



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Ipswich Preparatory School

September 2022

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School's Details

School	Ipswich Preparatory School			
DfE number	935/6039			
Registered charity number	310493			
Address	Ipswich Preparatory School 3 Ivory Street Ipswich Suffolk IP1 3QW			
Telephone number	01473 282800			
Email address	prepenquiries@ipswichschool			
Head	Mrs Claire Jackson			
Chair of governors	Mr Henry Staunton			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	266			
	EYFS	70	Lower Prep	57
	Upper Prep	139		
Inspection dates	27 to 29 September 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Ipswich Preparatory School is an independent co-educational school, established in 1883 alongside Ipswich School. The two schools were inspected concurrently and are an educational charity, whose directors form their governing body. The preparatory school is managed on a day-to-day basis by its own head, who was appointed in September 2022 and comprises three sections. The upper prep is for pupils aged 7 to 11 years and lower prep is for those aged 4 to 7. The youngest children attend the separate nursery which also accommodates a registered EYFS setting not included in this inspection.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to provide a caring environment where pupils feel safe and have a wealth of opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, to help them find their own passions and a love of learning. It seeks to encourage the pupils to develop moral and spiritual values; to embrace a spirit of service within the community; and to equip them with life skills to be happy and successful in school and beyond.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a range of business and professional backgrounds from the local area and outlying districts. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average, compared with those taking the same tests nationally. It has identified 45 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia. No pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language for 23 pupils, six of whom require additional support. Data used by the school have identified nine pupils as the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 14 other pupils due to their special talents in languages, sport, music and art.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management.

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.

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 published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports 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.

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

Key findings

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

- Pupils achieve highly in their academic studies and across a range of co-curricular activities.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Pupils are highly effective communicators, confidently using their skills to extend their learning.
- Pupils are effective learners and demonstrate the ability to work confidently on their own, although their ability to use their own initiative to direct their learning is less well developed.

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

- Pupils are extremely self-confident and self-disciplined, demonstrating resilience in their desire to improve their learning.
- Pupils demonstrate a keen awareness of the non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils display excellent behaviour around the school and accept responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils are highly respectful of each other in keeping with the school's ethos of care and compassion for others.

Recommendation

3.3 The school should make the following improvement.

- Enable pupils to extend their academic understanding and study skills through increased opportunities to work independently.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Attainment of pupils across the school is high. A large majority of the youngest children achieve a high level of development by the time they leave the early years setting. Assessment data provided by the school and observations in lessons confirmed that pupils in the prep school maintain this excellent start. Pupils of all ages and abilities make excellent progress over time, as evidenced in the school's detailed tracking system. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or with English as an additional language (EAL) make consistently excellent progress in line with their peers, supported by a rigorous process of identification, intervention and monitoring. The vast majority of parents responding to the questionnaire stated that they are satisfied with the progress their children make throughout the school.

- 3.6 The knowledge, skills and understanding of pupils develop strongly as they progress through the school, benefiting from excellent resources, a broad curriculum and highly supportive teaching. A very large majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their knowledge and skills improve in most lessons. Children in Reception showed rapidly developing co-ordination skills as they painted half an apple, pressing this to paper to create patterns. In Year 1, pupils demonstrated their excellent execution of phonic sounds, using previous knowledge to blend words. Pupils in a Year 6 design and technology (DT) lesson competently identified a wide range of flavours and smells, displaying an excellent appreciation of how these flavours might enhance a recipe. Pupils' learning is greatly enhanced when the teaching engages pupils to think for themselves, such as in a Year 3 science lesson when pupils were challenged to predict whether magnetic poles would attract or repel each other. At times, however, pupils make less progress when they are presented with fewer choices or opportunities to expand their learning beyond set tasks.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages are extremely articulate communicators, displaying highly developed reading, writing and listening skills. In the Nursery, children listened avidly and with a level of concentration which was mature for their ages, as their teacher told them a story from a picture book. In their Year 1 music lesson, pupils confidently placed semibreves on a stave and identified a range of note values, communicating with each other through rhythmic clapping. Year 3 pupils used their communication skills to great effect as they explained the programming requirements to ensure their teacher, acting as a robot, was able to make a jam sandwich. Older pupils created highly atmospheric pieces of writing as they made mundane sentences more vivid by their use of evocative and emotive vocabulary. Pupils speak with confidence and express themselves succinctly and clearly, responding to each other with understanding and sensitivity, supported by the classroom ethos of praise and encouragement.
- 3.8 Pupils display high levels of competency in their numeracy and apply their skills effectively across a range of subjects. They make rapid progress in their numerical understanding and application because of the well-planned curriculum, engaging teaching and school leaders' effective use of assessment data. Across the school, pupils work at an excellent level: Year 2 pupils demonstrated a confident ability in subtracting numbers while older pupils successfully employed appropriate mathematical language to support a game challenge experience. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils effectively converted between decimals, fractions and percentages. In their discussions, pupils were keen to explain how they use their mathematical knowledge in other subjects. Examples included weighing fizzy drinks to determine the amount of carbon dioxide in each, measuring photograph frames in a DT lesson and working with timelines in history.
- 3.9 Pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) to assist their learning is of a good standard overall but is better developed in older pupils who enjoy owning and using the recently provided individual tablet computers. Year 2 pupils displayed good levels of competence in computer science as they learnt how to keep themselves safe online while older pupils confidently made excellent use of their devices to access and choose cooking recipes. Pupils of all ages demonstrate a competent application of their ICT skills for research and presentation purposes and for accessing work set online.
- 3.10 Pupils' study skills develop well as they progress through the school. Pupils in a Year 3 tennis lesson ably identified areas for development and improved their personal targets when developing racket skills. Year 4 pupils, considering a range of fictional characters, hypothesised as to how they might deal with the Iron Man. Pupils demonstrated highly effective skills of analysis, using their scientific knowledge to predict how long it would take a variety of solids to dissolve in certain conditions. Pupils use their knowledge effectively and are keen to use their study skills, however the provision of open-ended tasks is not sufficiently wide to enable them to develop their thinking and learning to the highest level.
- 3.11 Pupils are successful within the formal curriculum and beyond. They achieve considerable success in gaining scholarships to senior schools, with several gaining academic and other competitive scholarships. Pupils consistently achieve regional and county successes in hockey, netball, football and

tennis. They have benefited considerably in this regard from the excellent resources and staffing provided through the governors' recent initiative to raise the profile of sport within the curriculum and co-curricular programme. Pupils achieve highly in public music examinations in a wide range of instruments, supported by a further governor initiative where music facilities have been extensively upgraded and made freely available to prep school pupils. Pupils enjoy the varied opportunities to participate in dramatic activities and many achieve high distinctions in public examinations.

- 3.12 Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning across all areas of the school. They are diligent and conscientious in their lessons and display an eager motivation to learn. Children in the EYFS display independence in their learning, making sensible, informed choices about the activities they wish to pursue and settling quickly and productively to their tasks. Older pupils approach their learning with a keen desire to do well. In chamber choir, pupils listened carefully, taking note to ensure each voice blended well with the whole and following the conductor to excellent effect. Year 1 pupils worked effectively together in a French lesson as they discussed topical ideas and vocabulary. In a Year 3 art lesson, pupils expertly manipulated a wide range of equipment including ink, rollers and tiles to create repeating patterns. They worked independently and collaboratively, asking for support where they felt they needed it. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school equips their children with the team-working and collaborative skills they will need in later life. Pupils are very effective learners and demonstrate the ability to work independently on directed tasks with confidence, however their ability to exercise their own initiative is not particularly well-developed as many learning experiences leave little opportunity for them to move beyond the set activities.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages demonstrate high levels of self-confidence and self-awareness. They are supported by the strong pastoral care they receive which engenders in pupils the knowledge that the school will support and encourage them to succeed in all they attempt. Almost all parents responding to the questionnaire stated that the school helps their children to be confident and independent. Reception children reflect well upon their own behaviour, finding pleasure in 'being golden when I'm smiling' and 'golden when I'm kind.' Older pupils do not fear making mistakes and this boosts their confidence and work ethic, as seen when Year 3 pupils discussed and questioned each other on the design of a book cover. Pupils display confidence in their school community, saying they feel valued and cared for as individuals, in fulfilment of the school's strong promotion of the importance of pastoral care.
- 3.15 Pupils of all ages understand the importance of making the right decisions, knowing that their choices affect their own successes and may impact on those around them. Younger children consider how important it is to be kind to one another while older pupils understand the importance of wise decision-making both in their work and playtimes. Pupils are supported in this through the well-planned elements of the curriculum which help them evaluate what makes a wise decision. Pupils are actively involved in making decisions which affect their time at school through the school council where their voice is heard and respected. A pupil-led initiative, *Talking Partners*, has been adopted by the school, resulting in each pupil having a special partner with whom they can work in lessons. Another is based on an acrostic for 'FRIENDS' which exhorts pupils to be kind and supportive of each other and is advertised in classrooms by a pupil-designed poster.
- 3.16 Pupils display a strong awareness of the non-material elements of life, seen from the youngest age, when children in Reception commented that their rainbow relaxation made them feel calm. Following their chapel service, older pupils spoke warmly of the wonderful sense of community they experience as they meet together. In a Year 4 English lesson, pupils demonstrated high levels of empathy as they considered how both Shackleton's crew and those left behind on the shore must have felt when the Endeavour left for the Antarctic. Writing postcards home, pupils spoke of the loneliness they

experienced at night times, thinking of their loved ones so far away and also of their pride in being chosen for such an adventure. Pupils develop a deep appreciation of philosophical questions through the newly combined philosophy and religious education lessons, a result of governors' suggestion to broaden the curriculum. Pupils spoke with empathy and sensitivity about the plight of the people in the Ukraine, showing their understanding of the devastation of disrupted lives. The artwork displayed around the school is evidence of the pupils' ability to express their feelings through the medium of colour and texture. Throughout the school pupils gain a mature awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses through opportunities to reflect on their work, their behaviour and through yoga and wellbeing sessions.

- 3.17 Pupils show a highly developed sense of moral responsibility. The vast majority of parents and every pupil responding to the questionnaire, agreed that the school expects pupils to behave well. Pupils understand the need for kindness and good behaviour and demonstrate an excellent understanding of what is right and wrong. They know when they get things wrong and value the opportunity they are given to reflect on and learn how to make better choices next time. Behaviour in the classroom is almost always of a very high standard, with pupils approaching their work in a mature, sensible manner and behaviour around the school is excellent. Children in Reception wrote their own golden lunchtime rules to help them behave more sociably towards others by not shouting and queuing patiently. Older pupils were seen helping younger ones at lunchtime and pupils are consistently polite and courteous in all aspects of school life. Pupils understand the system of rewards and sanctions although they say that sanctions are rarely required. From the youngest to the oldest, pupils do not want their behaviour to hurt or upset others but strive to make their school community happy for everyone.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate strong social and collaborative skills and enjoy opportunities to work together. This was seen in a Year 3 lesson where pupils happily helped each other to explore the articles that Sikhs wear and in the highly successful cooperation between older pupils when using their talking partners to improve their French accents. Pupils in a Year 6 mathematics lesson approached the task of helping their partners to spot and rectify errors in a positive and sensitive manner, achieving excellent results both academically and in building their relationships together. All staff who responded to the questionnaire agreed that pupils readily help and support others. Pupils are proud of their school and demonstrate a strong sense of loyalty as they work together to achieve common goals in keeping with the school's aim to foster a sense of service to each other.
- 3.19 Pupils display a keen awareness of the needs of others, and they are extremely willing to help each other both inside and outside the classroom. They gain valuable leadership skills from the earliest age through an increasing pattern of opportunities as they transition through the school, of buddies, school councillors, eco warriors, house captains and monitors to their final year as leaders. They take with them, when they leave the school, a Leaver's Certificate, which records all the positions they have held throughout their journey through the school, and this encourages them to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Pupils are dedicated in their efforts to raise awareness and money for those less fortunate than themselves, selecting local charities to support and taking food to local food banks after the Harvest Festival. Through these roles, pupils contribute positively to the lives of others in the school community and beyond, reflecting the successful efforts of senior managers to inculcate a spirit of service towards others.
- 3.20 Pupils of all backgrounds and cultures value the inclusive welcoming atmosphere of their diverse and well-integrated school community. They speak convincingly of their understanding that everyone is unique and understand the importance of respecting those who have a different culture or religion. Pupils are well aware of the diversity within their school and delight in exploring the richness this brings through their participation in cultural celebrations, learning about Jewish festivals and visits to places of worship such as a local mosque. They understand the significance of the Christian festivals of Easter and the Nativity and of the importance of Remembrance observances. Pupils are sensitive

towards the beliefs of their peers and are respectful towards each other, supported by the curriculum which has been carefully planned to ensure these excellent outcomes.

- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe physically, mentally and online. Almost every parent and pupil responding to the questionnaire stated that the school encourages pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils understand the need for a well-balanced diet and appreciate the choices they are given at snack and lunchtimes. Older pupils walking across to the senior school for lunch and other activities are careful to follow the path and wait for a member of staff to guide them across the road. Younger children explained how vegetables and fruit are good for you and make a tasty snack in the mornings. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the many sporting activities available to them and speak of the benefits of exercise both mentally and physically. They understand the need to relax and enjoy their yoga and quiet times. Pupils competently explain how to look after themselves online, supported by the comprehensive life-skills and pastoral programmes, and talks from expert speakers such as the police. Pupils feel safe in their school and are grateful to the staff who look after and care for them.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the governor for the prep school, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended chapel and house assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Pamela Johnson	Reporting inspector
Mrs Laura Turner	Compliance team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Mrs Kerry Cooke	Team inspector (Deputy head academic, IAPS school)