

## School inspection report

7 to 9 November 2023 and 10 January 2024

# Barnardiston Hall Preparatory School

Haverhill  
Suffolk  
CB9 7TG

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and the proprietor fulfil the school's aim to provide a secure and stimulating family environment that enables pupils to achieve their potential and leave the school as confident and caring individuals.
2. Leaders effectively monitor teaching. As a result, pupils from the early years engage positively in lessons and activities under the guidance of their teachers. Appropriate challenge that caters for the range of abilities on entry means that pupils make good progress. Most children reach the early learning goals by the end of Reception. Analysis of progress made by groups of pupils is inconsistent because new methods of assessment in the early years are not fully embedded.
3. Leaders use an effective framework for assessment to monitor and track pupils' progress in the prep school. Teachers utilise the data arising from this framework to identify individual need and implement appropriate next steps in pupils' learning. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support and encouragement through early identification of need, timely and appropriate actions in response and close liaison with parents by teachers and leaders.
4. Boarding leaders effectively oversee the management and development of boarding. Residential staff communicate frequently and appropriately with each other and with teachers. This means that all relevant staff understand and respond to boarders' needs, which promotes their wellbeing.
5. Leaders provide a secure and stimulating environment for pupils in which they enjoy a wide range of educational, physical and artistic opportunities. As a result, pupils develop confidence and resilience and increasingly assess risks for themselves.
6. Staff supervise pupils effectively and leaders act to mitigate potential risks to pupils. Risks relating to the nature of the site remain under scrutiny by leaders. Pupils feel safe during the evenings and in the outdoor areas.
7. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing. They collaboratively self-evaluate to monitor the effectiveness of policies. Leaders, teachers and the pastoral team effectively promote the wellbeing of boarders and positive relationships between day and boarding pupils.
8. The proprietor oversees the effective implementation of suitable health and safety procedures. Leaders take due precautions to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards.
9. Leaders train staff appropriately in safeguarding. Staff receive regular safeguarding updates and are knowledgeable about reporting and recording systems. There is an appropriate safeguarding policy which the proprietor reviews annually. Some procedures, although well understood by staff, needed clarification in the documentation, which was amended during the inspection. Safeguarding leaders are vigilant in following agreed protocols.

### **The extent to which the school meets the Standards:**

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

### **Recommended next steps**

Leaders should:

- Further develop the use of data to analyse progress by children in the early years.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The proprietor, leaders and managers demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively across all areas of school life. They effectively promote the school's aim that all pupils enjoy a wide range of educational, physical and artistic opportunities, so that they become confident and caring individuals, who are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
11. The proprietor and leaders effectively develop policies, and leaders and managers oversee and implement the policies appropriately, for example through effective and thorough keeping and monitoring of records of health and safety requirements. Staff are suitably trained, qualified and informed, so they competently carry out their duties.
12. The risk assessment policy guides staff to identify and mitigate potential risks in the school environment, including in the early years and in boarding. Leaders effectively manage potential risks relating to the premises and educational and residential trips. The expansive school grounds afford pupils opportunities to develop independence and resilience which allows them to learn to assess and manage risk themselves. The proprietor and leaders have recently reviewed and mitigated potential risks associated with the site and continue to keep these under review.
13. As a result of teachers' understanding of their subjects and their consideration of the needs of individual pupils, pupils thrive academically and make good progress across the curriculum.
14. Regular and effective communication between staff means that the needs of individual boarders are identified and shared appropriately. Boarding staff have the required skills and knowledge and fulfil their roles effectively. They receive regular training on general boarding issues as well as those pertinent to the particular nature of the school's boarding arrangements. Boarders, although small in number, are integrated well into the school community and relationships between them and day pupils are good.
15. Boarding leaders provide a statement on boarding principles and practice; staff are suitably knowledgeable, and appropriate risk assessments, including a policy for major incidents, are in place.
16. Leaders provide regular detailed reports to parents and they publish all required information on the school's website.
17. The proprietor and leaders deal with any complaints promptly and in accordance with published timescales. Formal complaints are recorded appropriately.
18. The proprietor and leaders effectively support and promote accessibility for pupils, including for pupils who have SEND.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

All the relevant Standards are met.

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders have developed an effective curriculum that covers a wide range of areas. Pupils engage enthusiastically with these and make good progress within each academic year and over their time in the school. Staff employ a variety of strategies that develop independence and responsibility in learning, including engaging questioning techniques, challenging pupils appropriately, and providing feedback that reinforces pupils' understanding.
20. Children in the early years have a wide range of ability. All make progress in the early years and most reach the early learning goals by the end of Reception. The progress of groups is not always fully analysed. A varied programme of learning opportunities is tailored to children's individual needs and is updated frequently. Staff liaise regularly with parents about children's development so that their learning can be reinforced at home. Reports to parents are detailed and contain clear advice about how to support children to make further progress.
21. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Results of standardised assessments show that pupils, including those who have SEND, make good progress, successfully developing their skills and knowledge. A few pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), and they make good progress. Teachers maintain respectful relationships with pupils, and the mutual trust between staff and pupils supports pupils to attain well. Teachers have high expectations and provide appropriate challenge which contributes to the development of pupils' higher order thinking skills and their ability to work independently.
22. Teachers plan lessons well so that pupils make progress in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils understand how teachers' feedback helps them to make progress. They are typically engaged by the lesson activities and interested in their learning. Staff support boarders well with their academic studies.
23. Pupils enjoy the wide range of after-school activities and the sporting, musical and performance opportunities provided, which range from cookery lessons to a programme of cultural and adventure activities. These effectively build and develop life skills and promote pupils' wellbeing.
24. Leaders have instituted an effective assessment and progress-tracking process. Most teachers use the information that this provides to adapt the curriculum to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils accordingly make good progress. In the early years the use of data is still to be developed to support judgements of children's progress at this age. Pupils who have SEND are identified through assessment data and regular discussion by staff in weekly meetings. They have Individualised Education Plans and 'pupil passports', which are produced collaboratively by staff, parents and pupils. These provide targets for pupils and clear guidance for those in teaching roles. They contribute to the good progress made by pupils who have SEND.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation:**

All the relevant Standards are met.

## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

25. Leaders successfully encourage pupils' participation in a wide range of physical education and personal development activities. Staff teach pupils about physical health through varied competitive sport and extra-curricular activities, such as cricket, hockey, netball and rugby. These, together with the 'Barnardiston Oomph' programme, develop pupils' resilience and risk-taking.
26. Staff actively promote pupils' mental health and wellbeing, for example by fostering pupils' understanding of their individual strengths and weaknesses and their development of supportive relationships with their peers. As a result, pupils work together and treat each other with respect and care. The effective delivery of the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme, reflective assemblies and creative activities reinforce the development of pupils' self-awareness, resilience and self-confidence.
27. Pupils feel secure talking to both teaching and non-teaching staff about any concerns. Pupils engage confidently with adults and with peers, such as when presenting their work, and participating in choir and dance performances. In the family atmosphere of the boarding house, boarders confidently share any concerns with the residential staff.
28. The PSHE programme successfully encourages pupils to respect others, including those with protected characteristics. The content of the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is suitable and age-appropriate. As a result, pupils talk openly, knowledgeably and confidently about the matters covered in the programme. They have a good understanding of the importance of self-care, self-regulation and support for others.
29. Teachers set clear expectations and provide encouragement in a constructive atmosphere. This is reflected in pupils' positive relationships with one another. Pupils learn to consider the choices they make and develop conflict resolution skills. Leaders effectively monitor behavioural incidents and respond appropriately to any bullying incidents.
30. The proprietor and school leaders monitor health and safety procedures effectively. Staff are suitably trained and demonstrate appropriate knowledge. Leaders pay due regard to the comfort of the pupils and age-appropriate furniture and furnishings mean that boarders feel welcomed and secure in the boarding houses. The school premises and accommodation are maintained to an appropriate standard and boarding accommodation is of suitable quality.
31. The proprietor maintains admission and attendance registers as required. Leaders monitor any patterns of absence and act effectively to minimise and reduce any low attendance.
32. There is an appropriate supervision policy, and arrangements are subject to regular review. First aid provision is effective, including during boarding time. Pupils have regular fire evacuation drills including during boarding times, and confidently explain what to do during these. There are helpful induction processes for new boarders and boarders have daily time to use their phones and contact parents. Boarding leaders formally meet termly with boarders to seek their views. In a recent meeting, for example, water temperature and bedtimes were discussed. Leaders consider and respond appropriately to matters raised by boarders.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing:**

All the relevant Standards are met.



## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

33. Pupils of all ages distinguish between right and wrong and understand the role they play in contributing to the school's cohesive and positive culture. Pupils, informed both by teaching and by how staff model behaviour, are kind to each other. They develop the ability to accept responsibility for their actions and learn how to resolve disagreements and differences.
34. The curriculum effectively promotes fundamental British values, such as those of respect for democracy, the rule of law and British institutions. Pupils understand and reflect the positive values promoted by leaders and teachers and are prepared well for life in British society.
35. Under the guidance of boarding staff, boarders relate well to and support each other. Younger boarders appreciate the care shown to them by older boarders.
36. Pupils treat each other respectfully and collaborate well when working together in lessons, problem-solving and supporting each other. Younger children, for example, showed care for others during games in the classroom, and when looking after dolls and providing for their needs.
37. In response to the opportunities provided by leaders, pupils contribute positively to the school and wider communities. Pupils develop their understanding about British traditions while supporting the local community. They lay wreaths at Remembrance services, perform at the turning on of Christmas lights, provide entertainment at a local community support group and raise money for local food banks. Pupils develop their cultural awareness and contribute as global citizens in various ways, including through a residential trip to India and by raising funds to support orphanages abroad.
38. Through the curriculum pupils explore environmental topics and develop their understanding of how they can have a positive impact on society and the environment. Their self-confidence is boosted as they take an active part in caring for animals in the model farm. Leaders encourage pupils to show initiative, for example responding positively to the suggestion of the pupil consultation committee in the recent purchase of a trampoline.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society:

All the relevant Standards are met.

## Safeguarding

39. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are appropriate. Leaders work effectively with external agencies when concerns arise. Any referrals to children’s services, the local authority designated officer and the police are made in a timely manner. Well maintained and suitable safeguarding records show that any reported safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly and appropriately.
40. Leaders train staff and volunteers in safeguarding as they join the school and this training is updated at regular intervals. Those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities receive advanced training suitable for their role. Staff are knowledgeable in child protection procedures, including those relating to online safety and the potential risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Staff, including those in boarding, understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern in school and are alert to the need to monitor pupils’ wellbeing. Pupils, including boarders, are confident to communicate with staff about any concerns that they might have.
41. Staff understand and implement effectively the school’s safeguarding policies and processes. They understand risk in the context of a boarding environment.
42. Leaders oversee safer recruitment checks for all staff, volunteers and governors as required and a suitable single central record of appointments is kept.
43. Governors maintain effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding:**

All the relevant Standards are met.

## The quality of the early years foundation stage in the registered early years provision

### Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

44. The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is good.
45. Leaders and staff use their experience and understanding of child development to plan a curriculum that meets the needs, interests and developmental stages of each child in the setting. This curriculum successfully promotes the children's development in the areas of their learning.
46. Children who have SEND are well supported. They and other groups of children, including those who speak EAL, make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. On occasion, leaders' evaluation of provision does not ensure that teaching identifies children's next steps in learning.
47. Leaders effectively oversee how staff care for the personal and emotional development of the children. In consequence, the children demonstrate that they feel safe, secure and happy. Relationships formed between the children and their key people are strong and positive.
48. All requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare are fully met. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to protect children and keep them safe. Robust procedures are in place and are regularly monitored by leaders and managers.
49. Recommendations from the previous inspection are met.

### Quality of education

50. The quality of education is good.
51. The broad and well-balanced curriculum meets statutory requirements. It provides a wide range of experiences for every child in the setting. Curriculum planning is based on the staff's understanding of each child's level of development, individual needs and interests.
52. The secure knowledge displayed by staff of the way in which babies and young children learn and develop means that content, sequencing and progression in the areas of learning are secure. Staff have consistently high expectations for the children in their care. As a result, they provide children with stimulating experiences that form a solid foundation on which to build their future learning. The homely environment provides all children with a wide range of high quality resources and experiences, which they use successfully to consolidate and deepen their knowledge and skills.
53. During routine activities, staff reinforce and develop children's social skills. Children listen attentively to and participate with enjoyment in stories, nursery rhymes and songs, repeating words and phrases modelled by staff. This successfully increases their vocabulary.
54. Regular assessments, are tracked against curriculum milestones, so that each child's progress is monitored. Children make good progress overall. However, on occasion, children's next steps in learning are not accurately identified and their progress is less consistent.

55. Staff provide children with positive feedback through praise and encouragement, which helps them to acquire the skills and attitudes to learn effectively and prepares them for the next stage in their education.

### **Behaviour and attitudes**

56. Behaviour and attitudes are good.

57. Children show much enjoyment in their learning. Accessible high-quality resources are used by children to explore, play and make choices.

58. Children are able to maintain their focus on activities for appropriate amounts of time. As they access resources and activities, they show high levels of independence in their choices.

59. Children enjoy learning, for example smiling and moving their bodies to the music made by a xylophone. Older children who were exploring ice worked collaboratively to make a volcano, sharing ideas and trying different ways of doing things in order to achieve the desired effect. Children enjoy using familiar real-life objects in their play.

60. Children behave well and show respect for one another. They respond to gentle reminders from staff of how to share things and how to play cooperatively.

61. Leaders and teachers have an effective partnership with parents, which successfully encourages regular attendance and establishes secure routines and good habits for future learning.

### **Personal development**

62. The personal development of children is good.

63. The relationships that children have with adults around them are built on strong, secure attachments. Children demonstrate high levels of wellbeing and emotional security as a result. They are settled and happy throughout the day and have warm relationships with all staff, including their key people.

64. Staff effectively build children's language and physical skills, as a result of which children develop confidence, resilience and independence. Older children walk sensibly to the dining room for lunch, they sit at the table and confidently use knives and forks. The youngest children ably feed themselves using spoons, being supported by staff as necessary.

65. Children are encouraged to take risks and be adventurous in various activities both indoors and outdoors. For example, younger children showed confidence when negotiating the rungs of the ladder to access the slide in the indoor area.

66. All children have regular access to outside areas that are well-equipped to promote physical activity. They enjoy weekly swimming lessons, games lessons and outdoor learning in the forest area. Children are provided with a healthy diet of freshly cooked food, drinking water and fruit. Staff cater effectively to needs arising from allergies and to food preferences.

67. Staff follow effective hygiene practices so that the personal needs of the children at this age are met appropriately. They teach children to understand the importance of handwashing before eating.
68. All staff give high priority to safeguarding and are aware of their responsibilities in this area. The setting meets the requirements for safeguarding, welfare and learning and development.
69. Teachers prepare children for life in modern Britain by teaching them how to show respect, share, take turns and help each other. Staff model these behaviours and promote children's developing understanding of diversity, including through the celebration of festivals in different religions and cultures.

### Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are good.
71. The clear direction from leaders results in an enthusiastic and able staff team. Leaders and managers monitor the standards of care and curriculum to maintain high standards, so all children have appropriate learning opportunities and are happy and well cared for.
72. Staff are well-qualified and are well-supported by leaders and managers, including through regular one-to-one-supervision meetings. Staff, encouraged by leaders, attend regular professional development courses to improve and update their practice. This has a positive impact on children's learning experiences and outcomes.
73. Leaders, managers and staff have high expectations of what all children can achieve. They know the children very well and respond quickly to the needs of all children, including those who have SEND and who speak EAL. Leaders access internal specialist help when required, together with support from outside agencies. However, leaders and managers do not always evaluate practice and provision effectively.
74. Staff communicate effectively with parents. Parents report that they are appreciative of the care their children receive. Some parents would value additional information on the curriculum and how to support children's learning at home.
75. The proprietor and leaders understand the early years setting and hold leaders and managers to account for the quality of the care and education that they provide.

### Safeguarding

76. Safeguarding is effective.
77. High priority is given by the leaders and managers to the implementation of safeguarding and health and safety policies to keep children safe. The setting meets requirements, including those under the Equality Act 2010 and in relation to the 'Prevent' strategy and safer recruitment.

### Recommended next steps

- Further develop the use of data to analyse progress by children in the early years.

- Further develop the use of data to analyse progress by children in the early years.
- Provide more information about individual children's progress and development to enable parents to further support their child's learning at home.

### **The extent to which the school meets the requirements of the early years foundation stage**

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

## School details

<b>School</b>	Barnardiston Hall Preparatory School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	935/6023
<b>Registered early years</b>	EY356432
<b>Address</b>	Haverhill Suffolk CB9 7TG
<b>Website</b>	barnardiston-hall.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Colonel Keith Boulter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Gavin Sinnott
<b>Age range</b>	0 to 13
<b>Number of pupils</b>	222
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	13
<b>Number of children in the early years registered setting</b>	78
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 May 2021

## Information about the school

78. Barnardiston Hall Preparatory School is situated near Haverhill in Suffolk. It is owned and governed by the proprietor. The school is organised into three parts: The Nursery, for children aged six months to 3 years; the Pre-Prep, for pupils aged 3 to 7 years; the Prep School, for pupils aged 7 to 13 years. The present headteacher was appointed in September 2022.
79. Boarding provision is available from the age of 7. The boarding accommodation is within the main school building, split by gender on separate floors.
80. The Nursery is located within its own purpose-built accommodation. There are 77 children in the early years. The registered early years setting provides for children aged 0 to 4 years.
81. The school has identified 33 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
82. English is an additional language for 8 pupils.
83. The school states that its aims are to provide a secure and stimulating family environment in which all children can enjoy a wide range of education, physical and artistic opportunities, so that they can achieve their potential and leave the school as confident and caring individuals.

## Inspection details

**Inspection dates** 7 to 9 November 2023 and 10 January 2024

84. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days in November 2023 and one inspector visited the school on 10 January 2024. The November inspection visit was quality assured by a monitor.
85. Inspection activities included:
- lesson observations
  - discussions with pupils, including boarders, and examining samples of pupils' work
  - discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor
  - observing a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period
  - attending registration, form meetings and assemblies
  - visiting the facilities for the youngest pupils
86. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.



### **How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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