



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report  
For Schools with Residential Provision**

**Sherborne Preparatory School**

**January 2023**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Sherborne Preparatory School			
<b>DfE number</b>	835/6026			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1071494			
<b>Address</b>	Sherborne Preparatory School Acreman Street Sherborne Dorset DT9 3NY			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01935 812097			
<b>Email address</b>	school.office@sherborneprep.org			
<b>Head</b>	Mrs Annie Gent			
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	Lt Gen David Leakey			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Sherborne School			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	205			
	<b>Day pupils</b>	193	<b>Boarders</b>	12
	<b>EYFS</b>	30	<b>Pre-prep</b>	28
	<b>Prep</b>	148		
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17 to 19 January 2023			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Sherborne Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding school. It was founded in 1858 and since 1998 has been administered as a charitable trust. In 2021 the school merged with Sherborne School and is now part of the Sherborne Schools Group with a shared governing body.
- 1.2 The school is comprised of three sections: the Nursery, for children aged from three to four years; the pre-prep, for pupils aged from four to seven years; and the prep school, for pupils aged from seven to thirteen years. The school has one boarding house, with separate floors for male and female boarders. Boarding is available from Year 3 and can be on a flexi, weekly or full boarding basis.
- 1.3 A new head was appointed in January 2023.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school's aim is to create a happy, vibrant atmosphere where pupils can develop a love of learning and the enthusiasm, initiative and curiosity to become independent learners and to develop a social and cultural awareness of the world around them. The school seeks to promote the values of kindness, perseverance, awareness, generosity, honesty and independence so that pupils fulfil their potential as resilient and responsible members of the community.

### About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from families with professional and business backgrounds, mainly living within a 15-mile radius of the school. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of pupils is above average compared with pupils taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 36 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, most of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 12 pupils who receive extra support in this regard. Those pupils identified by the school as being the most able have access to a differentiated curriculum and a range of enrichment classes.

## 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, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. 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. 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, including the boarding NMS.** 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, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, 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, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 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. Boarders have access to a suitable programme of activities.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Boarders are supported to develop good relationships with fellow pupils and staff which are based on mutual trust and respect. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 13, 17 and 21 are 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 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 3, 5–12, 15, 16 and 20 are met.**

## **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.12 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 19 and 22 are met.**

## **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.13 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. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.14 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 4 and 7 are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

- 2.15 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. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.16 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

- 2.17 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, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.18 **The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 14 are met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 **The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 2 are 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.

- From an early age and throughout the school, pupils demonstrate a very positive attitude to their learning.
- Pupils make excellent progress across all areas of the academic curriculum.
- Pupils achieve well in a wide range of co-curricular and enrichment activities, including sports and music.

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

- Pupils mix with ease across all age groups and are highly supportive of each other. This is especially evident in the boarding community.
- Pupils display a deep respect for others appreciating individual's differences and diversity of backgrounds.
- Pupils show high levels of self-confidence and self-motivation.

#### Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable pupils to apply their expertise with information and communication technology (ICT) more generally in all curriculum areas.
- Enable pupils to make best possible progress by fully reflecting on and further improving their work by ensuring they receive consistently effective feedback.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Achievement of pupils across the curriculum is high. A large majority of children achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the early years setting. The attainment of pupils in the prep school maintains this excellent start, with standardised scores in English and mathematics above national age-related norms. Pupils' strong progress is supported by the school's effective monitoring of their performance using data which guides teaching. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or with English as an additional language (EAL) achieve well. Detailed planning, effective support and helpful intervention strategies enable them to make high levels of progress alongside their peers.



- 3.6 Pupils make excellent progress in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. They benefit from high-quality teaching and positive attitudes, in line with the school's aim to ensure pupils can develop the enthusiasm, initiative and curiosity to become independent learners. For example, in a Year 3 geography lesson, pupils worked successfully applying their excellent knowledge about volcanoes to explain why they occur in specific places around the globe, relating this accurately to tectonic plate movement. Pupils display a deep thirst for knowledge. They seek clarification where required and identify links and connections, demonstrating their understanding and insights. In a Latin lesson in Year 8, pupils displayed a strong understanding of grammar, differentiating between positive, comparative and superlative adjectives.
- 3.7 Pupils are highly articulate communicators in the spoken word, reading and writing. They speak with confidence, fluidity, and clarity, expressing themselves well. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson, pupils accurately identified technical aspects of poems and in response to effective teacher questioning were able to explain how this created literary atmosphere. Pupils are confident and articulate when conversing with adults and each other as they go about their daily life in the boarding house and at mealtimes. They listen attentively, can speak knowledgeably in a range of subjects, and respond to others with engagement, empathy and understanding. Pupils' creative writing becomes more sophisticated as they move through the school, as they use an increasing array of literary techniques. This was seen in Year 2, when the pupils wrote fact books about Jacques Cousteau using accurate punctuation and a range of conjunctions. By Year 6, pupils' excellent winter topic poetry writing used well developed descriptive language, including personification, alliteration and mature vocabulary.
- 3.8 Pupils' mathematical competency develops assuredly as they progress through the school, supported by a curriculum that is well-planned and monitored. Pupils of all abilities understand a wide range of mathematical concepts, and are proficient in applying mathematical knowledge to solve problems. For example, Year 2 pupils quickly understood how to calculate change from one pound, working independently to accurately write number sentences to explain their answers. In Year 4, pupils enthusiastically explained and developed their number sentences to successfully play a mathematics game, demonstrating a detailed grasp of methodology. Positive pupil outcomes are most evident where opportunities for independent and collaborative investigation, and high-level numerical challenge are more frequent. Year 8 pupils articulated their thoughts clearly when explaining to each other how best to solve challenging percentage questions and benefited from an atmosphere of mutual respect in the class. Pupils apply their mathematical skills well to solve problems in other areas of learning for such as interpreting population graphs in geography and using their knowledge of angles to calculate the reflection angle of light in physics.
- 3.9 Pupils exhibit a good level of understanding in the use ICT. During pupil discussions it was evident they apply their digital skills in some curriculum areas to enhance their learning. Pupils in a Year 4 project work lesson confidently used ICT to research countries on the equator and to independently produce a presentation explaining the similarities and differences between them. In Year 8 pupils competently applied software to organise their revision programme. Pupils across the school develop their computing skills well in the ICT suite but do not have sufficient opportunity to apply their digital expertise more generally in all curriculum areas.
- 3.10 Pupils show increasing proficiency in their study skills over time becoming effective independent learners. Pupils enjoy and respond well to the strong emphasis on independent investigation, as seen in project work from Year 3 and developed in the humanities curriculum as they move through the school. Year 7 pupils hypothesised knowledgeably about how to separate the salt from sea water, guided by excellent teacher input. Pupils confidently analyse how writers use language effectively, as observed when a Year 6 class analysed how an author's choice of language made a poem create a sinister atmosphere. All parents who responded to the questionnaire stated that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life. Pupils respond readily to guidance in lessons and are keen to make progress. Pupils make the most progress

and self-reflect on their work more fully when teachers use the recently introduced feedback model effectively but its implementation is not yet consistently embedded.

- 3.11 Pupils achieve excellent outcomes across the curriculum and through their wider school experiences. There are many sporting successes, and music and art are significant strengths of the school. Music is a strong feature of the pupils' education, with a very large majority of pupils across Years 3 to 8 performing chorally and learning instruments. Results in a wide variety of music examinations are consistently high, with many pupils achieving the best grades. Pupils benefit from the many opportunities for them to showcase their talents in the variety of choirs, concerts and recitals every term. Dedicated staff and an extensive enrichment programme contribute significantly to the pupils' strong performance in sport. Teams consistently reach regional hockey and netball finals. Individual pupils, coached by the school, excel in swimming, cricket, and tennis and are selected to play for county sports teams. Boarders benefit from increased access to school facilities and practice time so they may explore and extend their interests, for example in music or sport. Almost all pupils gain a place at the senior school of their choice, and they are regularly awarded art, sport, music and academic scholarships. In the pre- inspection questionnaire, a vast majority of parents agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities, and pupils state they are proud of their achievements in the wide range of enrichment opportunities on offer.
- 3.12 Pupils demonstrate great enjoyment and engagement in their lessons. They have a willingness to work hard both individually and collaboratively. In the large majority of the lessons observed, pupils settled to their work purposefully and calmly as a result of the positive relationships between the pupils themselves and with their teachers. The school encourages collaborative learning which the pupils excel at, showing respect for each other through listening to opinions and problem solving. In a Year 3 English lesson, groups of pupils worked diligently together to write their version of a twisted fairy tale and applied themselves wholeheartedly to the activity. Children in the Nursery soon develop initiative as a result of carefully planned activities which promote independent learning. In Year 1 pupils worked quickly and independently to sequence the activities in the story of 'Beegu' and confidently made their own choices regarding how to demonstrate their understanding. Older pupils confidently take ownership of their learning in project work lessons where they have opportunities to select what they would like to investigate and how they will present their findings.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils gain increasingly high levels of self-knowledge and self-esteem as they proceed through the school. Almost all parents agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Pupils are naturally and unaffectedly self-confident. Proud of their school, they are at ease with staff, other adults and with one another. Pupils explained that their self-confidence grows through participating in assemblies, drama productions and through the encouragement of staff, as they successfully meet academic and other challenges. Pupils feel that the school allows them to 'grow and fly, not sink.' Throughout the school they are becoming more effective at improving their own work. In Year 2 pupils self-edited their own writing and in Year 6 pupils used the 'purple pens' to edit each other's work. They respond well to positive criticism from teachers or peers and see making a mistake as an opportunity to learn. Older pupils appreciate the recently introduced marking system and are aware that this helps them to better understand how to improve their work. The independence given to pupils to manage their prep strongly contributes to their self-understanding and organisational skills. Boarders feel that the boarding experience has helped to build their resilience and their own independence in learning, thus ensuring they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Inspectors agree that this is the case.
- 3.15 Pupils show excellent decision-making skills, understanding the significance of their decisions in relation to their own progress. Pupils learn the necessary skills at an early age. Children in the EYFS

make daily choices about a range of learning and play activities. Choice is a common feature of lessons, with pupils afforded opportunities to select appropriate activities with suitable levels of challenge. For example, pupils in Year 7 decided which theme in the history topic of Industrialisation they wanted to study and how they would present their findings. By the time they reach the older years, pupils are able to recognise the implications and difficulties of making important decisions. They learn to make sensible choices, such as which enrichment activities to join, following their interests to broaden their learning. Pupils understand that the decisions they make have a bearing on their own well-being and on that of others. Pupils also make very effective decisions collectively through the elected school council. For example, the council voted for the school charities and which additional playground equipment to purchase.

- 3.16 Pupils develop an increasing spiritual understanding and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. For example, they appreciate the value of enriching and uplifting experiences, such as plays and concerts, in which they have performed or watched. During their choral rehearsal, older pupils displayed a strong spiritual appreciation of the pieces selected. Reception children were enthralled by the differences between the sky and Vincent Van Gogh's interpretation of it in his picture 'The Starry Night.' Pupils' growth in spiritual understanding is supported well by the school's personal development, religious education and weekly outdoor learning programmes. Pupils respectfully listen to others during discussions, such as in a Year 7 religious studies lesson where they gained a clear understanding of the concept of revelation and the afterlife in the Islamic faith.
- 3.17 Pupils of all ages make clear distinctions between right and wrong, taking responsibility for their own behaviour, as seen in lessons and during break times. Behaviour in the school is excellent. This is because teachers' expectations, both in classrooms and throughout the school, are high. Pupils show a strong level of respect for each other, the school, and its ethos. Pupils challenge any misbehaviour and unkindness and show no tolerance of bullying. In interviews, pupils were quick to explain that the few instances of unkind behaviour are dealt with swiftly. Pupils display great kindness and empathy, showing thoughtful consideration for one another and an eagerness to help and support their peers. In a Year 1 ICT lesson, pupils helped each other to log on without being asked. All pupils and almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour.
- 3.18 Social awareness in pupils of all ages is excellent. Pupils form productive relationships with their peers, meeting the school's aim to create responsible members of the school community. Younger pupils were often seen collaborating effectively, engaging in lively discussion, enjoying successfully completed shared tasks, playing happily and working together to solve problems. Older pupils build strong relationships and feel respected by their professionally warm, friendly teachers, who have high expectations of them in all aspects of school life. Boarders feel that their social development has been improved by the positive relationships that they have developed with pupils of all ages who all spend time together harmoniously in the boarding house. The school's 'Dragon' values of kindness, perseverance, awareness, generosity, honesty and independence are clearly evident in pupils' interactions. These values help pupils to develop into considerate and empathetic young people who demonstrate a strong sense of loyalty to their school and who work together to fulfil common goals.
- 3.19 From the earliest age, pupils show a keen awareness of the needs of others. Pupils' contributions to the well-being of all within the school are obvious, positive, and highly effective. They are extremely willing to help and support their peers both inside and outside the classroom. For instance, younger pupils realising that some classmates were left out of a game at breaktime went to immediately include them. The oldest pupils demonstrate a well-developed self-confidence, strengthened by their roles as pupil listeners with the youngest children, involvement on the school council and as school ambassadors as well as their enjoyment when working together to run a cake sale. Pupils understand the importance of helping the wider community and contribute productively to charitable causes such as raising money for Ukraine and providing food for a local community kitchen.

- 3.20 Pupils engage naturally and without hesitation with those of backgrounds and cultures other than their own, in response to the ethos of kindness and mutual respect which permeates the school. Pupils have a thoughtful awareness of British society and in particular the role of tolerance. Boarding pupils confirmed in discussion that the boarding house is representative of a mixture of cultures and religions and all boarders work and live harmoniously together. In the questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that the school encourages pupils to respect and tolerate other people. Pupils value the opportunity to learn about other cultures, and to explore diversity. Their knowledge and understanding of these are woven through the curriculum and developed through personal development lessons and relevant topics in history and thought-provoking texts in English.
- 3.21 Pupils are physically healthy and they radiate cheerfulness. This reflects the priority attached by the leadership and management of the school to the fostering of their well-being. Pupils feel safe within the school and fully understand the importance of staying safe and healthy in different activities, such as when using the internet, cold water swimming or enjoying the weekend activities. Evidence from pupil discussions, boarding house visits and dining with the pupils confirms that pupils lead healthy active lives filled with a variety of sporting and enrichment opportunities which they grasp eagerly. This is supported by nutritious meals delivered by the school kitchen at every mealtime which the pupils appreciate, understanding that they should aim to eat a rainbow of different foods. A very large majority of parents and pupils in the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages a healthy lifestyle.

## 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 chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, attended form meetings and an assembly. Inspectors visited the boarding house and 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 Sue La Farge	Reporting inspector
Mr Daniel Wilson	Compliance team inspector (Assistant head, SofH school)
Mrs Saskia van Schalkwyk	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Stephen Yeo	Team inspector for boarding (Former head, SofH school)