



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Alleyn Court Preparatory School

March 2023

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School's Details

School	Alleyn Court Preparatory School			
DfE number	882/6002			
Registered Charity Number	1017369			
Address	Alleyn Court Preparatory School Wakering Road Southend-on-Sea Essex SS3 0PW			
Telephone number	01702 582553			
Email address	office@alleyn-court.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Rupert Snow			
Chair of Trustees	Mr Graham Reeder			
Proprietor	Alleyn Court Educational Trust			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	286			
	EYFS	81	Juniors	205
Inspection dates	21 to 23 March 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Originally founded in 1904 in Westcliff, Southend-on-Sea, Alleyn Court Preparatory School is a co-educational day school. It moved to its current main site in nearby Thorpe Bay in 1993, retaining an additional Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Nursery section at the original site. The school is owned by a charitable trust, whose trustees are responsible for governance.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to educate its pupils as respectful, responsible, resilient, resourceful and reflective young people. It seeks to promote curiosity, creativity and a love of learning through a broad, rich and stimulating curriculum. It aspires to inspire pupils to attain the highest levels of academic, physical, artistic, and social endeavour, and endeavours to ensure children are best prepared for their secondary education, instilling the skills to contribute to a rapidly changing world.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils are admitted with a wide range of abilities and come predominantly from families with professional and business backgrounds within a 15-mile radius of the school. The school has identified 68 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive support. Three pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Two pupils require support for English as an additional language (EAL). The needs of more able, gifted and talented pupils are met through a modified curriculum.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety;

acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils' communication skills are particularly well developed by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils apply their numeracy skills very effectively in mathematics and in other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are enthusiastic and highly engaged both in lessons and in their independent work.
- Pupils' study skills develop strongly because these are successfully taught and embedded from an early age.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils' excellent social skills result in them working together cooperatively when sharing ideas and strategies for improvement.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of empathy and tolerance towards others, respecting and valuing diversity.
- Pupils articulate a strong understanding regarding their physical and mental wellbeing. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
- Pupils have a profound sense of spiritual understanding and demonstrate that they are keen to be kind and supportive to others.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable pupils to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in their learning across the curriculum.
- Ensure that pupils' ability to develop and express their creativity in all subjects is consistently promoted.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Standardised data provided by the school indicate that pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is above age-related expectations in relation to other pupils nationally who take the same tests.

Analysis of tracking data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that pupils make good progress over time. Pupils with SEND attain well and make good progress over their time at the school, with some making particularly rapid progress. There is no significant difference in attainment in English and mathematics between male and female pupils overall or between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. Nearly all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the range of subjects was suitable for their child and that teaching enables their child to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils are highly articulate, developing excellent writing skills from an early age. For example, pupils in Year 1 demonstrate highly accomplished letter formation, cursive and presentation skills. They are also accomplished listeners; pupils listened to each other with great attention before making their own comments in lessons and discussions. Speaking skills were a highlight during a performance of *Grease* at a local theatre during the visit, where the cast delivered their lines clearly and with great expression, undaunted by performing to a full audience. In drama, pupils in Year 1 successfully used tonal variation, articulation, and expression to disguise their voices. Children in the EYFS spoke confidently, working together and discussing their fillings when making sandwiches. This is because practitioners use skilful interventions when encouraging children to communicate thoughts, ideas and feelings. High-quality teaching and consistently high expectations ensure pupils are very comfortable when presenting to their peers and to adults as seen, for example, in a Years 5 and 6 debate on international men's Day and when pupils in Year 3 spoke about their own experiences of Ramadan. Younger pupils relish the opportunity to contribute to discussions in small groups and report their findings back to the class as part of school council deliberations.
- 3.7 Pupils' numeracy skills are strong because they learn effective strategies from the outset, which they apply with assurance. Year 1 pupils use a variety of means, including dienes blocks, words and Arabic notation, to represent number in their work. Older pupils use different methods to represent algebraic relationships in imaginative ways which suit their individual learning styles. In the EYFS, children have highly developed numeracy skills and can use a range of methods to solve problems. Reception children counted cubes accurately when estimating the amount that would fill 3D shapes. As a result of effective cross-curricular planning, pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in other areas of their learning. For example, in science, pupils in Year 5 were able to predict with accuracy how many heart beats might occur during different forms of one-minute physical exercises. Pupils in Year 6 calculated coordinates and found contour patterns in geography. Mastery of learning is achieved through open-ended and challenging tasks set by teachers. Year 2 pupils learned to multiply in arrays and demonstrated excellent understanding of abstract numbers and problem-solving.
- 3.8 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent; they engage with all aspects of their learning in enthusiastic and creative ways. Pupils are clearly motivated to learn and are positive because they feel school recognises their initiatives and desire to do well. In most lessons, pupils are highly engaged, enthusiastic and well-focused. In discussions, they explained that, although they may not have achieved something *yet*, they knew that great things are possible if they try their hardest. Pupils are highly reflective learners; scrutiny revealed adept self-evaluation of their work, as well as pertinent and decisive peer discussions during lessons. Pupils are overtly supportive of each other and work readily together. For example, pupils in Year 3 discussed ways to improve their mental health. They reached unanimous group decisions requiring independent thinking and consideration of others. In an English lesson, pupils in Year 1 proudly read out their accomplished descriptions of Easter eggs in response to highly ambitious and dynamic teaching. Pupils flourish and are empowered by teachers' flexible and sympathetic attention to pupils' individual needs.
- 3.9 Pupils develop comprehensive study skills from an early age. Pupils exhibit higher-order thinking skills as a result of teachers' open questioning and aspirational expectations. Year 1 pupils' highly effective use of mind-mapping in topic books and clear synthesis from Year 3 pupils, citing Newton's third law of motion to explain why water does not fall from a bucket when it is swung around in an arc above the head are exemplars. Pupils are keen to extend their learning both in lessons and in independent

study. Older pupils described how they conduct additional research and analysis in order to achieve better grades. For example, they used spreadsheets to record and analyse weather observations in geography. They use evidence astutely to predict outcomes, extrapolating and hypothesising at sophisticated levels. This was seen in a Year 6 science lesson where pupils worked together to reason thoughtfully about the nuances of inherited or acquired human characteristics, and also when Year 2 pupils hypothesised that the polygon has sides that must connect and tested the theory for proof. Rapid progress was noted when these pupils synthesised new mathematical vocabulary into extension activities, responding critically to others' expanded noun phrases and offering suggestions to improve sentences through addition of better adjectives, verbs and adverbs.

- 3.10 Pupils' competence in the use of ICT is generally well developed but not in all subject areas. Pupils explained their use of laptop computers for writing in different subjects, coding to solve problems, research for projects and for presentation purposes. Younger pupils make effective use of digital cameras and by Years 5 and 6 pupils' presentation skills in history and English result in highly accomplished year books and projects. In lessons, pupils engage with teachers' use of ICT, but there is less evidence of pupils' contemporaneous use of technology as part of their everyday learning.
- 3.11 From the earliest age there is clear cross-curricular progression which supports pupils' excellent development of knowledge, skills and understanding. Children in the EYFS develop their use of vocabulary and understanding of language as a result of aurally and visually rich teaching. Children confidently stated to inspectors that they wanted to be palaeontologists when they grew up, enthusiastically explaining what this meant, and listing the tools they might need. Younger pupils demonstrated highly adaptable catching, throwing, marking, blocking, dribbling, hitting and spatial awareness skills in physical education (PE). In discussions, pupils explained how an art project on 'The Blitz' helped them to contextualise learning effectively in their history work. Pupils in Year 5 work demonstrated highly effective application of problem-solving skills using a combination of previously acquired knowledge of geometry, long multiplication and fractions. Year 6 pupils responded positively to teachers' fast paced extension techniques when they described appearances and personality in the French language, adeptly using a wide range of vocabulary with excellent pronunciation. Pupils' creative skills are well developed in subjects where they are enthused and enabled to experiment with a variety of approaches. For example, in English and the humanities, pupils' written work revealed some excellent examples of creative output. However, in subjects where teaching is more didactic, pupils are less empowered to express their creativity.
- 3.12 Pupils achieve success in a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural activities. They are successful at gaining places at schools with competitive entry requirements with a number receiving academic and other scholarship awards. Pupils participate with great success in local, regional and national sports, literary, swimming, cross-country mathematics, science, and artistic competitions. A large number of pupils also participate successfully in both stage and supportive roles in musical theatre productions. Many pupils play musical instruments and successfully take national examinations in speech and drama, and music, with a good proportion gaining merit and distinction grades. The school's governance and leadership ensures pupils have a range of opportunities to expand pupils' personal interests, successfully meeting their ambitious aims.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils' excellent social skills result in them working together cooperatively, sharing ideas and strategies for improvement. Strong relationships have built an atmosphere of palpable mutual trust in classrooms, which promotes pupils' willingness to try new ideas. They have a profound understanding that collaboration produces positive results as seen in highly effective co-operative partnerships in lessons. Almost all parents agreed that the school equips their child with the team-working and collaborative skills they need. Pupils explained that they worked with a variety of people

in different lessons, not necessarily just their friends, displaying a mature understanding of why this is beneficial. When discussing the problems associated with online behaviour younger pupils organised themselves sensibly into roles such as resource officer, reporter and note taker. Pupils appreciate being helped by their peers; this support clearly engenders excellent levels of mutuality, respect and kindness. For example, pupils in Year 1 used precise language and accurate vocabulary to support each other sensitively with proofreading, gently correcting missing capital letters. Pupils also understand that compromise is sometimes necessary. For example, pupils in Year 2 supported each other and demonstrated excellent leadership and self-control when they practised netball skills in small groups.

- 3.15 Pupils have an excellent appreciation of diversity and cultural plurality, explaining that their school is a place where it is acceptable to be different, and to be yourself, no matter who you are. Pupils from different cultures and beliefs play and interact happily together and demonstrate excellent levels of empathy and tolerance towards others. Pupils develop a strong insight into cultural experiences and exhibit a deep understanding of inclusion. Pupils explained that they love to learn about different religions so they can better understand their friends. In a religious education (RE) lesson, pupils in Year 2 showed a clear understanding that the Bible, Quran and Torah are all important religious texts. Pupils in Year 3 listened intently as peers informed the class about what their families did at Ramadan, which elicited some thoughtful questions about fasting. In a science lesson on genes, pupils reflected on a question about gender transition which they discussed with great sensitivity.
- 3.16 Pupils across the school have a finely tuned appreciation of their health and safety. They expressed a firm understanding of what constitutes healthy eating. For example, in a science lesson, pupils in Year 6 discussed whether or not weight is an inherited or acquired characteristic. Pupils conveyed sensible views on what might or might not be suggested to the school council for lunchtime menus and exhibited a ready appreciation of the need for, and enjoyment of, regular exercise. Older pupils explained their strong understanding of the importance of a good night's sleep and undertaking mindful activities to achieve a healthy work-life balance. The youngest children in the EYFS used knives and graters appropriately when making sandwiches. In discussions, pupils displayed a clear understanding of when to seek help from a trusted adult. In questionnaire responses, most parents agreed that the school encourages their child to adopt a healthy lifestyle.
- 3.17 Supported by the school's strong core values, pupils develop a strong sense of spiritual understanding and proactively demonstrate that they are keen to be kind and supportive of others. In discussions, pupils spoke eloquently about the values related to friendship, family, talent, and personality. They appreciate the acceptance from others of who they are, meaning that they feel comfortable being themselves at school. Pupils value quiet times, the inspiring woodland and regular mindfulness sessions. The trustees have ensured that the school achieves a seamless harmony in which all pupils feel equally recognised and valued and therefore reflect these qualities in their appreciation of the world around them.
- 3.18 Pupils' self-understanding develops strongly as they progress through the school. In their questionnaire responses, most parents agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Scrutiny of work reveals teaching's excellent use of comment marking and much self-assessment by pupils. Pupils demonstrate, in response, effective self-editing using different colours to enable easy identification. In discussions, pupils explained that grades they are awarded for attainment and presentation help them to understand what they need to do to improve further, motivating them to invest the extra time and effort needed to excel. As a result, pupils' self-esteem and confidence develop to very high levels. Children in the EYFS become increasingly independent in managing their personal needs, which enhances their self-esteem and self-confidence. For example, the very youngest pupils proudly showed how they could zip and unzip their coats independently. Pupils value the school's 'Three Cs' – curiosity, courage and compassion – as being motivational guiding factors in their daily lives. Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes, explaining that failure is a learning opportunity, and they know that teachers and friends will support them. In a French lesson, pupils in Year 4 were willing to 'have-a-go' at French pronunciation, even when they were unsure.

They were happy to be corrected and to refine their pronunciation in a very constructive way. Pupils react positively to challenges and occasional setbacks and develop resilience and self-confidence.

- 3.19 Pupils learn to make effective decisions from an early age. For example, they choose which break and lunchtime clubs to attend, whether to volunteer as a playleader or not, and how to opt for a healthy choice at lunchtimes. By Year 6, pupils are thoughtful decision-makers. For example, in mathematics, pupils make decisions about their levels of work using helpful starting prompts, enabling them to be proactive in their learning. In another example, a lively Year 5-6 form discussion about break time snacks, pupils showed mature knowledge of decisions to be taken about healthy versus unhealthy eating because teaching allows them the freedom to adapt their learning for success. In Year 6 some pupils chose to organise a mindfulness colouring club for the younger pupils explaining that the club helps the younger pupils to relax. Pupils relish opportunities to demonstrate their initiative, for example organising mindfulness classes for younger peers.
- 3.20 Pupils have a highly developed moral understanding of what is right and wrong because the school successfully meets its aim of developing respectful, responsible young people. They understand that everyone makes mistakes and are always keen to help and avoid being judgemental. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes is excellent and they exhibit respect, politeness and consideration for others. In their responses to the questionnaires, pupils agreed that the school expects them to behave well. Pupils voluntarily cleared away chairs and papers after a discussion, exhibiting an engrained sense of responsibility and awareness of others. Children in the EYFS explained the rules of the room including kind hands, kind words and listening ears. Children recognise the impact their behaviour has on others due to the consistent and sensitive guidance of their teachers. Pupils respect rules and the democratic process. They make collegiate decisions and vote democratically in class discussions. They are responsive and responsible, listening to each other in class and respectful of everyone around them. Year 6 prefects provide excellent role models for younger pupils. Their thoughtful suggestions of mottoes for inclusion in the art project's 'elephant who never forgets' demonstrated maturity and innovation.
- 3.21 Pupils delight in helping others whenever possible. Their highly developed sense of community leads to helpful problem-solving and finding strategies to achieve shared goals. Pupils in Year 3 deliberated on improving the school community and extending the eco club, while older pupils explained that it is normal and natural for them to intervene and offer help when they notice that anyone is struggling. Every member of Year 6 voluntarily helps in the lower school with reading and supporting play. Pupils contribute greatly to the lives of others by adopting roles as sports and subject captains, librarians and club leaders. They are proud of the charitable work they do and talk positively about the funds that have been raised. For example, Year 6 pupils recently created a music video in aid of *Comic Relief*. Excellent discussion and suggestions for a revised wet break routine were proposed by older pupils for inclusion in the next school council meeting.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Kerry Lord	Reporting inspector
Mrs Jane Sheppard	Assistant reporting inspector
Mrs Diane Durrant	Compliance team inspector (Former head, SofH school)
Mr Robert Gullifer	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)