



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY SCHOOL

JANUARY 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Notre Dame Preparatory School			
DfE number	936/6570			
Registered charity number	1081875			
Address	Notre Dame Preparatory School Burwood House Cobham Surrey KT11 1HA			
Telephone number	01932 869991			
Email address	office@notredame.co.uk			
Headteacher	Ms Merinda D'Aprano			
Chair of governors	Mr Gerald Russell			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	194			
	Boys	21	Girls	173
	EYFS	60	Juniors	134
Inspection dates	25 to 26 January 2017			

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Bridget Windley

Reporting inspector

Mrs Julie Jackson

Team inspector (Head of pre-prep, HMC and IAPS school)

Mrs Jane Scott

Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	1
About the school	1
What the school seeks to do	1
About the pupils	1
Recommendations from previous inspections	2
2 KEY FINDINGS	3
Recommendation	3
3 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	6

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Notre Dame Preparatory School is an independent Roman Catholic day school primarily for girls aged 2 -11, although boys also attend in the Nursery. It is part of the 400-year-old Order of the Company of Mary Our Lady. In 1937, the school, together with its sister senior school, opened at its present site on the banks of the River Mole, outside Cobham. The schools have independent leadership teams, but work closely together and are overseen by a common governing body. Four of the members of the current board are Sisters of the Order of the Company of Mary Our Lady.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, a new head and chair of governors have been appointed. The facilities have been upgraded with the addition of an all-weather pitch, new netball courts and a fully refurbished Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) block. Outdoor play and woodland areas have also been developed.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to develop a secure and stimulating environment in which pupils are encouraged and challenged to fulfil their potential, both academically and physically, and gain an appreciation of the world in which they live. It is considered to be of high importance that each pupil is respected as a valued individual and to imbue feelings of confidence, independence and, above all, self-esteem.

About the pupils

- 1.4 The school draws pupils from the surrounding area of south-west London and has many pupils from various minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has identified 15 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 22 pupils, 6 of these receive specialist support and the rest have their needs supported by their classroom teacher. Within the curriculum, the school provides a programme of challenging activities in mathematics and English for 14 pupils who are identified as being more able.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in March 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Implement fully the development plan for the support of pupils with English as an additional language.
 - Ensure that marking consistently provides pupils with guidance about how they can improve their work.
 - Ensure that evaluation in the EYFS pays due attention to the Reception age range.
 - Provide more opportunities in the EYFS for independent learning in Reception.
- 1.7 The school has fully met all but one of the recommendations of the previous inspection, and partially met the recommendation to ensure that marking consistently provides pupils with guidance about how they can improve their work. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- The pupils are extremely well educated in line with the school's aims to develop a secure and stimulating environment, in which pupils are encouraged and challenged to fulfil their potential.
- Achievement is excellent because the majority of the teaching has ambitious expectations, utilises stimulating resources and sets challenging tasks.
- Pupils with SEND, EAL and those who have been identified by the school as being more able achieve their full potential because they receive appropriate teaching to meet their needs.
- Pupils do not always benefit from marking which includes useful advice for improvement.

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

- Pupils' personal development is outstanding: they wholeheartedly respect and exemplify the school's *Floreceer* initiative; 'Love, Learn and Flourish'.
- Pupils display a genuine kindness and respect for one another.
- Pupils throughout the school show excellent confidence and self-awareness.
- Pupils' have high levels of appreciation and understanding of cultural traditions different to their own, and they show notable respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Recommendation

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

- Ensure all marking provides the pupils with guidance on how to improve their learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The school meets fully its aim to encourage and challenge pupils to fulfil their potential. Within an atmosphere of warmth and calm, pupils strive to achieve their very best. Throughout the school pupils have excellent attitudes towards their learning, towards each other, and towards their teachers and they share views and ideas most effectively. In all lessons observed collaborative learning is second nature. Pupils are mature and independent learners and are keen to take initiative in their learning when required.
- 3.3 The excellent standard of achievement is supported most effectively by the new head and the newly formed leadership team. Pupils' high standards of achievement are the result of robust systems and structures, and the closer monitoring and staff development which has been introduced. Governance is particularly strong and provides the school with a clear ethos that reflects its aims. Governors ensure that facilities and resources to support achievement are of an excellent quality. Evaluation within the EYFS setting has been given particular priority, which meets a recommendation from the previous inspection. Opportunities for these children to experience a richer curriculum have been greatly enhanced by their new purpose-built accommodation.
- 3.4 The school does not enter pupils for National Curriculum tests in Year 6 and is exempt from the DfE teaching and learning requirements in the EYFS, but data provided by the school from standardised tests indicates that attainment is above the national average. From the scrutiny of the pupils' work, lesson observations and discussions with pupils throughout the school, attainment is judged to be stronger than the historical test data suggests and is high in relation to national age-related expectations. The breadth of the curriculum provides numerous opportunities for the pupils to achieve very well in all subjects. This high level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils achieve at least a good rate of progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. In many lessons observed during inspection, progress was more rapid where challenging work had been set. A small minority of pupils commented in the questionnaire that they do not know how well they are doing but in interviews they reported that this was not the case in all subjects. However, in the book scrutiny, the inspectors identified that the marking did not always provide pupils with suggestions on how to improve.
- 3.5 Pupils develop high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in all areas of their learning, including the EYFS. This is particularly so in literacy and mathematics. Teaching, which is both skilful and knowledgeable in almost all lessons, makes a highly significant contribution to pupils' strong achievement. Lessons are delivered with enthusiasm and humour that enhances learning. Pupils are able to extend their ideas and offer their views and questions through the many opportunities provided. In humanities, older pupils demonstrated excellent knowledge of environmental issues affecting our world. Mature discussions about emissions of fuel polluting the environment exemplified their high level reasoning skills.
- 3.6 Pupils are highly skilled in literacy. They are notably articulate and apply their speaking skills confidently when performing to an audience. The oldest pupils have an excellent understanding of parts of speech and are competent in changing the tenses of verbs. As pupils move through the school they read and write with increasing fluency and in a range of contexts. They listen attentively to the views of others. A recent story writing workshop used group brainstorming discussions to inspire the pupils to write creatively and independently about winter.

- 3.7 Throughout the school pupils achieve high standards in mathematics. Older pupils confidently apply logical and mathematical understanding to a range of subjects. In a Spanish lesson, older pupils were observed adding and multiplying numbers and then recording their answers either numerically or in written Spanish. Pupils throughout the school are confident in their use of technology. Younger pupils learn basic coding which is extended as they move through the school. Older pupils can make presentations and use the tablet computers most confidently for photography and for publishing material for school events. The oldest pupils were observed using their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to create a presentation using ratio and equivalents to create word problems. These were used at a later date to explain proportion to their peers and their teacher. Pupils gain these strong ICT skills through the frequent opportunities to use the well-equipped and spacious ICT suites in the prep and the joint facilities shared with the senior school.
- 3.8 Excellent examples of independent learning within the EYFS are evident through the continuous provision of stimulating activities promoting all areas of development. This meets the recommendation from the previous inspection. Pupils throughout the school approach investigative challenges enthusiastically and they are confident to use a wide range of resources. Pupils in the younger classes choose a reference book each Friday and learn one fact to share with their peers on Monday, so building up a bank of useful knowledge. In a geography lesson, pupils were observed researching continents and sharing their findings with their peers. Older pupils develop good techniques in science where they are tasked to analyse the pitch of instruments or critique the reasons for selective breeding. Opportunities for independent work are enhanced by the well-stocked library, a bright and cheerful room which is most conducive to reading and studying.
- 3.9 In the questionnaire, a very small minority of parents reported that their child's needs are not met effectively. The inspectors found no evidence to support this view. Pupils with SEND at all stages make rapid progress and many achieve in line with their peers because their individual needs are met in all lessons. In interviews, they spoke highly of the excellent support they receive from staff. Data provided by the school indicates clearly that pupils with EAL progress rapidly, as their English becomes more assured. They are extremely well supported by personalised planning and efficient teaching. Thus the recommendation from the previous inspection has been fully met. More able pupils also achieve highly as a result of the exciting and challenging opportunities they are given to succeed such as debating, creating musical compositions and designing computer games.
- 3.10 Sports teams achieve considerable success in swimming, netball, athletics and cross country running and many take ballet lessons. Individual pupils achieve outstanding success at county level in swimming and drama and as associate members of the Royal National Ballet. Music offers considerable opportunities for pupils to achieve and most children play at least one musical instrument. The *Lestonnac* and *Bordeaux* choirs, string groups and many various ensembles provide musical opportunities for pupils of all ages to develop and enhance their skills. Pupils regularly perform in high quality productions staged by the school in its exceptional theatre.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Within a calm, close-knit and purposeful atmosphere all pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They show a keen awareness of the feelings and needs of others and build a reasoned set of attitudes, values and beliefs based on Christian principles.
- 4.3 Pupils display genuine kindness and respect for one another. Pupils in the EYFS know how to work together and solve problems. Pupils throughout the school appreciate one another's sensitivities and differences; they are tolerant of one another and show understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. In the questionnaires, all pupils who responded said that the school encourages them to respect others. In a drama class, older pupils worked together most effectively to select a favourite scene from their end of year play. They showed considerable excitement and confidence as they began to allocate parts for improvisation.
- 4.4 Pupils develop a strong sense of the need to help those less fortunate than themselves. Choirs sing to members of the community and take part in concerts for children's charities. They enthusiastically raise funds through a variety of self-initiated activities for charitable causes, for instance for local hospices, undeveloped countries and natural disasters. Pupils make recommendations for development of the school through the school council. The pupils' views and ideas are valued and have led to planters being purchased and to the creation of a whole-school tiled mosaic.
- 4.5 Pupils throughout the school show excellent confidence and self-awareness. Children in the EYFS show the ability to critique their work and they are keen to ask their teachers what to do to make further improvements. Older pupils show immense resilience and the desire to learn new skills. They report in interviews that teachers encourage them to persevere in lessons. This is particularly evident when they participate in their annual ski-trip, where individual determination affords huge success for many pupils.
- 4.6 Pupils' show high levels of appreciation and a deep understanding of cultural traditions different to their own. Children in the EYFS learn about Diwali and celebrate saints' days and they showed immense enjoyment in their music lesson as they performed an energetic Chinese dragon dance. The pupils show respect for Christianity as well as other major religions. In the questionnaires, all parents who responded agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Such important values are gained through their work in circle time, personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) and religious studies lessons. Cultural events at the school and visiting speakers further raise the pupils' strong awareness of other faiths and traditions.
- 4.7 As they grow older pupils become increasingly aware that the decisions they take are important determinants of their own success and well-being. Children in the EYFS froze toy bears in ice and then had to decide how best to thaw them out. An organised vote ensued and most decided that the radiator would be the best option. Older pupils reported that they are encouraged to take greater independence as they move up the school.

- 4.8 Pupils show excellent spiritual development. Children in the EYFS have high regard for, and a heightened awareness of, their natural surroundings. They use their woodland area to investigate changing seasons, appreciating beauty and colour. In a Nursery lesson a child was fascinated by the footprints he made in some shaving foam, very intensely checking the patterns against his own shoes. In an assembly, six and seven year old pupils were reminded of *Florecer*, a current project which promotes the school's values, 'Love, Learn and Flourish'. Pupils offered their own translation of the values such as, 'always show care, try something new and do your best'. Older pupils sing tunefully and melodically and gain deep awareness of spirituality through the genre of music they learn in preparation for Mass. They also enjoy opportunities for self-reflection in a tranquil garden dedicated to Saint Jeanne. This strong development is successfully supported by the school's values and practices. The delightful ethos of the school is promoted consistently throughout all aspects of school life and it stems from the excellent and supportive governance provided.
- 4.9 In the EYFS, children respectfully observe their classroom rules and the excellent behaviour, which originates in the setting, is evident throughout the whole school. The current school initiative *Manners on the Move* is actively encouraging the pupils to show self-discipline and be responsible for their own behaviour. Pupils develop a strong understanding of the workings of democracy and of the concept of economic well-being. Opportunities for democratic voting, such as the election of class captains, further this understanding. Colourful wall displays confirm that pupils strongly support British traditions, and in discussions pupils reflected on the importance of Remembrance Day.
- 4.10 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and why it is important to be active. Pupils reported in interviews that they are regularly educated in the dangers of social media and they sign a declaration that they will use ICT responsibly. Reception children know why they wash their hands before they eat and understand that they cannot use the woodland area or the outdoor play equipment if it is icy. All pupils show an excellent understanding of what constitutes a balanced meal and make excellent choices from the popular lunches. Nursery children are offered healthy snacks such as melon, grapes and oranges. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles in PSHEE and science and they have excellent opportunities to be active in physical education and games. Outdoor pursuits and sport are actively encouraged by the school to keep children physically fit.
- 4.11 Every parent who responded praised the school for meeting their child's pastoral and welfare needs. The school is highly successful in meeting its aim to prepare young people for their role as responsible citizens of the wider world.