

School inspection report

13 to 15 January 2026

Elm Green Preparatory School

Parsonage Lane

Little Baddow

Chelmsford

CM3 4SU

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 foster a warm, inclusive school culture built on mutual respect. They know pupils well and understand their needs. Leaders and staff receive effective guidance and support from the proprietor.
2. Leaders provide many opportunities to talk with and listen to pupils. Pupils know how to raise concerns with trusted adults and receive prompt support and guidance. Staff consistently implement policies to promote pupils' wellbeing and safety.
3. Leaders effectively promote the school's values of listening, forgiveness, sharing, peace-making, honesty, kindness and helpfulness and care for the environment, through a carefully constructed curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE).
4. Leaders work closely with well-trained teachers, many of whom are specialists in their subjects, to deliver a high-quality education that supports pupils in their intellectual, emotional, social and physical development.
5. Leaders check that pupils learn successfully. They use detailed assessment information across all subjects to inform their teaching plans and lesson content. Teaching is well matched to pupils' needs and enables them to make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and their needs met.
6. Leaders in the early years use their knowledge of children's needs and interests to plan a stimulating curriculum that makes good use of the indoor and outdoor spaces. Children enjoy their learning and make good progress.
7. Pupils behave well, both in lessons and at play. Their interactions with each other are kind and thoughtful. Pupils understand the fair and positive behaviour policy that is implemented consistently throughout the school. All aspects of health and safety are managed effectively, including teaching pupils about online safety, so that pupils feel safe and secure.
8. Leaders ensure that pupils' physical development is promoted throughout the school. Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to refine and apply their sporting skills during lessons and at a competitive level. Leaders provide pupils with various equipment to use during their recreation times that develops pupils' physical skills. This equipment is suitably risk assessed and staff supervise pupils to use this safely.
9. Leaders' approach to the management of risk encompasses all areas of school life, including fire safety and the administration of first aid. Pupils are provided with suitable, safe premises and timely first aid, when necessary.
10. Safeguarding is effective. Leaders respond quickly and appropriately, in line with current statutory guidance. They work effectively with external agencies should concerns arise, so that pupils receive the support they need.
11. Leaders provide a wide range of information to parents about the school, its procedures and key events. At the start of the inspection, not all required inspection reports were available on the school's website. This was addressed when inspectors were on site.

12. School policies are robust and understood by staff. Leaders implement current statutory guidance correctly and effectively. However, inspectors found some errors in how staff record pupils' absence. These were remedied during the on-site inspection.

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:

- ensure that all inspection reports are available on the school's website in accordance with regulatory guidance
- ensure that staff understand how to complete registers correctly and that any administrative errors are addressed promptly.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Leadership is effective. Leaders apply their skills to work successfully and collaboratively with members of staff, ensuring the school's aims and values are understood and interwoven into all aspects of school life.
14. Leaders' consideration of pupils' wellbeing underpins the work they do. They take time to build positive relationships with pupils. Leaders are an encouraging and visible presence throughout the school. Pupils feel safe in school and have trusted adults to support them.
15. Pupils' best interests are at the heart of decision-making in the school. The proprietor ensures that leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge to evaluate what the school does well and what needs to improve. Leaders plan for improvement effectively. Their decisions consider the needs and views of pupils, parents and staff.
16. Leaders responsible for safeguarding are suitably trained to undertake their roles. The proprietor maintains robust oversight of decisions regarding safeguarding. Leaders seek and maintain effective partnerships with external agencies.
17. Leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND are appropriately qualified and understand pupils' additional needs. They work closely with external specialists to provide effective support, as required.
18. Leaders liaise effectively with the local authority for any pupil in receipt of an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Leaders provide the local authority with information related to annual reviews, additional funding and any other relevant evidence or documentation.
19. Leaders in the early years know children well. Leaders and staff develop positive relationships with children and ensure children's needs are met. Leaders and staff plan an exciting curriculum that utilises both the indoor and extensive outdoor spaces, enabling children to achieve well in the required areas of learning.
20. The proprietor ensures a robust approach to the assessment of risk throughout the school. Leaders are appropriately trained to identify possible risks and take suitable action to mitigate these. Staff are trained in risk management, so they are confident and equipped to carry out their responsibilities.
21. The school has an appropriate accessibility plan in place. This sets out how leaders plan and implement specific actions to ensure that every pupil can fully access the curriculum and the school premises, as required by the Equality Act 2010. Leaders evaluate and reconsider their approaches to ensure that their actions remain effective. Leaders promote an ethos in which differences are respected and everyone is valued.
22. Leaders have drawn up a suitable complaints policy that meets statutory requirements. This policy is implemented consistently so that complaints are handled in a timely and effective manner.
23. Leaders liaise closely with parents and teachers provide parents with feedback regarding their child's development. Parents' consultations and written reports give parents specific information about their child's progress and attainment, as well as targets to support their child's next steps. Required

policies are published on the school's website. However, at the start of the inspection, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) report for the inspection undertaken in 2018 was missing. This was rectified when inspectors were on site.

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

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

25. The curriculum is suitably balanced to ensure pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Leaders ensure that teaching plans are clear, well-implemented and support the school's aims and values. Leaders and staff promote inclusivity and have high expectations that pupils will learn successfully in all subjects.
26. Teachers plan and deliver lessons that are well matched to pupils' needs, from the youngest children in the early years to pupils in Year 6. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and a range of teaching approaches to support pupils, so that they learn new knowledge and skills and achieve well.
27. Teachers give clear explanations and teach purposeful activities to secure pupils' learning. During lessons, pupils are motivated and engaged. They enjoy opportunities to self-select their activities. They are keen to challenge themselves and improve.
28. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils' discussion and dialogue within lessons. This supports pupils' speaking and listening skills and their confidence to express their ideas and opinions. Pupils throughout the school speak confidently to a variety of audiences. In French and Latin lessons, pupils accurately refine their pronunciation and draw parallels between these languages and English.
29. In mathematics, pupils use the practical resources given to them to develop secure numeracy skills. Teachers enable pupils to practise different strategies and build their independence, perseverance and collaborative problem-solving through a range of carefully planned activities.
30. Pupils develop their scientific knowledge and enquiry skills through practical and investigative activities. Teachers encourage pupils' curiosity and exploration, with opportunities for research and experiments that deepen their understanding.
31. In the early years, children gain confidence and become articulate and engaged learners. Children are encouraged to talk and develop their language and communication skills through regular one-to-one reading sessions. During their phonics lessons, children repeat familiar sounds and learn to blend sounds to form new words. Children use a range of resources to develop and refine their early number skills. They confidently count forwards and backwards using whole numbers. They enjoy practising and sharing their written answers when learning about part and whole numbers. Children demonstrate independence and curiosity both in and outside the classroom. Teaching is well matched to children's individual needs. Children receive additional support if required, so that most children achieve the early learning goals (ELGs) by the end of Reception.
32. The systems to check and track pupils' progress are robust and well embedded. Subject leaders use a range of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress, identify any pupils who need additional support and plan the right help for them. Pupils use the feedback teachers give them to improve their work. Pupils understand how their academic targets help them to learn effectively and they work hard to achieve these.
33. Leaders identify the needs of pupils who have SEND swiftly. They put targeted support in place to address pupils' specific needs. Teachers adapt their teaching and use resources appropriately to help pupils who have SEND to learn. Teaching assistants provide suitable support during lessons and through personalised one-to-one support when needed. Leaders liaise closely with external

professionals, when required, to ensure that specialist support is implemented effectively. Pupils who have SEND make good progress.

34. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are assessed when they join the school. They make good progress in their acquisition of the English language through tailored support both inside and outside the classroom. They benefit from initiatives such as joint parent and pupil phonics sessions, led by teachers. These events guide parents to use the correct pronunciation for letters and sounds when supporting their child's learning at home.
35. The school's extra-curricular programme is popular with pupils and activities are well attended. Pupils benefit from activities that refine their sporting skills, both before and after school. Lunchtime clubs such as computing, Spanish and woodwind ensemble develop pupils' talents and interests. Pupils are keen to participate in house competitions that support their personal development and enjoyment of school life.

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

- 36. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

37. The school's PSHE curriculum is taught through carefully chosen themes that build on pupils' knowledge and understanding from Reception to Year 6. Pupils demonstrate empathy and cultural awareness. They express their opinions respectfully and offer appropriate challenge to each other. Pupils' wellbeing and emotional development are supported through established strategies such as the 'listening ear' provision, 'chatterboxes' and providing pupils with safe spaces. These initiatives support pupils to regulate their behaviour and become more independent.
38. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is implemented in line with statutory guidance and is reviewed in consultation with parents and pupils. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships, emotional wellbeing and respect for others. This contributes positively to pupils' personal development.
39. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop and discuss spirituality through religious education (RE) and PSHE lessons. Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn about different religious views through visits to places of worship, including a synagogue and a Hindu centre. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they learn during these visits and how this relates to their own beliefs and experiences.
40. Pupils learn how a healthy diet and exercise contribute to their physical and mental wellbeing. Physical education (PE) is prioritised throughout school. The PE curriculum is well structured and led by specialist staff. Pupils develop their physical skills and techniques through a wide range of inclusive activities, including weekly swimming and competitive sport. Opportunities to compete in sporting activities develop pupils' understanding of teamwork, sportsmanship and resilience.
41. In the early years, the environment is nurturing and supports children's emotional development. Well-established routines help children to feel safe and secure. Children respond positively during morning registration. They are happy and settle quickly to start the school day. Children's physical development is supported by PE lessons, weekly swimming, play-based activities and opportunities to learn in the school's outdoor area. Staff are appropriately trained in food hygiene and paediatric first aid. Leaders make sure that the required ratios for staff and children are maintained.
42. The school's values are embedded in the daily interactions of both pupils and staff. Pupils greet each other kindly and are polite when interacting with others. Older pupils show kindness to the youngest children in the early years. They check they have friends to play with during breaktimes and include them in their own games.
43. Older pupils develop their moral and social skills through the leadership opportunities they are given. This includes leading arts and crafts clubs for younger pupils and undertaking library prefect duties. Pupils in Year 6 benefit from their roles as prefects and mentors, which support them to refine their leadership and communication skills and contribute positively to their school community.
44. Pupils develop their self-awareness and emotional understanding through lessons and discussions with staff. Pupils learn to articulate their feelings and identify strategies to support their wellbeing.

Pupils who have SEND benefit from using bespoke resources and consistent intervention by teaching staff.

45. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils listen to one another, value different viewpoints and collaborate effectively. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to share their ideas and debate respectfully.
46. The behaviour policy is implemented effectively throughout the school. Pupils understand what is right and wrong and they behave well. Teachers and leaders model the school's high behaviour expectations. These expectations are reinforced through consistent routines and visual reminders. Pupils move calmly around the school site and show consideration to one another and their teachers. Staff supervise pupils vigilantly at all times of the school day to help keep them safe.
47. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of bullying because of the school's effective anti-bullying strategy. Leaders and teachers regularly raise pupils' awareness of bullying through events such as 'anti-bullying week' and during assemblies.
48. Leaders responsible for health and safety ensure that the premises are well maintained. Effective systems are in place for auditing and monitoring. All staff receive appropriate health and safety training. Staff are trained in fire safety procedures and leaders conduct regular fire drills so that pupils and staff know how to respond in an emergency.
49. First aid provision is effective and managed by suitably qualified staff. Records for the administration of medication and first aid are comprehensive and maintained accurately.
50. Leaders understand the importance of good attendance. They have developed admission and attendance registers in accordance with statutory guidance. Leaders ensure daily registers are taken in line with the timings specified in the school policy. They identify any attendance patterns and trends that cause concern and take swift action to address these. Leaders understand and implement their statutory duty to report pupils' absence to the local authority. Leaders inform the local authority promptly when pupils leave or join the school, including at non-standard transition points. During the inspection, leaders discovered some errors in how staff record pupils' absence in the attendance register. This was due to staff using an absence code incorrectly. The attendance register was amended when inspectors were on site.

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

- 51. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

52. Pupils develop their understanding of social responsibility, collaboration and economic awareness through activities that teachers plan and facilitate. At some school events, pupils run stalls using money and calculate the change given. Pupils demonstrate an emerging understanding of financial literacy through practical experiences such as cake sales and charity fundraising.
53. Pupils link their understanding of democracy, liberty, the rule of law and tolerance to the school's 'values tree'. Pupils are taught that not all people are afforded these rights. Teachers facilitate opportunities for pupils, including children in the early years, to vote, express their opinions and make decisions, including electing their own school council representatives.
54. Pupils benefit from opportunities to reflect, discuss and resolve conflict. Pupils engage meaningfully in discussions, demonstrating a growing awareness of different viewpoints and a maturity in listening to the opinions of others.
55. The school's culture of mutual respect and tolerance fosters an environment where pupils are consistently considerate and welcoming, particularly towards new classmates arriving from other schools or countries.
56. The school provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to engage with the local and wider community through donations to foodbanks and fundraising campaigns. Enrichment activities that include participating in concerts, exhibitions, cathedral services and public performances enhance pupils' sense of belonging and community involvement.
57. Pupils develop their understanding of rules, fairness and responsibility through daily routines and the school's systems. Leaders and staff use clear and consistent behaviour management strategies that support pupils to recognise the importance of rules in maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all. Pupils socialise across year groups and are taught to help each other. This, alongside leadership opportunities, equips pupils with a sense of shared responsibility and participation for the common good.
58. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Planned visits to local secondary schools help pupils to settle quickly into their new schools. Older pupils enjoy being buddies and playtime helpers for younger children. Pupils are reflective and considerate. They are keen to contribute positively beyond their school.
59. In the early years, children's personal, social and emotional development is effectively supported through the curriculum and planned activities. Children's confidence, independence and self-regulation are developed through established daily routines and consistent expectations. Children learn to take turns and listen to the thoughts and ideas of others. Children learn about democracy when they vote for their preferred options and understand that the most popular choice determines the decision made.

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

60. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

61. The school's policies and procedures to safeguard pupils fulfil statutory guidance. The proprietor ensures effective oversight of safeguarding through regular meetings with the safeguarding team and regular reviews of safeguarding policy and procedures. The proprietor checks records of concern and the actions leaders take to make sure that pupils receive the support they need and in a timely manner.
62. Members of the safeguarding team receive suitable and regular training to carry out their roles effectively. All staff are trained in the most recent guidance and understand how to report concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils in their care. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and act quickly and appropriately when needed.
63. The safeguarding team liaises efficiently with the local authority, children's services and the police. Referrals are made promptly and records of any actions or outcomes are recorded in sufficient detail.
64. Pupils are confident to share any concerns or worries with staff. These are taken seriously by staff, who make sure pupils receive the advice and help they need. Leaders have put systems in place for pupils to share their concerns and worries anonymously, to encourage pupils to always seek help and advice when needed.
65. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online. The school's internet is subject to robust filtering and monitoring systems, which are further tested by designated staff on site. The safeguarding team responds quickly and effectively when there are data breaches to ensure that pupils use the internet safely.
66. Staff involved in safer recruitment are appropriately trained. They ensure that all required pre-employment checks are completed before any adults begin to work with pupils.
67. The school maintains an accurate single central record of appointments (SCR). Appropriate oversight by the proprietor ensures this is compliant with statutory regulations.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 68. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Elm Green Preparatory School
Department for Education number	881/6017
Address	Elm Green Preparatory School Parsonage Lane Little Baddow Chelmsford Essex CM3 4SU
Phone number	01245 225230
Email address	admin@elmgreen.essex.sch.uk
Website	www.elmgreen.essex.sch.uk
Proprietor	Mrs Ann Milner
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Milner
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	165
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 February 2023

Information about the school

69. Elm Green Preparatory School is a co-educational day school located in Little Baddow, Essex. The school is owned by a limited company of which the proprietor is the sole director.
70. There are 14 children in the early years, comprising one Reception class.
71. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
72. The school has identified English as an additional language for a very small number of pupils.
73. The school states its aims are to value each individual child, instilling confidence, independence and building self-esteem. Leaders seek to provide a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment in which each child can be encouraged and challenged academically, creatively, physically and socially to achieve high standards and fulfil their individual potential. They aim to foster curiosity and a love of learning, and to work with parents to create a happy partnership, working together with trust and respect. Leaders aim to provide a caring and compassionate ethos where children can live amicably together and develop values based on Christian principles, and to promote courtesy, good manners and good behaviour.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

13 to 15 January 2026

74. A team of 3 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

75. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

76. 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**.

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