



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Highfield Preparatory School

March 2022

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School's Details

School	Highfield Preparatory School		
DfE number	868/6009		
Registered charity number	309103		
Address	Highfield Preparatory School 2 West Road Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 1PD		
Telephone number	01628 624918		
Email address	office@highfieldprep.org		
Headteacher	Mrs Joanna Leach		
Chair of governors	Mrs Viv Thompson		
Age range	2 to 11		
Number of pupils on roll	107		
	Male	5	Female 102
	EYFS	20	Juniors 87
Inspection dates	8 to 11 March 2022		

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Highfield Preparatory School is an independent day school for female pupils and sibling brothers aged between 2 and 7 years. The majority of pupils are female. The school was founded in 1918 and became a charitable trust in 1966. In 2019 it became part of the Chatsworth School group, who form the governing body. Since the previous inspection the school has extended its provision to admit male pupils up to the age of 7.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's aim is to develop a love of learning by creating an exciting, stimulating environment where pupils are encouraged to maximise their potential. It actively encourages parents to be involved in the education of their children, and seeks to prepare pupils emotionally and physically for the next stage of their education.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the tests. The school has identified 14 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia, speech and communication difficulties and emotional and mental health issues. They all receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 12 pupils whose needs are supported by their class teacher. The school has identified 18 pupils as being more able in the school's population and 20 pupils as having special gifts or talents. The curriculum is modified for them because of their special talents in English, maths, sport and music. No pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

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 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 well-being 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>
Pre-school	Nursery 3 – 4 years

Key findings

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

- Pupils achieve high academic standards by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent communication skills which they confidently apply to all areas of learning.
- Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are strong across all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils confidently and routinely use ICT across a range of subjects, seeing it as an essential tool that enhances their learning.

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

- Pupils rapidly develop a strong moral compass, clearly know right from wrong and take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils are well supported and thrive in all areas of their personal development within the warm, nurturing community that the caring senior leaders and staff have created.
- Pupils respond positively to the wealth of cultural diversity within the school and can understand the benefits of working with those from other backgrounds and faiths.
- Pupils are highly knowledgeable in how to stay safe and keep healthy physically, mentally and online.

Recommendations

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Enabling pupils to strengthen further their personal development by developing more opportunities for older pupils to work with younger ones and by developing further links for pupils of all ages with the local community.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Throughout the school, pupils develop excellent knowledge in many areas of learning and acquire a high level of skill in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) which they confidently apply across the curriculum, successfully meeting the school's aims. Younger children rapidly acquire a broad range of skills as they engage wholeheartedly in activities that cover all areas of learning. They studiously looked at rocks through a magnifying glass, and were fascinated by the moonscape role play area as they explored what life must be like in space. Open-ended questioning by staff and awareness of children's emerging interests ensure activities are meaningful. Pupils learn thematically and make links in their learning that deepen their understanding through the highly-developed topic approach to the curriculum. This was seen as older pupils created ethereal pictures of temples using a variety of paint techniques, solved problems using an ancient number system and visited a chocolate museum as part of their topic on Mayan civilization. Pupils participate fully and enthusiastically in all PE lessons. Year 6 pupils sang confidently and with expression in three-part harmony and showed creditable levels of attainment in oral and written Latin. All pupils develop enquiring minds, as seen in the range of open-ended science experiments they created. Subject leaders systematically monitor their subjects and follow a co-ordinated approach to assessment and tracking which enables pupils to see the progress they are making, thus addressing two recommendations from the previous inspection.
- 3.6 Pupils across the school demonstrate outstanding communication skills and successfully apply these to all areas of learning. Pupils show great confidence when communicating their ideas in response to the many opportunities available for them to participate, such as drama, poetry readings and in assemblies. Lively topical conversation and role play enable pupils to gather their thoughts and present them in a coherent, persuasive manner. For example, young pupils thoughtfully improvised scenes in hospital during the Crimean War. Pupils have excellent listening skills, follow instructions carefully, and listen attentively to other people's points of view. The love of listening to stories is further embedded through craft activities such as decorating wooden spoons as book characters and staff participation in events such as the 'Masked Reader' event for World Book Day during lockdown. Pupils communicate clearly in writing and write effectively for a number of audiences in different genres using mature vocabulary. Younger children wrote simple sentences about what they saw in the sky, making plausible attempts at spelling they did not know. Creative writing often reflects higher-order skills such as the use of imagery and personification, as seen in poignant, sensitive poetry produced by older pupils on the *Black Lives Matter* campaign.
- 3.7 Pupils' mathematical skills develop rapidly for their age and they apply their knowledge and skills successfully to other areas of learning. Children in EYFS accurately counted backwards from ten as they eagerly waited for their rockets to launch. Older pupils are competent in a wide range of mathematical concepts, including place value beyond a thousand and complex fractions, and are proficient in applying knowledge to solve compound problems. Less able pupils used tablets and headphones effectively in work on mixed numbers, which enabled them to practise the concepts at an appropriate rate. Pupils successfully apply their mathematical knowledge to other subjects. Children in EYFS carefully estimated the number of bricks they would need to build a tower in construction club. Younger pupils confidently used block graphs to present a variety of data and in science, whilst older pupils were able to work out average speeds in an experiment on friction using toy cars.
- 3.8 Pupils of all ages and abilities develop excellent technological skills which they usefully employ across the curriculum. Through Digital Citizenship lessons, pupils reflect meaningfully on the uses of ICT and how to use it responsibly. By involving pupils in a research project on how ICT is used in other subjects, senior leaders ensure that computing is seen as a valuable tool to support learning. Children in EYFS confidently manipulate the interactive white board and manipulate simple programmable robots to make them move. Younger pupils enthusiastically use tablets to take pictures of spring in their science

lessons and mapping software to explore aerial views of European cities in topic. Older pupils are skilled in using presentational and desktop publishing software, as seen in their topic work display of the circulatory system. Older pupils eagerly explained how digital leaders perform important tasks around school such as in assembly and music lessons.

- 3.9 Effective study skills are well-developed in pupils of all ages. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, almost all pupils agreed that the school helps them to learn and make progress. Open-ended research tasks carefully structured by skilled staff allow pupils to hypothesise on what might happen and test this with experiments they design. Younger children accurately predicted what would happen when water was added to an effervescent tablet as they sought to power their rockets, suggesting it would 'fizz', 'give off bubbles' and 'explode'. Older pupils avidly followed their own trails of investigation as they constructed an experiment to show that light is energy. They wisely predicted what would happen to egg shells when soaked in different liquids in an experiment to simulate the effect food has on teeth. In literacy they were able to analyse the syllable pattern in a poem, and use this as a template for their own writing. The tangible open culture created by senior leaders for pupils to follow their own lines of investigation enthuses pupils who confidently set about drawing on a wide range of resources, including ICT, to help them pursue their study.
- 3.10 Pupils of all ages and abilities have extremely positive attitudes to learning. They are aware that through hard work, resilience and regular reflection they will learn and improve. They are eager to tackle their tasks and thrive within a culture of praise and encouragement. The youngest children concentrated hard to write numbers and sounds they heard using individual white boards. Older pupils showed great concentration in maths and Latin, fully engrossed in their written tasks. Pupils take a strong lead in their learning through motivating staff inviting them to question what it is they want to find out from new topics. Pupils are adept at working collaboratively, and can articulate the benefits of being able to bounce ideas off of each other. They feel good about their work even when mistakes have been made because of the constructive marking and helpful personal feedback. Consequently, they feel confident to take risks in their learning, and to approach a problem from different angles in order to solve it. Pupils show great initiative and determination to see an idea come to life, for example when they independently set up their own lunchtime card club and a school magazine.
- 3.11 The attainment of pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those who have English as an additional language (EAL) and those who are more able is very high. Individual needs are catered for by sensitive, caring teaching in the early years, enabling all children to make significant progress. Almost all achieve the expected learning outcomes by the time they finish Reception. Pupils achieve excellent results in competitive entry examinations to state grammar or independent senior schools, with all successfully gaining places at their school of choice and some pupils being awarded scholarships. Pupils' attainment and progress is strong because teaching addresses their individual needs and preferred learning styles, and appropriate targets are set through the school's internal assessment and tracking system.
- 3.12 Encouraged by enthusiastic, energetic staff, pupils achieve a high level of success in a limited range of national and regional competitions such as those in computing, spelling and mathematics. All pupils participate successfully in the wide range of sporting activities provided, and show great pride when representing the school in competitive matches. Pupils have proudly represented the school in individual sports such as swimming, gymnastics and cross-country. They achieve commendable results in instrumental examinations, many achieving merits or distinctions, and grow in confidence through regular participation in school plays, concerts and performances in assembly. Governors and senior leaders ensure that all pupils' successes outside the classroom, whether as individuals or teams, are warmly celebrated by the whole school community. The busy programme of extra-curricular activities and house competitions ensures all pupils feel great pride and experience success across the full range of school activities.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND, EAL and the more able, have high levels of self-knowledge, self-discipline and resilience. Senior leaders have successfully created a culture whereby pastoral care is at the heart of what the school does, and regular reflection on pupils' personal development ensures emotional needs are well supported. In the questionnaires, parents wholeheartedly agreed that the school helps children to be confident and independent. Younger children develop their self-confidence and take calculated risks through the many and varied activities provided by attentive staff who are focused on following the child's particular interests. Pupils develop the ability to identify their emotions when words are hard to find through strategies such as 'mood stars'. In activities such as 'I am me' younger children say their likes and dislikes which helps establish their identity. Older pupils are able to undertake leadership roles responsibly, perform to an audience and to represent the school which contributes to them feeling extremely well prepared all-round for the next stage of their education.
- 3.15 Pupils make sensible choices and are fully aware that the decisions they make will impact directly on their own success and well-being. Open-ended questioning by staff in the early years carefully guides and encourages children to think about the choices they make. Older pupils think seriously about decision-making in society and understand the impact of their actions on others, such as recycling waste products and purchasing unnecessary items such as costumes for book week and plastic Christmas decorations. Through the life skills curriculum and the constant message from caring staff, pupils are acutely aware that everyone has a choice in the decisions they make. Pupils know how to use their free time productively and to interact positively with technology.
- 3.16 Pupils of all ages develop a good awareness of spirituality. They understand the need for tolerance in a multi-faith society and are eager to find out about other religions, particularly those of their peers. They were able to explain how some people worship more than one God, and retold stories from other faiths, for example the birth of Brahman on a lotus flower. Pupils develop a deep appreciation of the non-material aspects of life through art, literature and topic work, and benefit from being given time and space to contemplate. The youngest children reflect with wonder and surprise as they investigate the many small world activities and explore the outdoor learning environment. Study of the Crimean War allowed younger pupils to empathise with people nursing the sick in war-torn communities. Older pupils said that singing in three-part harmony made them appreciate the entreatings of *Imagine* all the more as the music lifted the lyrics to a higher level.
- 3.17 Pupils across the school show a keen sense of fair play and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They appreciate the need for rules at school and in society generally and speak highly of the golden rules that guide their behaviour, leading to a happy and vibrant school environment. Children in EYFS understand clear codes of behaviour which enable them to work happily together: they take turns to speak, freely share their equipment and offer help to each other, as seen in construction club and after school care. The behaviour of all pupils is exemplary. They talk fondly of the excellent role models provided by the dedicated staff. Parents stated unanimously in the questionnaires that the school deals with all types of bullying effectively. Assemblies and special events such as anti-bullying week ensure that positive behaviour is regularly reinforced. Pupils state that the house point system is highly effective in encouraging them to aspire to kind, thoughtful behaviour, and the 'traffic light' system of sanctions is clearly understood and respected, though seldom used.
- 3.18 Pupils develop strong social awareness through the many opportunities provided for teamwork, problem-solving and collaboration across year groups. The tangible family ethos of the school contributes strongly to their social development. They acquire a strong awareness of what makes relationships work. For example, younger pupils were encouraged to think about what might contribute to a happy and friendly environment and suggested qualities such as loving, honest, polite, helpful, smiley, playful, kind, friendly and thoughtful. The youngest children spoke positively of how they like working in pairs and small groups so they can share ideas, and they were observed working collaboratively as they explored space-related activities. They burst with pride when given important

roles such as the daily helper. Older pupils stated they felt the school actively promotes high levels of social awareness through the positions of responsibility they are given. They talked excitedly about house days and competitions that enable them to collaborate on the challenges they are set and work effectively in mixed-age teams to achieve common goals. Pupils learn to negotiate and when disputes occur they are encouraged to work out problems for themselves. They comment that they are taught to consider the other person's point of view.

- 3.19 Pupils develop strong leadership skills and contribute positively to the school community through performing the wide range of duties they undertake. Younger pupils thrive on the class responsibilities, and the older pupils conscientiously perform the various roles they are assigned, such as house captains, eco-captains, digital leaders and school council members. They maturely explain that in undertaking such roles they are contributing to the school community, and stress the importance of listening to others. For example, pupils are invited to suggest ways the school can be improved by adding to a list on the school council noticeboard.
- 3.20 Although activities have been curtailed during lockdown, pupils talk animatedly about how they help the local community through 'litter picks' and singing at the local home for the elderly. They enthusiastically join in activities to raise money for local and national charities, such as a sponsored walk and swim, and support a school in Uganda. They appreciate being able to choose which charities to support, and occasionally run one-off events to support charities of their own choice for specific reasons. Sensitive staff ensure pupils fully understand the reasons why certain groups of people need help through assemblies and class discussion.
- 3.21 Pupils show great respect for those of different faiths, backgrounds and traditions, and value the diversity within their tightly-knit school community. School governors have supported the anti-discrimination initiative run by the school leadership, which impacts positively on pupils' cultural understanding. Pupils are very accepting of each other and warmly celebrate other cultures, genuinely seeing no difference between the ethnic groups represented in the school. Special events such as Cultural Diversity Week enable pupils of all ages to appreciate each other's differences through a range of meaningful activities such as story-telling, dance, hand-painting and food tasting. Such events are warmly supported by parents who are invited into school to share their backgrounds. Pupils were very supportive of their peers who chose to fast during Eid. Pupils talk with admiration about people who have become famous despite a disability such as Beethoven, Evelyn Glennie and Stevie Wonder. They learn to empathise with disabled people though participating in wheelchair basketball and boccia, whilst raising money for disabled sports.
- 3.22 Children in EYFS consistently follow simple rules that are clearly embedded in their daily routines which enable them to stay safe, such as not running in the classroom, washing hands and holding scissors correctly. Older pupils recount the many ways in which they are able to keep physically fit through sport, and appreciate the specialist teaching that enables pupils of all abilities to be appropriately challenged. They are particularly proud of making a fitness video during lockdown which won a local competition. They can explain how a vaccination works, the elements of a healthy diet and the importance of a good night's sleep. Pupils of all ages can explain how to stay safe online, a key part of their digital citizenship programme. They appreciate the many ways in which the school ensures that they stay mentally healthy. Through the personal, social, and health education (PSHE) curriculum, assemblies, special events like 'Hello Yellow' day for mental health and regular circle time, pupils have the opportunity to coherently express their thoughts and feelings. They have great affection for all staff at the school who are quick to listen to their concerns and provide emotional support, often through picking up a message in the worry box or having a private chat in the sanctuary.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews 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 an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Dr Wendy Bowring	Reporting inspector
Mr Danny Boswell	Compliance team inspector (Bursar, HMC and IAPS school)
Mr Alex McCullough	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)