



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Oakfield Preparatory School

November 2022

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School's Details

School	Oakfield Preparatory School			
DfE number	208/6109			
Registered charity number	270901			
Address	Oakfield Preparatory School 125-128 Thurlow Park Road West Dulwich London SE21 8HP			
Telephone number	020 8670 4206			
Email address	office@oakfield.dulwich.sch.uk			
Head	Mrs Moyra Thompson			
Proprietor	Education Development Trust			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	315			
	EYFS	69	Years 1 to 6	246
Inspection dates	22 to 24 November 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Oakfield Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school, established in 1888 in four former Victorian town houses. It is owned and governed by Education Development Trust. The current head has been in post since April 2019, having joined the school in January 2010 as head of pre-prep. The pre-prep department includes the Nursery, Lower Foundation, Upper Foundation and Year 1. The prep department accommodates Years 2 to 6.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection the school has undergone a programme of refurbishment.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to teach pupils to be independent learners with enquiring minds in an exciting, all-round and forward-thinking educational experience where they can discover and develop their unique passions and talents. It endeavours to promote independence, resilience and a willingness to take on new challenges, encouraging pupils to be the very best that they can be and take their place in the world as kind, articulate, thoughtful and innovative contributors to society.

About the pupils

- 1.4 The majority of pupils come from the local area. Nationally standardised test data indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 64 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include expressive and receptive language difficulties, ADHD, ASD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other conditions. Of these, 43 receive additional specialist help. Nine pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for five pupils. The school has identified 68 pupils as being the most able, and the curriculum is modified for them, and for 48 others for their talent in sport and the creative arts.

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 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.

Key findings

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

- Pupils show high levels of achievement in relation to their abilities and make strong progress across all ages.
- Pupils have an excellent attitude towards their learning and work with high levels of engagement in their lessons.
- Pupils are confident learners and are willing to take risks to further extend their understanding.
- Pupils display an outstanding ability to work collaboratively in their lessons.
- Pupils have excellent communication skills.

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

- Pupils have an extremely well-developed sense of self-belief and self-confidence whilst showing consideration to others.
- Pupils show very well-developed social skills, including the ability to collaborate effectively with their peers.
- Pupils are extremely well-mannered and show a high degree of respect for their school rules and take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils show high levels of respect for one another and celebrate the diversity within their school and the wider community.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enhance the outcomes for the most able pupils by challenging them further to demonstrate and apply their higher order thinking 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 Across all ages pupils make rapid progress and attain high levels of achievement in relation to their abilities. EYFS children make an excellent start to their education as almost all children reach expected levels of development by the end of Reception. The attainment of pupils in the prep school

maintains this excellent start with standardised scores in English and mathematics above national age-related expectations. This can be attributed to school leaders' rigorous individual tracking process which highlights areas of strength and weakness and identifies the pupils' next steps in learning. Pupils with SEND also make significant progress from their starting points. Detailed planning, effective support and comprehensive support strategies enable them to make high levels of progress alongside their peers. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire confirmed that they feel well prepared for senior school. This view is supported by the strong success in senior school entrance examinations and scholarship awards.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages are curious and interested learners, demonstrating excellent attitudes to learning, with extremely strong engagement and motivation. Pupils' positive attitudes result from the way staff genuinely care about their pupils and actively model enthusiasm and mutual respect. The quality of relationships between pupils and staff and between pupils themselves strongly contributes to this achievement. Pupils show strong initiative and great independence in their learning as well as a strong sense of togetherness, with awareness that success comes through collaboration and supporting one another. Pupils work with focus and determination when working independently and in collaboration. Children in the EYFS frequently work and play in pairs and groups, as was observed in the game of 'Sounds Bingo'. The partners exhibited high levels of concentration and worked effectively together. The school's six core values with associated characteristics of courage, creativity, curiosity, collaboration, care and challenge, known as the '6Cs' are actively promoted and embedded in the school culture and ethos. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors highlighted the number of 'wow' moments they had in lessons. Leaders' and staff's high expectations of behaviour and pupils' own wish to do well, help them develop excellent habits for learning. For example, pupils in Year 1 confidently explained that they have to persevere, keep trying, be resilient and learn from their mistakes as that helps them get better.
- 3.7 Pupils exhibit excellent knowledge, skills and understanding. Music, drama and English are of a high standard across the school and pupils demonstrate the ability to perform competently through concerts, competitions and productions. This is because leaders provide effective opportunities to compose, perform and appreciate all genres of music. In Year 4 drama, pupils worked in a constructive manner, confidently sharing ideas on dramatic intention and interpretation to produce a tableau. In work scrutiny, older pupils were observed proficiently adding lyrics to music and layering recordings using technology to produce an outstanding final performance. Throughout the school pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement with scientific ideas. Pupils in Year 1 were keen to share their interesting facts about different animals, identifying how these skills supported their hunting abilities in order to survive. In Year 5, pupils' excellent collaborative skills ensured a suitable hypothesis and test question to investigate effects of air resistance. The pupils demonstrated outstanding understanding of the effects of air resistance. However, some pupils were not suitably challenged in follow-up activities. Pupils' skills and understanding in art and Spanish are particularly strong. Year 5 pupils use their excellent linguistic skills to add, subtract and multiply two-digit numbers from numerical words written in Spanish well above age-related expectations. In art, Year 3 pupils demonstrated excellent skills when using perspective, proportion, position and shading to enhance the overall quality of their sketches. Most parents agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress. Inspection evidence supports this view.
- 3.8 Pupils' communication skills are excellent. The school actively promotes and empowers pupil voice and as a result the pupils feel secure in taking risks, speaking out and voicing their thoughts, ideas and opinions. For example, EYFS verbalise their thoughts and respond to effective questioning and encouragement by adults in their regular contributions to show and tell sessions. Year 6 pupils display mature understanding when discussing the most appropriate vocabulary, such as describing civilised as the 'inverse of savage'. Pupils are excellent listeners, digesting and respecting the thoughts of their peers, as was observed during assembly. Early literacy skills develop quickly due to the well-structured teaching of the relationship between letters and sounds, enabling children to develop secure pre-reading and writing skills. Children in Reception build on this strong foundation

with creative writing and apply their skills effectively in their work and topic books. Older pupils' writing is descriptive and detailed, using a variety of genres and techniques to add dramatic effect or suspense, such as in Year 4 pupils' Haiku poems. The most able pupils demonstrate excellent independent writing skills using powerful adjectives. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors talked about the many opportunities they are given to develop their communication skills and how proud they feel of their achievements.

- 3.9 Pupils of all ages develop strong skills in numeracy. EYFS children confidently sort shapes from smallest to largest and identify more complex shapes. Year 6 pupils showed excellent mathematical skills by relating geometrical properties of shapes to the difference in co-ordinates of each vertex. Work scrutiny demonstrated excellent progression of skills across all groups. Pupils consistently respond to written feedback in order to improve and show a high degree of numeracy in their written calculation methods. However, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to ensure the highest mathematical outcomes. Pupils make good use of their mathematical skills in other lessons such as science, applying their understanding of averages, frequency tables and graphical representations well.
- 3.10 Pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) is excellent. They demonstrate high levels of confidence and skill in their use of a wide range of digital technologies, applying these skills to strong effect in their learning across the curriculum. In the EYFS, children use programmable toys and mobile electronic devices, using simple computer applications to support their learning. For example, Nursery children used the interactive whiteboard to develop their mark making ability. In discussions, pupils spoke about their experiences of coding, identifying linking useful skills such as the de-bugging code and how this supported their ability to answer some non-verbal reasoning questions. Pupils use presentation software successfully and make use of a wide variety of resources and applications. For example, Year 1 pupils successfully utilised an art programme, using the mouse to draw pictures of their favourite animals. The development of pupils' competency in ICT is supported by the trustees and leaders' investment in high quality digital resources to develop their skills.
- 3.11 Pupils at all ages concentrate, focus and behave well and this creates an excellent learning environment where pupils can practise and develop their study skills in a positive manner. Pupils are keen to openly share their ideas in order to extend their understanding. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school equips their children with the team-working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life. Year 2 pupils used a high level of understanding of mathematical problem solving and collaboration to achieve success when calculating cost and change with different denominations and exchanging of coins. Pupils are confident to draw information from a range of sources, including the internet, dictionaries, subject artefacts and information books. When researching Viking artefacts, Year 4 pupils displayed good independent research skills to evaluate, synthesise and extract information from pages and a selection of pictures of artefacts. The school meets its aims to enable pupils to become independent learners with enquiring minds. Pupils apply study techniques demonstrated by their teachers with enthusiasm to enhance their own personal learning. However, the most able pupils do not always strongly apply their higher order thinking skills because some lessons do not provide them with the opportunity to do so.
- 3.12 Pupils' sporting and creative endeavours demonstrate success both individually and collaboratively. Pupils' sporting successes have included taking part in a variety of national competitions ranging from netball, hockey, five-a-side football, gymnastics and athletics, producing several finalists and champions along the way. In the performing arts, pupils have achieved success in national competitions for best musical and took part in the 'Shakespeare for Schools Drama Festival' 2022. Pupils also take part in many productions, written and performed by pupils as well as achieving examination success in a range of musical instruments. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have an extremely well-developed sense of self-belief and self-confidence whilst also showing consideration towards others. Children in the EYFS are confident in their environment, working together and discussing ideas. Pupils are willing to 'have a go' and learn from their endeavours. They persevere with and finish tasks, demonstrating a high level of resilience from an early age. For example, Year 6 pupils demonstrated excellent understanding on the importance of perseverance and resilience to achieve success while linking this approach and commitment to other areas of school life. Older pupils show a high level of understanding, such as when self-assessing their English writing skills. This is because teaching provides pupils with opportunities to analyse their own work to improve. Pupils develop confidence in their abilities. Those who spoke to the inspectors said that they appreciate that the support given to them by their teachers and peers. The '6Cs' underpin the school culture and ethos that enables excellent pupil personal development and self-understanding. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their children to be confident and independent.
- 3.15 Pupils exhibit outstanding respect and empathy for one another. They show significant tolerance and understanding of those from diverse backgrounds and traditions and see this as something to celebrate. Pupils instinctively show appreciation for each other's differences, and this underpins the positive relationships between pupils of all ages. For example, in the EYFS when discussing those taking part in the Paralympics, children demonstrated understanding of the importance that everyone tries to be the best they can possibly be whatever their circumstances. Throughout the school, pupils of all backgrounds and cultures enjoy very constructive and inclusive relationships in a well-integrated community where they recognise the many ways people can demonstrate diversity. Through thematic work, assemblies and special days, such as celebrations of different religious festivals, pupils grow in their understanding of living in a multi-cultural society. They are able to see the value of tenets of different faiths, such as forgiveness in Christianity, or intentional rightful choice in Buddhism. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors declared that they come from lots of different backgrounds and said that pupils all respect each other and do not judge each other.
- 3.16 The pupils' understanding and confidence in their decision-making ability are excellent. Children in the EYFS exhibit strong levels of independence in responding to the decision making opportunities offered from a very early age. For example, in Reception, children collectively vote for the book they would like to read by placing a conker in front of their selection and identifying their choice. Older pupils are aware that the decisions they make can have a lasting effect on their future. They show strong empathy towards their peers and reflect on how their decisions might impact upon those around them. Pupil voice is very strong at the school, creating an environment that empowers pupils to make meaningful and impactful decisions. The school council is very effective in its decision-making abilities and is held in high esteem by pupils and staff alike. Whether it is through the '6Cs', charitable fundraising, in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) or religious studies (RS) lessons, pupils often discuss what is the right choice and teachers give them the responsibility and freedom to make important decisions. Year 6 pupils also take responsibility for their learning as they select the modules of their choice to study as part of the 'Oakfield Diploma' activities. In discussions, Year 6 pupils also felt they had to carefully consider their choice of senior school.
- 3.17 Pupils show a highly developed sense of moral responsibility. All those who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school expects pupils to behave well. Pupils treat each other with a strong sense of respect. The conduct and consideration of the pupils is excellent. They work effectively together and enjoy roles of responsibility from a very young age. For example, EYFS children eagerly help to tidy up their classroom. The strong and respectful relationships between staff and pupils allow the older pupils to become role models to those around them. Pupils of all ages develop a clear understanding of right from wrong and that all actions have consequences and confidently refer to the golden rules in each classroom. They have a strong sense of responsibility for

their own behaviour, understanding that their behaviour affects others. Pupils value, appreciate and respect the rules and ethos of the school and their interactions are based upon a dignified sense of respect for each and every member of their school community and the wider society.

- 3.18 The pupils show excellent social development and collaboration skills. For example this could be learning to take turns both in activities and sharing of resources in Nursery or working together as a team to discuss new initiatives to improve the school as a member of the school council. This is underpinned by the '6Cs' and a strong desire to work together to achieve common goals. Across all ages, there is a strong sense of togetherness and awareness that success comes through collaboration, and by celebrating and supporting each other. A culture of collaboration was evident in lessons seen, with pupils and teachers all working together as a team. Older pupils frequently help younger pupils, and the strong pupil voice empowers pupils to work together to achieve common goals. Lessons are often designed to include collaborative tasks, and clubs such as Eco-Warriors and Mini Model United Nations Club create effective and powerful teams. All parents in the questionnaire agreed that the school helps the children to develop strong teamwork and social skills.
- 3.19 Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the lives of others within the school. They look out for each other and provide support and encouragement in abundance. The pupils take their positions of responsibility seriously and the older pupils provide excellent role models for the younger ones. Pupils are enthusiastic about how they actively make changes via the 'Eco-Warriors' and school council through discussing environmental issues or having an impact on life at school. Pupils are very aware of the positive influence these decisions make in the school community. Pupils demonstrate acts of kindness throughout their form time helping each other prepare for the day and helping their teachers. There is extensive pupil charitable fundraising through school and pupil-led initiatives.
- 3.20 Pupils have a strong spiritual understanding and appreciation of non-material aspects of life. For example, in an RS lesson, all the pupils said if they were given a million pounds they would give at least half to charity, with a handful saying they would give it all away as they had no need for it. Through pupil discussions it is clear the school facilitates this by providing broad curriculum opportunities to reflect deeply, particularly in PSHE, P4C, 'Votes for School' and form time. Pupils felt that these opportunities helped them to focus and reflect on the past, the present and the future. This was evident in pupils books where they explored different aspects of spirituality, using examples from different faiths: "understanding the term forgiveness" through Christianity and Easter and using Buddhism to help make the right choices through the noble eightfold path. Pupils across the school also engage in calm and highly effective meditation sessions on a daily basis as part of PSHE and Year 6 pupils identified these sessions as time to be with themselves and to become focused. Leadership has been very successful at embedding core values such as kindness and empathy throughout all aspects of school life.
- 3.21 Pupils have a well-developed understanding of what they need to do in order to achieve a healthy body and mind. They recognise what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and the steps they can take to keep, themselves safe, due to the regular discussions in assemblies, PSHE and ICT lessons. Pupils can explain the benefits of physical exercise, the components of a healthy diet and the importance of eating a balanced lunch. In an open and affirming environment, pupils readily share their thoughts and feelings and are willing to show vulnerability and seek support for their mental wellbeing. In discussions, pupils confidently identified strategies they use in times of stress and anxiety, giving them the opportunity to relax and redirect, ready for what lay ahead.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended 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 Julie Lowe	Reporting inspector
Mrs Joanna Leach	Compliance team inspector (Headteacher, IAPS and ISA school)
Mr James Polansky	Team inspector (Headteacher, IAPS and ISA school)
Mrs Allison Skipper	Team inspector (Head of pre-prep and nursery, IAPS school)