



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Chandlings Preparatory School

June 2023

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School's Details

School	Chandlings Preparatory School			
DfE number	931/6117			
Registered charity number	309639			
Address	Chandlings Preparatory School Bagley Wood Kennington Oxford OX1 5ND			
Telephone number	01865 730771			
Email address	office@chandlingspst.org			
Head	Ms Christine Cook			
Chair of trustees	Mrs Emma McKendrick			
Proprietor	Prep Schools Trust			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	310			
	EYFS	105	Pre prep	67
	Prep	138		
Inspection dates	20 to 22 June 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Chandlings is a co-educational day school, located near Oxford. It was founded in 1994 and is one of five schools owned and managed by the Prep Schools Trust, whose board of trustees administer the school, supported by a Local Advisory Group that is chaired by one of the trustees.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to provide a friendly and vibrant community, where pupils are happy, secure and confident. It seeks to provide a challenging educational experience, through a broad, balanced and enriching curriculum, where high-quality teaching inspires pupils to have a lifelong love of learning. The school aims to create a strong partnership with parents and positive relationships throughout. It strives to foster self-belief, promote curiosity and build resilience, provide many opportunities for leadership and inspire pupils to be independent, resourceful, adaptable and creative.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a range of professional families and from a wide geographical area. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared with others taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 50 pupils as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and speech and language needs, most of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan (EHC). English is an additional language (EAL) for 38 pupils, eight of whom receive additional support for their English. The curriculum is modified for the pupils identified by the school as more able in the school's population or who have specialist talents in sport, music, drama and art.

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. 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. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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 showering facilities where required by the standard, 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 are highly skilled communicators. They use their well-developed language skills across the entire curriculum, confidently making links in their learning.
- Every pupil has the opportunity to experience a varied and stimulating curriculum that enables them to identify the areas at which they enjoy and excel.
- Pupils use their IT skills seamlessly across the curriculum to support their learning.

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

- Pupils' attitudes towards learning are excellent throughout the school.
- Pupils have high self-esteem, are extremely confident and show mature levels of self-discipline.
- Pupils exhibit excellent appreciation for the non-material aspects of life and are highly respectful of their school environment and the benefits it brings them.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Further develop the opportunities for pupils of all ages to use their own initiative and to take ownership of their learning, allowing them to refine their higher-order skills.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Attainment of pupils across the school is high. A large majority of the youngest children achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the early years setting. The attainment of pupils in the prep school maintains this excellent start, with standardised scores in English and mathematics above norms for others taking the same tests nationally. Standardised tests, as recorded and monitored by the school's tracking system, show that pupils make good short and long-term progress in all core areas of the curriculum. Evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of lessons confirms this picture. Careful oversight and tracking in all subject areas, together with regular professional dialogue by subject leaders, class teachers and section leaders ensure that individual pupils' progress is well known and monitored. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or with English as an additional language (EAL) are highly productive. Detailed planning, effective support and helpful intervention strategies enable them to make high levels of progress alongside their peers.

- 3.6 The knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils develop strongly as they progress through the school because they are provided with a very wide and a highly stimulating curriculum, supported by careful planning. Cross curricular links are carefully planned to enable pupils to link their learning across subject areas. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, all pupils said that lessons were interesting, that their teachers helped them learn, valued their feedback, and that their skills and knowledge improved in most lessons. The children in EYFS enjoy a broad curriculum that enables them to link different areas of their learning across all the Early Learning Goals, for example, confidently using their knowledge of the outdoor world to write sentences when responding to a picture stimulus. In a Year 2 art lesson, English, historical and geographical skills were seamlessly woven into the set task to design and draw a fantasy map linked to their *Alice in Wonderland* topic. Pupils gain an excellent understanding of the technical aspects of each subject, employing the correct vocabulary and key terms. Year 3 pupils, in an Outdoor Learning lesson, demonstrated an excellent understanding of the properties of wood and how to make charcoal from the charred wood to create their environmental maps. More able pupils explained how the cellular materials in wood are affected by the heat. High levels of skill and knowledge were seen across the music curriculum, from Reception children recognising violins playing in an orchestra, to Year 6 choir pupils having a high level of familiarity with terms such as intonation, bass lines and multi-part ensembles, ensuring they are constantly improving their performance.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages are highly articulate and develop increasingly effective communication skills as they progress through the school. They express themselves confidently and convey their ideas with great clarity due to the many opportunities for performance at all levels alongside feedback in class within a supportive environment. Children in the EYFS are expert in applying their communications skills throughout the curriculum: playing collaboratively, they listen to others and speak clearly to convey their needs. The writing skills of pupils are at a high level for their age, where they benefit from many opportunities to write in a wide variety of forms. A scrutiny of lessons and pupils' books confirms their skills are applied effectively across all areas of learning. Children in reception write well, largely above their expected age, using correct punctuation and making phonetically plausible attempts at spelling. Year 1 pupils enthusiastically showed that they understood creative writing improvements, accurately naming similes, alliteration, and adjectives to describe a setting. Pupils listen to others with interest and work very efficiently together in lessons. In the EYFS, pupils listen attentively to stories, instructions, and one another. They have a good understanding of 'active listening' which is modelled and explained by teaching staff.
- 3.8 Pupils attain excellent standards of numeracy throughout school. They achieve very high levels of understanding of technical maths vocabulary and numerical competence which they apply across different subject areas from the youngest age. This can be attributed to teaching which provides clear explanation, excellent modelling, and a range of activities to reinforce their learning and to meet the individual needs of pupils. Reception pupils accurately identify spheres, cones, and cubes, describing their properties in terms of faces and vertices and were able to apply this knowledge effectively in a game. All pupils confidently record their mathematical thinking in their exercise books. In the work scrutiny older pupils were able to draw a range of graphs, tables and diagrams and higher ability pupils showed excellent understanding of investigations on parabolic curves and Fibonacci sequences.
- 3.9 Pupils exhibit an excellent level of understanding in the use of ICT. They use digital learning confidently and habitually in their daily school lives. The provision of tablets and laptops, either for individual use for older pupils or as a bank of devices for younger ones, by the leadership team has helped them to become highly confident digital users. During pupil discussions it was evident they apply their digital skills to many curriculum areas to enhance their learning, for example researching and recording geographical findings, and music where they have used interactive sites to learn about Gamelan music. They learn to code and program from a young age and a scrutiny of work showed that they seize opportunities to extend research and publish writing in subjects such as humanities and English.

- 3.10 In many, but not all lessons, pupils are provided with a variety of opportunities to refine their higher-order thinking skills. In philosophy, Year 6 pupils offered sophisticated reasons for wishing to be well known: for example, citing Greta Thunberg as an example of the contrast between fame and wealth. In mathematics, Year 5 pupils were given opportunities to test their predictions of which nets would work prior to challenging themselves to the construction of the shapes. Older pupils offered a range of responses when analysing World War 2 public information posters; giving excellent reasons for their thinking about how the use of slogans such as 'food is a weapon' might be interpreted. In written work there are excellent examples of higher-order thinking for the age, for example in the interrogation of mathematical sequences, in response to 'what if' questions and the questioning of reliability and bias in a variety of historical sources.
- 3.11 Pupils enjoy considerable success in their endeavours outside class. All pupils gain a place at the senior school of their choice, and they are regularly awarded sport, drama, music and academic scholarships. Musical performances are a regular and important part of school life, and pupils have achieved much success in external music examinations. Each year group has opportunities to perform in assemblies and in an annual drama production. Many pupils achieve excellent results in external speech and drama exams. Pupils are proud of their achievements in the wide range of clubs and activities on offer. Year 6 boys spoke glowingly of the exploits of their friend who had been encouraged at school and gone on to represent the county for his age at cricket. These and other achievements are celebrated during whole school assemblies. In this way the school very successfully achieves its aim to provide a broad, balanced, and enriching curriculum for the pupils.
- 3.12 Throughout the school pupils display positive attitudes and an enthusiasm for learning as evidenced by their endeavours in lessons and activities observed during the inspection. They are productive when working individually, with their learning partner or in a group. Children in EYFS are happy in their learning and extremely confident in taking the initiative in child-led learning. They show independence from the youngest age. Pupils in the older classes transition sensibly and purposefully between lessons. They are highly independent at play yet inclusive in their games throughout the whole school. In activities such as outdoor learning they are attentive, responsible, pair-up quickly in groups and understand that greater success is determined by doing so. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations of attitudes to learning, praise those who respond well and reinforce this through regular reference to the school's values. In overwhelmingly positive questionnaire responses about the governance and leadership of the school, all parents agreed that the school helps pupils to develop the collaborative skills that their sons and daughters will need in later life.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils across the school have excellent levels of self-esteem and high levels of self-confidence; they are happy, engaged and highly positive about their school. In the questionnaire all pupils said they were happy at school, and that pupils were kind and respectful to each other. In all lessons seen, the children interact very positively with each other, and relationships are warm and natural. Pupils develop high levels of self-knowledge and resilience because leaders and staff reinforce positive attitudes and encourage them to always do their best. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to develop their self-knowledge through regular wellbeing sessions. In a Year 3 form session, when recording five things on a handprint, they reflected on their personal progress, articulating how experiences such as 'meeting new friends' or 'being in the school production of Little Red Riding Hood' had helped them to discover inner confidence and self-belief. Children in the EYFS exhibit a deep curiosity of the world around them and are actively encouraged by teaching staff to explore their interests further. Staff engage in conversation constantly with children, modelling language skills. As a result, children in the EYFS have high self-esteem and the self-confidence to drive their learning forward. Older pupils in discussions were highly appreciative of systems such as *Chandlings Knights* who act as relationship ambassadors, and the school values which were well understood across the school.
- 3.15 Pupils show excellent decision-making skills, understanding the significance of their decisions in relation to their own progress. Pupils learn the necessary skills at an early age. In the EYFS, teaching staff allow many opportunities for children to express their thoughts and ideas. Children quickly become effective decision-makers, they make daily choices about a range of learning and play activities. As they move through the school, pupils enjoy the opportunities they are given to make decisions about how to tackle tasks in their learning, and confidently explain their reasons for doing so. Opportunities for pupils with SEND to fully access content of lessons are embedded in the curriculum and teaching staff are adept at ensuring all pupils, regardless of needs, can make decisions within their learning. Pupils also make some decisions collectively through the elected school council.
- 3.16 Pupils have a notably strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. Starting in the EYFS, children enjoy weekly outdoor learning activities, in which they acquire strong observational skills and a real appreciation for all aspects of life. In this way the school's leadership successfully fulfils its aim to both inspire and challenge. Pupils talk thoughtfully about their understanding of the spiritual aspects of life. They have an excellent awareness of how nature can positively impact their wellbeing and enjoy the vast outdoor space that the school offers. They can recall times where they have spent time outdoors, reflecting and being calm in nature and value time spent underneath their class tree reading and talking. In outdoor learning activities observed, Year 3 pupils knew the names of different trees and Year 2 pupils showed an understanding of the cycle of life in terms of the leaves rotting into the soil to make compost. Pupils are well aware that their school is a place to appreciate both in terms of the stimulating environment it provides, but also in recognising how fortunate they are. Teachers ensure pupils appreciate messages such as the difference between worth and value.
- 3.17 Pupils of all ages make clear distinctions between right and wrong, taking responsibility for their own behaviour, as seen in lessons and during break times. Behaviour in the school is excellent, pupils behave well towards each other and are polite and courteous both in and outside the classroom. In the questionnaire all pupils and parents agreed that the school expects excellent behaviour. Pupils are intrinsically kind to one another. They show thoughtful consideration for one another and an eagerness to help and support their peers. Pupils challenge any misbehaviour and unkindness and show no tolerance of bullying. In discussions, pupils were quick to explain that the few instances of unkind behaviour are dealt with swiftly. The values of the school, courage, forgiveness, kindness, and helpfulness thread through conversations and observation across the school.
- 3.18 Social development in pupils of all ages is excellent and they form productive relationships with their peers, meeting the school's aim to build strong relationships within a family atmosphere. Almost all

parents agreed that the school helps pupils to develop strong teamwork and social skills. Pupils throughout the school are highly effective at working collaboratively whether on the sports field, in lessons or at play. Younger pupils were often seen collaborating effectively, engaging in lively discussion, and enjoying successfully completed shared tasks, such as in EYFS where they can solve simple problems. Pupils who are relatively new to the school spoke of the profoundly positive experience they had had since joining and being appointed a *Chandlings Knight* to help them settle. This allowed them to rapidly assimilate the school expectations and integrate into social groupings. Through the elected school council, which spans the junior year groups, pupils come together to drive initiatives such as fundraising events for charities of their choice, expanding their awareness of the world beyond the school gates.

- 3.19 From the earliest age, pupils show a keen awareness of the needs of others. Pupils' contributions to the wellbeing of all within the school are obvious, positive and highly effective. They are extremely willing to help and support their peers both inside and outside the classroom. For instance, through their work as buddies, and school council members. There are a wide variety of opportunities for pupils to positively contribute to their school community. Older pupils are actively encouraged to apply for and undertake leadership roles within school. Pupil led charity initiatives are popular and well supported by staff, parents, and pupils. Pupils thrive on their opportunity to share their performing talents to the school and wider community, for example in the whole school Arts Festival.
- 3.20 Pupils engage naturally and without hesitation with those of backgrounds and cultures other than their own, in response to the ethos of kindness and mutual respect which permeates the school. Pupils have a thoughtful awareness of British society and in particular have a good understanding of the concept of tolerance. Pupils value the diversity within the school and are naturally curious about understanding different cultures. This is actively celebrated by whole school initiatives, such as International Day when pupils, parents and staff come together to celebrate the culture and religious beliefs of their peers. Children in the EYFS are exposed to a rich curriculum offering many opportunities to explore the belief and culture of those in their own and the wider community. Their links with a school in Nigeria affords the youngest pupils the opportunity to dance to African music and experiment with wearing clothing made from African cloth, expanding their understanding of the wider world. Their knowledge and understanding of these are woven through the curriculum and developed through themed celebration days, assembly topics and relevant topics in history and the diverse range of texts available in the library. All parents who completed the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes respect and tolerance of other people.
- 3.21 Pupils are physically healthy, and they radiate cheerfulness. This reflects the importance attached by the leadership and management of the school to the fostering of their wellbeing. Pupils feel safe within the school and fully understand the importance of staying safe and healthy in different activities. Pupils throughout the school take part in a variety of sporting and extracurricular activities and can explain the benefits of remaining active. Older pupils in Year 6 can explain why keeping both the mind and body healthy is important. They are active for large parts of their school day, largely outside in the extensive grounds. The mental health of pupils is at the forefront of initiatives such as *Well-being Wednesday*, outdoor learning, and happiness check in cards, which enable staff to monitor all pupils. In outdoor learning activities they learn how to factor risk into their activities, correctly recognising the importance, but also the dangers, of fire. They are provided with and enjoy healthy meals which they appreciate. In food technology they learn about the importance of certain foods such as 'oily fish' in their diet and their displays show they are very familiar with the relative food groups needed for a healthy diet. An overwhelming majority of parents and pupils agree that the school encourages pupils to lead a healthy lifestyle.

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 the chair of trustees, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. 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

Mrs Sue La Farge	Reporting inspector
Mrs Gretchen Copeman	Compliance team inspector (Headteacher, ISA school)
Mr Thomas Mylne	Team inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mr Phillip Scriven	Team inspector (Houseparent, IAPS school)