



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Sevenoaks Preparatory School

March 2022

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School's Details

School College	Sevenoaks Preparatory School			
DfE number	886/6015			
Registered charity number	110021			
Address	Sevenoaks Preparatory School Fawke Cottage Godden Green Sevenoaks Kent TN15 0JU			
Telephone number	01732 762336			
Email address	admin@theprep.org.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Luke Harrison			
Chair of governors	Mrs Janette Berry			
Age range	2 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	403			
	EYFS	110	Pre-prep (including EYFS)	187
	Prep	216		
Inspection dates	22 to 25 March 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Sevenoaks Preparatory School is a co-educational day school. The school is divided into sections, the pre-prep for children in the EYFS and those in Years 1 and 2 and the prep for those in Years 3 to 8. It was founded in 1919 and became an educational trust in 2003. The current headmaster took up his post in January 2012. The school is a charitable trust, whose trustees act as the governing body. Since the previous inspection a new Centenary building has been added which provides specialist teaching rooms for Years 6 to 8 including a science laboratory, art studio, library area and ICT suite.
- 1.2 Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.
- 1.3 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school's *Way of Life* emphasises the importance of developing self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence, with an emphasis on kindness, responsibility and community. The school aims to provide a balance of academic challenge with personal development, focusing on the pupils being the best version of themselves through their own endeavours and the collaborative guidance of staff and parents.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils mainly come from professional families living within a 15-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 56 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional specialist help for a range of difficulties. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for eight pupils, of whom four receive additional support for the development of their English. The needs of the more able are supported by their classroom and subject teachers through modification of the curriculum as required and through a range of extra-curricular activities.

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 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 in the pre-prep and prep sections and relationships and sex education in Years 7 and 8, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. 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, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply 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.

Key findings

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

- Pupils of all abilities make rapid progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils' study skills and their attitudes to learning are excellent.
- By the time they leave the school, pupils' levels of achievement are excellent right across the curriculum.
- Pupils' ease of communication with everyone they encounter is excellent.

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

- Pupils of all ages are excellent decision-makers and understand the significance of their choices.
- Pupils display high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Pupils' social development is of an extremely high standard, and they understand the importance of working together to create a harmonious community.
- Pupils' respect for inclusion and diversity is excellent. They challenge injustice at every opportunity.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Ensure that pupils can further strengthen their knowledge, skills and understanding consistently, across all subjects and age groups, in response to marking and feedback that provides clear next steps with which pupils can meaningfully engage.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils' excellent levels of attainment, as indicated by the evidence from lesson observations, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of their work, together with standardised measures of progress in mathematics and English, show that pupils of all abilities and ages make rapid progress over time. These levels are supported by the school's robust and consistent use of tracking data to monitor levels of progress from the pre-prep through to Year 8. The use of this monitoring to implement effective and highly personalised interventions ensures excellent outcomes for pupils, including those with SEND, EAL and the more able. Inspection evidence reflects the views of parents in the questionnaires where almost all who responded felt that teaching, including any online provision, enables their child to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils achieve above average outcomes, for those taking the same test nationally, across all year groups and by the time they leave the school, many are receiving offers and awards to sought-after senior school destinations. Pupils achieve excellent outcomes in creative subjects such as art, music and drama with there being many opportunities for co-curricular involvement. Significant contributory factors enabling these excellent outcomes are the high quality and challenge of the teaching and the breadth of the curriculum.
- 3.7 Pupils have an outstanding attitude to their learning, promoting their excellent progress. They are enthusiastic and eager to learn. This positive and deeply embedded learning approach which is an element of the school's *Way of Life* philosophy, strongly supports the development of pupils' independence, initiative and self-challenge, and enables them to take responsibility for their own learning and development.
- 3.8 From the EYFS, pupils thrive in a learning environment which allows them to explore the curriculum and gives them opportunities to follow their own interests. They can reflect on their learning and pupils feel that failure is an opportunity to improve their learning and skills. Pupils participate in their learning with cheerful enthusiasm but also with determination and a willingness to succeed. Pupils are excellent at working collaboratively, showing support and tolerance for each other, but are equally confident when asked to work independently. Teachers provide a relaxed but purposeful environment for these attitudes to flourish. Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic about their studies and talk with gratitude of the support and encouragement they are given by their teachers.
- 3.9 From a young age pupils develop excellent key study skill techniques, such as the effective use of technology, self-assessment of work, and identifying ways of developing their short-term memory. Learning skills of this nature stand them in good stead and support their future progress and development. From the early years of their education when they are regularly asked their opinion, invited to predict what comes next and how something happened, children begin building firm foundations for study skills.
- 3.10 As pupils move up through the school, they develop a wide range of study skills to draw upon. They are regularly challenged by their teachers to question, develop high-order skills and to individually investigate and analyse data and draw reasonable outcomes from this important process. Older pupils demonstrate higher-order skills by debating ideas and challenging perspectives through philosophy lessons and class discussions whilst showing respect for conflicting views. Pupils improve their revision techniques and confidently tackle examination questions guided by the excellent learning support they receive. This positive picture is reflected in the pre-inspection questionnaires where almost all parents felt that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they will need in later life.
- 3.11 Pupils make excellent progress in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding. This is a result of the inclusive balance and breadth of the curriculum, well-planned lessons and thoughtful differentiated teaching, all delivered by knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed staff. For example, children in the nursery were able to explain that when planting their sunflower seeds they would need water, sun and soil to grow successfully. Pupils benefit greatly from specialist subject teaching which includes a range of stimulating activities. Older pupils show excellent knowledge in a wide variety of subjects such as Spanish where they can construct complex sentences using vocabulary that indicates a great depth of knowledge. This was shown in their outstanding presentations in Spanish, using technology, on healthy eating and a balanced diet. Older pupils also demonstrated excellent previous knowledge and profundity of understanding in science when discussing the reactivity series of different metals.
- 3.12 The excellent development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding is strongly supported by the senior leadership team who ensures that pupils' experiences are exciting and varied. Pupils with SEND show expert ability to adapt the skills learnt, for example in one-to-one lessons, to their class activities. The learning of all pupils is enhanced in most instances by effective interactive feedback, which

enables pupils to further develop their subject knowledge, skills and understanding. However, this is currently inconsistent in some subjects and in some age groups.

- 3.13 Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills in their everyday interactions with each other and adults. They are noticeably articulate and apply their speaking skills confidently when performing to an audience, as was evidenced in a religious studies lesson when they debated whether England was still a Christian country. Pupils are given many opportunities to hone their skills through regular communication in the classroom and by presenting to audiences in numerous co-curricular activities such as assemblies and in drama. They are confident and articulate when speaking, listening and writing which enhances their ability to make excellent progress in the classroom. From an early age the youngest EYFS children develop strong communication skills. They are not afraid to interact with each other and are confident when talking to staff and adults. They can ask for what they want, take instruction and they show patience when listening to their peers. Older pupils use sophisticated language to express their ideas both verbally and in the written form. In a creative writing lesson younger prep pupils were successful in using their senses, personification and onomatopoeia within their descriptive writing about a journey they were taking. Prior to this, the pupils discussed both the literal and metaphorical spiritual journey showing excellent knowledge and understanding. Written work in pupils' books is of a consistently high standard. Pupils of all ages read with eloquence and understanding.
- 3.14 The pupils have excellent numeracy skills. These have a firm foundation in the EYFS where Kindergarten children demonstrated how they can count to 20 with confidence and understanding. Pupils' mathematical competency develops rapidly as they progress through the school. They clearly enjoy mathematics and feel well supported by their teachers. They work at a high level in class as they are consistently challenged by teachers who, while successfully making the subject interesting and fun, expect pupils to demonstrate their full understanding through the quality of their written work and their verbal explanations. This is supported by the high standard of accurate numeracy work seen in pupil books and the mathematical knowledge and practical skills successfully applied in several other subject areas. For example, when designing and building model racing cars as part of the science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) day, pupils accurately calculated the distance the car would travel when moving along surfaces with different levels of friction.
- 3.15 Pupils are proficient in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) and use it across many areas of the curriculum to support their learning, research information, and develop specific computing skills such as coding. They instinctively and expertly use technology to research on specific topics, as was seen in prep-pupils' eco-projects on littering. Pupils benefit from the investment governors have made in technical resources and electronic devices enabling pupils to gain confidence in their use of technology from their earliest years. This was shown when younger prep-school pupils competently used a book creator program to design books showing how muscles work when doing different actions. Pupils of all ages scan codes on classroom walls to access information and records of their work. Pupils understand the importance of e-safety training which allows them to use the technology safely and for its intended purpose. Pupils are, as a result, confident to apply their ICT skills widely and develop a solid technical foundation to build upon in their future learning.
- 3.16 Pupils' achievements are excellent both in and out of school as they are actively encouraged to participate in an extensive range of activities. Teams and individuals demonstrate high levels of achievement in the various sports offered by the school and through the extensive programme of inter-school matches and clubs which ensure that all pupils can become involved. Pupils achieve a great deal and enjoy much success across a broad range of activities including music, drama, art, and a wide variety of sports because the school places a great emphasis on fulfilling potential by both identifying and then developing pupils' individual skills and talents. This attitude is strongly supported by having specialist staff in all curriculum areas and access to purpose-built and high-quality facilities and resources.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.17 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.18 Pupils are expert decision-makers. They speak with confidence about how they see decision-making as an important part of their school and future lives. They can reflect on how the school encourages them to make their own decisions and then offers advice that helps shape future decisions. Pupils understand the wider implication of decision-making in areas such as relationship development. They see kindness as a crucial cornerstone of this stating that there can never be too much kindness and how being selfish can undermine positive relationships. Pupils were keen to report that they feel that their voice is heard and valued and that changes often happen as a result. For example, girls and boys were given equal opportunities to participate in sports because of a school council discussion.
- 3.19 Pupils display excellent levels of self-understanding and self-esteem. They confidently express their feelings and have no fear of making mistakes. This is developed through the school's culture and ethos where mistake making is seen as an invaluable part of the learning process. In discussions pupils eloquently conveyed the fact that they loved their independence and appreciated that there was a support network behind them should they ever require it, thus developing their self-confidence. They are self-reflective and have an objective awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. They are very aware of how their resilience has developed and are positive about all that the school has done to encourage this through *The Way of Life* school philosophy. They learn to understand themselves and, as a result, are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. This is a view shared by almost all parents who feel the school helps their child to be confident and independent.
- 3.20 Pupils are excellent collaborative workers and socialisers. They realise the positive impact of effective group endeavours and could even sum things up by stating how important it was to put any differences aside. Pupils place a high value on supporting friends of all ages and relish the opportunity to do so, such as during the inspection, when older pupils worked with those in the pre-prep on an Easter egg hunt. These older pupils showed kindness and patience beyond their years, demonstrating an excellent understanding of their responsibilities within the school. Pupils understand how their social development can have a positive impact outside of the school such as being involved in the Sevenoaks Youth Council project. The development of community is an extremely high priority of the school; hence the social development skills of the pupils are consistently excellent. This was echoed by parents who cited it as a key strength of the school in their questionnaire responses.
- 3.21 Being respectful comes as second nature to most of the pupils. They actively challenge discrimination and firmly believe that everyone is unique with their own set of personal qualities. In discussions with inspectors, pupils spoke about how they treat everyone equally as it was a natural part of their personality. This was shown in a history lesson for older pupils who demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of the issues regarding slavery during the time of the British Empire, citing the injustice and mistreatment of others as something that should never happen again. Pupils feel confident to question and talk about a range of matters, such as supporting members of the school community who may be LGBTQ+. Nothing phases them and thus their sense of understanding around diversity and inclusion is excellent. Their well-developed understanding of diversity within society has been explored through lessons, clubs, assemblies, relationships and sex education schemes of work and extended project work. Staff provide outstanding role models around these important topics. Pupils are tolerant and supportive towards each other, regardless of differences, and show an appreciation of communities and individuals who experience significant challenges in their lives.
- 3.22 Pupils have a well-developed depth of spiritual understanding. They understand what makes them feel good inside and how positive friendships are important. Peer feedback helps strengthen these scenarios. The depth of pupils' spiritual understanding was demonstrated when pre-school pupils were debating a conundrum and had to consider the worth of different individuals working on the same task but playing different roles. They showed a willingness to philosophically debate the dilemma which required pupils to place a material value on a non-material event, which they did with

insight and sensitivity. Children in the EYFS showed a deep appreciation of the natural world when working in the school's woodland setting where they listened attentively to the sounds of nature. In staff discussions, staff attributed much of this understanding to the embedded *Way of Life* philosophy of the school. Pupils demonstrate a mature philosophical understanding by reflecting, then adjusting their views after listening to the opinions of others.

- 3.23 Pupils have an excellent sense of morality and responsibility for their own behaviour. They appreciate how the school helps them to reflect on their actions, especially if they make a wrong decision. They are mature in their thinking realising the importance of seeing things from another point of view. A strong pastoral system underpins the moral development of the pupils as does positive role modelling from older pupils and staff. Pupils are expert philosophical and moral debaters and think critically from an early age. Older pupils relish the opportunity to support the well-being of the younger pupils. The school enables pupils to assume positions of responsibility which further encourages them to develop their skills in caring for others. Pupils challenge misbehaviour and unkindness when they encounter them and show no tolerance for bullying. Pupils emphasised the importance of taking responsibilities seriously during their discussions with inspectors. They fully appreciate the importance and need for rules and maintaining high moral standards both in school and in a civilised society.
- 3.24 Pupils understand that being part of the school community is part of the *Way of Life* and that active involvement makes the school a better place for everyone. They understand that serving and helping others is an ongoing and not a one-off event. Pupils are keen to learn about how life is more difficult for some people and the crucial part they can play in making things better. The school encourages active participation and ownership of fund-raising projects. The pupils are not short of ideas and initiatives because they care deeply. They raise funds for local charities as well as providing invaluable contributions to community projects and global crises, such as the recent *Sunflower Day* to raise funds for humanitarian needs in the Ukraine. In pupil interviews, they spoke proudly of the school's *Oak Award* scheme saying how important it was to involve yourself in anything that pushes you out of your boundaries.
- 3.25 From a very early age the pupils are aware of the importance of staying safe, eating sensibly and keeping fit and healthy. They recognise these aspects as a vital factor in their on-going personal well-being and individual development. This is because of a well-planned pastoral curriculum, closely linked to a range of age-appropriate educational assemblies and talks, supported by caring and pro-active pastoral staff. Pupils have an excellent sense and understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle, a view reflected by parents in the questionnaires. They enjoy a varied and healthy selection of food at lunchtime and are encouraged to make choices that will benefit their health and well-being. They enjoy maintaining their physical health but also realise the importance of a healthy mind. Pupils speak up about their emotions. The *Way of Life*, the school's core values, is at the heart of all that the pupils do and helps guide them through their school day and prepares them well for the rest of their lives.

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 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 governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Graham Gorton	Reporting inspector
Miss Kaye Lovejoy	Compliance team inspector, team inspector (Former head, IAPS/ISA school)
Mr Richard Evans	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Mr Edward Rees	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)