

School inspection report

31 October 2023 to 2 November 2023

Ursuline Preparatory School

Old Great Ropers
Great Ropers Lane
Warley, Essex
CM13 3HR

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'.

Contents

Summary of inspection findings	3
The extent to which the school meets the Standards	4
Recommended next steps	4
Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance	5
Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation	6
Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	7
Section 4: Pupils’ social and economic education and contribution to society.....	9
Safeguarding.....	10
School details	11
Information about the school	12
Inspection details	12

Summary of inspection findings

1. Senior leaders and governors are knowledgeable both about their responsibilities to actively promote pupils' wellbeing and how to implement strategy effectively to ensure this is the case. Leaders ensure that the wellbeing of pupils is prioritised throughout the school. Leaders and governors are well informed about the levels of progress pupils make. However, they do not always evaluate the impact of supportive strategies they put in place for pupils who require additional support. Governors and trustees are experienced in their areas of responsibility. They have a suitable awareness of risk management and utilise the skills and knowledge of the board to plan for emerging needs and issues.
2. Leaders ensure that an appropriate curriculum is provided and that most lessons are taught well. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Leaders oversee the monitoring of teaching and learning, ensuring that most teaching is effective and enables pupils to make good progress. In some lessons, teachers do not make full use of the time available to ensure all pupils are progressing as well as they can. Pupils show an excitement for learning, and they are fully engaged in their lessons. Leadership within the early years foundation stage (EYFS) is highly effective in promoting the wellbeing of children and ensuring that they engage in a fulfilling curriculum which enables them to make good progress in all areas.
3. Pupils' spiritual understanding is developed within the school's Catholic ethos which permeates school life. Staff understand the needs of the pupils who are supported by warm and caring relationships. Senior leaders are visible and liaise effectively with pupils, parents and carers. Leaders provide a wide range of sporting activities for pupils.
4. Leaders promote pupils' positive behaviour ensuring effective implementation of the sanctions and rewards procedures. Pupils know right from wrong. Pupils raise money and awareness for a range of charities. Children in the early years value the importance of working as part of a team with the positive support of adults within the setting.
5. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils are effective. Leaders are knowledgeable in their roles and responsibilities. Staff receive regular training and updates to support the school's approach to safeguarding which is part of the school's culture. Pupils feel safe and happy. They know how to stay safe online.

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 and managers should:

- strengthen their analysis and evaluation of assessment data to monitor the impact and effectiveness of additional support and progress across different cohorts
- ensure that teachers make the best use of time in lessons to ensure opportunities for pupil progress are more consistent.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Effective and visible leaders actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. Leaders ensure policies are clearly understood and implemented by staff to support the needs of the pupils. Governors ensure that leaders have an appropriate range of knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities, which are identified and reviewed in the governors' annual review of the school. Senior leaders and governors have a secure oversight of the school. They oversee the effective implementation of policies and procedures ensuring that the school's aims are central to their decision-making and that the relevant Standards are met consistently. Leaders are aware of the strengths and areas for development within the school. They conduct regular self-evaluation and review which supports their formulation of a thorough three-year development plan.
7. Senior leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education. A comprehensive programme of activities, including regular homework and transition events meet the needs of the pupils in preparation for transition to senior schools. Leaders ensure that parents are suitably informed of their child's progress. Leaders maintain regular contact with parents including in parents' evenings. They provide termly reports to parents, about their children's progress. Leaders use effective system of assessment to monitor pupils' progress. Senior leaders and staff know the individual needs of the pupils. Ongoing assessment and regular progress meetings inform leaders' oversight of pupils' progress. However, leaders do not always evaluate and consider the effectiveness of the strategies they employ to support pupils.
8. Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well considered throughout the curriculum. Leaders work closely with class teachers to adapt programmes of support and create individual education plans. Senior leaders ensure that teaching assistants are suitably deployed to help to support pupils who have SEND. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The annual appraisal programme and regular observations of lessons inform their oversight, ensuring that, in most cases, a suitable range of teaching methods are used to engage pupils in their learning.
9. Leadership within the early years is highly effective in promoting the wellbeing of children and ensuring that they engage in a fulfilling curriculum. Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously and that children are cared for in a secure and happy setting. Children flourish in the early years under the guidance of leaders and staff who have regular contact with parents to inform them about their children's progress. Leaders ensure that there are appropriate staffing ratios throughout the setting to meet the needs of the children.
10. Governors play an active role within the school. They commission an annual safeguarding review via the local authority and ensure required actions are implemented. Effective communication between senior leaders and governors ensures the smooth running of the school. Senior leaders provide termly reports and presentations from staff keeping governors informed. Leaders ensure that there is an appropriate complaints policy and procedure that they follow when dealing with any complaints.

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

11. Leaders plan the curriculum effectively to ensure that pupils are prepared for the next steps of their education. Teachers plan learning well and effective teaching promotes pupils' good progress. Pupils display secure knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. They make good progress and achieve positive results in national curriculum tests. Pupils are extremely competent in both numeracy and literacy, a result of the priority given to these areas of the curriculum by leaders. Senior pupils gain a range of academic, musical, and sporting scholarships to senior schools of their choice, supported by the school's focus on preparing pupils for transition.
12. Pupils are engaged in their learning, and they confidently collaborate with peers to work out solutions to problems that have been posed by teachers. They are eager to learn, and they apply their understanding of topics covered in lessons to homework set by their teachers. Teachers provide appropriate feedback to pupils to help them to consider ways to improve their work. Pupils reflect on their own understanding of topics and show this through a traffic light system which enables teachers to tailor the support they provide. Most teaching excites and challenges pupils' thinking. However, in some lessons teachers do not make full use of the time available to ensure progress is consistent. Older pupils enjoy reading for pleasure, supported by the school's well-resourced library. Younger pupils enjoy the support of reading buddies when older pupils read with them each week. This contributes well to their progress in reading fluently. Leaders carefully monitor pupils' progress in reading and employ supportive strategies for those pupils who require them.
13. Leaders ensure that information and communication technology (ICT) is fully embedded in the curriculum to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils throughout the school confidently use a range of applications to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in different subjects. Older pupils effectively apply their understanding of coding to various challenges within their ICT lessons. For example, pupils use their coding skills to create mini games to challenge their peers. Pupils learn to play musical instruments in weekly individual and class music lessons. They confidently apply their musical skills and knowledge when performing in assemblies, concerts and acts of worship. There are high levels of participation from the pupils in the comprehensive programme of after school clubs and activities. Older pupils enjoy engaging in a range of sporting, creative and cerebral activities which enhance their educational experience within the school.
14. Children in the early years make good progress across all areas of the curriculum engaging in well-planned activities. Staff support the pupils who have SEND effectively making effective use of well-resourced classrooms. Classroom spaces and outdoor areas are thoughtfully considered to develop knowledge and understanding indoors and in the outdoor areas. Children work together to make decisions about the activities they choose. Sometimes they vote for activities they want to take part in. Children are articulate and confident when talking to adults about their learning; they use an extensive range of vocabulary to describe their learning. The well-planned curriculum ensures that children have a secure grasp of early numeracy and literacy skills.

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

15. Pupils' spiritual understanding is well developed. The school's Catholic ethos permeates throughout the school. Pupils take time to reflect on the things that they have done and consider the needs of others during their daily times of prayer. They enjoy celebrating the success of others in the informative and reflective assemblies led by senior leaders. Pupils enjoy learning about different faiths and forms of worship, which promotes respect for those of different faiths.
16. Senior pupils develop their own self-confidence and leadership skills when carrying out leadership roles in the school. They take pride in the responsibility of these roles, helping with the smooth running of the school and supporting younger pupils. Mental health and pupils' wellbeing are fully considered and promoted in the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils understand the importance of looking after their mental health. They make use of the school counsellor, and they value the support of teachers when they face problems. Relationship education is taught effectively in an age-appropriate way. Parents are informed of the programmes of study. Leaders provide informative presentations for parents to aid them in supporting their child's learning. Leaders consider the views of pupils gathered in wellbeing surveys. Leaders and staff consider the responses and provide support or adapt provision for individual pupils where necessary. For example, individual support plans are put in place or changes are made to pupils' timetables.
17. Pupils behave well due to the high expectations of all staff. Pupils take pride in their behaviour and enjoy the accolades they receive when they maintain their high standards. In the few cases of negative behaviour, pastoral support is put in place to enable pupils to reflect and learn from these incidents. Pupils are extremely confident and well mannered when talking with adults. Pupils feel that when they experience unkindness or bullying, staff always deal with it effectively. Prevention of bullying is promoted in PSHE lessons and assemblies. Staff oversee the effective implementation of an anti-bullying ambassador programme for older pupils. Pupils receive suitable training to carry out these roles in supporting their peers and younger members of the school.
18. Leaders deploy specialist physical education (PE) teachers to teach pupils how to stay fit and healthy during PE lessons, games sessions and after-school clubs. Pupils represent the school in a range of sporting activities. This well-structured sporting provision has enabled pupils to experience success in local and regional competitions. Supervision of pupils is well considered by senior leaders. There are appropriate staffing ratios in place for all activities that take place outside of the classrooms including educational visits. Senior leaders are vigilant about pupils' attendance and actively follow up any unexplained absences. An appropriate record of admissions is maintained, and suitable action is taken to inform the local authority when pupils leave the school.
19. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained. Leaders ensure that health and safety is considered rigorously. Precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire, and pupils know what to do in the event of the alarm in their termly drills. All staff receive regular training in paediatric first aid including those in the early years. There are suitable arrangements in place for pupils who become unwell or who have specific medical needs.
20. Children in the early years enjoy learning in the outdoor learning areas within the school grounds. There is a woodland area where they work together to investigate the challenges posed to them by the staff. They show exemplary behaviour and respect towards each other. Relationships between

the staff and children are extremely positive and support the nurturing learning environment. Leaders within the setting ensure that health and safety are effectively secured. Children learn to keep healthy including when healthcare professionals visit the setting to talk to children. The setting is clean and tidy, promoting a positive learning environment for the children.

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

21. Leaders ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to learn about society and the wider world. The mathematics curriculum, for example, incorporates economic education where pupils apply different numeracy skills to economic problems. Pupils have a secure understanding of current affairs and some of the key events occurring around the world. They develop a respect for different public institutions and visit key landmarks within the local area and nationally. Pupils have a strong awareness of different faiths and cultures informed by the religious education lessons and culture days. Whilst there is a clear focus on the Catholic ethos within the school, lessons with a religious content are balanced to enable pupils to learn about the world around them and prepare them for life in British society. Pupils develop their awareness and respect for different cultures including during the school's annual culture day. They are encouraged to recognise and celebrate their differences and they show mutual respect for different forms of worship. Pupils show an understanding of discrimination in a study of Black History month and can articulate their reasons for studying it. Their learning is effectively supported by the availability to them of carefully selected reference books in the library.
22. Across the school, pupils show kindness towards each other and readily celebrate each other's achievements. Staff model desired values to the pupils and consistently encourage them to recognise right from wrong laid out in the school's sanctions and rewards system. Pupils collaborate effectively within class, working towards common goals. They are rewarded for positive behaviour and effort, including when they earn marbles for class jars, encouraging a sense of teamwork.
23. Pupils have opportunities to contribute towards the running of the school. Senior prefect roles, school council and the eco committee provide these opportunities, which are overseen by leaders. The electoral process for positions on the councils or prefects actively promotes their preparation for life in British society. Pupils are enthusiastic in charity fundraising for a range of local, national, and international causes where they consider the needs of those less fortunate than themselves.
24. Children in the early years enjoy working together on their different tables to work out solutions to questions they have been asked. They have a clear understanding of right from wrong. Staff act as positive roles models in the setting. They value their rewards for hard work and kindness which support their team points. They understand the value of working together towards common goals. Children begin to learn about what democracy means, including by taking votes for the activities that they would like to do in their outdoor learning area.

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

25. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils are effective. Leaders are knowledgeable in their roles and responsibilities. They ensure that a positive safeguarding culture is created throughout the school. Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) have appropriate levels of experience and training to carry out their roles. They meet regularly as a safeguarding team to review safeguarding and discuss pastoral issues within the school. DSLs maintain safeguarding files effectively and records show that any reported concerns are acted upon promptly. All staff have appropriate levels of training, and they are kept informed of current issues and receive guidance from senior leaders in their regular updates. Safeguarding is given full regard during the induction of new staff. Staff feel confident to raise safeguarding concerns with DSLs, senior leaders, or external agencies, and know the procedures to do so. Senior leaders make effective use of the expertise and guidance of external safeguarding agencies to support their decision-making processes.
26. Trustees and governors, who all have appropriate training, exercise effective oversight of safeguarding. The governor with responsibility for oversight of safeguarding reports termly to the governing body. The designated governor meets regularly with the DSL to review the effectiveness of the procedures and has appropriate knowledge and understanding to question and challenge senior leaders. Safeguarding is discussed and considered at all staff and governor meetings, reflecting the importance it has within the school.
27. Pastoral leaders oversee the effectiveness of the behaviour and anti-bullying policies in regular monitoring and pastoral meetings. They effectively analyse the data and information generated by all staff on the school's pastoral management information system to track and monitor trends. DSLs are aware of the safeguarding thresholds for behaviour and bullying incidents.
28. Senior leaders oversee suitable safer recruitment procedures. Leaders and governors involved in the recruitment process have appropriate levels of training and knowledge of current statutory requirements. They ensure that a single central record of recruitment is maintained accurately alongside individual staff files. All relevant recruitment checks are carried out on staff within the school.
29. The overwhelming majority of pupils who responded to the pre-inspection survey agreed that they feel safe in school. Pupils learn about online safety in the well-planned ICT lessons and in regular assemblies that reinforce this learning. They understand the importance of protecting their own personal information and raising concerns if they are worried about anything that has occurred online. Senior leaders ensure that appropriate filtering systems are in place to monitor pupils' access to electronic devices and their use of the internet. Younger pupils talk confidently about protecting their own personal body space in the work covered in relationship education lessons and in informative assemblies led by senior leaders. Pupils have a range of adults within the school with whom they can raise any concerns or worries. They understand that they can use the school's worry boxes to raise concerns anonymously. Pastoral leaders' well-informed knowledge of the needs of the pupils enables them to offer suitable support depending on the level of need required. Pupils make use of the access they have to a trained counsellor to support pastoral concerns that they may have.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Ursuline Preparatory School
Department for Education number	881/6034
Registered charity number	1058282
Address	Ursuline Preparatory School Old Great Ropers Brentwood CM13 3HR
Website	ursulineprepwarley.co.uk
Proprietor	The Ursuline Preparatory School
Chair	Mrs Fiona Deery
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Wilson
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	160
Date of previous inspection	25 June 2019

Information about the school

30. Ursuline Preparatory School is a co-educational day school located in Warley, Essex for pupils aged between the ages of three and eleven. The school consists of a preparatory school and early years setting, all within the same building. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of trustees and governors.
31. There are 40 children in the early years which comprises two nursery classes and one reception class.
32. The school has identified ten pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autistic spectrum disorder, all of whom receive additional support. A further 17 children are identified as receiving additional support from the learning development department.
33. English is an additional language for one pupil.
34. The school states that its aims are to create a happy, respectful, and caring atmosphere where children are inspired to develop their gifts and talents to their full potential and are valued for who they are and for all that they achieve. The school is non-selective and follows a Catholic ethos.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 31 October to 2 November 2023

35. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.
36. Inspection activities included:
- observations of lessons and extra-curricular activities
 - discussions with pupils and staff
 - meetings with governors and senior leaders
 - review of school policies and procedures
 - consideration of the responses of pupils, parents, and staff to pre-inspection surveys
 - examination of samples of pupils' work.
37. 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.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit isi.net