

School inspection report

11 to 13 June 2024

Exeter Pre-Prep School

The Avenue

Exminster

Devon

EX6 8AT

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. Governors have an in-depth understanding of the work of the school and regularly meet with senior leaders, staff and pupils to quality assure school provision and scrutinise school policies and practice. This oversight confirms that leaders demonstrate the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and ensure that Standards are met.
2. Governors and leaders actively promote the wellbeing of pupils, and of the children in early years. This is achieved through a specific wellbeing curriculum and regular self-evaluation of leaders' decision-making that purposefully links pupils' welfare, learning and safeguarding.
3. Leaders provide an environment in which pupils are nurtured as individuals. Respect for others, kindness, being helpful, curious and collaborative are values and skills that resonate with the youngest children in early years and the older pupils. This is due to leaders carefully crafting age-appropriate illustrations of the school's virtues and aims, and consistent modelling by staff.
4. Children in early years have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and there is kind and considerate behaviour throughout the school. Incidents of negative behaviour or bullying are rare and, if they occur, are responded to effectively.
5. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It covers the required range of subjects and areas of learning for pupils throughout the school, including the key areas of learning for children in the early years. In addition, pupils have appropriate access to a range of activities both through the school's extra-curricular programme and specialist teaching in French, music, physical education (PE) and woodland activities.
6. Leaders effectively implement the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and personal, social and emotional development (PSED) programmes to foster the building blocks for success in life. Pupils know how to keep safe, are socially adept and show support and respect for one another. Leadership skills are promoted through positions of responsibility in Year 2 which are rotated regularly and, as a result, pupils develop an awareness of leadership.
7. Teaching meets pupils' learning needs and builds on previous attainment so that pupils make good progress. Leaders review data to monitor the pupils' progress from their starting points to inform planning, implement extension activities and to support pupils with their learning. However, some teaching does not support pupils to achieve as well as they could do.
8. The provision for the pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is targeted with planning tailored to match individual pupils' needs. These pupils quickly achieve good levels of fluency in English which enables them to access the curriculum. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have individualised support to identify appropriate strategies to ensure that they make good progress.
9. Oversight of the school's safeguarding culture by governors is robust. The safeguarding policy is effectively implemented. Staff receive regular training and report promptly if a safeguarding concern arises. The safeguarding team work closely with external agencies.

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 higher prior attaining pupils are more consistently supported to achieve as highly as possible
- ensure that children in the early years are provided with opportunities to respond to their individual interests to help them develop their learning in line with their ability.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors are kept well informed about the school's development and performance through effective oversight and monitoring of the school's self-evaluation, policies and processes, frequent visits to the school and termly reports to the governing body.
11. Leaders have the knowledge and skills appropriate to their roles and ensure that the Standards are met. They make available to parents and prospective parents, relevant policies and required information through the school's website.
12. Leaders place the welfare of the pupils at the heart of their decision-making process and actively promote pupils' wellbeing through a curriculum designed to have a positive impact on pupils' emotional and mental health. Leaders proactively connect pupils' learning, wellbeing and safety. For example, the additional school gates to the school site and the creation of an outdoor learning area. These provide secure access to the provision and enable the children in early years to freely extend their learning outdoors resulting in a positive impact on their progress towards their early learning goals (ELGs).
13. In the early years, leaders fulfil the statutory requirements. The early years curriculum and assessment framework is well planned, and this enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points. The administration of medication is by qualified first-aiders, the children are visible to, or within the hearing of, staff so that they receive individual attention. Supervision arrangements adhere to appropriate staff-to-child ratios.
14. The high visibility, accessibility and regular communication of leaders such as at the beginning and end of the school day, and the close working relationship with parents, supports pupils' learning and progress.
15. The school has suitable procedures in place to identify and manage behaviour, or any isolated incidents of bullying. The management and oversight of any incidents is supported by detailed records and the support and care of the staff who know every pupil at the school well.
16. Leaders have created a school ethos in which mutual respect and equality are promoted. The children in the early years are cooperative and work together effectively in the classroom and outdoors. Pupils' interactions in Year 1 and Year 2 are respectful.
17. Leaders meet their responsibilities under equality legislation and have a suitable accessibility plan which is regularly reviewed to ensure action is timely and appropriate. Adjustments are made to ensure pupils have appropriate access to the premises such as, for example, the installation of ramps to facilitate wheel-chair access. There is an individualised and inclusive approach to pupils' access to the curriculum and to regulation of their emotions.
18. There is systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of the school's health and safety and fire safety provision. Procedures for assessing and mitigating risks are robust and action is taken promptly when risks are identified.
19. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding procedures. Links with external safeguarding partners are well established.

20. Any complaints that arise are dealt with in line with the school's policy which details three stages and appropriate timeframes. Records of complaints are kept which include the stage a complaint reaches and any action taken.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. A suitable broad and balanced curriculum is provided in Year 1 and Year 2 taught by teachers who have the requisite knowledge and skills. Teachers are well supported by teaching assistants who contribute positively to the individualised nature of the pupils' education. The curriculum and associated teachers' planning incorporates well-structured activities and resources matched to pupils' prior attainment. As a result, pupils make good progress in the full range of subjects.
23. The children in the early years develop their skills across all required areas of learning and development. Typically, they are given opportunities to explore their own learning with activities which are carefully planned with resources linked to lesson aims for purposeful play. The children are responsive to opportunities to build on their learning when teachers provide resources that enable them to explore their personal interests.
24. A well-defined assessment framework is in place to evaluate pupils' performance. This includes teachers' assessment of pupils' needs and their tracking of progress using a range of strategies, including through marking and oral feedback. Teachers have a clear understanding of the aptitudes and attainment of pupils and use this knowledge to plan their teaching to enable pupils to make good progress from their starting points. Pupils in Year 2 typically maintain high levels of achievement across the age range and gain places to future schools, including those with academically selective entry requirements. By the end of Reception, the children generally attain their ELGs. The same good progress is true of pupils in Year 1. Pupils' numeracy and literacy skills are well developed with pupils demonstrating a good understanding of number, a broad range of vocabulary and creative, imaginative language in their writing. In Year 2, pupils enjoy the recognition of being the 'Mathematician of the Moment' and the 'Hand-writer of the Day'.
25. As they move up through the school, pupils' literacy skills are well supported by the emphasis that leaders place on the daily routine of hearing pupils read. Pupils speak with clarity and confidence and express their views coherently. In science, pupils understand how to conduct an experiment and show knowledge of the world around them. For example, through a practical experiment on plant growth, pupils understand that plants need water, light and a suitable temperature to grow and stay healthy. Well planned and taught art, design and music lessons develop the pupils' creative skills. High quality singing in assemblies and displays of artwork around the school showcase the pupils' artistic aptitudes. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points. However, teaching does not typically enable higher prior attaining pupils to receive consistent support to ensure their individual good progress from their starting points in lessons.
26. The school offers a varied range of recreational activities which are well attended, including drama, construction, football, multi-sports, art and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). Pupils talk positively about this aspect of their school day, appreciating the experience they gain from their involvement in a range of physical and creative activities.
27. The minority of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are provided with reading materials in their own language and additional scaffolding of learning tasks. This encourages them to gain good levels of fluency and enables speakers of EAL to access the curriculum fully.

28. Informative pupil progress reports are published to parents at regular intervals. In the early years, parents are additionally kept informed about the achievement of their children through an online learning journal.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. The school has introduced a range of activities, and a wellbeing curriculum in order to promote pupils' mental health, self-esteem and self-confidence. Discussions in 'circle time', their interactions with the school dog, participation in yoga and mindfulness lessons incorporating breathing exercises, help them to know how to keep healthy.
31. In the early years, the children's physical development, and their fine and gross motor skills, develop through their navigation of the space and obstacles, climbing outdoors and in physical education (PE) lessons. In PE, pupils learn, for example, how to balance, catch, throw and kick a ball. They enjoy their participation in events such as the school's Pancake Day races, sports day and fun runs. Pupils talk readily about how to live healthy lives, including the importance of physical activity, sleep and nutrition.
32. The relationships education programme content, which is shared with parents, is age-appropriate, carefully planned and led. Pupils understand that family contexts differ, and they show respect for those differences. The pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to resolve disagreements and friendship issues through clearly defined behaviour expectations and their daily interactions with peers and adults. At play time, the children are seen negotiating the sharing of toys and resources. Older pupils consistently demonstrate attitudes that reflect respect for themselves and for others.
33. Anti-bullying policies set clear expectations of behaviour, including for rewards and sanctions. The management and oversight of behaviour incidents is supported by detailed records which are monitored and acted upon. This approach to managing pupils' behaviour by leaders, helps pupils seek appropriate support when they need it from staff who know the pupils well. Visual illustrations of the school's virtues, for example, kindness, collaboration and curiosity enable the pupils to explain the behaviour choices they make. Across the school, pupils identify with the description of a 'Kind Kingfisher', a 'Helpful Heron', 'Teamwork Turtledove' or a 'Curious Curlew'. The pupils enjoy the daily recognition they receive for their efforts and the awards for good behaviour and academic endeavour through the giving of house points and certificates at the weekly celebration assembly. Children collect tokens towards their houses by adhering to the school's behaviour guidelines.
34. The school effectively develops the pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness through topics covered in PSHE lessons. It includes relationships education, citizenship, and visits to places of historical, religious and cultural interest and is supported by discussions in humanities subjects. The religious education (RE) programme enables pupils to experience local places of worship. Pupils' spiritual experience is also fostered through an effectively planned assembly programme. For example, pupils' understanding of Hajj was effectively enhanced in an assembly that used action and role play, and contributions from pupils, to extend their understanding of faith. Pupils can talk about traditions associated with different faiths and they demonstrate interest and respect for cultural diversity.
35. Participation and engagement in the weekly singing assembly is high with pupils engaging in moral debates. Through the lyrics of the songs they sing, the introductory learning content and opportunities for pupils to contribute to discussion during reflection time in assemblies, the pupils develop their social skills and moral awareness. Respect for individuality, particularly those

characteristics relating to identity, is seen in the interactions between pupils in lessons, assemblies and at play time.

36. Suitable precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Fire evacuation drills take place regularly. All required maintenance checks and records are in place. In addition to internal processes, the school undertakes an external audit of all health and safety practices and of its fire safety procedures. Records are meticulously kept and all regulatory requirements are met.
37. The school has a suitable medical room for pupils who have an injury, become unwell or have specific medical needs. Staff are paediatric first aiders with qualifications suitable for their roles. They manage first aid with care, maintain a diligent approach to record-keeping and communicate effectively with parents if first aid is administered.
38. Admissions and attendance registers are well managed. Leaders inform the local authority when pupils arrive or leave the school at non-standard transition points. Any non-attendance is monitored and followed up with appropriate action taken to any concerns.

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

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

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

40. Leaders ensure that children in the early years have a clearly defined sense of right and wrong. They are sensitively supported and guided as they learn to socialise with their peers and are kind and helpful towards one another. The children work productively in pairs and in groups, sharing and cooperating with each other. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 show respect towards adults and their peers; they interact and demonstrate positive social relationships.
41. Leaders have developed effective links with their locality and institutions in the wider world. Pupils have an understanding of the world around them through visits to, for example, local farms, the seaside, theatre trips and the zoo. Pupils support the local welfare hub by being invited to sing to residents and are involved in charity fund-raising events. Pupils enjoy these experiences which extend their learning beyond the classroom into the local community.
42. Through their creative play, children explore the roles of people in different professions including a doctor, dentist and a firefighter. Through role-play the children know how, for example, to brush their teeth to keep healthy and how to keep safe outdoors. During woodland lessons, the children in the early years know why they wear gardening gloves when planting flowers and sing "No pick, no lick, no waving your stick" during their outdoor learning.
43. Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to understand British values. For example, when visiting a local zoo, pupils have the opportunity to research the zoo's animals and vote on which they would like to learn about. This encourages an understanding of the democratic process and brings the taught curriculum to life as seen in the excitement and dialogue in lessons ahead of the visit. Questions asked include 'Do you think animals are happy in zoos?' to which pupils contribute their opinions knowledgeably. Active involvement in the principle of democracy is also experienced with election to the school council. Implementation of initiatives by the school council through their decision-making and leadership, has led to the introduction of, for example, adaptations of lunch menus and play equipment.
44. Pupils understand that rules in school, and laws in society, help people keep safe. Rules for lunchtime and play time are clearly displayed and followed by pupils. Pupils act responsibly and enjoy collecting house-points for making positive behaviour choices.
45. There are many opportunities for older pupils to have positions of responsibility. These include assembly, digital, library, lunch, play time and as nursery leaders which are rotated. Pupils talk about the leadership experience and the opportunity to support their school and the community. They have the self-confidence to 'have a go' and speak highly of the recognition they experience from their peers and the school for taking on a responsibility. They have a keen sense of how they can bring about change through these roles.
46. Leaders' emphasis on respect for others is evident in the daily routine of the 'Question of the Day', which is asked of the pupils by the headteacher during lunch. Creative thinking and thoughtful contributions on a range of topics are linked to the social and moral curriculum. For example, in the pupils' spontaneous responses around being kind and helpful in relation to the question "What would you do if you found your friend crying?" and the question that asked "What would you give the King for His birthday?" which inspired the pupils to consider gifts that are non-material.

47. Pupils recall learning about their place in the world through teaching of, for example, the life cycle, how to nurture friendships and understanding different beliefs in society. Pupils are respectful of others who have different views from their own. Pupils are confident in their interactions with their peers from a range of nationalities and cultures. They demonstrate respect for individuality and the diversity within the school.
48. The programme of economic education includes the theme of 'money and me' which enables pupils to apply their knowledge of number to real life and become aware of how money, savings and simple budgets are managed. Pupils' decision-making for charitable fundraising provides early steps towards ethical and economic awareness. Children in the early years learn about, for example, counting money through role play of real-life contexts such as in selling items in shops.
49. Year 2 pupils in the school are suitably prepared for the year above and the next stage of their education through the curriculum and opportunities to visit events at future schools, with the majority of pupils transitioning to the associated Exeter Junior school. The daily interactions between staff in early years and Year 1, their shared curriculum planning and tracking of children's progress and discussions around needs and the opportunities, ensures effective planning for the children's transition to Year 1. The children visit the classroom and meet their next teacher prior to the start of Year 1 which supports the children's transition.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements through regular visits, reports and an annual review of safeguarding to assure themselves that leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard children effectively.
52. A suitable safeguarding policy that promotes the welfare of the children in early years and older pupils is published. Staff understand the expectations of the staff code of conduct and recognise the need to report low-level concerns.
53. Governors and leaders responsible for safeguarding receive regular and appropriate training. They demonstrate good skills and knowledge and follow child protection procedures. They ensure safeguarding records are appropriately detailed. Communication with external agencies is effective.
54. Recruitment procedures are secure with a detailed recruitment policy which is implemented effectively. The process is supported by thorough record-keeping of all staff appointments in line with the requirements of statutory guidance.
55. All newly appointed staff undergo an appropriate safeguarding induction. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and receive regular training and safeguarding updates to consolidate their skills and knowledge.
56. Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils understand the risks associated with online activities. Suitable systems are in place to filter and monitor the use of the internet so that it is safe for pupils to access.
57. Leaders provide a range of ways for pupils to raise a concern including talking to staff and use of the 'Ask it Basket' initiative, a confidential means of asking an adult for help. Pupils are confident that any incidents would be quickly dealt with by the staff.
58. Leaders ensure that all relevant records are transferred when pupils change schools minimising the risk of children missing education.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Exeter Pre-Prep School
Department for Education number	878/6046
Registered charity number	306724
Address	Exeter Pre-Prep School The Avenue Exminster Exeter Devon EX6 8AT
Phone number	01392 496122
Email address	preprep@exeterschool.org.uk
Website	www.exeterschool.org.uk/pre-prep-school
Proprietor	Exeter School
Chair	Mrs Helen Clark
Headteacher	Mr Daniel Ayling
Age range	3 to 7
Number of pupils	73
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2023

Information about the school

60. Exeter Pre-Prep School is an independent co-educational day school. Known as 'The New School' until August 2023, the school was originally founded in 1992 and transferred to the ownership of Exeter School in March 2021. The school is a wholly owned subsidiary of Exeter School and has its own governors who are also members of Exeter School's governing board. The current head took up his position in September 2021.
61. The early years section of the school comprises one Nursery class for children aged 3-4 years and one Reception class for children aged 4 to 5 years.
62. The school has identified three pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
63. English is an additional language for seven pupils.
64. The school states its aims are to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which prepares children for the next step in their education, achieved within a stimulating, nurturing and inspiring environment where children can thrive and develop a real love of learning.

Inspection dates

11 to 13 June 2024

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

66. 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 head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- consideration of the views of pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

67. The inspection team considered the views of 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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