

School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

Notre Dame Preparatory School

Burwood House

Cobham

KT11 1HA

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. Pupils are very proud of their school. They love working with their teachers and friends because leaders have designed a curriculum that is engaging, stimulating and well taught. Consequently, pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points.
2. The school successfully meets its aims. This means that following the principles of its foundress and her order, the common themes of an ethos of kindness, caring for others, respect and friendship are embedded in all areas and across all age groups.
3. Leaders and a supportive board of governors work closely together to ensure that the Standards are met consistently. In doing so, they monitor the effectiveness of the school and set priorities for ongoing development. Governors are knowledgeable. They give generously of their time to support the school.
4. Arrangements for the management of risk ensure that pupils are suitably protected from harm. Risk assessments are carried out diligently. However, the reviews of the impact of existing risk assessments are not consistently detailed enough to inform future assessments.
5. Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-awareness and an understanding of others' needs. As a result, they are highly empathetic, caring and considerate.
6. Pupils' behaviour is effectively managed. As a result, serious sanctions and instances of bullying are rare.
7. Standards of maintenance are high. Stringent application of robust health and safety arrangements by all staff mean that the school is a safe environment for pupils to learn in and to play.
8. Safeguarding leaders work closely together, supported by knowledgeable governance, to ensure that the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted. All staff are well trained. Liaison with external agencies is frequent and effective.

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 risk assessments are reviewed and updated in line with practice.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders undertake considered and honest self-evaluation of the performance and success of the school. They identify and set out clear priorities for development. Progress towards achieving these priorities is monitored effectively by knowledgeable senior leaders. This approach ensures the active engagement of the whole staff body. Strong and effective working links with relevant external agencies mean that leaders and staff are well informed. They share information effectively to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is promoted and secure.
10. Governors are closely involved with school life. They keep up to date with the detail of regulatory requirements. Consequently, they make sure that leaders' knowledge, skills and understanding are appropriate to their roles so that the Standards are met consistently. Governors' frequent presence in supporting and in offering critical challenge to leaders means that all the required policies are in place and implemented effectively. The policies are made readily available for parents and other stakeholders.
11. The school meets its stated aims successfully through the consistent application of the principles of its foundress, Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac. Catholic values are shared empathetically throughout the school. A high degree of mutual respect, friendship and kindness between pupils and adults is mirrored across all age groups. This is evident in lessons, in corridors and during shared mealtimes. Leaders take great care to offer an effective spiritual and moral education. This inspires pupils to be good citizens who are resilient, well informed and who understand and express the British values. Senior staff lead by example through strong and positive attitudes, which set the ethos of the school successfully. This ethos is actively promoted through the curriculum and reflected in the day-to-day experience of the whole school community. All the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are fulfilled effectively.
12. An appropriate complaints policy is in place and implemented as intended. Complaints, including any panel hearings, are handled according to the requirements and within published timeframes. All the required records are kept securely. These detail the nature of any complaint, the actions taken by the school, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld, and they are supported by relevant communications with all parties concerned.
13. A proactive approach to the management of risks to pupils is adopted successfully in the school. The risk management policy is understood and implemented appropriately by staff. This means that any risks to pupils' physical and mental health are anticipated. Action is taken to reduce the likelihood of such events occurring. However, risk assessments are not always reviewed as efficiently as they should be. Consequently, their usefulness to staff undertaking the same activity subsequently can be limited.
14. A suitable accessibility plan to improve access to the curriculum for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is in place and implemented effectively. Personal care plans involving rest times, consideration of physical access, for example, using lifts and the use of special equipment, such as support chairs, are created for individuals. The school works with specialist occupational therapists and physiotherapists to support pupils appropriately.

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

15. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Overall high-quality provision, careful planning, high-quality resources and stimulating and challenging teaching leads to pupils' active engagement and enjoyment of learning. Pupils make good progress. The pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) achieve well in their English skills. This is because specialist and class teachers create individual plans designed to meet their needs. The same is true for pupils who have SEND. For these pupils, carefully devised individual education plans are monitored to ensure that, as far as possible, barriers to learning are removed.
17. From the early years onwards, pupils experience a broad curriculum which covers all the seven areas of learning. Pupils' involvement in the wide range of stimulating and engaging extra-curricular activities, enhances and reinforces their physical, intellectual and creative development. Highly effective coordination of the curriculum ensures seamless continuity between the different sections of the school. Effective provision is made by adapting planning, teaching and staffing in order to meet pupils' different needs. For example, in a mixed ability Y5 mathematics lesson on regular and irregular polygons, the use of manipulative shapes provided effective support for some pupils, while others were problem-solving complex interior angle questions, through abstracting.
18. Assessment is carried out effectively and monitored rigorously by subject leaders. A range of measures ensure that pupils' attainment and progress is on track. Action is taken swiftly to remedy any gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing. They speak enthusiastically about both teachers' and self-assessment, while demonstrating and explaining how they know that they have made progress. For instance, they discussed in detail how the use of pink (for progress) and green (for growth) highlighters in their English work show the development of their skills. Pupils use mnemonics and other memory strategies effectively, to learn difficult sequenced information. Teachers' regular 'flashbacks' in maths and English allow key ideas to be revisited, reinforcing previous learning. The use of targets which are regularly reviewed means that pupils are confident that they make good progress as they achieve these each term. Pupils' reflection on their learning in their books give them a sense of achievement and reminds them of the new information on each topic.
19. Pupils use their skills of deduction, research, inference, analysis and hypothesis with confidence. They show a real interest in their studies and a genuine desire to learn and improve. Pupils achieve well in literacy and numeracy, as reflected in their work, for example, in their African Tinga tales. Pupils' handwriting and spelling develop steadily over time. As a result, pupils' knowledge and skills in these aspects are secure by Year 6. Pupils are taught how to do their own research and to take ownership of independent enquiry and projects, including using safe online information sites curated by their teachers. Their skills of critical analysis and discernment of information are therefore very effective. Reception children's work in English shows an emerging enjoyment in the use of language. Year 2 pupils correctly identified where they had used adjectives, adverbs and alliteration in their writing. By Year 6, displays and pupils' work reflect highly effective use of written language.
20. The cross-curricular programme, spanning academic, sporting, creative and physical activities, enables pupils' skills in each area to be integrated. This helps pupils to make connections between different areas of learning, so they remember more of the content taught. For example, high-quality performances in the school's theatre involve integrated dance, drama and music. These productions

draw on the work carried out during music and dance lessons, because of the emphasis which the school places on cross-curricular learning.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

22. Respect, empathy, consideration and kindness are an integral part of the school's ethos, which, in turn, stems from the mission of the school's founding organisation, the Order of the Company of Mary Our Lady. Members of the order visit regularly to speak about this mission. They participate in school masses and chapel services led by the Chaplain, which also help to sustain the spiritual life of the school. The same is true in the early years, where children's personal, physical and emotional wellbeing is well developed because of skilful interactions and empathetic modelling from staff.
23. Pupils' relationships are warm and caring because staff are proactive in helping them to learn how to resolve differences that may occur. However, staff will also step in immediately if matters become more complex. Serious sanctions are rarely necessary because the school community's expectations of pupils' behaviour are high. Pupils learn to respect and value each other from the earliest age. They feel safe, happy and well looked after at school. Pupils know that there is always someone to turn to for help and that they will always be listened to. Staff provide effective and caring supervision. Pupils share their views on their school experience through the school council and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. The school is respectful, accepting of diversity and inclusive of all. Pupils are confident and engage readily in conversation in an open and inquisitive manner.
24. Anti-bullying measures are stringently applied. Bullying is not tolerated in the school community. This means that pupils have a very clear understanding of not only what bullying is, but what to do if they experience or witness it. Pastoral leaders take immediate action if bullying happens. They maintain very detailed records of any bullying allegations. Consequently, such incidents are extremely rare.
25. A comprehensive programme of physical education is in place, including opportunities for competitive fixtures in a range of sports. Pupils understand the importance of physical activity and its contribution to their health. They appreciate the rules and values of sport and its social side, for example when hosting visiting sides for post-match teas.
26. Arrangements for dealing with any accidents or pupils' illness are effective. The school's medical centre is efficiently run by qualified staff. This is supported, when necessary, by the large number of fully trained first aiders. Almost all staff who work with pupils hold full paediatric first aid training. Any medication is administered with parents' permission, or in line with a medical care plan, for example, when the use of prescribed medicine is required. All medicines are stored safely, with grab bags including adrenalin auto-injectors and inhalers readily at hand. Records are kept securely and shared appropriately with parents.
27. Matters relating to ensuring the health and safety of pupils are taken seriously. The premises are maintained to a high standard. Detailed records of testing, maintenance and servicing of plant and equipment are kept as required. Staff who work in hazardous areas, or with hazardous substances and equipment, are knowledgeable about safety procedures and how to protect pupils from harm. Fire prevention arrangements are implemented effectively. A suitable fire risk assessment for the premises is in place. Appropriate actions reduce the potential for risk and address any risks identified. Regular fire drills take place. The related information is recorded and monitored by leaders and governors. Admission and attendance registers are kept as required. The staff managing

registers are keenly aware of their responsibilities. They have a clear understanding of actions to take if they are concerned about a child's safety, for example, in the event of unexplained absences or children missing from education. The school informs the local authority, as required, of any pupils who join or leave the school roll at non-standard times.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. Pupils are extremely empathetic with each other and adults. They notice others' needs and respond in kind, caring and thoughtful ways, living out their foundress Saint Jeanne's guidance to extend the hand of friendship to all. This is tangible confirmation of the high quality of PSHE provision in the school. Pupils hold the school's PSHE scheme in high esteem, describing how it helps them to be safe, to be caring, to achieve, to be resilient and to develop and manage friendships. High levels of respect are prevalent in the school. Individual difference and protected characteristics are valued and celebrated, along with the diverse pupil population.
30. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives. For example, the school's frequent arrangements for joint activities between senior school pupils and their prep school counterparts builds firm relationships between junior and senior school pupils. This helps pupils to be ready, both academically and socially, for their next steps. Looking further ahead, Year 6 pupils complete ambitious, thoughtful and inspiring writing on their career aspirations, including consideration of which higher qualifications they might need. Pupils gain the experience, information and understanding they need, so they are confident and know how to keep safe in the modern world. This is because of the comprehensive and skilfully taught PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes. This curriculum includes learning in online safety, careers, positive mindset, personal relationships, sex education, growing up and resilience, all delivered in age-appropriate and logically ordered ways. Pupils are well prepared for opportunities in their future lives, for example, by hearing female representatives from different careers, including the public services, speak on International Women's Day.
31. The school promotes a strong spiritual and moral understanding in line with its Catholic ethos, while respecting those of different faiths and none. Pupils' understanding is rooted in the way the curriculum reflects the warm acceptance of diversity, the respect for others and the purposeful support given to those who need additional help.
32. British values are fully explored and actively promoted through a carefully planned, high-quality PSHE curriculum. They are reinforced daily through the school's own ethos, aims and mission statement. Pupils of all ages reflect these values tangibly, having a genuine understanding and respect for their peers and for the adults in the school. They listen to each other carefully, accept each other's differences and show consistent kindness in their attitudes to others. From the Reception class onwards, each year group democratically elects two representatives to serve on the school council. These councillors work hard to represent their peers. They were successful in lobbying recently, for an outdoor mini-stage in the playground so that ad-hoc plays can be performed. Pupils display an inherent understanding of right from wrong. This is underpinned by the school values and in the way that these values are modelled by staff.
33. Economic education is woven into the PSHE syllabus. Pupils' understanding of the value of money develops from the earliest age through active play, for example, in the early years through the range of play shops selling fruit, vegetables and ice cream. These shops are stocked with clearly priced items and play customers can choose payment at the till by cash or card. Pre-preparatory pupils operate a popular play veterinary surgery. Older pupils talk about using and saving money, the affordability of items, including gifts to charity, and how to budget. Lending and borrowing are also covered through PSHE. Dealing with money is seen in practice on school trips, for example, where

pupils have pocket money and need to think about budgeting. The school also organises guest speakers trained in finance to run financial workshops with the oldest pupils. Through these initiatives, pupils develop an effective understanding of market forces and how the price of goods are derived.

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

34. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

35. Robust systems ensure that all staff undertake their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and promptly. Governors participate actively in monitoring and supporting leaders to safeguard pupils effectively. Safeguarding leaders have received up-to-date training from the local safeguarding partnership. They work closely with leaders from the senior school. The extended safeguarding team hold regular meetings to review ongoing and emerging concerns. They share information and work together effectively to ensure that pupils' safety is of the highest priority.
36. Those involved in staff recruitment have a comprehensive understanding of the required pre-employment checks. Robust systems alert leaders if there is any delay in completing a check. All necessary action is taken if this happens. Checks are completed and recorded appropriately on a single central register. Safeguarding leaders, together with human resources managers, routinely monitor and review recruitment protocol and recent appointments. In this way, safety nets are in place. Any potential for errors in ensuring the suitability of those who work with pupils is successfully mitigated.
37. Safeguarding leaders liaise closely with external agencies, including the local authority designated officer (LADO) and children's services. Records of concerns are detailed. They include plans, actions and outcomes for any issues raised. Communication with parents is regular. Detailed attention to joint working ensures that safeguarding is effective. Staff awareness of safeguarding requirements is well embedded. Effective training ensures that they know how to spot signs of concern and how to report these. Staff are confident in the knowledge that safeguarding leaders will address their concerns. This is because the school's strong culture of safeguarding prioritises the needs of pupils. The overall management of health and safety also takes pupils' safeguarding into account in a carefully considered, integrated approach.
38. Pupils feel safe in the knowledge that their teachers and safeguarding leaders provide them with a secure environment. They are taught how to keep safe, including when online. They know how to report concerns in the confidence that they will be listened to, and that their concerns will be acted on swiftly.
39. In the early years, the management of safeguarding is robust. Detailed consideration is given to risk management. This includes consideration of risks inside and outside of the setting, procedures and checks for dietary and medical needs, care of children who are sleeping and ensuring that children are dismissed from school to their appropriate adult.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Notre Dame Preparatory School
Department for Education number	936/6570
Registered charity number	1081875
Address	Notre Dame Preparatory School Burwood House Cobham Surrey KT11 1HA
Phone number	01932 869990
Email address	prep.head@notredame.co.uk
Website	www.notredame.co.uk
Proprietor	Notre Dame School Cobham
Chair	Mrs Wanda Nash
Headteacher	Mrs Amélie Morgan
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	237
Date of previous inspection	5 to 6 February 2020

Information about the school

41. Occupying a former convent of the Order of the Company of Mary Our Lady, Notre Dame Preparatory School is an independent Catholic day school for girls, situated near Cobham in Surrey. The Nursery is co-educational and is part of the same Notre Dame School charitable trust, which shares the same site and governance arrangements. Since the previous inspection, the school has extended the availability of the early years setting to 48 weeks of the year and increased the provision of wrap around care for all pupils.
42. Children are admitted to the early years setting from the age of two years, where they are taught in three nursery classes and one Reception class.
43. The school has identified 45 pupils with SEND. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
44. English is spoken as an additional language (EAL) for 15 pupils.
45. The school states that its aims are to: emphasise personal, moral and spiritual development, based on Gospel values, enabling each member to become a valued participant in the life of the community; to strive for personal academic excellence; to provide wide-ranging opportunities to identify and develop all talents; to foster a strong relationship between family and school and to prepare pupils for their role as responsible citizens following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 April to 02 May 2024

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

47. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

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

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