

School inspection report

19 to 21 November 2024

Wilmslow Preparatory School

7 Grove Avenue

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5EG

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 have a detailed and accurate understanding of the strengths of the school. They work in close collaboration with governors and staff to identify areas for further development and the means needed to accomplish these. Governors have effective oversight of all aspects of school life, providing both support and challenge.
2. Leaders check pupils' progress carefully and identify areas for further improvement. Pupils gain good knowledge and skills across all curriculum areas. They engage in an extensive range of activities outside the classroom. Teachers use a range of effective strategies which help pupils to learn and make good progress. At times, teachers do not explain clearly what pupils need to do to achieve success or do not provide activities that take sufficient account of all pupils' prior attainment.
3. Leaders diligently identify the needs of each pupil and promote their wellbeing. Staff know pupils well and ensure that individual needs are understood and met. Leaders model the behaviour they expect of pupils so that pupils learn the importance of respecting and caring for others in school and the wider world. Teachers teach the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum effectively so that pupils develop an understanding of the characteristics of healthy relationships and lifestyles. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to engage in physical education (PE) and ensure healthy options are available at lunch and snack times.
4. Leaders prepare pupils well for life in British society. Through school events, assemblies, religious education (RE) and geography lessons, pupils learn to appreciate the importance of respecting people who have customs or beliefs that are different from their own. Pupils develop an economic awareness and understanding of the principles of democracy and freedom of speech. Leaders provide pupils with a range of meaningful ways to contribute to the life of the school and to the local and international community.
5. Leaders promote pupils' safeguarding through the effective implementation of suitable policies and procedures. Staff understand their responsibilities well as a result of their training and leaders' clear communication of expectations. Governors maintain oversight of safeguarding through regular communication with leaders and review of policies and procedures. The attendance policy was not on the school website prior to the inspection. However, this was rectified during the on-site visit.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that teachers provide pupils with suitably challenging activities and learning across all subjects in the older year groups
- ensure they have oversight of the latest statutory guidance so that required information is always included on the school's website.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders have good skills and knowledge which they use to fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the Standards are met. Leaders foster a culture of shared responsibility for the promotion of pupils' wellbeing. They regularly check academic and pastoral records. They liaise with staff effectively so that pupils' individual needs can be identified and met.
7. Leaders have appropriate policies in place, which comply with relevant statutory guidance. They provide staff and pupils with regular, suitable training and guidance so that everyone is aware of their responsibilities in putting policies into practice. Early years leaders provide regular support and training for staff to promote children's interests and wellbeing.
8. Leaders evaluate the school's success in achieving its aims in close collaboration with staff. Subject leaders review their areas of responsibility effectively, and have suitable action plans for continued development. Leaders identify areas for development in response to these reviews alongside detailed analysis of assessment data. They put improved and updated systems in place to support the implementation of new initiatives. Recent examples have included improvements in the teaching of writing and computing, and the promotion of the arts, including within the broader curriculum. Pupils achieve well in these subjects as a result of leaders' actions.
9. Leaders regularly report to governors about the impact of their actions. Governors oversee the quality of leaders' work through school visits, which focus on specific aspects such as health and safety, staff recruitment and education. Governors work alongside leaders and staff on an annual basis, conducting a full review of the school's work, which informs their subsequent meetings and visits. They take an active role in supporting and challenging leaders in identifying how provision may be enhanced.
10. Leaders have a secure understanding of any potential risks associated with the school site. They identify and assess risks systematically, putting suitable measures into place to mitigate them. Staff assess and manage risks associated with educational visits and with the learning environment. Staff in the early years check indoor and outdoor spaces on a daily basis. Leaders have set up suitable measures to manage risks to individual pupils. Governors are well informed about the management of risk.
11. Leaders provide a suitable range of information about the school's policies and procedures to current and prospective parents. They share regular information with parents about their children's progress and attainment. Staff in the early years liaise closely with parents so that they understand how they can support their children's learning at home.
12. Leaders and staff respond swiftly to parents' concerns. These are dealt with effectively and in line with the school's procedures. Formal complaints are rare, none having been made in recent years. Leaders have put in place suitable arrangements to manage these should they arise.
13. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 through their awareness of the needs of all pupil groups and their promotion of respect. They regularly review and adapt a suitable accessibility plan, implementing associated measures when required.

14. Leaders establish links with external agencies to promote pupils' wellbeing. They liaise with the local authority as required, including through the provision of information relating to pupils with education and health care (EHC) plans, attendance and early years assessments.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Pupils are provided with opportunities to gain the knowledge, skills, and understanding they need in all subjects. Pupils make good progress and are well prepared for the next stages of their education both within and beyond the school.
17. Leaders provide a diverse range of extra-curricular activities, including some that have been set up in response to pupils' interests. Pupils respond positively to teachers' encouragement to participate, and in doing so they develop and extend their skills across a range of curriculum areas. This contributes to pupils' achievements in external events, examinations and competitions.
18. Leaders identify aspects of the curriculum to improve, based on their knowledge of pupils' progress and attainment. Recent initiatives have included a review of the teaching of literacy and of the structure of the mathematics curriculum. Leaders have put new systems and resources in place, supported by staff training, which have had a clear and positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress.
19. Leaders make rigorous use of pupils' assessment information to check pupils' progress and attainment. They work closely with teachers to identify the requirements of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and plan suitable support tailored to their needs. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress and achieve great success alongside their peers in gaining places at selective senior schools.
20. Children in the early years learn to develop their ideas through a combination of play and guided learning. They make good progress from their starting points, benefiting from secure routines and positive interactions with staff. Staff share information with parents about their child's progress regularly so that their learning is supported at home. Leaders regularly check children's progress. Staff use this information to plan interesting activities which meet pupils' needs and interests.
21. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage behaviour well. They make good use of a range of resources to engage and maintain pupils' interest to help them learn. Teachers plan a range of activities and use effective strategies. They use their assessment of pupils' learning to inform their teaching so that pupils make good progress.
22. In some lessons, the activities and level of challenge that teachers provide are not consistently matched to pupils' prior attainment. Pupils who could deepen their knowledge and understanding further are provided with challenging work in some lessons and in their homework, which enables them to make good progress, but classroom activities do not always provide them with opportunities to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding in lessons.
23. Teachers give pupils targets to work towards and provide constructive feedback which helps pupils to improve. In lessons where teachers' expectations are clear and feedback is focused on pupils' individual targets, pupils understand how to improve their work. In other lessons, pupils do not understand the steps they need to take to reach their objective or know how to recognise that they have achieved it because the information needed has not been clearly explained.
24. Pupils are articulate speakers and attentive listeners. They develop fluency and expression in their reading, enjoying the books that they read. Pupils use sophisticated language and structures to good effect in developing their creative writing skills. They put their literacy skills to good use across the

curriculum, and in doing so they gain good levels of knowledge and understanding in subjects such as history, geography and science. Pupils acquire good skills in technology and computing, which many extend further through the activities programme. Pupils become competent and confident mathematicians through regular opportunities to reinforce their skills.

25. Pupils achieve well in the creative arts as a result of specialist teaching and opportunities to develop their skills. They produce high-quality art work and achieve great success in competitions. Staff provide a wide array of musical activities, and pupils perform vocally and instrumentally to advanced standards. Pupils achieve well in music examinations and in local festivals. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their dramatic skills through lessons and performances. Pupils use these to good effect in developing their creative writing skills.
26. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in their acquisition of English. Leaders provide support that meets pupils' individual needs through personalised programmes of study.

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

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

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

28. Leaders promote pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing so that pupils of all ages develop confidence and self-esteem. Staff understand pupils' needs, providing support and encouragement in helping them to identify their individual strengths and areas for development. Pupils follow their teachers' example in maintaining positive relationships and seeking to help others.
29. Children in the early years develop an understanding of their feelings and how to regulate their behaviour in response to adult guidance and encouragement. Staff maintain warm and supportive relationships which help children to face challenges with determination and perseverance. Leaders provide experiences that enable children to develop their coordination skills through outdoor play and the use of tools for writing and artistic creations. Children learn how to look after themselves through healthy eating and exercise.
30. Pupils learn the importance of respecting everyone within their diverse school community and the wider world. Pupils reflect on how they interact with others through the PSHE curriculum and in assemblies. As a result, pupils can explain maturely why they should treat everyone with equal kindness and consideration.
31. Teachers deliver the relationships education element of the PSHE curriculum effectively through a range of activities and discussions. Pupils understand the features of healthy relationships and how to recognise unhealthy ones.
32. Pupils learn how to maintain a healthy lifestyle through a range of activities in PSHE, science and physical education (PE) lessons. Pupils are given the opportunity to take part in a range of sports within the curriculum alongside a variety of extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils achieve well in their sporting endeavours, enjoying successes at local and regional level. They also have a detailed understanding of how to make healthy food choices and how the meals provided in school help them to do this.
33. Pupils learn to appreciate the importance of positive mental health in assemblies and dedicated events. Pupil mental health ambassadors play a meaningful part in promoting pupils' wellbeing, and pupils know that they can access support readily in the playground through use of the 'buddy' bench. Teachers help pupils to learn how to manage stress when they feel under pressure. Pupils understand the benefits of spending time in the natural world and make good use of the visual displays which remind them of how to maintain their positive mental health.
34. Leaders' high expectations of pupils' behaviour are well understood. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and of how they should behave. Staff implement the behaviour policy fairly and consistently, carefully providing support when needed. Leaders check records of misbehaviour closely to identify trends. They address any concerns through targeted assemblies and lessons. Instances of poor behaviour are managed swiftly before any serious sanctions are required.
35. Pupils understand the importance of recognising and preventing bullying. Pupils are confident that friendship issues are addressed quickly by staff and with the support of pupil anti-bullying ambassadors. Instances of bullying are rare as a result of leaders' identification and management of concerns at an early stage.

36. Leaders carry out systematic checks and reviews of procedures which are designed to keep pupils safe. They assess the risks associated with the premises and buildings and identify effective ways to reduce these. Appropriate arrangements are in place to minimise risks associated with fire. Pupils who are unwell or injured receive appropriate treatment from suitably qualified staff.
37. Pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the day. Leaders maintain admissions and attendance registers as required.

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

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

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

39. Leaders provide pupils with a range of experiences that prepare them to take up their places in British society.
40. Children in the early years learn about the needs of others as well as their own. Staff support children to work and play cooperatively and resolve conflicts agreeably. Children learn about the varying customs and faiths followed by those who belong to their school community and in the wider world. They are introduced to public services and institutions through visits to the local area and through external visitors to the school, such as the fire service.
41. Older pupils learn about the diverse ways in which people in Britain live their lives through a variety of activities, assemblies and events. These events and activities complement the PSHE programme so pupils understand and respect the customs followed by their peers and those outside the school. Pupils learn about the lives of people who live in other countries, for example in geography, or through writing to their French pen-pals. Pupils develop an interest and understanding of the faiths practised in Britain through the RE programme and visiting places of worship.
42. Pupils learn about the role of money and how to manage their finances in PSHE lessons and through enterprise projects, especially in Year 6. Younger pupils learn about where money comes from and why it is needed. Older pupils understand the importance of budgeting and the role of banks in looking after their money.
43. Pupils develop an understanding of democracy through participation in the voting process for school council members. Pupils understand that the councillors have a responsibility to represent the whole pupil body. Older pupils appreciate the difference between democracy and other forms of government, and are able to relate this to personal liberty and freedom of speech.
44. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to learn about British institutions and services through visits and visitors. Pupils learn about the part that the government and the royal family have to play in modern Britain as well as the role of people in society who help others.
45. Pupils learn to respect and value rules in school and laws in the wider world through discussions in class and PSHE lessons. Staff help pupils to develop a mature understanding of right and wrong and taking responsibility for their actions.
46. Leaders involve pupils in contributing to a school community where helping others is seen as the norm. Younger pupils take responsibility for their tables at lunchtime and are members of the school council. Older pupils fulfil roles as ambassadors. These involve providing meaningful support for younger pupils in activities such as art, music lessons and library visits as well as leading assemblies on matters such as mental health.
47. Staff work with pupils to help them identify charities to support and understand the means of doing so. Pupils support a range of causes both nationally and internationally. They engage positively with the local community, for example through fundraising for local causes, singing at community events and visiting residents in a local care home.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. Leaders have suitable policies and procedures in place to safeguard the pupils. They ensure that all staff understand that safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Pupils are confident that there are adults in school who will listen to their concerns and take effective action in response. Governors maintain a close oversight of policy and procedures through an annual review and through regular communication with leaders.
50. Staff, governors and safeguarding leaders are suitably trained. Leaders check that staff understand their responsibilities and provide regular updates on policies and procedures.
51. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities well. Concerns are reported promptly and leaders take appropriate action in response. Staff understand leaders' expectations of their conduct and the need to report any instances when these expectations are not met. Suitable arrangements are in place for the management of allegations about the behaviour of adults.
52. Leaders maintain thorough records of safeguarding concerns. These are stored securely and shared with others only when appropriate to do so.
53. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies when concerns about pupils or staff arise. They seek and follow advice, taking appropriate action as necessary.
54. Leaders monitor attendance closely and identify any children at risk of missing education. They provide the local authority with information regarding pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard times. The attendance policy was not on the school website before the inspection as required by statutory guidance. Leaders addressed this during the on-site visit.
55. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay safe online and learn about how to keep safe through PSHE and computing lessons. Leaders maintain a suitable filtering system to protect pupils when they use the internet in school and check this closely so that action can be taken in response to attempted breaches.
56. Leaders identify the risks associated with radicalisation and social media both at an individual pupil level and at a wider level. They take effective action to mitigate any risks identified.
57. Leaders undertake the required checks on staff and volunteers before they commence working. They maintain suitable records of all checks, including those on a single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Wilmslow Preparatory School
Department for Education number	895/6011
Registered charity number	525924
Address	Wilmslow Preparatory School 7 Grove Avenue Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5EG
Phone number	01625 524246
Email address	secretary@wilmslowprep.co.uk
Website	https://www.wilmslowprep.co.uk/
Proprietor	Wilmslow Preparatory School Trust Limited
Chair	Mrs Diana Stephenson
Headteacher	Mr Bradley Lavagna-Slater
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	129
Date of previous inspection	5 November 2021

Information about the school

59. Wilmslow Preparatory School is a co-educational day school. It was founded in 1909 and moved to its current site on the outskirts of Greater Manchester in 1925. It is administered by a charitable trust and overseen by a board of governors. The school consists of the early years for children aged three to five years, Years 1 to 2 for pupils aged five to seven years and Years 3 to 6 for pupils aged seven to eleven years.
60. There are 38 children in the early years, in a Nursery class and a Reception class.
61. The school has identified 16 pupils as having SEND. Two pupils in the school have an EHC plan.
62. English is an additional language for seven pupils.
63. The school states its aims are to enable pupils to achieve their academic potential and become creative and enquiring learners. It seeks to offer a caring environment in which pupils develop confidence and learn to respect themselves and others.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

19 to 21 November 2024

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

65. Inspection activities included:

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

66. 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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