



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**BRABYNS PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**JUNE 2017**



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### SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Brabyns Preparatory School			
<b>DfE number</b>	356/6004			
<b>Address</b>	Brabyns Preparatory School 34 - 36 Arkwright Road Marple Stockport Cheshire SK6 7DB			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 427 2395			
<b>Email address</b>	admin@brabynsprepschool.co.uk			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Lee Sanders			
<b>Chair of education committee</b>	Mr Steven Wade			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	126			
	<b>Boys</b>	56	<b>Girls</b>	70
	<b>EYFS</b>	35	<b>Primary</b>	91
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21 to 22 June 2017			

## PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work.** It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of the education committee, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Andrew Farren	Reporting inspector
Mrs Jane Huntington	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mrs Elizabeth King	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)

## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Brabyns Preparatory School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 11 years. It is owned by the Bellevue Education Group and is overseen by an education committee of directors. The school was founded in 1899 and is located in Marple, on the Cheshire and Derbyshire border. Set on a one-acre site, the school occupies two buildings in a suburban environment. It comprises a Nursery and Primary school.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has installed a new computer suite and introduced laptops and tablet computers.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.3 The school aims to nurture, engage and enable every pupil to achieve their best, become excellent citizens, and know the difference between right and wrong. It seeks to create a warm, safe, family atmosphere, in small class groups, and to use every learning opportunity so that pupils can develop their individual talents.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.4 Pupils have a range of professional and business family backgrounds, mostly from White British families living locally and in nearby towns and villages. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of pupils is above average. It has identified 48 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and specific learning difficulties, 38 of whom receive additional specialist support. Also, 2 pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 1 pupil, whose needs are supported by classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified 15 pupils as the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- All groups of pupils make rapid progress and achieve academic excellence, in line with the school's aims.
- Pupils display notably positive attitudes to learning, responding enthusiastically to the many opportunities to achieve which are provided by the school.
- Extra-curricular achievements are outstanding across a wide range of activities.
- Pupils' communication skills are excellent, allowing them to be confident participants in all aspects of school life.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate distinctive self-discipline and resilience, combined with an exuberant passion for improving their own learning.
- A high degree of kindness is demonstrated by all pupils which is founded upon their clear sense of right and wrong, and consideration and respect for others.
- Pupils are highly socially aware and therefore work extremely effectively with each other.
- The trust and sense of security which pervades the school means that pupils feel safe, whilst gaining the information they need to look after themselves in the wider world.

### Recommendation

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes and acknowledging that the school has already identified this need for development:

- Embed opportunities for pupils to use information communication technology (ICT) more consistently across the full range of subjects throughout the school.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 All pupils including the more able and those with SEND or EAL make excellent academic progress. A large majority of the younger children in the Nursery and Reception currently achieve well above age-related expectations and are helped to do so by staff who use progress data very effectively to ensure that their teaching is accurately focused on pupils' outcomes, as recommended in the previous inspection. Most pupils in the Primary department exceeded the national average in the last school year. This is supported by evidence from the work scrutiny and lesson observations which indicate high levels of attainment. All Year 6 pupils achieved admission to the senior school of their choice, many of which have challenging entry requirements. Pupils including those with SEND or EAL achieve very well as the school cares greatly about each child, and provides excellent teaching and additional support when it is needed. The school creates a purposeful setting for enjoyable and personalised learning which includes appropriately challenging activities matched well to pupils' strengths and interests. Almost all parents' and pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire responses agreed that pupils' educational needs are met effectively by the school, and that pupils are provided the opportunity to learn and make good progress. Many appreciative comments were made regarding the positive difference the school had made to individual pupils' experience of education, and noting pupils' increased faith in their own abilities and potential on joining the school at whatever stage of their education.
- 3.3 Pupils apply their learning to new situations with confidence and draw on a wide range of resources and learning styles to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding. Within the small classes and small group work, they benefit from the tailored support of staff who display excellent subject knowledge and teaching expertise. This enables pupils to develop independence, flexibility and resourcefulness, and they are not afraid to take risks in their learning to find out new things. Pupils quickly learn from staff that finding answers to questions can be a collaborative activity, and that it is acceptable to say you do not know and to join others on the quest for solving a problem, such as by what is known in lessons as 'phone a friend'. As a result, pupils experience lessons as a shared adventure in learning and make excellent progress working together. In this mutually supportive setting, pupils in all age groups confidently rise to the challenges presented by teachers, as was observed when Nursery children successfully blended the sounds which make up words, when Reception pupils explored numbers through mental arithmetic and when Year 2 pupils created similes such as 'the leaves are as creased as a t-shirt that has not been ironed'. Pupils' written work during the school year demonstrated a strong commitment to achieving good presentation and their application to developing their knowledge, skills and understanding over time. Parents and pupils were overwhelmingly positive in their questionnaire responses regarding the quality of lessons, the support and helpfulness of teachers, and the impact of these factors on learning new skills for the future. In interview, pupils were consistently enthusiastic about their teachers and their enjoyment of lessons.

- 3.4 Pupils' communication skills are particularly well developed. They provide clear explanations reflecting their reasoning, listen attentively and contribute willingly to discussions. Pupils know that their views will be valued by teachers, who encourage them with skilful questioning and well-planned lessons which provide structure and support but do not in any way inhibit pupils' creativity and use of imagination. Some pupils who at times find it difficult to remain focused on activities are managed effectively by teachers who help them redirect their attention to smaller steps within a task, and maintain a calm environment where all pupils can flourish. By the time they reach Year 6, all pupils are well equipped with the communication skills they require to move confidently on to the next stage of their academic education.
- 3.5 Attitudes to learning displayed by pupils are notably positive. Pupils respond to the school's rich curricular and extra-curricular offerings with enthusiasm, taking every opportunity to try out new interests and take on fresh challenges. Within lessons, they are always ready to tackle problem solving both individually and collaboratively, enjoying the positive and fun rapport they share with staff and the way that teachers stretch their learning capacity. Pupils enjoy the positive, lively ethos of the school which reflects the model set by senior leadership and staff. They readily develop leadership attitudes and skills of their own, for instance pupils took turns as teacher within a mathematics lesson and demonstrated very strong knowledge as 'the king or queen of algebra'. Pupils readily join in drama and musical performances, sharing their newly acquired skills and honing talents with appreciative audiences of their peers and their families. They participate in sporting and music competitions with other schools and achieve considerable success, but also learn to have due regard for competitor's strengths and a respect for sportsmanship and musicianship. The school recently won a national junior drama festival competition. Almost all pupils from Reception upwards participate in at least one club, and when interviewed were proud of and keen to extend their involvement. Every parent and pupil who responded to the questionnaires agreed that the school provides a good choice of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.6 Pupils develop excellent study skills due to teachers consistently helping them to do so from the Nursery onwards. The pupils respond very well to encouragement to work together with a partner or within small groups, and to build on one another's ideas. They learn to research individually and with others, to take care in recording information, and that good presentation matters. Pupils pursue learning with zest, and employ their study skills very well to investigate and capture what they discover. They are supported very well in their studies by the positive way in which teachers mark, provide verbal feedback, and encourage pupil self-evaluation and peer appreciation of others' efforts and achievement. This represents a successful response by the school to the recommendation of a previous inspection to improve marking. Pupils use computers including computer tablets competently within their range of study skills and in their learning generally, but they do not use ICT as fully as they could. The school has responded positively to the recommendation of the previous inspection to extend the use of ICT but it is not yet fully embedded in daily practice.
- 3.7 Pupils' achievement is excellent due to the school aspiring to high standards. Senior leaders are very clear in setting the school's aims, consistently ensuring that they are fulfilled. Staff are suitably skilled, conscientious and committed to helping pupils achieve their best. The responses from parents and pupils in their questionnaire responses were strongly positive. Parents work in very close partnership with the school to support their children's achievement, welcoming the open and collaborative approach promoted by the school. The part played by the proprietors in supporting, monitoring, evaluating and holding the school to account is very effective.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils display excellent self-discipline and resilience, combined with an exuberant passion for improving their own learning and preparing for the next stage of their lives. They are highly motivated and rise to the challenges set by their teachers, which are geared well to their individual needs and personalities. Pupils have high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence but never express these in a precocious manner, more typically in a natural and easy way which endears and values others. They respond very well to the encouragement they receive to take a broad view of what school life can offer them in terms of their personal development. In addition to their regular timetabled activities, every pupil enthusiastically participates in a programme which spans their learning career in the school, inviting them to fulfil 101 specified personal goals before they leave for senior school. The pupils proudly engage in this pursuit, as was observed when pupils shared a completed video report of a residential visit which marked off one of the final items on the list. Pupils enjoy their time at school; some even stated that they miss it during the school holidays.
- 4.3 Pupils understand that the decisions they make can be important in determining their next steps in life. This was clear when older pupils discussed their aspirations over senior school choices, and the focus and priority that they would need to bring to their studies and choice of extra-curricular activities. Pupils learn to make smaller decisions from an early age as a result of teachers structuring their learning experiences to encourage independent thinking and choice-making, such as when younger pupils were given ownership of selecting descriptive words for a project task in English. Pupils also make decisions regarding their own behaviour and base these upon the school's expectations for behaviour, all having contributed to the agreement on 'golden rules'. Due to pupils' individual and corporate decision making regarding expected standards of behaviour, and their high degree of commitment to keeping to these rules, the school is a very orderly place. Pupils feel that they have a real say in the life of the school and a tangible ethos of pupil pride is present, characterised by a cheerful and positive whole-school attitude. They know and understand the school's sanctions for any inappropriate behaviour, although instances of misbehaviour are infrequent.
- 4.4 The pupils demonstrate a high degree of kindness to others. This is well founded in their clear sense of right and wrong, and consideration and respect for others, and is guided by the school's caring ethos which values every individual and by the excellent staff role models. Pupils regard the school's presentation of a 'courtesy cup' and other awards for kindness very seriously. At an assembly, school and house captains presented certificates celebrating acts of kindness, and pupils from across the school displayed earnest respect towards the children thus acknowledged. Pupils demonstrate a strong respect for other cultures, speaking in an informed and tolerant manner about other religions and cultures. They are inclusive in their attitude towards one another regardless of age, ethnicity or ability. The 'buddy' scheme which enables older pupils to help younger ones is very popular and bonds the school together as a cohesive community.

- 4.5 Pupils make the most of being in a relatively small school community, many who were interviewed said that joining the school after negative experiences elsewhere had literally changed their view of education. The pupils understand fundamental British values and referred to relevant posters and displays they had created but, even more significantly, they are genuinely putting them into practice in a wholehearted manner. Pupils benefit from a stimulating personal and social education programme which deepens their understanding of issues relating to living in a diverse and multicultural society. Participation in the school council allows them to experience democracy in action as their deliberations are acted upon by the school, for instance in their influence on the school's behaviour policy. Pupils listen to visiting speakers such as doctors, and gain an understanding of public services. Parents and pupils in their questionnaire responses all agreed that the school successfully promotes values of democracy, respect for other people, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 4.6 Spiritual understanding amongst pupils is very strong. They demonstrated a calm and reverential attitude during an assembly when individual pupils played pieces of music to one another, listening and reflecting on the feelings generated within themselves. Children in the Nursery visit farms and express a sense of wonder as they experience animals close-to. Older children are fascinated by questions about the non-material aspects of life, such as 'What was there before God created the universe?'. Pupils appreciate the outlook from their school to open countryside and are visibly captivated by the view of hills, sky and ever-changing weather.
- 4.7 The social development of pupils is outstanding. From their start in the Nursery, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage respond very well to the guidance they receive about playing and working alongside others, demonstrating a clear desire to get things right and make things work together. As they move up through the school they learn to take on responsibility in the school community, for example through the house system, playing in teams and singing in choirs. Every Year 6 pupil has a role of responsibility as a school captain, or captain of house, performing arts, playground, or as a prefect. All pupils take part in charity fundraising and actively contribute their own ideas for these activities. Pupils visit elderly people in the community and participate in local festivals. They gain experience in public performance as observed when younger pupils presented a play to the rest of the school and parents, and the juniors' annual production takes place in the local professional theatre.
- 4.8 Pupils feel safe, enjoying the sense of trust and security which pervades the school. They gain the information they need to look after themselves in the wider world, including online, as they grow in independence. Pupils are very approving of school meals and appreciate the advice given to them regarding healthy eating. They understand the importance of physical activity and were observed energetically joining in a whole-school outdoor workout in the playground prior to morning lessons. Pupils and parents alike responded overwhelmingly positively in their questionnaire responses regarding the school's effectiveness in keeping children safe, and this confidence in the school was reflected in their responses in relation to all areas of pupils' personal development. The school's proprietors, senior leadership and staff all contribute to this through their highly committed care for the pupils and families they serve.