



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

St Edward's Prep School

June 2023

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School's Details

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| School | St Edward's Prep School | | | |
| DfE number | 870/6005 | | | |
| Registered charity number | 309147 | | | |
| Address | St Edward's Prep School 64 Tilehurst Road Reading Berks RG30 2JH | | | |
| Telephone number | 0118 957 4342 | | | |
| Email address | office@stedwardsprep.com | | | |
| Headmaster | Mr Jonathan Parsons | | | |
| Proprietor | Mr Sam Antrobus | | | |
| Age range | 3 to 11 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 111 | | | |
| | EYFS | 40 | Pre-prep | 27 |
| | Prep | 44 | | |
| Inspection dates | 27 to 29 June 2023 | | | |

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St Edward's Prep School is a co-educational, independent day school. Founded in 1947, originally for male pupils, the school became part of the Wishford Schools Group In 2014 and has admitted female pupils since September 2021. The proprietor is the executive chairman and he is guided by an advisory board. The current head was appointed in September 2020.
- 1.2 The school comprises 3 sections; the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for pupils aged three to five, pre-prep for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and prep for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection, classrooms and outdoor learning spaces have been developed to enhance provision for the youngest children. The school has developed a new investigation-based curriculum framework and has provided all pupils in Years 4 and 5 with personal tablets.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to provide a safe, happy environment in which children develop a love of learning and gain the confidence, character and the capability to fulfil their potential. It seeks to enable pupils to develop a passion for, and awareness of, the world that empowers them to make a positive contribution to the world.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Most pupils come from business and professional families in the local area. Standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average in relation to pupils taking similar tests nationally. The school has identified 14 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include speech and language, dyslexia and potential neuro-diversity, five of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan (EHCP). English is an additional language (EAL) for 50 pupils, four of whom receive additional support for their English. Data used by the school have identified a number of pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for those with special talents in sports, music and drama.

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. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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, 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 wellbeing 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'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

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

- Pupils' attainment and progress are excellent thus they successfully gain entry to senior schools with competitive entry requirements.
- Pupils develop outstanding communication skills; they listen attentively and are extremely confident and articulate speakers.
- The excellent achievement of pupils with SEND and EAL is significantly enhanced by the support they receive.
- Pupils from the very youngest ages demonstrate an excitement to learn, curiosity and excellent attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils demonstrate notably strong information and communication technology (ICT) skills and use them with ease to support and enhance their learning.

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

- Pupils' spiritual awareness and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life are excellent.
- Pupils are excellent decision-makers and understand the importance of making the correct choices in their work and friendships.
- Pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of religious and cultural diversity and value it in their school community.
- Pupils are confident, self-assured and well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Ensure pupils' progress and attainment are enhanced by taking more care and pride in the presentation and completion of their written work.
- Enable pupils to consistently meet the school's expectation for high standards of behaviour in lessons.

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, including those with SEND and EAL, make excellent progress, successfully fulfilling the school's aims to provide an environment where children develop a love of learning and the confidence and capability to fulfil their potential. High-quality teaching and an investigative curriculum effectively support pupils' learning, along with highly effective assessment, tracking and early targeted support when required. In the EYFS, children entering with a broad range of ability, make excellent progress, so that almost all reach the expected levels of development for their age by the end of Reception. Standardised test data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, show attainment to be well above age-related expectations, so that pupils successfully gain places at independent senior schools and grammar schools with competitive entry requirements with some gaining scholarships. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, all parents agreed that the school enables their child to make progress and the vast majority agreed that their educational needs are effectively met.
- 3.6 Pupils' communication skills are outstanding. Pupils answer questions enthusiastically, using complex language and subject-specific vocabulary and they speak with clarity. They are excellent listeners. The ethos of the school enables them to feel safe so that they are eager to talk about their work. Children in Nursery explained confidently, exactly what they were doing when participating in a range of science-based activities. In interviews, pupils expressed themselves eloquently when discussing their school experiences. From the EYFS onwards, pupils develop a love of reading and are quickly able to read with understanding and expression. Pupils in Year 5 were extremely articulate when describing the books they were reading. Relaxed and confident, using complex language and visual imagery, they described what was special about their books and what had captured their imagination. Pupils spoke proudly of their enjoyment of reading and the confidence and sense of achievement they gain from the weekly reading awards. Pupils' creativity and the freedom they are given to choose topics for independent research is reflected in their writing, which is fluent, well-written for purpose, and applied successfully in history, geography, science and independent project work. Inspectors found that the presentation of some pupils' written work lacked sufficient care and did not always reflect pride in their achievement.
- 3.7 Pupils rapidly develop high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the range of subjects. Children in the EYFS develop secure foundations to their early literacy and numeracy skills, furthering their knowledge successfully in a range of well-planned, engaging and purposeful activities. They demonstrated outstanding dexterity and excellent fine and gross motor skills when building bridges using wooden blocks and paper. When playing on the equipment in the outdoor learning area, they used playdough and freshly picked herbs to create imaginary pizzas. In French, highly engaged pupils made rapid progress in their learning as a result of imaginative teaching. Displaying strong knowledge of French vocabulary, working in pairs, they confidently used the perfect tense and the present participle to explain how they got a pain somewhere on their body. In a science lesson in the pre-prep, pupils worked in groups to build strong bridges, interested and inspired by challenging prompts, which encouraged them to work hard and do their best. In a tennis activity, pupils in Year 2 displayed excellent co-ordination when learning the forehand, demonstrating patience as they took turns and were highly supportive of one another. Pupils with SEND and EAL gain confidence and make consequently excellent academic improvement because of well-planned interventions and support. In their questionnaire responses, almost all pupils agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons and that their teachers help them to learn. Feedback from teachers was recognised by pupils as a vital part of their success and all pupils appreciate that teachers give both praise and constructive advice as to how to improve.
- 3.8 Pupils have an extremely confident grasp of information and communication technology (ICT), using it adeptly as a research tool, for programming and coding and across other subjects in the curriculum. In a computer science lesson, pupils in Year 4 shared their ideas about working on cloud variables,

sharing their excellent knowledge about coding, whilst creating an animation linked to scientific words learned in science lessons, whilst creating a project around the subject of hearing.

- 3.9 Pupils are highly numerate. From the early years they have an excellent understanding of the concept of number. This was illustrated in the EYFS when they used their understanding of number acquisition to count out cups for milk, blocks for bridge building and days of the week. Core numerical skills are strong in relation to age and are employed effectively across the curriculum, for instance in the pupils' spontaneous use of graphs and tables in their scientific, geographical, artistic and technological investigations. Teaching provides high levels of challenge to further enrich pupils' skills and understanding. For example, pupils in Year 5, increased their strong understanding of percentages when estimating the number of days in the month of June when the weather was stormy or sunny. All pupils, including those with SEND, develop their skills through a range of problem-solving activities both within the mathematics curriculum and in the wider investigative curriculum through scientific and technological projects in which all pupils engage.
- 3.10 Pupils develop an excellent range of study skills. They respond positively to tasks which allow independence of thought, and they display excellent focus and attention to detail. Pupils work effectively with others, offering support, valuing ideas and making suggestions for improvement. In a lesson in Year 3, pupils hypothesised effectively looking at glyphs, articulating clearly and accurately what each picture represented. In a science lesson, pupils in Year 1 hypothesised, in groups, as to what might have happened to their volcanic eruption if the container had been a different size. In some lessons, analysing and hypothesising were limited by the lack of time given to pupils for reflection. When asked a question, they needed more time to think. Pupils successfully analyse how they learn and identify their own strengths and weaknesses when self-evaluating and setting their own targets. Pupils persevere and solve problems from an early age and enjoy the challenge to think creatively, collaboratively and independently. By Year 6, they are clearly able to analyse, synthesise and hypothesise, as well as work independently to reach conclusions. *Key skills and attributes* embedded into lesson planning and delivery, effectively encourage higher-order thinking. Teaching consistently encourages pupils to think for themselves, to question and challenge, to have a go. Pupils are unafraid to get things wrong, thus seeing the value of mistakes, using them as springboards for growth and improvement. Pupils keenly emphasised this in interviews. Independence of thought is fostered positively from the earliest age and is a notable aspect of the pupils' achievement and development.
- 3.11 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are highly motivated, inquisitive and well-rounded learners who work effectively in groups and individually. Pupils say that teachers help them understand that they can achieve well even in areas they find more difficult. They develop the confidence to try out ideas because all ideas are celebrated and tested. The culture of mutual respect between teachers and pupils contributes to positive attitudes to learning; this relationship is the foundation of pupils' success and achievement. Pupils say the constructive feedback they receive from teachers helps them to move forward in their learning. Pupils show positivity in the energy and drive they bring to lessons, responding to the high expectations that leaders, governance and staff have successfully embedded throughout the school. However, in some lessons, this enthusiasm can lead to a lack of self-discipline which results in some pupils losing focus.
- 3.12 Pupils achieve success in a range of extra-curricular activities in and out of school because they are actively encouraged to follow individual strengths and passions. The many opportunities, such as playing in fixtures, appearing in plays and performing in concerts, are key factors in pupils' excellent achievements. Pupils spoke proudly about their individual successes, in matches, and in a variety of sports, in school and in local and national competitions, commenting how the school has helped them to be successful. Many pupils are highly successful in external music and drama qualifications each year, with almost all achieving distinctions in LAMDA examinations. Pupils in Year 6 were invited to take part in the Primary Maths Challenge bonus round resulting in gold, silver, and bronze awards. Pupils spoke with particular pride of the school's Guinness World Record success linked to climate

change, which they achieved in 2022 and the climate summit they hosted with local schools to raise awareness of climate change.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils' self-understanding builds as they progress through each section of the school, nurtured by excellent welfare and pastoral support. Pupils are extremely confident and self-aware. Governance and leadership have successfully created an ethos where pupils of all ages demonstrate a highly developed understanding of how to improve their learning. Pupils appreciate their teachers' support and respond well to the levels of challenge posed. Pupils are quick to understand how to set personal targets, keen to 'have a go', embracing opportunities to self-evaluate and self-correct when required. In interviews with inspectors, pupils said that the school's culture and environment enable them to develop a strong sense of empathy. They embrace the opportunities which provide a clear framework for personal development and this results in pupils who are confident, well-rounded and curious. This enables them to develop into respectful, resilient young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- 3.15 Pupils demonstrate strong spiritual awareness and a keen appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They have an excellent appreciation of the world around them which starts in the EYFS and develops across the school. Throughout the school a strong sense of togetherness pervades and an awareness that success comes through collaboration and support for each other with kindness. Pupils spoke of their enjoyment and appreciation of music, art and drama which they referred to as the things you can't buy but bring you peace. Pupils discussed how they had created nature portraits in the woodland using natural resources, enthralled the younger members of the community. In an art lesson pupils compared their colours to the natural world; 'the orange represents an anthill, the light blue represents forget-me-nots and the sky.' In a music lesson pupils in Year 5 demonstrated a keen sense of wonder when listening to *Earth* by Hans Zimmer, and drawing an interpretation of how the music made them feel. When describing their drawing of a magical landscape, they noted that the world is unique to all the other planets; that it is very precious; and that we must appreciate what we have in the world. Leaders and teachers have developed strategies through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme to encourage pupils to form their own opinions, enabling them to consider and discuss a variety of spiritual, musical, artistic and religious topics. Pupils speak of harmony and working together, and 'having a smile on everybody's face'.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate sensitivity and awareness when making decisions. They understand how decisions they make academically, in their relationships, and in their personal lives might impact on their success and wellbeing, now and in the future. Younger pupils readily make sensible choices in their activities and play, encouraged by their teachers. Pupils relish the choices they are given in lessons to take on tasks of different levels of difficulty. In interviews, pupils commented that they were encouraged to take risks and to keep trying as this can lead to getting it right next time.
- 3.17 Pupils value the rich diversity in their school community which they say teaches them about tolerance and understanding. They enjoy celebrating different festivals so that everyone understands each other's cultures and practices. In assemblies, pupils are encouraged to share information about their own religions and cultures, which is greatly appreciated by the pupils, such as when pupils explained about Eid Mubarak. They show excellent levels of respect and tolerance for everyone around them and are socially and culturally aware. Pupils look after each other as if they are one large family. In the questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.
- 3.18 Pupils have a mature appreciation of how diet, exercise and a balanced lifestyle helps them to be physically and mentally healthy. They know how important it is to follow safety instructions, whether lining up sensibly in Nursery or using the outside play equipment safely. Pupils in the pre-prep know

the importance of hygiene and washing their hands and understand why they have fruit and not sweets at break-time. Pupils feel cared for, well prepared for life, and understand how to keep themselves safe in many different contexts. This was strongly emphasised in discussions with the pupils who spoke with enthusiasm about how well they are supported by the school, particularly in their PSHE and relationship and sex education (RSE) lessons. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online through what they learn in lessons and from visiting speakers. In an assembly about water safety in rivers, canals, lakes and the sea, pupils demonstrated a strong understanding of the need for caution. The vast majority of parents responding to the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages their child to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

- 3.19 Pupils have a strong moral awareness and are deeply caring and respectful of one another. Pupils' strong sense of right and wrong begins in the EYFS where they learn to understand the impact of their actions on others, and acts of kindness are recognised and encouraged. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and founded on respect. Strong pastoral leadership leads to pupils valuing and supporting the school's rules. Pupils say that the system of rewards and sanctions works well to support behaviour management expectations, agreeing that it is fairly and consistently applied. They say that it teaches them to be the best they can be. Pupils consistently exhibit the traits of kindness and respect for others and reflect the school's ethos. In some lessons observed, some pupils were not as attentive or as aligned to the behaviour expectations as those expected by the school.
- 3.20 Throughout the school, pupils' social development and ability to work collaboratively are strong. They understand the importance of maintaining positive relationships. In the EYFS, children engaged in a range of collaborative activities and worked with sensitivity together when developing a farm layout and when working with magnets and when painting. They spoke respectfully to each other and listened attentively. They supported each other and played kindly together. They are respectful and work extremely well together, as was regularly seen during lesson observations in activities such as sport, music, drama. Pupils understand the need to work in teams to achieve common goals. For example, pupils proudly described how they had collaborated to make the world's longest plastic sentence and got into the Guinness Book of Records: In their questionnaire responses, the vast majority of parents agreed that the school helps their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills.
- 3.21 Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the lives of others in their school community. They take their positions of responsibility seriously, provide excellent role models for the younger children, and their leadership qualities are celebrated. Pupils display strong environmental awareness, and this is evidenced in the school's enterprise project. Tasked with replacing plastic water bottles, pupils researched and identified biodegradable bottles made from sugar cane, which they sold for charity at an enterprise fair. Pupils organise the donation of harvest produce to local charities each year and support national and international charities.

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 proprietor, 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. 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 Loraine Cavanagh | Reporting inspector |
| Mr Garry Leeson | Compliance team inspector (Compliance manager, ISA school) |
| Miss Penelope Kirk | Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school) |