

School inspection report

21 to 23 November 2023

Vita et Pax Preparatory School

6a Priory Close

Green Road

Southgate

London

N14 4AT

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. The proprietor and senior leaders ensure that the education provided is based around the school's core values and aims, which are widely known and embedded within the school's culture. Senior leaders promote a child-centred education that enables pupils to grow into confident, capable and caring individuals.
2. Leaders plan the curriculum effectively and ensure that it is well taught with clear expectations for individual pupils. Teachers consider pupils' prior learning, levels of understanding and areas for development. Pupils develop their social and cultural knowledge through an age-appropriate scheme of work. Pupils actively celebrate and respect all members of the community.
3. Thorough and careful assessment and knowledge of each pupil's needs are used to ensure that teaching builds on pupils' prior knowledge. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan provision to meet pupils' needs.
4. Pupils are happy, motivated and actively engaged with their learning. They are attentive and focused in lessons and, due to the warm, positive relationships with staff, challenge themselves to go further, showing resilience and perseverance to succeed.
5. Leaders have written a suitable policy for the promotion of good behaviour. Pupils are effectively supervised throughout the day. The policy is understood by staff and pupils and is implemented consistently. However, records of more persistent or unacceptable behaviour are not monitored effectively to identify trends and plan for improvement.
6. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum provides learning and experiences that support pupils' preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life in British society and beyond.
7. Risk assessments are in place for many aspects of the school's provision. However, leaders do not ensure the careful implementation of some mitigations to manage risks in relation to the transportation of pupils.
8. Leaders effectively implement most school policies and usually follow planned procedures appropriately. However, some required records are not kept up to date. The record of the necessary pre-appointment checks has not been kept accurately.
9. Staff are suitably trained and can demonstrate an appropriate understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. The safeguarding policy did not reflect the most recent statutory guidance. This was addressed before the end of the onsite inspection.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are not 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 not met.

Areas for action

The governors must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- the safeguarding policy is up to date and reflects current statutory guidance
- suitable safeguarding records are in place to promote the wellbeing of the pupils
- there is a strategic, comprehensive and inclusive approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing
- the single central record of recruitment checks is an accurate record of the checks which have been undertaken.

Recommended next steps

The proprietor and leaders should:

- ensure that an effective system of tracking and monitoring behaviour is developed to enable patterns and trends to be identified and appropriate strategies to be developed.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The proprietor has not ensured there is sufficient capacity to maintain required records relating to safer recruitment checks. There is not sufficient oversight of these required records. Leaders are not able to readily access key information since it is not sufficiently organised. This reduces certainty that required checks, such as for appointments and arrangements for the transportation of children have been completed. In consequence, the standards relating to safeguarding are not met.
11. The proprietor ensures that appropriate measures are taken to manage any risks within the school's buildings and grounds to protect pupils from harm. They regularly use external contractors to support this work, including to mitigate the risks from asbestos and to provide portable appliance electrical testing. However, the implementation of mitigations is not effectively monitored in relation to the transportation of pupils in the cars of parents.
12. Leaders use self-evaluation effectively to identify strengths, weakness and areas for development. This information is used to plan next steps across all areas of school life reflecting the school's aims. Leaders' self-evaluation has led to enhancements to curriculum planning.
13. Curriculum planning considers pupils' ages, aptitudes, and needs, including for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This is supported with secure tracking to identify and support pupils' specific needs ensuring that they make good progress.
14. Leaders in the early years actively promote the wellbeing of children. Staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children in the early years. Policies, including those relating to managing behaviour, safeguarding, risk assessment and complaints, are consistently applied within early years.
15. Those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities have developed effective links with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders ensure that staff are appropriately trained to identify when pupils might be in danger of suffering harm.
16. Relevant and appropriate information is available to parents on the school's website. Parents receive information about their children's progress in regular meetings and written reports.
17. Where parents raise concerns and complaints, leaders respond promptly to respond in line with the school's appropriate policy.
18. Leaders ensure they fulfil the responsibilities of the Equality Act. Leaders have an appropriate accessibility plan in place to develop access to the school and the curriculum and to ensure that no pupil is discriminated against.

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

- 19. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The curriculum is planned effectively and is well taught. Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils' progress across all subjects. The school uses effective planning to ensure pupils benefit from positive academic experiences throughout each year group.
21. In the early years, children make good progress because of a curriculum that is tailored to their individual needs and starting points. Staff provide an age-appropriate programme of activities that support the personal, emotional and physical development of children. Staff identify and provide for children's emerging needs and developing knowledge and skills. They adapt the individual curriculum for children, for instance when they begin to read at an early age. Each child is allocated to a key person who carefully monitors progress and liaises with parents to support children's development. Staff build on children's interests providing stimulating resources to enhance learning and promoting language development when children are playing. Focused teaching of mathematics and literacy and daily reading with children in Reception support the development of children's key skills.
22. Effective planning and implementation of the curriculum support the development of pupils' speaking, listening, numeracy and literacy skills. Teachers use questioning effectively to identify and correct any misconceptions and to clarify and develop contextual language to support pupils' learning. Pupils are increasingly confident in their knowledge and skills in mathematics, and develop extensive language skills, which supports their learning across the curriculum as they move through the school. Older pupils use their well-developed language skills to good effect when debating topics of interest. Older pupils are prepared well for entry to their preferred secondary schools through an effective programme of lessons to support transition.
23. Pupils have opportunities to develop their aesthetic and creative skills both in and outside the classroom and including when they take part in music and drama performances and extra-curricular activities. These activities also help to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.
24. Pupils develop effective problem-solving, decision-making and teamwork skills when taking part in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) learning. Teachers have planned a structured and engaging curriculum, which provides opportunities to learn beyond the core subjects and ensures pupils make good progress across subjects. Pupils consistently demonstrate enthusiasm for learning and engage in lessons happily.
25. Thorough assessment of individual pupils' progress and their needs leads to a highly effective personalised learning environment in which pupils thrive. On-going assessment includes gathering information from tests, statistical analysis and discussions with pupils, teacher and parents. Teachers use assessment information to provide bespoke support for individual pupils, enabling them to make consistently good progress. Teachers' regular and helpful feedback to pupils helps them to identify their strengths and to improve their work.
26. Appropriately qualified staff provide support that enables pupils who have SEND, and those requiring additional speech and language support, to access the curriculum and to make progress in line with their peers.

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

27. Pupils make good progress in developing knowledge and skills in physical education through a range of experiences. Teachers plan lessons well, which encompass a range of activities to develop pupils' skills. Teachers provide effective demonstrations and a variety of activities so that pupils are highly engaged. Pupils enjoy learning new techniques and practicing skills, often working collaboratively in groups to achieve success. A wide range of extra-curricular sporting opportunities enables pupils to further improve their performance and skills. Pupils are enthusiastic and self-motivated in these activities.
28. Leaders promote the development of pupils' self-confidence and mental wellbeing. Staff receive appropriate training in mental health first aid, which enables them to support pupils' emotional needs. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons facilitate discussions about pupils' feelings. Pupils can also post their concerns in worry boxes around the school. They value the support they receive and are comfortable in talking to teachers.
29. The curriculum encompasses the school's core values and encourages mutual respect. The inclusive PSHE programme focuses on developing positive relationships. Teachers develop a common language around respect for others that pupils can understand and use. Leaders' and teachers' consistent approach to behaviour management helps pupils to develop their moral understanding.
30. Pupils' spiritual understanding is developed, including through the faith and ethos of the school. From the early years, pupils are introduced to traditions and cultures of other faiths in their topic, 'Come with Me'. Older pupils think deeply and consider a variety of concepts, such as the meaning of commitment in life and in religion. Pupils are knowledgeable about world religions and are tolerant and respectful of each other's faiths.
31. From a young age, pupils learn to take responsibility for their actions. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and feel that sanctions and rewards are applied fairly. Pupils appreciate the support that they receive from staff and respond positively to the opportunities they have to learn from mistakes and to make amends when required.
32. The behaviour policy and appropriate sanctions are effective and understood by pupils. From the early years, teachers focus on the use of positive praise, which generally results in good standards of behaviour. Teachers carefully monitor minor incidents but instances of persistent or more serious misbehaviour are not appropriately recorded or monitored by leaders. Patterns or trends of behaviour therefore are not easily identified.
33. An effective anti-bullying strategy is in place. Training for both staff and pupils is effective and rare incidents of bullying are quickly identified and effectively dealt with. Pupils understand the difference between unkindness and bullying. Pupils appreciate the strong, supportive relationships they have with approachable staff.
34. Early years leaders provide a wide range of stimulating experiences to promote children's personal, emotional, and physical development. The warm and open relationships between children and adults result in an environment where children feel happy, motivated, and engaged. Early years staff promote principles that encourage children to distinguish between right and wrong. As a result of

positive role-modelling to deter negative behaviour, children's behaviour is consistently good. Children work and play together harmoniously and are encouraged to celebrate everyone's successes.

- 35. The attendance and admission registers are maintained effectively and appropriately.
- 36. Premises are maintained to a satisfactory standard and appropriate health and safety arrangements are implemented to ensure the environment provided for pupils is safe. Fire exits are clearly marked and kept clear, and appropriate precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Pupils take part in termly fire drills and staff are appropriately trained.
- 37. Suitably trained staff are always available to provide timely and competent first aid and medical assistance.

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

38. Pupils access a range of age-appropriate activities, which engage their interest and support their social development. For example, a termly enterprise activity introduces pupils to the world of finance and involves funds being raised for use on school trips. Parents and local officials are invited to talk to pupils and share their occupational expertise. This introduces pupils to a variety of career opportunities and develops their understanding of the role of public service and its connection to wider society.
39. Pupils from across the year groups collaborate enthusiastically and participate in a range of activities such as multi sports, construction projects and paired mathematics games. This promotes pupils' understanding of, and respect for, others.
40. The PSHE curriculum enables pupils to be effectively prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life in British society and beyond. Pupils consider different systems of democracy around the world and relate them to the British system to develop their understanding and appreciation of British values. A recurring theme of positive relationships permeates the programme and pupils learn to appreciate the qualities of successful family structures.
41. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility and teamwork through a range of roles. For example, younger pupils act as class helpers whilst older pupils play important roles such as sports leaders, house captains, student council leaders and prefects. These opportunities develop pupils' confidence as they prepare for the next steps in their education.
42. Leaders ensure that pupils develop an appreciation of and respect for all members of their diverse community and the wider world. Pupils contribute to this community by sharing and celebrating their religions, traditions and cultures when planning and leading assemblies.
43. In the early years, staff plan activities to develop children's social understanding. In the early years, teachers create opportunities in assemblies for children to recognise and celebrate the successes of their friends. Without hesitation, pupils enthusiastically develop their empathy for, and awareness of, the feelings of others.
44. Through activities such as debating, leaders ensure that older pupils learn to share opinions openly. Pupils develop empathy with, and begin to understand the importance of listening to, others in a safe environment. The PSHE curriculum, underpinned by the school's motto of being a good Samaritan, is highly effective at encouraging respect for all people.

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

45. Senior leaders make some suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including those within the early years. However, there are systematic weaknesses in some procedures. At the time of inspection, the safeguarding policy did not reflect the most recent statutory guidance and aspects of the management of record-keeping, lacked rigour, thereby undermining the culture of safeguarding and the wellbeing of pupils.
46. Leaders do not have robust procedures in place regarding recruitment procedures. During the inspection, the record of appointments was incomplete and leaders did not have due regard to the regulatory guidance to ensure that all checks were added to the record in advance of staff commencing their appointment. Some checks have since been added and new systems are being implemented.
47. The proprietor does not regularly monitor procedures that school leaders put in place. There is no systematic approach to oversight.
48. Suitable induction procedures for new staff, and ongoing training for existing staff, including contextual safeguarding training, is effective. The safeguarding team receive appropriate training and regular updates. Staff are knowledgeable about the school's safeguarding procedures and they understand the relevant guidance. This includes online safety training and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism.
49. A suitable filtering and monitoring system, overseen by the safeguarding leader, is implemented to reduce the risk of harm when pupils are online. Staff understand how to manage and report safeguarding concerns within the school or directly to local children's services, when necessary. Staff are confident in how to use the whistleblowing policy.
50. Appropriate relationships with external agencies have been established. Local children's social services are contacted, when necessary, as a source of advice as well as to refer concerns.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The relevant Standards are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 (1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school – (a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently (b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and (c) actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that – (a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and (b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

The relevant Standards are met.

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

The relevant Standards are met.

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

The relevant Standard are met.

Safeguarding

The relevant Standards are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that – (a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and (b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 21 (1)	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraph (3) as is applicable to the school in question.
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 21 (3)	(a) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is in relation to each member of staff ('S') appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether – (ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act (iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant

	<p>qualifications</p> <p>(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S; including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained; and</p>
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 21 (3)	<p>(b) in relation to each member of staff ('S'), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.</p>
EYFS 3.9	<p>Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles. Providers must have effective systems in place to ensure that practitioners, and any other person who may have regular contact with children (including those living or working on the premises), are suitable.</p>

School details

School	Vita et Pax Preparatory School
Department for Education number	308/6056
Registered charity number	281566
Address	Vita et Pax Preparatory School 6a Priory Close Green Road Southgate London NA14 4AT
Phone number	020 8449 8336
Email address	info@vitaetpax.co.uk
Website	vitaetpax.co.uk
Proprietor	Vita et Pax School (Cockfosters) Limited
Chair	Mrs Anna Westcott
Headteacher	Ms Allana Gay
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	95
Date of previous inspection	15 March 2021

Information about the school

51. Vita et Pax Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school located in north London. The proprietor has overarching responsibility and is supported by an advisory governing board.
52. There are 27 children in early years, comprising of one Nursery class and one Reception class.
53. The school has identified 25 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom five have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
54. No pupils have English as an additional language.
55. The school aims to deliver a child-centred approach within a supportive environment which nurtures the unique character of each pupil. With a Christian tradition, care and respect for difference is shown to everyone. The school seeks to work in strong partnership with parents to ensure pupils are safe, academically confident and well cared for physically, socially and emotionally.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 November 2023

56. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days and were accompanied by a shadow inspector.

57. 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 proprietor
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- 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.

58. 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

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