

School inspection report

5 to 7 November 2024

The Manor Preparatory School

Faringdon Road

Abingdon

Oxfordshire

OX13 6LN

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. Governors have comprehensive oversight of the school and ensure that school leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities to meet the Independent School Standards consistently.
2. Leaders accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for development. They are supported and challenged by both governors and external agencies. Leaders implement effective and well-informed development plans across the curriculum.
3. The school's aims and ethos are promoted well and can be seen in the attitudes and behaviours of pupils around the school.
4. Pupils make good progress from their starting points. The majority of pupils achieve above age-related expectations in standardised assessments and successfully transition to their first choice senior school.
5. Leaders have developed a suitable, broad curriculum which meets the needs of pupils and which is regularly reviewed. Lessons are carefully planned and teaching typically helps pupils to gain new knowledge, skills and understanding. However, the level of challenge presented in some lessons is not matched to the ability of the pupils. The impact of marking and feedback on the pupils' progress is not consistently effective.
6. Leaders maintain a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the children in the early years. From a young age, pupils learn to understand and regulate their emotions. Leaders ensure that provision is in place for those who need additional emotional and educational support. Consequently, children feel safe, well supported and valued.
7. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and facilitate reasonable adjustments for individuals when necessary. As a result, they lead a diverse and inclusive school community where pupils openly and actively think of others before themselves.
8. Policies and procedures are aligned with the latest statutory guidance. The required information is readily accessible on the school's website.
9. Pupils behave well around the school. They are polite, considerate and respectful of other people. Through a range of guest speakers, trips and charitable initiatives, leaders ensure that pupils develop a broad social and economic education and understand the valuable contribution they can make to their local community and wider society.
10. The school has a robust approach to managing risk. Leaders identify risks within school and in the local area and have implemented appropriate measures to mitigate these risks. Health and safety arrangements, including fire safety, are comprehensive and in line with current requirements.
11. Leaders have developed an effective safeguarding culture. Staff, including those with specific safeguarding responsibility, are appropriately trained and knowledgeable. Leaders take advice from local safeguarding partners, and make prompt referrals to them, as necessary. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they can approach a trusted adult for guidance and support.

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

- teaching consistently provides suitable levels of challenge that is matched to the abilities of all pupils
- marking and feedback consistently allow pupils to understand how they can improve their work and enable them to make consistently good progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Governors and leaders work as a cohesive team to plan and deliver a strategy which actively promotes pupils' wellbeing. Governors demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a result of a highly developed system of scrutiny. Leaders provide regular reports, and there are frequent visits to scrutinise the school's performance. Governors ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities carry out their responsibilities to meet the Standards and to promote the wellbeing of pupils.
13. The school's aims and ethos are promoted well, and can be seen implemented in practice. Leaders' values are widely displayed around the school and reflected in the everyday language used by both pupils and staff.
14. Leaders use a variety of data, including assessment scores and pupil surveys, to develop a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. An effective strategic plan is in place to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted. As a result, pupils are well supported and make good progress across the curriculum.
15. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A clear and detailed accessibility plan and individual passports and risk assessments for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), ensure that reasonable adjustments are made, as necessary. Leaders review the curriculum and monitor lessons and activities to ensure that teaching is inclusive.
16. Policies and procedures are aligned with the latest statutory guidance. Leaders regularly review how effectively and consistently policies are implemented and whether they are understood by staff and pupils.
17. The school provides parents with a wide range of useful information. Leaders regularly upload the latest versions of policies onto the school's website so that parents are kept up to date. Parents are well informed on their children's progress and attainment through a programme of regular and detailed academic reporting.
18. The school operates an effective complaints procedure. Parental concerns are taken seriously and dealt with in an open and timely manner in line with school policy. Governors and leaders regularly review the complaints log and, if appropriate, any lessons are learned, recorded and acted upon.
19. Governors and leaders have a strategic approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing. This includes creating effective links with external agencies such as local safeguarding partners and medical professionals. There is a robust risk management culture that influences decisions at all levels, especially in relation to safeguarding and educational visits. Risk assessments are thorough and regular staff training enhances their knowledge and practice in this area.
20. Early years leaders have the knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They have a detailed understanding of the requirements of the early years framework and ensure that the safeguarding and welfare requirements for early years children are all in place.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum and extra-curricular provision that covers a broad range of subjects and interests whilst ensuring that pupils make good progress in their speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers' secure subject knowledge is evident in many lessons and the positive impact of this upon pupils' own depth of understanding is clear. For example, the pupils' knowledge of subject specific vocabulary is well developed, and pupils confidently use key words and phrases appropriate to the topic being learned.
23. Teachers use a range of effective teaching methods so that pupils acquire new knowledge and make good progress across all areas of the curriculum. Positive relationships between teachers and pupils, built on respect and kindness, result in pupils being willing to share their thoughts and engage in dialogue so they develop a deeper understanding of their work.
24. Pupils make good progress when teachers ensure lesson activities offer an appropriate level of challenge matched to the abilities of all pupils, and feedback offers an opportunity for pupils to reflect on and improve their work. However, this approach is not consistent across the curriculum. In some cases, marking and feedback give limited guidance on how the pupil could improve their work and enhance their knowledge and understanding. Some teaching offers limited opportunities for pupils to think for themselves and develop their intellectual curiosity.
25. Leaders monitor pupils' progress and achievement through standardised assessments, analysing data at individual, year group and school levels. This analysis informs teachers' planning and feeds into whole school development. Data shows that the majority of pupils are working at, or above, age-related expectations in relation to their literacy and numeracy skills. The majority of pupils successfully secure a place with their first choice senior school, some of which have selective entrance criteria.
26. Clear frameworks offer detailed guidance regarding support mechanisms for pupils who have SEND. The needs of pupils who have SEND are well known to teaching staff and effective support is provided in most lessons to account for their needs. There is effective oversight in place and leaders monitor the progress of each child with additional needs, initiating further support whenever needed. Standardised data shows that pupils who have SEND make good progress across the curriculum.
27. Leaders have recently undertaken a data review and the school's 'multi-lingual register' now identifies those pupils who are multi-lingual and those pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). A thorough system of assessment at the point of admission highlights the level of support needed for every child who speaks English as an additional language, and the SEND team then closely monitor individual progress. As a result, pupils with EAL make good progress in their use of English.
28. In the early years, a well-planned curriculum and a programme of individual interventions promotes good progress for all children across the seven areas of learning, with particularly successful emphasis on language and communication. The early years environment is well resourced and, as a result, children engage in child-initiated play in which they demonstrate creativity and curiosity. Teachers guide the children's play and encourage dialogue through effective questioning. As a result, the vast majority of children reach their early learning goals by the end of Reception.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. The wide range of inclusive physical activities and sports enables pupils to be active, develop a healthy lifestyle and broaden their interests. Regular swimming lessons and sports fixtures are enhanced by a range of clubs from archery to golf. Pupils also have opportunities to develop their physical abilities in a range of outdoor settings, including a woodland learning environment and residential trips.
31. From an early age, pupils learn how to better understand and monitor their own mental health and emotional wellbeing. In the early years, leaders ensure children have a range of opportunities to increasingly express and understand their emotions. Staff and parents have been trained in the school's 'zones of regulation' and children are encouraged to 'move their pebble' to denote how they are feeling throughout the day. Support mechanisms are in place, such as 'safe spaces' and 'friendship stops', and children develop their confidence by aspiring to be like characters such as 'helpful hippo' and 'go for it gorilla'. In the older years, pupils needing additional emotional support are identified early and a range of support mechanisms are in place including from trained 'drawing and talking' therapists and staff trained in emotional literacy.
32. Pupils are well supervised by appropriate adults. Pupils and staff share warm, respectful relationships and, as a result, pupils move around their school in a calm and considerate manner. Bullying is not tolerated. In the rare instances when it occurs, it is dealt with promptly with effective support given to all involved.
33. Staff in the early years help children to feel at ease and to enjoy their activities. Children feel secure in their environment as a result of the caring relationships and positive attitudes modelled by staff. Each of the three early years buildings provides ample indoor and outdoor space which include a wide range of resources promoting the development of fine and gross motor skills. As a result, children consistently reach the early learning goals in relation to self-care and physical development.
34. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme ensures pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of the features of a respectful relationship. Parents are consulted regarding any curriculum updates. The curriculum is effectively delivered across the age groups.
35. The school site is maintained to a high standard, with robust health and safety procedures in place. There are regular fire evacuation drills. Training for staff is up to date and suitably recorded. There are suitable procedures and accommodation in place to care for pupils who are injured or become unwell. First aid is provided by well trained staff and pupils with specific medical needs receive suitable care. Any medicine is appropriately administered and stored securely.
36. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained and regularly reviewed to monitor patterns of absence. Staff are vigilant and follow up on unexplained absences promptly. Staff understand local reporting procedures in relation to children who are missing education. They report pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition times to the local authority, as required.

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

37. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

38. The school prepares pupils well for life in British society. The curriculum is designed to promote pupils' understanding of equality and the importance of respecting people's individual characteristics such as race, religion and sex. Pupils develop a tolerance and respect for people from a diverse range of back grounds. In addition, leaders ensure that pupils develop their self-confidence via the life skills embedded within the PSHE curriculum. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their transitions within the school and their move to senior school.
39. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to collaborate with each other in lessons which helps them to behave respectfully towards each other and develop social skills. Pupils are kind and friendly, and display maturity in their social interactions. Adults in the early years successfully support the children's social development through identifying and recognising feelings and emotions. This enables children to show empathy and reflect on how their actions would make other people feel. As a result, the children are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
40. Pupils celebrate and respect the many different cultures of their school and local community. As well as learning about different religions in religious education (RE) lessons, there is a wealth of opportunities in the curriculum where pupils gain an appreciation for different cultures such as 'culture day' and Black History Month. Termly services delivered by a local chaplain are complemented by visits to other local places of worship such as a synagogue and a Sikh temple. Leaders promote equality and respect by providing a 'prayer tree' in every classroom where all pupils, regardless of belief, can hang a wish or a hope for the future.
41. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for developing their future roles in society. From an early age, leaders provide a wide range of opportunities to lead and support their school community, be it as school council representatives or as members of 'the green team'. The pupils are widely committed to maintaining their eco-school status and publish regular reminders around energy and food waste, as well as advice on action to support the environment such as creating 'hedgehog highways' in your garden at home. The pupils are equally committed to local charitable service through a range of community activity such as raising money for a local hospice or singing in the local care home.
42. Leaders support pupils to be able to distinguish right from wrong and to develop a respect for public services and the rule of law. The school has close links with Thames Valley Police. Representatives from the force regularly engage in a broad programme of on-site activities, from assemblies on online safety and drug abuse to reading about the adventures of 'PC Ben' in the early years. Any political issues are presented in a balanced manner.
43. The curriculum ensures that pupils are given numerous opportunities to develop their economic understanding in age-appropriate ways. For example, by studying tax and income in PSHE, the impact of tourism on global economies in Geography, or sterling's strength against foreign currency in modern languages. In Year 6, pupils are given autonomy over the budget for the summer fete and take part in a financial workshop during their co-curricular programme.

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

44. There is an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. A formal annual review of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures by the governors is supplemented by regular oversight and challenge. Governors have a comprehensive understanding of the school's safeguarding arrangements and any specific risks. Clear and comprehensive risk assessments and procedures are in place to mitigate these risks.
45. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest statutory guidance and is a central feature of new staff induction. Staff receive regular training, both in-person and online, organised by a suitably qualified and experienced safeguarding team. As a result, staff have a robust understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures as well as the staff code of conduct and whistleblowing policy. Training includes an awareness of child-on-child abuse and the dangers of extremism.
46. Safeguarding records are carefully managed, regularly reviewed to analyse any trends and cross-referenced with the school's bullying and behaviour logs. Pupils deemed to be at risk, or with an identified need, are closely monitored. Records demonstrate that staff are confident in reporting concerns about other adults and making self-disclosures whenever necessary.
47. Safeguarding leaders readily engage with local agencies for guidance and support. As a result, they are aware of when and how to make referrals relating to staff conduct, early help assessment, child-on-child abuse, children missing education, and extremism. Referrals to children's services, the police or other agencies are made in a timely manner. At the request of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), local safeguarding partners regularly audit the school's safeguarding culture which feeds into school development planning.
48. Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, including online. The online safety curriculum is comprehensive and age appropriate. Arrangements for the monitoring and filtering of online technology are effective and leaders respond to alerts promptly. Pupils understand how to report concerns and appreciate the multiple channels available to them, including worry boxes and self-reporting emotion cards.
49. Governors and leaders ensure there are robust recruitment procedures in place that reflect the latest statutory requirements. Checks are recorded fully and accurately on the single central record of appointments. Staff involved in interviewing candidates are trained in safer recruitment.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	The Manor Preparatory School
Department for Education number	931/6090
Registered charity number	900347
Address	The Manor Preparatory School Faringdon Road Abingdon Oxfordshire OX13 6LN
Phone number	01235 858458
Email address	schoolsecretary@manorprep.org
Website	www.manorprep.org
Proprietor	The Manor Preparatory School Trust
Chair	Mrs Susan Sowden
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Hamlyn
Age range	2-11
Number of pupils	377
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 December 2021

Information about the school

51. Founded in 1907 and located in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, The Manor Preparatory School is a co-educational independent day school for pupils aged 2 to 11 years. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of trustees. Since the previous inspection, a new head and chair of governors have been appointed.
52. The Pre-Nursery accommodates 24 children aged 2 to 3 years and the Nursery can accommodate 32 children aged 3 to 4 years. There are three Reception classes currently made up of 39 children in total.
53. The school has identified 67 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
54. English is an additional language for 26 pupils.
55. The school states its aims are to cherish each child as an individual; enthuse children with a love of learning and the desire to make the very most of their abilities and opportunities; offer a caring yet challenging environment in which children are given the courage to learn from their mistakes and develop resilience; foster a sense of self-worth in each child. They seek to promote respect for different life-styles, cultures and religions; develop a sense of individual responsibility towards others and the environment; create a community which reflects the ethical and moral framework of our Christian foundation and to promote the pupils' spiritual and moral development; inspire pupils to play a positive role in contributing to the life of the school, the wider community and beyond; making a childhood at The Manor as positive and happy as possible.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 November 2024

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

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 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 with staff and pupils
- 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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For more information, please visit isi.net