

# School inspection report

23 to 25 January 2024

## **Blackheath Prep**

4 St Germans Place

Blackheath

London

SE3 0NJ

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 governors act effectively to fulfil the school's aims and the requirements of the Standards. The new governing body demonstrates effective oversight, bringing a diverse range of expertise across the school's operations and creating a positive learning environment for pupils to thrive. Governors and senior leaders collaborate effectively in drawing up plans for annual school improvement and strategic development. The governing body's commitment to effective governance, combined with the strategic input from senior leaders, create a robust foundation for the school's ongoing development.
2. Leaders oversee teaching through an effective programme of staff training and monitoring. As a result, teaching is generally of high quality and pupils make good progress. Following a recent curriculum review, leaders have implemented a new assessment framework to monitor pupils' progress and attainment. Whilst this has been implemented, there has not yet been sufficient time to evaluate its impact on teachers' planning and pupils' progress.
3. Children in the early years make good progress in all seven areas of learning through experiencing a broad and well-planned curriculum.
4. A supportive and mutually respectful learning environment is created through the effective implementation of policies that positively impact on pupils' self-esteem and wellbeing. On occasions when bullying takes place, leaders investigate rigorously, maintain thorough records and put in place appropriate support.
5. Leaders have updated the timings of the school day to increase pupils' access to pastoral and academic support from form tutors. Since this initiative has been recently implemented, there has not been enough time to evaluate its impact on pupils' ability to seek and receive support.
6. Pupils are well prepared for their futures, and they make a positive contribution to the school and the community around them through a broad personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.
7. Leaders actively promote the wellbeing and safeguarding of pupils through the effective implementation of the school's policies and procedures. Leaders overseeing safeguarding have an appropriate range of skills and experience to carry out their roles effectively.

## 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:

- enhance the use by teachers of information from academic data so that support and extension strategies consistently assist pupils' progress.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders and governors are committed to fulfilling the school's aims. Senior leaders are effective in their roles, displaying comprehensive knowledge, skills and understanding and prioritising the wellbeing of pupils.
9. Governors demonstrate a diverse range of suitable expertise. They have a clear understanding of the school, garnered through detailed reports from senior leaders and regular visits. This enables them to allocate suitable resources to support the positive learning environment for pupils.
10. Governors work in conjunction with senior leaders to create an effective annual school improvement plan aligned with a three-year strategic overview. Leaders regularly evaluate procedures and initiatives, then reflect on these evaluations to create action plans to address and enhance various aspects of the school experience for the pupils.
11. Senior leaders have implemented an effective system of staff development and appraisal so that teaching and learning reflect the school's aims and promote high standards for pupils. A successful programme to develop middle leaders has improved the teaching and learning environment for pupils.
12. Leaders oversee the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum that results in effective teaching and good pupil progress. Through a review of the curriculum, leaders have updated the school's assessment framework to support and inform teachers' planning. Since this framework has been introduced recently, sufficient time has not elapsed to comprehensively assess its effectiveness in promoting pupils' progress throughout the school.
13. A suitable complaints policy and procedure are in place. Leaders diligently maintain records of informal and formal complaints, and systematically create action plans to address and respond to any concerns raised by parents. Regular reports to parents on pupils' progress are comprehensive and informative. They enable pupils and parents to understand pupils' levels of attainment and areas for improvement.
14. Through the risk management process, leaders effectively consider and promote the health and safety of pupils across the school. They work in conjunction with staff to highlight and report risk so that any issues are rectified. Governors allocate sufficient funds and resources to matters of health and safety.

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

15. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

16. The well-planned and broad curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of all pupils. An appropriate range of subjects develops pupils' literacy, numeracy, linguistic and artistic skills. Teachers' subject knowledge and high-quality teaching mean that there is an appropriate level of challenge for pupils in lessons and recreational activities. As a result, they make good progress. Technology is suitably used in teaching and learning across the school, including in the early years, to develop pupils' subject knowledge throughout the curriculum.
17. Pupils exhibit secure knowledge, skills and understanding in their learning, reflecting the high quality of teaching throughout the school. The school's own assessment framework indicates that pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is above the national average. Most pupils make expected or higher progress in these subjects. For those pupils who do not initially make expected progress, teachers implement an effective targeted programme of additional support. The new assessment framework was introduced recently, so its data is not yet used consistently by teachers to assess and respond to pupil progress.
18. Pupils are knowledgeable about their understanding of the topics covered because of the regular and informative feedback they receive from teachers, although the quality of feedback is not consistent across all subjects. Pupils reflect positively on their learning and consider ways to improve. The school's programme of regular homework fosters pupils' ability to learn independently as well as their understanding of topics covered during lessons. Children in the early years develop their understanding of areas of learning through the additional activities provided by teachers for them to enjoy at home.
19. Teaching staff oversee a programme that effectively supports the transition of older pupils to their senior schools. Pupils receive appropriate preparation for entrance exams to a variety of local and regional senior schools. Pupils are successful both in achieving entry to senior schools of their choice and in gaining academic, music, sporting, drama, and art scholarships. Through their work in lessons and after-school clubs, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
20. From the early years upwards, children demonstrate articulate communication skills and extensive vocabularies, strengthened by the school's reading programme. Leaders have adapted the timetable to prioritise a daily focus on reading. Pupils utilise the school's well-resourced library to extend their enjoyment of reading. Children in the early years develop their literacy skills through the school's phonics programme and the extensive reading resources available to them. Suitably planned activities by staff foster confident communication, cooperative working, and respectful turn-taking among the children.
21. Staff responsible for overseeing special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) implement effective support plans for pupils who have SEND, including children in the early years. These are shared with all teaching staff, fostering a collaborative approach to addressing pupils' differing needs so that they make good progress.
22. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive suitable support. This is reflected in teachers' lesson plans that include appropriate activities so pupils who speak EAL make good progress.

23. Pupils develop their understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle through the school's physical education (PE) curriculum. Regular exercise during PE lessons and pride in representing the school in sports fixtures contribute to pupils' overall well-being. Children in the early years enjoy being active and understand the importance of physical activity through the weekly physical activity sessions.
24. Pupils' artistic and creative skills are nurtured effectively through the curriculum and the rich provision of extra-curricular activities. All younger pupils in the prep school learn a string, wind, or brass instrument, helping them to develop an initial understanding of music. Many then build on this experience by taking up other instruments as they progress through the school. Pupils enjoy singing and participate in various musical groups. They achieve a high level of success in external music examinations. Children in the early years begin to develop their musical skills through weekly music lessons and regular singing sessions. Pupils are expressive in drama performances which provide them with the self-confidence to perform in front of audiences during each year group's drama production. Pupils' artistic skills are developed through engaging lessons and after-school activities as evidenced in their sketchbooks and work on display around the school.
25. Leaders within the early years deploy staff effectively so that children make good progress through a programme of engaging activities. They make use of the facilities, including outdoor learning areas, to enhance the learning experience of the children within a safe and engaging environment.

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

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

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

27. The wellbeing of pupils, anchored in the school's seven core values, permeates the school. Leaders create a supportive and mutually respectful environment that has a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem and wellbeing. Pupils develop self-esteem and an appreciation of others through the teaching and celebration of mutual respect and tolerance during PSHE lessons and weekly celebration assemblies. Staff actively promote respectful relationships among pupils through the school's relationship education programme, an integral part of the PSHE curriculum. This commitment is evident in the pupils' patient and attentive engagement during class discussions with peers.
28. Leaders successfully promote good behaviour among pupils through the effective implementation of the behaviour policy and anti-bullying strategy. Pupils value the recognition they receive when maintaining high standards of behaviour. In instances of negative behaviour, staff employ reflective strategies to provide support for the pupils involved, and they maintain accurate records of any sanctions given to monitor the process. Pastoral leaders provide suitable support for pupils who experience bullying, which is followed up with comprehensive investigations and accurate record-keeping of the actions carried out. The promotion of kindness and mutual respect is a consistent theme, reinforced through PSHE lessons, weekly assemblies, form time, and class charters, all aligned with the school's core values. Staff share pastoral concerns in weekly staff meetings which feed into pastoral support plans for individual pupils, ensuring suitable support is in place.
29. Pupils have a range of adults to whom they turn for help and support. The school's counsellor, whom pupils may contact directly or to whom they may be referred by pastoral staff, offers valuable support. Leaders have increased pastoral time for form tutors to give further options for pupils to seek guidance. However, this initiative is not yet sufficiently embedded for the practice by form teachers across different year groups to be consistent. Children in the early years display positive relationships with staff which give them confidence to share their ideas and any worries.
30. Pupils develop awareness of their feelings and how to promote their health through work in PSHE and sports. The school has a philosophy of sport for all which leads to high levels of participation by pupils. Staff in the early years foster physical activity by children throughout the day and, through their teaching, children start to develop their understanding of how to stay healthy. Children learn about the importance of dental hygiene through talks linked to active play.
31. The effective implementation of health and safety policies promotes the wellbeing of pupils, including through appropriate risk assessments for the activities in which they participate. Pupils know what to do when the fire alarm sounds because of regular drills, and suitable fire risk management procedures are in place. The school grounds and buildings are well maintained.
32. The first aid policy is effectively implemented. There is a well-resourced medical room and staff are trained in first aid and paediatric first aid, as appropriate.
33. Attendance records and the admission register are well maintained. Leaders oversee the deployment of staff so that pupils are effectively supervised throughout the day.



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

**34. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

35. The broad curriculum is designed to equip pupils for life in modern British society. In informative PSHE lessons, pupils reflect on societal issues and the broader world. They embrace belonging to a diverse community, celebrating cultural differences through engaging assemblies and informative presentations by visiting speakers.
36. The promotion of the school's core values and high expectations from staff mean that pupils have a clear understanding of right from wrong. They are knowledgeable about different institutions through the comprehensive programme of educational visits and community service. Pupils are aware of the importance of contributing positively to modern society. They actively engage with their social responsibilities, participating in community-oriented activities such as visiting older people's homes, supporting the work of the local foodbank, homeless shelter and donating resources to other local charities.
37. A school council provides pupils across the school with the opportunity to engage in democratic processes. Pupils vote for their class representatives, gaining an understanding of the responsibilities associated with these roles. The school council meets regularly to discuss issues that impact the school community and then share their thoughts with leaders, such as during the recent whole-school review of the positive relationships and behaviour policy.
38. The mathematics curriculum incorporates economic education throughout the school. In the early years, children learn practical monetary skills, such as working out change through play activities. Pupils apply their numeracy skills to real-world money problem solving activities which are embedded across the mathematics curriculum. Older pupils actively participate in an annual *Make Ten Grow* charity challenge, enhancing their financial understanding while making a positive impact by supporting local charities.
39. Older pupils contribute to the effective running of the school through leadership roles such as captains of house, sport, and music. The school's programme of preparation for next steps includes interview practice and school visits, so older pupils are well prepared for a smooth transition to senior schools within the area.
40. Well-planned activities in the early years introduce children to an awareness of the wider world. Regular visits from professionals broaden their understanding of people who play roles in keeping them safe. Engaging in play-based activities, the children learn about the various roles people have in their community. This approach lays a strong foundation for their educational journey.

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

**41. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

42. Leaders effectively implement policies and procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils. Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) and senior leaders exhibit appropriate knowledge, understanding and experience to fulfil their roles effectively. The school's safeguarding team meets regularly to monitor the pastoral care of pupils. They maintain comprehensive records and formulate any necessary action plans to support individual pupils. The safeguarding leads establish effective liaison with external agencies, seeking advice on child protection matters and making referrals as necessary.
43. Governors are well informed about the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements through regular updates and reports from leaders. The designated governor with responsibility for safeguarding has appropriate knowledge and experience and provides leaders with useful challenge and support. Governors actively contribute to an annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures which informs their annual audit of safeguarding.
44. Appropriate safer recruitment checks are undertaken for all adults working in the school. Staff involved in recruitment procedures are well versed in their roles and responsibilities, supported by comprehensive training. They maintain a suitable single central record of recruitment, which is complemented by well-organised and complete staff files.
45. Staff across the school, including those in early years, display a secure understanding of safeguarding procedures. DSLs regularly train and provide updates to staff on safeguarding, including how to handle a disclosure in line with the school policy and procedures.
46. Leaders oversee an appropriate online filtering and monitoring system. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online through well-planned computing lessons, informative assemblies and work covered in PSHE.
47. Arrangements to safeguard children in the early years include comprehensive risk assessments, appropriate supervision, and the establishment of effective routines.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Blackheath Prep
<b>Department for Education number</b>	203/6114
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1058438
<b>Address</b>	Blackheath Prep 4 St Germans Place Blackheath London SE3 0NJ
<b>Phone number</b>	020 88580692
<b>Email address</b>	info@blackheathprep.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.blackheathprep.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Eltham College
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Doyle
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alexander Matthews
<b>Age range</b>	3 - 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	384
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 June 2019

## Information about the school

49. Blackheath Prep is a co-educational day school located in the London borough of Greenwich. The school consists of a prep and a pre-prep that includes the early years setting. These sections are located in different buildings on the same site. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in 2020. In 2023 the school merged with Eltham College and is overseen by a new shared governing body.
50. There are 118 children in the early years comprising three Nursery classes, and two Reception classes.
51. The school has identified 47 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
52. English is an additional language for 35 pupils.
53. The school states its aims are to offer an education without boundaries, giving every child the freedom to shine and achieve their full potential, upholding academic excellence, sparking curiosity and a joyful love of learning, nurturing kindness and wellbeing, and creating a strong sense of community.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

23 to 25 January 2024

54. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

55. 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 chair and other governors
- 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

56. 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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