

School inspection report

24 to 26 September 2024

Homefield Preparatory School

Western Road

Sutton

Surrey

SM1 2TE

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. Leaders ensure that the Homefield values of respect, kindness, integrity, endeavour and resilience are evident throughout the school. Pupils are mutually supportive, keen to succeed and value the opportunities made available to them.
2. However, leaders have not ensured appropriate oversight in all areas. The necessary pre-employment checks on staff are not always carried out, and not all of those which are completed have been recorded accurately in the single central record (SCR) or completed within an appropriate timeframe, resulting in unmet Standards in this area.
3. Not all staff have received sufficiently effective safeguarding training to enable them to understand and act upon statutory guidance. Consequently, they are not all aware of possible pathways for making referrals to the local authority, do not all identify or report low-level concerns appropriately and do not demonstrate understanding of the importance of contextual safeguarding awareness.
4. The school has not instituted an appropriate programme of structured professional supervision meetings specific to staff members who work with children in the early years and their families, meaning that appropriate support and guidance is not always received.
5. Governors do not exercise appropriate oversight, or take effective action, to ensure that all Standards are met. They have not all received all the necessary refresher training in safeguarding and child protection to equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge and enable them to be sure that policies and procedures in safeguarding are effective.
6. Leaders have developed a broad, academically ambitious curriculum that is complemented by an extensive co-curricular programme. As a result, pupils develop their skills, understanding and self-confidence appropriately.
7. Pupils behave well. When any inappropriate conduct occurs, it is quickly identified and resolved through effective implementation of policies which encourage self-reflection and remediation.
8. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), typically make good progress in all curriculum areas and are successful in gaining places in various senior schools. Pupils respect each other, value the advantages that arise from diversity and difference, and welcome opportunities to improve the lives of others.
9. Many lessons are characterised by challenge. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and lessons are mostly well planned. However, this is not always the case and leaders should take steps to ensure greater consistency in the planning and delivery of all lessons.
10. Activities for children in the Nursery and Reception classes encompass all prime and specific areas of learning. Children make good progress in all respects, including literacy and numeracy. Meaningful, well-structured conversations and interactions take place both between children and with the adults who look after them.
11. The school meets all requirements for the provision of information, the handling of complaints, risk management, premises and accommodation, health and safety, first aid, equality and the promotion of fundamental British values.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- an effective supervision programme of support, coaching and training meetings is implemented for staff who have contact with children and families in the Early Years
- all staff members have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including those related to safeguarding
- all necessary recruitment checks on all staff are made and recorded appropriately
- timely and effective oversight of all school policies and procedures enables leaders and governors to ensure that safeguarding is effective and all Standards are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- monitor the effectiveness of teaching to ensure greater consistency in the planning and delivery of lessons so that all pupils make good progress in all subjects.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Governors do not provide effective oversight of all aspects of the school's work, have not challenged leaders sufficiently and have not monitored the accuracy of core documentation, such as the single central record (SCR) effectively.
13. As the result of a lack of effective training or oversight, not all leaders, managers and governors have the appropriate skills and knowledge to undertake their duties consistently and effectively.
14. Leaders do not report on safeguarding incidents to governors in a sufficiently detailed manner. This means that governors do not have the information needed to maintain effective checks on procedures being in place. As a result, safeguarding practice is not monitored or reviewed robustly.
15. Appropriate arrangements for supervision meetings, providing helpful and supportive professional discussions between staff and leaders who have contact with children and families in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), have not been made by the school.
16. Leaders' proactive approach to developing the school has involved recent revisions of a wide range of policies, protocols and procedures. These changes include effective revisions to the behaviour code and marking policy.
17. The school has formed links with various other agencies, ranging from the local safeguarding partnership and nearby schools through to national advisory bodies which informs leaders' thinking on matters of policy and procedure.
18. The school meets all requirements for the provision of information to those who require it through the school's website and the supply of termly reports to parents.
19. The school's policy for the management and resolution of complaints adheres to all requirements and works well in practice, with accurate records being kept.
20. Governors and leaders have robust systems for risk management in place in all areas of the school's operations. Staff are appropriately trained and responsibilities are fulfilled within a culture of preparedness and accountability. Assessments are reviewed regularly to ensure that risks are systematically identified and mitigated. Appropriate action is taken whenever necessary to keep the school community safe.
21. Leaders fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010: the school recognises and values the enrichment that is derived from diversity and an appropriate accessibility plan is in place.

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

22. Standards are not met consistently with respect to completion and recording of pre-appointment checks on staff, provision of effective safeguarding training, the supervision of staff working with children and families in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the effective reviewing of safeguarding matters by governors as they undertake annual policy revision.
23. As a result, Standards relating to leadership, management and governance are not met.

24. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

25. The school curriculum is broad, interesting and academically ambitious. Including subjects such as classics, drama, French, theology, philosophy and religion, and wellbeing; the curriculum equips pupils for future success and fosters a passion for the subjects within it. Pupils encounter many topics and resources at a younger age than is often the case in schools. Leaders have implemented a comprehensive assessment framework. Most teachers use attainment data to plan lessons effectively and tailor strategies to meet the needs of all pupils; however, some teaching does not take pupils' prior attainment into account.
26. Regular feedback, in both written and verbal forms, ensures that pupils have a clear understanding both of their strengths and the areas for development in their learning. Pupils act upon this feedback and make improvements to their work which enables their clear progress over time.
27. In many lessons, teachers use their secure subject knowledge to provide academically rigorous instruction. Pupils listen attentively and respond to questioning thoughtfully. Teachers ensure appropriate degrees of both challenge and support. As a result, pupils develop their reasoning and collaborative skills.
28. However, some lessons do not address the needs of all pupils. In these lessons, teachers do not take pupils' prior attainment into account when planning for learning or delivering instruction. As a result, some pupils' pace of learning and rate of progress are slower.
29. The needs of pupils who have SEND are met through individualised support plans, the provision of additional adults within classrooms, easy access to appropriate resources and suitably amended tasks being set. Consequently, these pupils made good progress.
30. Effective help is provided when pupils who speak English as an additional language require it. For example, when vocabulary being used in a lesson is particularly complex or because they are in the process of mastering functional communication. As a result, these pupils are all able to access activities across the curriculum effectively, regardless of the complexity of language involved, and make good progress.
31. The ambitious, yet inclusive, environment and the focus on self-motivation prepares pupils effectively and successfully to sit assessment tests for entrance into a range of selective senior schools.
32. The needs of each child in the early years are well met and supported by careful interventions which facilitate effective learning. Staff use their knowledge of age-appropriate learning strategies to plan engaging activities which take into account children's individual needs and interests. Through structured, meaningful conversations that arise naturally from playing together well, children develop effective social awareness. This is further developed when they sit together at mealtimes, chatting proficiently to their friends and to the adults around them.
33. An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities is in operation before school, at lunchtime, and after the school day. Topics as diverse as ancient Greek, dodgeball, vexillology and yoga are included, allowing pupils to discover and develop new interests and to hone their skills.

34. Details of pupils' performance and progress are shared regularly with parents, including through termly reports.

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

35. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

36. Leaders have developed a warm, friendly and welcoming atmosphere in the school. Pupils are mutually respectful and supportive of one another. They have a well-developed moral understanding. Structured routines, like calming music and efficient registration, foster a readiness to learn.
37. Regular thought-provoking assemblies based around the five Homefield values of respect, kindness, integrity, endeavour and resilience, alongside weekly lessons in theology, philosophy and religion develop pupils' spiritual understanding.
38. Pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence are developed through effective use of verbal and written praise alongside a range of reward systems such as house points, crests and badges. These are reinforced within the school's recently revised code for marking and feedback, which is understood by all and enables pupils to recognise their achievements whilst identifying the next steps they should take.
39. Pupils demonstrate great enjoyment of the school's physical education provision. They know that sporting activities enhance both their physical and mental health and participate in a diverse range of pursuits including hockey, football, rugby, athletics, table tennis, basketball, swimming, tennis and golf, some of which they select for themselves through a democratic process. The school provides an extensive and popular programme of extra-curricular activities which also enhance pupils' mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.
40. A detailed programme of study in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is delivered both as a specific subject and through regular additional wellbeing lessons. These lessons emphasise pupils' personal development and have a positive impact on their self-understanding.
41. Pupils learn about relationships and sex education (RSE) as they follow a programme developed by staff who consulted parents appropriately during its creation. Further timely communications are issued which offer parents the right to withdraw their children from these lessons as appropriate. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of RSE topics, demonstrating confidence and empathy as they discuss matters such as choices, consequences, responsibilities and consent.
42. In the early years, teaching effectively promotes children's emotional development by providing opportunities for them to express themselves and understand their feelings.
43. Leaders implement detailed behaviour and anti-bullying strategies effectively. When inappropriate conduct occurs, robust sanctions are applied which provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on their behaviour and identify how they could modify it in future. The school has clear protocols for dealing with any bullying which is resolved effectively and recorded appropriately.
44. All pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefit from specific duties and responsibilities which enable them to make contributions to their school and develop their leadership skills. These include house captains, sports captains, music ambassadors and music mentors.

45. The school campus is well maintained and includes suitable accommodation for all activities, including the effective administration of first aid from appropriately trained staff. Classrooms are bright, well resourced and conducive to learning.
46. Levels of supervision of all ages of pupils are appropriate at all times of the school day. Lunchtime routines balance efficiency with valuable social opportunities. Supervising staff maintain high behavioural standards throughout.
47. The school maintains admission and attendance registers in line with current legislation and informs the local authority of pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.

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

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

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

49. The school is a cohesive community which emphasises mutual respect amongst all its members and celebrates diversity. The school's core values are deeply embedded in school life, contributing to pupils' strong interpersonal skills, sense of responsibility, and social wellbeing. An ethos of collaboration amongst the pupils is evident in all activities; they support each other and welcome the different insights that each of them can bring to a discussion. Respect for different cultures and traditions is further emphasised through a programme of events both within and outside of the classroom.
50. Lessons in PSHE, wellbeing and English, help pupils to understand democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for those with different faiths and beliefs. These concepts are reinforced through practical activities such as a mock general election week, in which those in Year 8 formed themselves into three political parties, created manifestos based around five key areas (healthcare, education, economy, environment and transport) and campaigned across the school before all pupils cast votes in a simulated polling station.
51. Pupils learn the difference between what is right and wrong through thoughtful discussions around the creation and implementation of school and class rules, as well as explanations whenever specific permissions (such as a Bunsen burner licence) are granted or responsibilities within the community (such as the captaincy of a sport or house) become allocated.
52. The school makes effective use of speakers to reinforce pupils' learning. Visitors include representatives of the law, national institutions and local services such as the police and fire brigade, and practitioners from a range of careers including engineering and medicine. Appropriate measures are in place to ensure that speakers are appropriate in what they say and do, and a balanced perspective is presented on any political issues. Consequently, pupils begin to appreciate their role in society and start to consider their possible future pathways.
53. Pupils are well prepared to take up their place in British society through various responsibilities which enable them to play a helpful role in their current community. For example, Year 6 sports captains design and deliver athletics events for local primary schools, appropriately overseen by their teachers, and older pupils regularly mentor younger ones in performing music.
54. A programme of specific activities throughout the school encourages pupils' development of economic awareness. This includes younger pupils investigating money and coinage, whilst older ones explore compound interest on loans and mortgages. Linked practical activities foster pupils' sense of entrepreneurship. For example, the school council decided to organise a talent show to raise money for a charity of particular significance to the school community. They decided on the ticket price and produced their advertising posters both to promote the event and to raise awareness of the charity's work.
55. Children in the early years are provided with numerous opportunities to develop their social skills. They build social awareness through cooperative play, the creation of games, and by assisting one another in structured activities. They participate in whole-school charitable events, such as fundraising for the local foodbank.

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

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

57. A robust whole-school approach to the oversight of school safeguarding protocols and procedures is not in place. Consequently, arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including children in the early years, are not effective in all areas.
58. Not all appropriate pre-employment checks had been carried out on all employees, and some were not completed in line with an appropriate timescale. Furthermore, the details of those which had been done were not always recorded accurately in the school's SCR.
59. The governors' annual review of the school's safeguarding policy is not consistently informed by staff reporting upon practice. Consequently, the monitoring of safeguarding is not sufficiently robust.
60. Staff training in safeguarding takes place with appropriate regularity but it has not resulted in all employees developing a comprehensive awareness of their responsibilities and the protocols that they should follow under specific circumstances. For example, staff do not all understand procedures for identifying and reporting low-level concerns and do not appreciate the significance of context in safeguarding. They are unsure about how and when they should approach their local authority directly to make a referral.
61. Training for those with specific safeguarding responsibilities, such as the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is in line with requirements and is up to date. Timely referrals are made to the local children's safeguarding partnership whenever necessary and appropriate child protection records are kept securely.
62. Not all members of the governing body have received the regular refresher training in Safeguarding that is required, and the school has not kept records to verify when this has been completed. Leaders have not been challenged effectively about safeguarding matters by governors.
63. Pupils understand how they can keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Their access to the internet in school is filtered and monitored, with weekly checks carried out and discussed by leaders to identify, and act upon, any concerns.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

64. Standards are not met consistently with respect to completion and recording of pre-appointment checks on staff, provision of effective safeguarding training and the effectiveness of leaders' and governors' oversight.
- 65. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
EYFS ² 3.27	Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching, and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of children. Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork, and continuous improvement, which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.

Safeguarding

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
7(a)	arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
7(b)	such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 18(1)	The standard in this paragraph refers to the suitability of persons appointed as members of staff at the school, other than the proprietor and supply staff.
18(2)	The standard in this paragraph is met if –
18(2)(c)	the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person –
18(2)(c)(ii)	the person's medical fitness
18(2)(c)(iii)	the person's right to work in the United Kingdom; and
18(2)(c)(iv)	where appropriate, the person's qualifications.
18(3)	The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 21(1)	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

² Early years foundation stage statutory framework ('EYFS')

	applicable to the school in question.
21(3)	The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is –
21(3)(a)	In relation to each member of staff ('S') appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether –
21(3)(a)(ii)	a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act
21(3)(a)(vii)	(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained.
EYFS 3.5	Providers must have and implement policies and procedures to keep children safe and meet EYFS requirements. Schools are not required to have separate policies to cover EYFS requirements provided the requirements are already met through an existing policy. Where providers are required to have policies and procedures as specified below, these policies and procedures should be recorded in writing. Policies and procedures should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant LSP.
EYFS 3.7	If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must immediately notify their local authority children's social care team, in line with local reporting procedures, and, in emergencies, the police. Providers must also take into account the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales'. All schools are required to have regards to the government's statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to read this guidance.
EYFS 3.9	Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable; they must have the relevant qualifications, training and have passed any required checks to fulfil their roles. Providers must take appropriate steps to verify qualifications, including in cases where physical evidence cannot be produced. Providers must also ensure that any person who may have regular contact with children (for example, someone living or working on the same premises the early years provision is provided), is suitable.

School details

School	Homefield Preparatory School
Department for Education number	319/6001
Registered charity number	312753
Address	Homefield Preparatory School Western Road Sutton Surrey SM1 2TE
Phone number	0208 642 0965
Email address	administration@homefieldprep.school
Website	www.homefieldprep.school
Proprietor	Homefield Preparatory School Trust Limited
Chair	Ms Meg Gardiner Boiling
Interim Headteacher	Mr Christopher Hammond
Age range	3 to 13
Number of pupils	275
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 3 December 2021

Information about the school

66. Homefield Preparatory School is an independent day school for boys aged between three and 13. It was founded in 1870 and moved to its present purpose-built site in 1968 which was significantly redeveloped in 2021. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. Since the last inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed and, at the time of this inspection, a new Interim Head was in post.
67. The school is divided into two sections: the lower school educates children aged three to seven and includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting of seven children in the Nursery and 16 in the single Reception class. The senior department of the school is for children aged seven to 13.
68. The school has identified 17 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
69. English is an additional language for 133 pupils.
70. The school states its aims are to provide a safe and happy environment in which boys both 'do well' and 'do good' through specialist teaching inspiring pupils' academic ambition and fulfilment of individual potential across the curriculum 'in head, hand and heart'. The school's five values are respect, kindness, integrity, endeavour and resilience. The school aims to emphasise research, collaboration and challenge as key elements in pupils' development of independent thinking skills and ethical character as they take their place in a diverse, cosmopolitan society.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

24 to 26 September 2024

71. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

72. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

73. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net