

School inspection report

15 to 17 October 2024

Brabyns Preparatory School

34-36 Arkwright Road

Marple

Stockport

Cheshire

SK6 7DB

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
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Effective proprietorial oversight ensures that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively and provide pupils with a stimulating education in a warm, supportive environment. Pupils' wellbeing is accorded the highest priority.
2. Leaders implement a curriculum which provides appropriate breadth and is characterised by well-planned teaching based on careful assessment of the pupils' work. Teachers know the pupils well, understand their needs and teach them in ways which take suitable account of their abilities.
3. Assessment data enables teachers to identify the requirements of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and support them through the effective deployment of resources. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points.
4. Leaders provide wide-ranging sports and extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils participate enthusiastically developing skills and interests, enhanced social awareness and greater self-confidence.
5. The recently introduced behaviour management system contributes to the calm, well-ordered and friendly atmosphere in the school. Staff treat pupils fairly and pupils behave well.
6. Leaders provide effective support for pupils' emotional wellbeing. Pupils can raise concerns with trusted adults who listen carefully and provide prompt and appropriate advice. There are opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills and contribute positively to school development.
7. Effective leadership of the early years contributes to the thoughtful, engaging teaching and pastoral care that enables children to learn successfully and strengthen their personal, social and emotional development.
8. British values, such as the importance of democracy and tolerance, are promoted through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education syllabus. Pupils develop understanding of different careers and financial and economic matters. As a result, they are prepared for life in wider British society. However, the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme does not always develop pupils' understanding in this area as effectively as possible.
9. Leaders ensure effective management of all aspects of health and safety, fire safety and the administration of first aid. As a result, pupils are provided with suitable and secure premises and accommodation.
10. Safeguarding is effective. Leaders respond appropriately and in line with current statutory guidance should any safeguarding concerns arise.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme consistently develops pupils' understanding in this area as effectively as possible.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Parents and pupils benefit from effective leadership. Leaders and managers apply their knowledge and skills to work successfully and collaboratively with members of staff to promote the school's aims. Leaders' knowledge of the school enables effective evaluation and planning for improvement which takes account of staff and pupil views.
12. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of leaders' work through careful scrutiny of the curriculum, health and safety procedures, safeguarding and all other aspects of the school. As a result, the proprietor ensures that leaders carry out their duties and promote pupils' wellbeing effectively.
13. Leaders and managers have a secure understanding of risk management. They ensure appropriate risk assessments are drawn up which cover the premises, educational activities and pupils' welfare. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that the identified risks remain suitably mitigated. Staff receive appropriate guidance about risk assessment. Appropriate procedures are in place to swiftly respond to any new identification of potential risks.
14. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of the provision well. They listen carefully to pupils and take account of their views in developing the school. Leaders conduct an annual learning review that evaluates the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement and identifies actions to be taken to develop provision further.
15. Leaders and managers maintain appropriate relationships with external agencies. They work closely with educational psychologists and speech and language therapists to provide effective support for pupils who have SEND.
16. Leaders liaise closely with parents and provide them with suitable feedback on their children's development. Regular parents' meetings and written reports provide pertinent information about pupils' progress and attainment and identify their targets. All required policies are available to parents on the school website. Leaders provide the local authority with required information relating to any pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan whom they fund.
17. Any complaints, formal or informal, are managed promptly and appropriately in accordance with the school's policy. Leaders respond thoughtfully to concerns and maintain a suitable log of complaints.
18. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils its responsibilities under equality legislation. There is a suitable accessibility plan and staff are deployed effectively to support pupils' individual needs. Leaders ensure that no pupils are discriminated against.
19. Effective leadership and management of the early years ensures that children's needs are met. Staff provide a rich and varied curriculum which makes suitable use of indoor and outdoor space. Adult supervision is appropriate, and the children's safety and security is given a consistently high priority. Staff are available to meet informally with parents and carers at the beginning and the end of the school day to discuss their children's wellbeing and development.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders and managers have established an effective curriculum which evolves to meet pupil needs. The curriculum is structured so that pupils study key concepts and subject-specific information in greater depth as they move through the school. Curriculum planning is designed to develop pupils' knowledge and skills across the range of subjects appropriately according to their ages and abilities.
22. Teachers' use of appropriate rhymes and pictures enables children and younger pupils to make effective progress in learning the sounds that letters make. Teachers analyse texts with older pupils enabling them to employ similes and figurative language to enhance their creative writing. They write sentences using sophisticated construction and use of vocabulary.
23. Pupils engage readily in art and benefit from teaching which encourages exploration and adventure. They show a confidence which is not undermined by fear of making errors. Through humanities, pupils learn how to compare people's lives and circumstances in different historical periods and geographical places. In music, pupils are exposed to different styles and develop skills such as being able to hold a rhythm against a melody. Investigative science enables pupils to develop skills such as hypothesising sensibly. Throughout the curriculum suitable opportunities for speaking and listening contribute to the high level of articulacy shown by pupils. They are happy to speak to adults and share ideas with them.
24. Teachers apply their good subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs well to ensure their lessons are well planned and consistently effective. Teachers use resources to help pupils learn effectively and demonstrate skills in questioning pupils to promote reflection and deeper critical thinking about the subjects being studied. Teachers offer suitable support and challenge so that pupils throughout the school are stimulated to think carefully about the subject at hand. Teachers model how to solve problems and invite pupils to do the same. Pupils benefit from clear explanations and are enabled to develop skills in independent and collaborative learning. As a result, they show positive attitudes to their learning and are supportive of each other.
25. Teachers in the early years make skilful use of resources so that children and younger pupils quickly develop understanding of number bonds and how to add and subtract. Older pupils apply their numerical skills to solve word problems and develop fluency in mental arithmetic, becoming skilled in more complex manipulation of number. Pupils are challenged through skilful teacher modelling and questioning.
26. Children learn well in the stimulating early years department. They benefit from carefully planned lessons, skilful use of resources and structured role play opportunities supported by teachers who model appropriate language to develop the children's communication skills.
27. Teachers identify the learning needs of pupils who have SEND swiftly and effectively. Teachers deploy teaching assistants effectively so that pupils who have SEND receive suitable support. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.
28. Staff meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) . They are provided with effective additional support for their English when required, such as in the areas of reading and spelling support. As a result, these pupils progress well in their development of English skills and comprehension.

29. The detailed assessment framework enables teachers to track pupils' progress and attainment against national age-related expectations. Data is used effectively to adapt lesson planning and identify pupils in need of additional support. Pupils are involved in their own assessment and encouraged to reflect on their work and how it can be improved. Thoughtful, supportive feedback from teachers helps pupils make good progress. Pupils' attainment is typically in line with, or better than, pupils taking the same assessments nationally.
30. A wide range of clubs is available to pupils throughout the school day. Teachers use the extra-curricular activities to develop skills and knowledge in activities such as gymnastics, cookery, art, learning another language and how to administer first aid, as well as providing fun, enjoyment and relaxation.

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

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

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

32. The recently developed behavioural principles embody the culture of the school, which is characterised by the values of mutual respect, kindness, empathy, moral understanding and honesty. These principles were determined by staff, pupils and parents together and are promoted successfully through assemblies, form time and the PSHE education curriculum. Pupils learn, for example, about diverse cultures and family structures and how to manage conflict and relationships with their friends more effectively.
33. Leaders implement a religious education syllabus which enables pupils to learn about the principal world faiths and develop spiritual understanding. They acquire knowledge of similarities and differences between faiths, and of their principles, beliefs, rituals and ceremonies. This is supported by assemblies at which representatives of various faiths speak to the pupils to help them better understand their beliefs.
34. The importance of a healthy lifestyle is encouraged throughout the school during PSHE lessons. Pupils learn about the benefits of regular physical activity and healthy eating choices. They are provided with a balanced range of nutritional food in the dining hall. Early years staff help children understand the importance of oral hygiene.
35. Leaders implement a typically effective RSE programme, which is taught through PSHE education. Parents are consulted about the content of the programme and staff suitably trained so that sensitive topics such as puberty, relationships and consent are taught in ways appropriate to the pupils' ages. However, RSE does not always develop pupils' understanding of themes as effectively as possible. This is because the delivery of RSE lessons is constrained by the timetable.
36. Specialist teaching in physical education enables pupils to develop a range of abilities, such as how to run more effectively, throw and catch and complete gymnastic movements successfully. Pupils learn about the importance of exercise and its contribution to a healthy lifestyle. Leaders ensure that all year groups, from Reception upwards, swim weekly. Pupils build on these skills through swimming galas and water polo matches. They are involved in competitive fixtures against other schools including, but not limited to, netball, football, swimming and cross-country. As a result, the skills of teamwork are developed and resilience, self-confidence and self-esteem are encouraged.
37. Early years leaders support the children's physical and emotional development well. They enable the children to play confidently using role play spaces indoors and exploring outdoors. Equipment such as play scissors and toy trucks enable imaginative play and help children develop their fine and gross motor skills. Staff engage the children in conversation about their activities and provide effective encouragement to build their confidence and self-esteem.
38. The consistent application of school rules and positive behaviour management, including the awarding of house points and reward time for highly positive conduct, contribute positively to the good behaviour which is evident throughout the school. Any instances of inappropriate behaviour result in pupils being encouraged to reflect on what they have done wrong, make amends and avoid such behaviour in the future. Instances of bullying are rare and dealt with promptly and effectively.

39. The school premises are suitably maintained and regular checks are implemented. Appropriate procedures are in place to mitigate the risk of fire and there are regular fire evacuation drills so that pupils know how respond to emergencies.
40. Leaders ensure that pupils are supervised effectively throughout the school day. There are suitable numbers of staff to supervise break and lunchtime activities and the required ratios of adults to children are maintained in the early years department.
41. Staff are appropriately trained in first aid, including in the early years where all staff are qualified paediatric first aiders, and there is suitable medical accommodation. Pupils receive appropriate medical support when required, and suitable records of the administration of first aid or medication are maintained.
42. Leaders understand the importance of pupils attending school and ensure their daily attendance is carefully registered. They challenge any avoidable absences and analyse patterns and trends regularly. Attendance and admissions registers are appropriately maintained, and leaders inform the local authority promptly when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

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

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

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

44. Through assemblies, PSHE and a range of school activities, such as an African workshop and participation in 'neurodiversity celebration week', pupils learn about diverse cultures and develop understanding and respect for people from diverse backgrounds. Pupils manifest respect for others, an understanding of the importance of tolerance and a willingness to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
45. Assemblies and the PSHE programme focus on issues such as poverty, neurodiversity and public services so that pupils develop an understanding of British society and wider moral awareness. They learn about human rights, including the rights of children, and how prejudice undermines individuals and groups. As a result, pupils understand that discrimination is wrong and support for the vulnerable is right.
46. Leaders promote pupils' social wellbeing through engagement with ethical themes and issues. Pupils discuss how they should respond to challenging moral dilemmas, such as the treatment of other living creatures, and the importance of recycling to the environment.
47. In history, pupils learn about ancient Greece and its contribution to democratic ideas. Through PSHE lessons, they consider the role of local councils and the notion of democratic representation. Pupils' understanding of democratic principles is developed through participation in elections to the school council. Year 6 pupils deepen their knowledge of democracy through the local MP speaking to the school council.
48. Early years children acquire knowledge of British institutions and wider society through visits to the bank, the Post Office and an educational museum. Older pupils learn about the role of the Houses of Parliament and how laws are made and enforced through the PSHE syllabus.
49. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their understanding of finance and economics. In PSHE, they learn about the role of banks, the importance of saving and how to create a budget. Older pupils take part in an entrepreneurial challenge to raise money for a number of charities, both local and national, and then join members of staff in counting the money raised. Younger pupils visit a supermarket to purchase items for cookery and go to a café to purchase a drink and a snack.
50. Older pupils' awareness of possible careers is enhanced by talks from professionals such as doctors, nurses and business people. In early years, children role-play different jobs such as builders, shopkeepers and electricians.
51. The school prepares pupils for the next stage in their education effectively. Pupils visit their next classroom and meet their new teacher before the start of the subsequent academic year. Year 5 and 6 pupils receive effective support as they prepare for assessments and interviews for academically selective secondary schools. Most pupils are successful in securing places at the secondary schools of their choice.
52. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to take on positions of responsibility through representative pupil bodies such as the school council, eco-committee and wellbeing committee.

Together with the roles of school captains and sport captains, these positions enable pupils to develop their ability to contribute positively to school life.

53. Leaders enable pupils to play an active role in the local community. They visit a local care home to spend time with the residents, fundraise for the local food bank and take part in litter-picking. Older pupils visit a local respite care home to work on improving the garden. Through these activities, pupils develop their understanding of the importance of social responsibility and the value of supporting others.

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

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

Safeguarding

55. Safeguarding is securely embedded in the school's culture. There is an appropriate policy which is available to parents, and both the policy and procedures reflect current statutory guidance. Safeguarding leaders are suitably trained for their role. They ensure all staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, including at induction, and are provided with regular updates about safeguarding issues and procedures. Staff undergo online safety training and training about the 'Prevent' duty. Staff understand how to raise concerns regarding any adults working in the school and are confident to do so.
56. Safeguarding leaders maintain effective relationships with children's services and the police and liaise with the local safeguarding partners as and when appropriate. Leaders refer concerns onwards promptly when appropriate. They take appropriate action in response to any safeguarding concerns that are raised, including any instances of child-on-child abuse.
57. Governors' regular meetings with the designated safeguarding leads, an annual review of the safeguarding policy and its implementation and the headteacher's report to governors, ensure effective proprietorial oversight of safeguarding.
58. Leaders ensure that all required pre-employment checks are completed before any adult begins work at the school. An accurate single central record of appointments is maintained. Appropriate oversight by the proprietor ensures this is checked regularly, together with the personnel files.
59. Pupils can bring any concerns to trusted adults, anonymously if they so wish, and each pupil is paired up with one of their peers for additional support. Regular surveys of pupils' attitudes enable leaders to identify pupils experiencing difficulties. Staff know the pupils well and respond promptly and thoughtfully if they raise any worries.
60. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when online. The school's internet is subject to appropriate filtering and monitoring. Designated safeguarding leaders respond effectively whenever there are any breaches.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Brabyns Preparatory School
Department for Education number	356/6004
Address	Brabyns Preparatory School 34-36 Arkwright Road Marple Stockport Cheshire SK6 7DB
Phone number	0161 4272395
Email address	admin@brabynsprepschool.co.uk
Website	http://www.brabynsprepschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Brabyns Preparatory School Ltd
Chair	Mr Steven Wade
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Carrasco
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	83
Date of previous inspection	21 September 2022

Information about the school

62. Brabyns Preparatory School is a co-educational day school. It is located in the village of Marple, near Stockport in Cheshire. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2023. The school is overseen by a board of governors, the chair of which is the group education director of the Bellevue Education International Ltd group, to which the school belongs.
63. There are 21 children in the early years comprising two Nursery classes and one Reception class
64. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. English is an additional language for three pupils.
66. The school states its aims are to nurture children through a warm, safe, family atmosphere and engage them through stimulating teaching so that every child achieves their best, becoming excellent global citizens and knowing the difference between right and wrong.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

15 to 17 October 2024

67. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. 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.

69. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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