



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Elm Green Preparatory School

February 2023

Contents

Contents	2
School's Details	3
1. Background Information	4
About the school	4
What the school seeks to do	4
About the pupils	4
2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection	5
Preface	5
Key findings	6
PART 1 – Quality of education provided	6
PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	6
PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils	6
PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	6
PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools	6
PART 6 – Provision of information	7
PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled	7
PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools	7
3. Educational Quality Inspection	8
Preface	8
Key findings	8
Recommendations	8
The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements	9
The quality of the pupils' personal development	10
4. Inspection Evidence	13

School's Details

School	Elm Green Preparatory School			
DfE number	881/6017			
Address	Elm Green Preparatory School Parsonage Lane Little Baddow Chelmsford Essex CM3 4SU			
Telephone number	01245 225 230			
Email address	admin@elmgreen.essex.sch.uk			
Principal	Mrs Ann Milner			
Proprietor	Mrs Ann Milner			
Age range	4 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	196			
	Kindergarten	19	Juniors	177
Inspection dates	21 to 23 February 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Elm Green Preparatory School, founded in 1944, is an independent day school for male and female pupils. It is owned by Educational Options Ltd. The school's principal is the owner and sole director, with full responsibility for the leadership and management of the school. Since the previous inspection a multi-use games area has been created.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to provide a safe and stimulating environment in which all pupils can develop confidence and independence while being encouraged to reach their full potential. It sets out to encourage curiosity and a love of learning. It defines its values as: listening; forgiveness; sharing; peace-making; honesty; kindness and helpfulness; and care for the environment.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from within the local area and from a range of nationalities. Nationally standardised tests conducted by the school indicate that pupils are of above average ability compared to those taking the same tests nationally. There are 35 pupils identified as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and one with an education and health care plan (EHCP). Some pupils are bilingual, but none need support for their English. The school does not formally identify pupils as more able but provides opportunities for more challenging work within lessons.

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. 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Kindergarten	Reception

Key findings

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

- Pupils make excellent academic progress, many reaching standards in advance of those expected nationally for their chronological age in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils' communication skills are excellent; they are articulate both orally and in writing, expressing themselves with maturity and using a range of sophisticated vocabulary.
- Pupils have an excellent attitude to learning; they are eager and curious learners, ambitious to achieve their best in all their lessons.
- Pupils in Reception achieve good levels of development, demonstrating a growing ability to think critically and analytically.

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

- Pupils develop excellent levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, nurtured by the warmly supportive and consistently encouraging approach of their teachers.
- Pupils are highly resilient; they use the independence they are given wisely and make mature choices so as to improve their learning and performance.
- Pupils' moral understanding is excellent, so that their behaviour invariably reflects the school's values of honesty, kindness and helpfulness.
- Pupils' ability to work together collaboratively and in a team are excellent.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Encourage pupils to develop their interests and abilities more fully beyond the classroom by expanding the extra-curricular programme.
- Ensure that the relationships education programme fully prepares pupils in good time for the challenges they will face as they mature.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Data provided by the school show that the pupils reach high levels of attainment in comparison to pupils taking similar tests nationally. Children in Reception reach a good level of development before they enter Year 1. By the time they reach Year 6, many pupils are working at levels above expectations for their chronological age. There is no significant difference in the attainment of male and female pupils. Pupils' attainment is supported by the senior leadership's effective systems for monitoring, so that any issues are quickly identified and strategies put in place by the learning support staff. Pupils with SEND succeed in line with their abilities because of this effective support in class and in separate sessions as needed. More able pupils are encouraged to challenge themselves by choosing extension work in lessons. In questionnaire responses, parents and pupils were unanimous in their satisfaction with the progress made by pupils. Pupils say their teachers are supportive and know how to help them learn.
- 3.6 Pupils' progress across the curriculum is rapid, especially in literacy and numeracy. Children in Reception are proud of the way in which their writing skills have developed since they joined the school. In a mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 2 showed excellent understanding in adding and subtracting single digit numbers in their heads. Older pupils were seen engrossed in lessons across the curriculum, for example in their study of World War Two, and in applying their geographical knowledge, differentiating between a country and continent. A discussion in a registration session showed that the pupils have excellent general knowledge and can make connections across areas of the curriculum. Pupils' high level of creativity is evident in their art and in music, and they develop confident physical skills. The small size of the outdoor learning area attached to their classroom limits the potential for children in Reception to develop their gross motor skills independently. However, they engage energetically in PE (physical education) and swimming lessons, developing good physical abilities as they do so. Pupils in Year 1 told inspectors proudly of how they have learned how to sustain balance on gym apparatus. In a netball club, pupils in Year 4 showed good ball skills and tactical awareness, encouraged by fast-paced teaching and highly effective initial drills.
- 3.7 The pupils have an excellent grasp of the power of language and their ability to communicate effectively is a great strength. They are articulate and eager conversationalists, taking pleasure in explaining and debating their ideas. They are confident in doing this because they know the school values and respects their views. Pupils listen to each other and to their teachers carefully. Children in Reception engaged inspectors in animated conversations as they explained how bandits were trying to steal the rocket in their imaginary game. Pupils throughout the school are keen to contribute to lessons and their vocabulary is excellent. They write at length with confidence and enjoyment. Pupils in Year 2 made alterations to drafts of persuasive letters, adding adjectives such as 'pristine' to make them more effective. Those in Year 3, writing descriptive animal poems, discussed how to use alliteration and rhyming couplets to improve their work. Their grasp of language and sentence structures becomes steadily more sophisticated, as evident in poetry work by pupils in Year 6. Their written skills are supported by teachers' high expectations and displays which encourage them to be ambitious in their word choice. Pupils are keen readers for pleasure, selecting and recommending books from the school library eagerly. Their tastes are mature, the majority with a reading age in excess of their years.
- 3.8 Pupils' mathematical skills are excellent and they are encouraged to understand the relevance of these and to apply them across the curriculum. In a gymnastics lesson, pupils in Year 1 considered whether they could re-arrange the equipment to make a cube rather than a square. Year 4, in a history lesson, measured feet to assess height and used their conclusions to assess the accuracy of archaeologists' suggestions on the height of humans in the past. Their mathematical skills are developed well in mathematics lessons. Younger pupils were observed in an activity in which they shopped for various items, working out their own addition sums. They showed excellent levels of understanding, for example identifying that 105 pence is the same as one pound and five pence. Older pupils confidently

turned a statistic into a fraction in a geography lesson, teaching seizing the moment to develop their confidence in, and understanding of, number.

- 3.9 The pupils demonstrate competent skills in using information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils in Year 6 were able to navigate information website with ease in an ICT lesson and to make insightful assessments of how user-friendly and reliable they were. Year 5 were excited and engaged in a mathematics lesson accessing a weather forecast site and creating graphs from their conclusions. Some evidence was seen of pupils using coding to create basic games and of their using presentation applications well, for example Year 6 have created effective presentations in support of charities they want their peers to support. While pupils make good progress in dedicated lessons in the ICT room, there was little evidence in the work scrutinised of ICT being used routinely as a tool in pupils' daily learning. The school leaders are aware that this is an area for development, so more tablet devices have been acquired in order to enable further development of pupils' skills in this area.
- 3.10 Pupils show an excellent ability to think critically and analytically. Children in Reception quickly realised the problems of taking a computer into the zero gravity of space and worked out their own solutions, such as using a belt to stop it floating away. Pupils question perceptively in lessons, asking challenging questions. While exploring the ways in which people protected themselves during the London Blitz, Year 6 pupils analysed and made independent notes from a series of slides, selecting only the relevant information. They discussed the relative effectiveness of the protective measures, wondering whether if a bomber plane was shot down before releasing its bombs there would be more or less damage on the buildings beneath. In a French lesson, Year 5 pupils showed good reasoning skills in identifying the odd word out amongst lists of French words. Year 4 pupils reflected thoughtfully in geography on clues given, before suggesting the country to which the teacher was referring. They analysed the new information given on each slide, combining it with what they already knew to refine their thinking and amend their conclusions.
- 3.11 Pupils have achieved high levels of success in a number of areas. They are proud of their achievements in sports. The swimming team was recently successful in an IAPS national swimming gala. The team has also been winners in local swimming galas. The pupils have consistently been successful in cross country meets, in netball tournaments for Years 3, 4 and 6 and for Year 3 football. There have been successes in the primary school mathematics challenge with some pupils successfully reaching the international bonus round. Pupils' artwork has been exhibited in local competitions and pupils are proud of their success in various music examinations. Pupils work hard and achieve a high standard in concerts and productions within school. Their opportunities to discover and develop a wider range of interest are limited because of the small number of extra-curricular activities the school is currently providing.
- 3.12 The pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and the school is highly successful in its aim of encouraging them to be curious and enthusiastic learners. They are unafraid of mistakes, rapidly learning from errors. Year 5 pupils were able to identify the point at which they had lost the rhythm in their percussion piece and why. They were able also to identify what they had done to get back into the correct rhythm. Year 6 explained that their graph had gone wrong because they had selected the wrong scale, so they had started again. Similar determination was evident in art, as pupils chose to re-do work which was beautiful in itself but had a flaw which meant it did not precisely meet the criteria. In discussions, the pupils pointed to the displays encouraging them not to be daunted by making mistakes. Pupils readily use the language of the school's growth mindset approach and take real pleasure in knowing that they are learning how to learn more effectively.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, because of the school's consistently encouraging approach which enables them to use mistakes as stepping stones to learning. Children in

Reception proudly told inspectors that they were good at writing and knew lots about planets and the solar system. Pupils understand the importance of resilience. Older pupils said that if they were not good at something yet, they were confident that they would learn how to improve. This was evident in conversations with pupils in Year 6, who explained the acronym they use to check they have included in a history task all the information needed to gain better marks. Pupils of all ages show considerable self-assurance. They are eager to talk to visitors and to make them feel welcomed to their school. In assembly, pupils in Year 3 performed a dramatisation of an Oscar Wilde short story with aplomb and no sign of nerves, despite a technological hitch. A very large majority of parents agree that the school helps pupils to become confident and independent, and pupils in Year 6 were unanimous in saying they feel well prepared for senior school.

- 3.15 Pupils are keenly aware that making wise decisions will affect their progress and ultimate success. Almost invariably pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent; they settle down very swiftly and remain closely attentive throughout. They use registration time sensibly, checking homework or reading quietly. When given a choice of tasks to complete in a lesson, they select wisely. In music, for example, when choosing a rhythmical task, pupils explained that they had chosen the one they knew they would find more difficult because they wanted to challenge themselves and learn how to improve. They make notes independently, choosing the structure which they know will best suit their own learning style. In Year 6 these ranged from words framed in bubbles to bullet points or continuous text. Set to create a play script from a section of a novel, some pupils in Year 4 began by highlighting the names of characters on the page while others chose to write the names down on alternate lines of their exercise books.
- 3.16 Pupils respond thoughtfully to matters of religious faith. In a lesson on Sikhism, Year 5 pupils were intrigued by the symbolism of artefacts, understanding that the bracelet is to remind believers that God has no beginning and no end. They suggested that the comb is a reminder that God can take the tangles out of their lives. In assembly, pupils sang the hymn enthusiastically and recited the school prayer respectfully. The short discussion following the assembly showed they had understood its message of being sensitive to others and not being boastful. The pupils have an excellent sense of the values which underpin their school lives and say that kindness, forgiveness and respect for all are far more important than material matters such as money. Their aesthetic awareness is highly developed. They told inspectors that they find music inspirational and the choir's pleasure in the sound they made when successfully singing a three-part harmony was evident. Pupils spoke appreciatively of the colour and texture of their felt designs of pets; art on display was skilful and vibrant. In discussions, pupils pointed to the 'tree of hope' in the hall as expressing ways to make life better after the periods of school closure. Others pointed to the 'tree of values' in a classroom, saying they like it not only because it is beautiful to look at but because every leaf on it reflects an individual's act of kindness. In a school council discussion inspired by a famous footballer's campaign for free school meals, pupils suggested that during lunch everyone should stop for a moment just to reflect on how fortunate they are in comparison to other children of their age.
- 3.17 Pupils have a well-honed understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Their demeanour shows that they fully understand the school's behavioural expectations, based on the values which are on display in every room. Children in Reception listen to their teachers carefully and behave responsibly, for example when lining up to walk to and from school. In Year 5 registration, pupils showed a clear understanding of how a biblical quote about behaviour towards others linked to the school values and their own behaviour. When asked if they would own up if they had broken something in the classroom, Year 6 pupils were unanimous in saying they would because their teachers would be disappointed in them if they did not. They added that besides that, their own consciences would make them feel really bad until they admitted it.
- 3.18 Working together and helping each other comes naturally to the pupils. They automatically step in to help should, for example, someone be trying to carry too much. In Reception, children made sure no one was left out of their role play game by creating the role of a policeman to help the astronauts.

They take turns and share without fuss. Year 2 pupils helped each other in their mathematics lesson, sharing ideas on how to select two items with prices adding up to 50p. Pupils were seen helping their classmates by critiquing their work and making helpful suggestions. For example, in a Year 3 English lesson on poetry, pupils complimented others on their use of similes and then suggested adding a few more words to create alliteration. Older pupils talked perceptively about working together in science, in preparing for concerts or performances, and in sports teams. They said that while it can be annoying when someone wants to dominate or get their own way, they will find a way to compromise so that all can work together happily and succeed in the task. In the playground, pupils of all ages play together happily, sharing the space and equipment fairly.

- 3.19 Pupils have a strong sense of community and are eager to contribute to school life. Younger pupils happily help to hand out books and tidy up in their classrooms. Year 6 pupils eagerly apply for specific roles of responsibility such as house captains, prefects for specific areas or play leaders. The contribution they make and the role models they provide help to reinforce the school's distinctive family atmosphere. Play leaders help to sort out any problems for younger pupils at playtimes or provide someone older to talk to if they wish. Prefect librarians engage in keen competition to encourage pupils to select from their allocated shelves in the library. The school council has recently been revived and is meeting more regularly, making suggestions such as proposing 'Meat Free Mondays'. Its effectiveness has been limited by the fact that such responsibility posts change each term to ensure that as many as possible have the opportunity to experience leadership roles. However, this means that council proposals have not always been carried through. Pupils support three charities each year, all chosen from the proposals put forward by Year 6 pupils who also organise and run occasional fund-raising toy or cake sales.
- 3.20 There are many different nationalities and ethnicities in the school and pupils are very aware of the importance of inclusivity, respect and tolerance of others regardless of background or ability. They confidently say that differences do not matter because underneath they are all the same. Asked about what they can learn from classmates with different backgrounds, the pupils spoke of helping teach English to Ukrainian pupils who spent a few months in the school. They also said that talking with these pupils helped them to appreciate their own good fortune. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures in lessons and the school library has a display of books reflecting a range of cultures.
- 3.21 Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet, and of the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. Older pupils spoke intelligently of the importance of taking care of their mental health. They described their techniques for managing stress and for helping to get a good night's sleep. A very few parents, pupils and staff said that they do not think the school's relationships education gives sufficient attention to ensuring that pupils fully understand the physical changes they will experience as they mature or are confident in managing unwanted attention. Such matters are covered well in the relationships education lessons and all the required content is taught by the time pupils finish Year 6, but inspectors agree that some topics are taught too late for all pupils to benefit. Pupils feel safe in their school and are proud of the way they look after and care for each other.

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 proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form time 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 Colette Culligan	Reporting inspector
Mrs Melanie Pople	Compliance team inspector (Former deputy head, GSA school)
Miss Naomi Bartholomew	Team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)