

School inspection report

3 to 5 June 2025

Oakfields Preparatory School

Harwood Hall

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Corbets Tey

Upminster

Essex

RM14 2YG

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. The proprietor maintains comprehensive oversight and ensures that school leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities to meet the requirements of the Standards consistently. Leaders accurately self-evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development, with both support and challenge from advisors and external agencies. As a result, leaders implement well-informed improvement plans firmly linked to the school's aims and ethos. Some information on the website was out of date or missing. This information was updated during the inspection.
2. Pupils benefit from a broad, inclusive and age-appropriate curriculum, including a well-designed extra-curricular programme. Teaching, especially in English and mathematics, typically ensures that most pupils learn effectively, make good progress over time and achieve well. Many pupils gain entry at selective senior schools, including with scholarships. However, some teaching does not precisely support pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn as effectively as they could in some subjects. Leaders do not have a precise oversight and understanding of the impact of their work for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL).
3. Leaders actively promote pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. Leaders have implemented a suitable programme for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE). The programme considers the age and needs of the pupils. Leaders implement effective behaviour and bullying policies and, as a result, polite, considerate and respectful relationships are commonplace. Health and safety arrangements, including first aid provision and fire safety, are comprehensive and comply with current regulations.
4. Pupils learn the importance of respect for each other. They learn about important values such as democracy and the rule of law. Through a range of trips and charitable initiatives, leaders ensure that pupils develop a broad social and economic education and understand the valuable contribution they can make to their local community and wider society. Pupils' economic education supports their understanding of key life skills, such as money management.
5. Leaders maintain a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework and support the youngest children to learn and develop effectively. In the youngest year groups, children learn to understand and regulate their emotions, become confident communicators and develop numerical fluency. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
6. Leaders have developed an effective safeguarding culture. Staff, including those with specific safeguarding responsibilities, are well trained and knowledgeable. Leaders take advice from local safeguarding partners, and make prompt referrals to them, as necessary. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they can approach a trusted adult for guidance and support, when required.

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 planning and teaching across the curriculum are consistently effective so that pupils learn well consistently in lessons and over time, including pupils who have SEND
- ensure leaders have precise oversight of the needs, strategies and impact of their work for pupils who speak EAL, so they can identify where they could be more effective in supporting these pupils to acquire language and communication skills.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. The proprietor body, supported by a team of advisors, maintains effective oversight of leaders' work. They review regular reports and presentations on the school's procedures, achievements and areas for improvement, as well as seeking the views of staff, pupils and parents. The school's advisors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the role, such as in safeguarding and educational leadership. As a result, the proprietor ensures that leaders fulfil their responsibilities, so that the Standards are met consistently.
8. Leaders undertake regular training and ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge of current legislation and guidance. They use a variety of information to develop a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. A strategic plan is in place to ensure that pupils' wellbeing and academic success are actively promoted. They act in a timely way to ensure that they support pupils. As a result, pupils' wellbeing is prioritised in leaders' work.
9. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A detailed and appropriate accessibility plan is in place. Individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with educational, health and care (EHC) plans ensure that reasonable adjustments are made, as necessary. Leaders review the curriculum and monitor lessons and activities to ensure that teaching is inclusive. The accessibility plan that was available on the school's website was not the most up to date. The most recent plan was made available to inspectors when requested.
10. Leaders ensure that they provide parents and external agencies with required information. Leaders provide local authorities with appropriate information related to pupils who have EHC plans, including the use of additional funding. Parents are well informed on their children's progress and attainment through a regular and detailed programme of academic reporting. Policies and procedures are aligned with the latest statutory guidance and regularly reviewed. The school provides parents with these policies and a wide range of further useful information through the school's website. The previous inspection reports were not all available on the school's website. This was rectified by leaders during the inspection.
11. The school operates an effective complaints procedure. Parental concerns are taken seriously and dealt with in an open and timely manner, in line with school policy. Leaders regularly review the complaints log and, if appropriate, any lessons are learned, recorded and acted upon.
12. The proprietor, advisors and leaders have a strategic approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing. This includes creating effective links with external agencies such as local safeguarding partners and medical professionals. There is a robust risk management culture that influences decisions at all levels, including in relation to safeguarding and overseas trips. Risk assessments are thorough and precise. Regular staff training takes place to enhance their knowledge and practice.
13. Leaders in the early years are knowledgeable and skilled and ensure that the learning and development needs of the youngest children are prioritised. Transitions from home to school and from one class to the next are planned carefully, enabling children to become familiar with their new environment and to settle quickly. Early years staff receive a range of well-considered and specific training, including in SEND, safeguarding, food hygiene and paediatric first aid. The learning environment is suitably staffed and well-resourced, supporting children's development and

independence. Leaders use assessment precisely to identify where children need extra help and to support children to be ready to transition into Year 1.

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

14. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders plan the curriculum so that all pupils undertake a wide and varied range of lessons and activities appropriate to their ages and aptitudes. Leaders invest in specialist teaching and suitable resourcing in a range of areas such as music, Spanish and swimming to ensure high-quality provision for pupils. A wide-ranging programme of educational visits and guest speakers extends and deepens learning across the curriculum. Extra-curricular provision is broad and caters for a full range of interests, from public speaking to gardening.
16. Typically, teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They introduce concepts clearly and support pupils to learn effectively, especially in mathematics and English. In these lessons, pupils develop a strong understanding of the content and can apply their learning independently and successfully to increasingly challenging tasks. As a result, pupils become increasingly proficient at reading, writing, speaking and listening skills as well as developing and applying mathematical skills in reasoning and problem-solving. In some subjects, staff are less well trained to plan and deliver the content as well as they do in English and mathematics. As a result, some pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as leaders intend.
17. Leaders have recently developed an effective framework for assessment which provides detailed, individual tracking data for pupils. This is helping leaders to monitor pupils' progress over time more effectively and precisely. Pupils learn effectively in a range of lessons, especially English and mathematics. They develop effective skills in literacy and numeracy and a rich understanding of the wider curriculum. Many go on to successfully achieve places at selective senior schools and achieve scholarships to do so.
18. Leaders provide teachers with information which summarises the needs and learning preferences of pupils who have SEND. They provide teachers with appropriate training. Most teaching supports pupils who have SEND to learn effectively, especially those pupils who have more complex needs, including those who are in receipt of an EHC plan. However, in some lessons, teaching does not use this information precisely enough to adapt and support pupils to access the curriculum as effectively. When this occurs, pupils do not learn as well as they should.
19. Teachers are adept at supporting pupils who are in the early stages of learning English, so that they develop language and communication skills, and can access the curriculum alongside their peers. However, leaders' monitoring of pupils' specific needs and of the impact of the school's strategies and work in relation to these pupils is underdeveloped. As a result, leaders are not able to precisely identify the difference that the school is making to the progress of pupils who speak EAL and where some pupils may benefit from further support for their language development.
20. In the early years, children develop confidence and independence in their learning as a result of an appropriate curriculum and well-trained staff. Resources and activities are thoughtfully matched to children's needs and interests. Staff support children well to develop their language and conceptual understanding through role play, questioning and the introduction of subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils become articulate and confident communicators as they share their ideas in lessons, support and encourage each other, and listen well to what each other have to say. The vast majority of children are well prepared for the transition to Year 1.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

22. Pupils participate in an extensive range of physical activities through their physical education (PE) lessons, competitive sports and a range of extra-curricular activities, from tennis to pickleball. This supports their development of balance and gross- and fine-motor skills, as well as their wellbeing. Pupils also explore and develop their physical abilities and self-awareness in a range of outdoor environments such as during outdoor learning sessions on the school site and while on residential trips. These experiences help grow pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
23. Leaders ensure that pupils' emotional and mental health are promoted. Lessons in mindfulness and religious services and assemblies all serve to promote pupils' spiritual awareness and sense of perspective. Daily emotional regulation checks ensure teaching staff have a continuous insight into every pupil's wellbeing. Leaders and staff publicly celebrate pupils' efforts and achievements across the school community. Staff encourage pupils to be confident in their own abilities.
24. Pupils are well supervised by appropriate adults. Pupils and staff share warm, respectful relationships and, as a result, pupils are calm and considerate to one another. Leaders monitor patterns in behaviour and act to address any emerging issues. Staff approaches to behaviour and bullying are in line with the school's policies and consistently effective. Incidents of behaviour and bullying are dealt with, and recorded, appropriately.
25. Children in Nursery and Reception feel at ease and secure at school. Staff role-model positive attitudes and caring relationships. They use a range of strategies to support children's understanding, such as daily emotional checks and a broad collection of stories related to managing emotions. Children learn to regulate their emotions and develop empathy for others. The curriculum regularly promotes children's physical and emotional wellbeing, including through daily use of the outdoor environment, swimming lessons and activities such as street dance club. Children's emotional and physical development are well supported.
26. The PSHE programme, including statutory responsibilities for RSE, reflects the school's aims and ethos, and is well planned and well delivered by staff. It ensures that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of important topics, such as the features of a respectful and healthy relationship. Parents are consulted and kept informed regarding any curriculum updates.
27. The school site is well maintained. Appropriate health and safety policies and procedures are in place, regularly reviewed and implemented effectively. Regular checks and maintenance are carried out across the premises, including of fire safety equipment, lighting, asbestos and the electrical system. Detailed records are maintained, and suitable action is taken to address any issues. Appropriate systems are in place for managing any on-site risks, such as the control of traffic and people on-site. Health and safety training for staff, including in fire safety, is up to date and suitably recorded.
28. Suitable accommodation and appropriate procedures are in place to care for pupils who are injured or become unwell. First aid is provided by suitably trained staff. Pupils with specific medical needs are well known to staff and receive appropriate care. Any medicine is appropriately administered and stored securely. Appropriate records are kept, including those relating to accidents and injuries and the administration of medicines.

29. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained and regularly reviewed to monitor patterns of absence. Staff are vigilant and follow up on unexplained absences promptly. Staff understand local reporting procedures in relation to children who are missing education. They report pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition times to the local authority, as required. An up-to-date attendance policy is available on the school website and is effectively implemented.

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

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

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

31. The curriculum enables pupils to develop their financial awareness effectively. Pupils learn about the role of money in everyday life across a range of subjects and activities. For example, during PSHE lessons, Year 6 learn about taxes, payslips, budgeting and loans. Years 3 and 5 take part in a collaborative project to set up their own shop and consider financial operations such as budgeting, pricing and the use of contactless payments. In the early years, role-play areas simulate financial transactions with the use of tills, money and Oyster cards.
32. Leaders ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to develop respect for other faiths and cultures and to take an interest in the wider world. Coverage of world religions and cultures in PSHE and religious studies is enhanced by whole-school events such as 'diversity day', where pupils and staff celebrate the dress and customs of their respective faiths and cultures. Pupils treat each other with notable kindness, tolerance and empathy, for example in early years assemblies, when Nursery children listen attentively and respectfully to a child's presentation on his family's upcoming Eid celebrations.
33. Pupils learn the significance of fair processes and understand that a system of rules supports a safe society. Pupils are introduced to various democratic systems and laws, discussing topics such as elections around the world or the importance of rules in team sports. Equally, pupils have opportunities to participate in the democratic process throughout their time at the school, for example, by taking part in a voting system for reading books in the early years, or during 'campaign week' for the school council elections.
34. Pupils engage purposefully with local and wider communities. They participate in activities such as litter picking, foodbank support and regular sporting events with local schools. Involvement in large-scale events such as the London Mini Marathon, Young Voices at the O2 arena and Remembrance services help to develop wider context and perspective. Equally, activities such as singing performances at a local care home ensure that pupils develop an increasing commitment to community service.
35. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their future roles in society. From an early age, pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to lead and support their school community, whether as class leaders in the younger years, play leaders in Year 5, or school council leaders and house captains in Year 6.
36. Effective transition arrangements ensure that children in the early years proceed smoothly into the next stage of their schooling. Leaders' close liaison with senior schools supports a smooth transition process for leavers. Parents and pupils discuss their options with staff and are well supported in choosing their next school, including through visits, transition days and presentations from recent alumni.
37. Adults in the early years act as positive role models so that children learn to form successful friendships. They provide opportunities for children to interact with other adults and pupils in school in order to foster confidence in wider social interactions. Through imaginary play and discussion during storytelling, children practise different roles and relationships. As they get older, staff focus

on speaking and listening opportunities which provide pupils with the tools to communicate effectively with a range of different audiences.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

38. There is an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. A formal annual review of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures is supplemented by regular oversight and challenge. The proprietor, supported by their advisors, has a comprehensive understanding of the school's safeguarding arrangements and any specific risks. Clear and comprehensive risk assessments and procedures are in place to mitigate these risks.
39. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest statutory guidance and is a central feature of staff induction and training. Staff receive regular training, both in-person and online, organised by a suitably qualified and experienced safeguarding team. Staff have a thorough understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures as well as the staff code of conduct and whistleblowing policy. They report any concerns appropriately and in a timely manner.
40. Leaders act in a timely manner on all concerns raised about pupils. When needed, leaders readily engage with local external agencies for guidance and support. They make appropriate referrals to a range of agencies, including children's services.
41. Safeguarding records are carefully managed. Leaders regularly review safeguarding information to analyse any trends or wider concerns. They cross-reference their records with other information, including bullying and behaviour logs, to ensure that pupils are closely monitored and supported.
42. Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, including online. Arrangements for the monitoring and filtering of online technology are effective. Leaders respond to alerts promptly. Pupils understand how to report concerns.
43. The proprietor, advisors and leaders ensure there are robust recruitment procedures in place that reflect the latest statutory requirements. Records of checks that are made in relation to adults working with pupils, including new members of staff, governors, volunteers and contractors, are detailed and appropriate. Leaders' effective oversight ensures that all steps in the recruitment process are followed systematically.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Oakfields Preparatory School
Department for Education number	311/6061
Address	Harwood Hall Harwood Hall Lane Corbets Tey Upminster Essex RM14 2YG
Phone number	01708220117
Email address	office@oakfieldspreparatoryschool.co.uk
Website	www.oakfieldspreparatoryschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Limited
Chair	Michael Drake
Headteacher	Matthew Booth
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	222
Date of previous inspection	8 to 11 March 2022

Information about the school

45. Oakfields Preparatory School is a co-educational independent day school located in Upminster. It is part of Cognita Schools Limited. The proprietor body is supported by a team of advisors, including leaders from other schools in the Cognita Schools Limited group. This team acts in an advisory capacity to the headteacher and proprietor body. Although there is not a governing body, there is a chair of governors, Karen Nicholson, who acts on behalf of the proprietor body to oversee the work of the headteacher. The school is divided into four sections: a Nursery, a Reception, a lower school for pupils in Years 1 to 2 and an upper school for pupils in Years 3 to 6. There has been a change of headteacher since the previous inspection.
46. There are 75 children in the early years comprising two Nursery classes and two Reception classes.
47. The school has identified 17 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
48. English is an additional language for 12 pupils.
49. The school states its aims are to celebrate each child's individual talents and strengths by offering them a broader and balanced wider curriculum that promotes acceptance and development of interpersonal skills through celebrating diversity and creating an inclusive culture that supports children to thrive. The school aims to encourage an inquisitiveness in children that harnesses their understanding of the global changes they face by praising curiosity, and to cultivate personal goals to enhance motivation by recognising the importance of a child's self-belief.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

3 to 5 June 2025

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

51. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, 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.

52. 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**.

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