



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Sunninghill Preparatory School

February to March 2023

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School's Details

School	Sunninghill Preparatory School			
DfE number	838/6029			
Registered charity number	1024774			
Address	Sunninghill Preparatory School South Court South Walks Road Dorchester Dorset DT1 1EB			
Telephone number	01305 262306			
Email address	receptionist@sunninghill.dorset.sch.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr David Newberry			
Chair of governors	Miss Jean Walker			
Proprietor	Sunninghill Preparatory School Ltd			
Age range	3 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	129			
	EYFS	15	Juniors	51
	Seniors	63		
Inspection dates	28 February to 2 March 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Sunninghill Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. Founded in 1939, it moved to its current site in 1997. The school is a charitable trust governed by a board of trustees. A new chair of governors was appointed in November 2019 and the current headmaster in September 2022. The school comprises three sections: the EYFS, for children aged 3-5, juniors for pupils in Years 1 to 4 and seniors for pupils in Years 5 to 8.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has refurbished the medical room, refurbished the library, relocated the SEND department into the hub of the school, created a dedicated wellbeing room and appointed a wellbeing co-ordinator.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to create a community full of heart, which looks beyond to the wider community and globally, encompassing values of compassion, creativity, courage and commitment. It seeks to provide an environment that is full of opportunities and experiences, allowing pupils to develop their talents and discover new ones, academically and through extra-curricular opportunities.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of local professional and business backgrounds mostly within a 15-mile radius. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is above average compared with those taking similar tests nationally. The school has identified 26 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia and dyscalculia, nine of whom receive additional specialist support. One pupil has an educational, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for three pupils, none of whom require additional support. The curriculum is modified for pupils identified as being the more able in the school's population and for those with special talents in sport, drama and music.

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 up to Year 6 and relationships and sex education in Years 7 and 8, 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.
- 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 develop strong knowledge and understanding across all areas of study and develop outstanding skills in creative areas.
- Pupils' communication skills are excellent and applied confidently across the curriculum and beyond.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are excellent and their willingness to work collaboratively is outstanding.
- Pupils have highly developed study skills; they analyse, synthesise and hypothesise data and material confidently from a very young age.

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

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-confidence, self-esteem, self-awareness and perseverance.
- Pupils are able decision-makers.
- Pupils display a strong contribution to others, embracing the many opportunities to take responsibility towards others.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of spirituality and a deep appreciation of the non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils understanding and appreciation of diversity is excellent.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Strengthen the ability of pupils to work with increasing independence and initiative across all subjects.

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' knowledge, skills and understanding are strong across all areas of learning. High expectations, strong subject knowledge and expertise demonstrated in teaching effectively challenge pupils from the very youngest to aim high. In a science lesson, pupils in Year 5 challenged appropriately, accurately discussed the effect of forces in a range of situations and confidently identified how forces acted in

different scenarios. In a games lesson, highly effective teaching enabled pupils in Years 5 to 8 to demonstrate strong understanding of netball skills and participate with confidence in the activity, marking and dodging their partners with highly skilled manoeuvres. Pupils consistently self-reflect and review, responding well to teaching which constantly encourages them to do so. All pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their teachers' feedback and marking helps them to improve. When discussing their own work with inspectors, all pupils commented on the importance of teachers' feedback. For instance, pupils in Year 4 showed excellent written work on the poet Maya Angelou in which teachers' comments celebrated success but also provided appropriate challenges for next steps to improve. Similarly, pupils in Year 7, who produced excellent empathetic writing based on their studies of *Romeo and Juliet*, explained that teachers' helpful comments and clear targets had enabled them to refine and improve their work to the high standard evidenced. Pupils' creativity and talent are nurtured and developed throughout the curriculum, resulting in pupils' outstanding success in music, art and drama. This was seen during the inspection when pupils, rehearsing for the school production of the musical *Moana*, demonstrated skills well beyond that expected for their age, both in their musical interpretation and their mastery of the Polynesian language. Responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire and in interviews, the vast majority of pupils agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons and that their teachers help them to learn. Evidence from the inspection confirms this.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills. In the EYFS, children are encouraged to speak clearly, and articulate their thoughts with linguistic skill above that expected for their age. In interviews, older pupils were highly articulate when expressing their ideas. In an art lesson, pupils in Year 3 confidently explained their ideas for imaginative sea creatures, discussing the features of the creatures and why they had chosen to use different colours. In LAMDA examinations, all entrants are successful, with over seventy-five per cent gaining distinctions. Pupils in Year 5 eloquently illustrated their communication skills developed while preparing for the examinations, in excellent, reflective written self-evaluations. Pupils perform in a wide range of activities from the informal production of adverts, filmed for the class to view and critique, through to debates and public performances, where pupils confidently perform on a larger stage. In the *World Book Day* assembly, pupils read extracts from their favourite books with sensitivity, understanding and expression. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows they develop excellent written skills and the ability to write for a range of purposes and genres. In English they analyse texts cogently and identify structures, techniques and features of a particular genre of writing. Pupils' grasp of technical language is excellent. For example, when analysing travel writing, pupils in Year 8 confidently identified and clearly explained the use of similes, rhetorical questions, exaggeration and direct speech.
- 3.7 Pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, make good and often excellent progress, successfully fulfilling the school's aims to allow pupils to develop their talents and discover new ones. The school's broad curriculum and high quality teaching in most areas, effectively supports pupils' learning, along with highly effective assessment and tracking, careful planning, and early targeted support when required. In the EYFS, children entering with a broad range of ability, make good or excellent progress, so that almost all reach the expected levels of development for their age by the end of reception. Nationally standardised test data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, show attainment to be above average in relation to national age-related expectations. Thus, all pupils successfully gain entry to a variety of senior schools and some gain scholarships, particularly in music. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress.
- 3.8 Pupils' numeracy skills are strong and are successfully applied to a range of problem solving opportunities. In a lesson in Reception, skilful teaching enabled children to use their developing skills to increase their knowledge and understanding as they eloquently discussed the method for counting accurately by using concrete apparatus to make number bonds. In another well-structured lesson, excellent classroom management allowed all pupils in Year 4 to demonstrate high levels of confidence in their mathematical ability and excellent understanding when using a fraction wall, independently identifying and understanding that they could multiply and divide the numerators and denominators

by the same number to find its equivalency. Pupils effectively apply their mathematical knowledge to other areas of the curriculum. This was evident in a science lesson when pupils accurately described the relationship between current and strength of magnets and produced line graphs to record their findings, correctly analysing the data to draw conclusions. Numeracy skills are also applied with confidence across creative areas of the curriculum, such as in musical notation and the use of symmetry in artwork inspired by the designs of William Morris.

- 3.9 From the earliest years pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively across the curriculum. Younger pupils in junior prep are able to code and program a floor robot, film impromptu productions and utilise interactive white boards to help with the gross and fine motor-skills needed for the development of handwriting. Pupils in Year 5 prepared thoughtful short films about their recent LAMDA experience, which were skilfully edited by pupils in Year 8 for their blog, *'Notes from a Small School'*.
- 3.10 Pupils' excellent study skills contribute to their academic achievement. Older pupils' use of mind-maps across all subject areas demonstrates an embedded ability to synthesise information. Children in the EYFS can predict what will happen next in a story. Pupils in Year 2 used their prior learning and understanding to hypothesise sensibly which materials would be best to make an outdoor playhouse. In a history lesson, pupils in Year 1, responding to challenging questioning, showed excellent recall and knowledge of facts about the fossil hunter Mary Anning. They named fossils correctly and confidently and demonstrated their prior knowledge of aspects of her life. Challenged to express how she might feel about being ignored by the scientific profession, they skilfully acted out incisive, appropriate responses. In an English lesson, pupils in Year 6 successfully analysed a text and hypothesised about how certain characters would behave and react to each other in a given set of difficult circumstances. They exhibited higher-level thinking to articulate the difference between the feelings of the character and the situation in which they found themselves. Pupils use information from a wide range of sources with insight and discernment and are able to discuss, debate and reflect with clarity. Pupils' work shows that they successfully use a range of study skills, for example analysing unseen text in English or drawing conclusions from data in science. Lesson observations indicated that pupils keenly question the concepts they learn rather than taking them at face value. However, in a few lessons observed, which were more teacher-led, there were missed opportunities to stretch and challenge the more able, thus limiting their progress.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve highly in a range of activities, in matches with local schools and in national sports competitions, including skiing and sailing, where pupils excel. Older pupils proudly explained that, as well as being good sailors, they are part of the national team. Pupils also achieve a high degree of success in writing and debating competitions, music and the performing arts, all of which are strongly promoted in the school. The school enrichment programme allows pupils to follow their individual interests, thus fulfilling the school's aims to provide an environment that is full of opportunities and experiences, allowing pupils to develop their talents and discover new ones. Pupils are motivated by this and participate in these activities at a high level, benefiting from the opportunity to train without missing out on academic work.
- 3.12 All pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils with SEND and EAL feel well-supported to achieve, saying teachers help them believe they can achieve through their support and encouragement. Pupils' positive attitudes are strengthened by opportunities to collaborate and engage, particularly in creative subjects, where teaching consistently inspires and challenges pupils to aim high. For instance, in a music lesson, the passion of the teaching and pace of the lesson enabled pupils in Year 4 to demonstrate outstanding ability. They engaged wholeheartedly with their learning, confidently performing extremely complex songs from their upcoming musical production with enthusiasm and tangible passion and pride. Governors and leaders have successfully created a learning environment in which pupils' success is celebrated.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are confident, reflective learners, developing deep self-understanding which prepares them well for the next stage of their education. In interviews and conversations, pupils were objective about their strengths and insightfully discussed what they needed to do to improve. Pupils have excellent levels of perseverance and readily accept challenges. In the EYFS, children show strong self-confidence in their activities and play, responding positively to warm, encouraging interactions with their teachers. Pupils in Year 1 visit the local dry-ski slope where they are expected to look after their own needs. If they fall on the slope, instructors explain to them how to stand up safely and be independent, thus strengthening their resilience. Older pupils' work shows that they reflect effectively on their achievement, using the success criteria for a task alongside teachers' supportive comments. Pupils maturely use failure as a learning tool to push themselves outside their comfort-zone. The governance and leadership of the school are highly effective in creating the space and the time for pupils to develop excellent personal skills and self-awareness. The school fully meets its aim to create a community which encompasses values of compassion, creativity, courage and commitment. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent.
- 3.15 Pupils are confident and able decision makers, understanding the importance of this skill. In lessons they respond well to opportunities provided to choose how they will tackle a task. All Year 1 pupils were able to independently choose the method of working that best helped their calculation of number sentences, manipulatives, number lines, parts or wholes. Older pupils can choose to engage in the Bronze Arts Award and make their own choices of theme and media. Pupils demonstrate an excellent ability to make decisions about their own learning. They confidently make decisions when choosing the 'Friday Enrichment' opportunity in which they wish to partake. Pupils are involved in key decision making in the school, including the election of house and sports captains and, through the elected school council, choosing which charities to support. Pupils are given many opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities and to make decisions for themselves and for their peers, consequently developing an excellent understanding of how the decisions they make affect their own success and wellbeing and that of others.
- 3.16 Pupils have an excellent spiritual awareness. They show a deep appreciation and respect for diverse beliefs and faiths, with the principles of kindness and tolerance underpinning all. Conversations with pupils during breaks and lunch, around the school and in interviews, revealed that pupils think deeply about the non-material aspects of life. Many well-crafted and affecting displays show the pupils' deep appreciation of art, poetry and values. Pupils demonstrate particularly an excellent appreciation for music and the natural world around them. Working with the school gardener, the pupils are actively engaged in tending the grounds and discovering more about their natural surroundings. In an art project, they were encouraged to view birds as 'natural architects'. Pupils enjoy trips to the local woodland and collecting driftwood from the beach for art projects. They embrace the many opportunities to thoughtfully discuss their non-material understanding of the world around them, such as in their personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons.
- 3.17 Pupils are clear about what is right and wrong and accept responsibility for their own behaviour. On the whole, they are good at learning from any mistakes that they make. Most pupils are considerate in their behaviour towards others both in and out of the classroom and respect the support they receive from their teachers. In their questionnaire responses, all parents agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour. However, a minority of pupils indicated that they did not agree that good behaviour is promoted at the school, or that pupils are kind and respect each other. Inspectors found that there was some evidence to corroborate this in the senior school but the school is aware of this, and leadership has already introduced effective strategies to strengthen pupils' demonstration of kind and respectful behaviour. Discussions with staff and pupils and scrutiny of records show that when issues arise, they are fairly and sensitively managed, helping pupils to learn

from the consequence of their actions. Acts of thoughtfulness are celebrated in the same way as academic and other achievements, with the result that most pupils exhibit very positive behaviour.

- 3.18 Pupils show excellent social awareness overall. There are high levels of collaboration between pupils of different ages in the school. Pupils in Years 1, 2 and 7 thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to share books with one another as part of World Book Day. They listened well to each other, and the older pupils were extremely kind, thoughtful and mature in their approach to the younger pupils, encouraging their questions and interacting positively with them. In a Year 7 PSHE discussion concerning homelessness, all pupils were able to demonstrate outstanding empathy when discussing how homeless people may be feeling, how they are treated by others and why they could have found themselves homeless. Pupils at breaktime maintain an awareness of those who do not appear to be engaged with a friendship group. In the classroom, pupils collaborate effectively, although there were occasions where pupils needed to be reminded that collaboration requires them to listen as well as offer their own thoughts and opinions. Pupils' social skills impact significantly on their success, through activities such as sport, music, drama and the many collaborative activities in which they are involved on a daily basis.
- 3.19 Pupils show an excellent level of respect for diversity and mature cultural understanding. Pupils in Year 1 demonstrated this with their work celebrating how families are all unique and special, culminating in an effective display of different types of family units. Pupils in Year 2 were able to explain the differences between Christian and Hindu weddings, and as part of 'Black History Month', pupils in Year 8 produced very thoughtful work, entitled, '*No Room for Racism*', about the influence of current black football stars. Pupils' cultural understanding was highlighted in their considered approach to the school production where they worked especially hard on perfecting the pronunciation of Polynesian words to ensure accuracy and respect.
- 3.20 Pupils are keen to embrace opportunities to be part of their local community, while also acknowledging that they have a part to play in global issues. This ranges from visits to the local care home where, after getting to know the residents, pupils produced biographies before inviting the same residents to concerts, and to be part of other events in the school community. Senior pupils act as supportive reading buddies to those in the junior department and voluntarily play with and support them at breaktimes. During a shared reading session between pupils in Year 2 and Year 7, all of the younger pupils listened carefully to their reading buddies and all interacted positively. Pupils aspire to leadership roles, showing commitment and responsibility as they support the school community as prefects, house captains and heads of school. Pupils initiate and organise charity events themselves, in response to wider global issues such as the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. Conversations and interviews with pupils showed their excellent empathy with those trying to raise awareness of issues such as the protection of the seas and other places of natural beauty.
- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils in Year 2 confidently planned a healthy and balanced menu that incorporated all five food groups. They understood the importance of not touching a hot bulb when performing their shadow experiments. Pupils in Year 7 who had led an assembly on the importance of healthy snacks wrote to the parent body explaining why convenience snacks should be avoided. In a PSHE lesson, whilst discussing homelessness, Year 7 pupils confidently explained cuckooing, county lines, drug and alcohol abuse and the possible impacts of these. Pupils clearly displayed in interviews that they recognise that mental health is vital in ensuring wellbeing, and appreciate the many avenues, including the wellbeing room, available in school to discuss any concerns. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages their child to adopt 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, 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
Mrs Emma Haworth	Compliance team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mrs Amanda Kirby	Team inspector (Former head, ISA school)