

## School inspection report

10 to 12 December 2024

# Hopelands Preparatory School

38–40 Regent Street

Stonehouse

Gloucestershire

GL10 2AD

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’.

## Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....   | 4         |
| <b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE .....                         | 6         |
| <b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....                 | 8         |
| <b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....</b>   | <b>9</b>  |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....        | 10        |
| <b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY ..... | 12        |
| <b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>  | <b>13</b> |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....  | 13        |
| <b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>  | <b>14</b> |
| <b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>   | <b>15</b> |
| <b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>  | <b>16</b> |

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders ensure that the school is run well and that the Standards are met. They foster good relations with key stakeholders and work closely with the staff body to develop their practice. They ensure that the school nurtures pupils' confidence, independence and respect for others. Governors actively support improvement, including through the appointment of an early years specialist, fostering external links with other education groups and local authority support networks, and providing educational support such as speech and language specialists.
2. Leaders have put in place a broad curriculum that supports pupils' academic, creative and personal growth. Staff typically meet pupils' needs effectively, including those of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff provide for pupils who have SEND through tailored teaching and additional support matched to their needs. However, leaders do not evaluate the impact of this support on pupils' progress as effectively as possible. Pupils typically progress well, gaining practical skills in different subjects, such as in coding. However, teaching does not always challenge older pupils with high prior attainment in Years 3 to 6 sufficiently to deepen their understanding and enable them to progress as well as possible.
3. Leaders, managers and staff foster pupils' emotional wellbeing through a nurturing environment, a suitable and helpful personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, and effective pastoral support. These enable pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem and learn about healthy relationships and the importance of fair treatment.
4. Leaders promote social responsibility, inclusivity and respect through initiatives such as a junior version of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE), community projects and a curriculum that educates pupils about cultural diversity and global issues. The school fosters mutual respect and develops pupils' sense of moral responsibility.
5. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective through comprehensive policies, clear procedures and regular staff training. They respond to safeguarding concerns swiftly and appropriately and maintain safeguarding records in line with the requirements of current statutory guidance.

## 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 teaching consistently challenges older pupils with high prior attainment sufficiently to deepen their understanding and enable them to make progress as well as possible
- strengthen their evaluation of the impact of additional support provided to pupils who have SEND on their progress.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders and managers monitor the school's policies and processes effectively to ensure that they are implemented consistently across the school, in line with the school's values. Leaders' skills and knowledge enable them to fulfil their responsibilities well, so that the school meets the Standards.
7. Leaders are dedicated to ensuring that the school's core aims and values are actively promoted and reflected across all areas of school life. They clearly communicate these aims and values to all stakeholders. Leaders provide personalised support for pupils, which helps pupils to make good progress. They provide a caring environment that is cultivated through an effective whole-school ethos where pupils of all ages integrate respectfully and courteously. Governors maintain effective and thorough oversight of the school. This oversight is informed by school visits, policy reviews and consideration of regular reports from leaders. Governors take measures designed to lead to school improvement, such as the recent appointment of an early years specialist and liaison with an external educational group which provides training, support and guidance to the school along with opportunities for moderation of pupils work.
8. Leaders are proactive in identifying and addressing risks, including contextual risks. There are systems in place to check all areas of the school daily and identify potential risks. Leaders and staff put in place suitable control measures to mitigate these risks and ensure a secure environment. Leaders ensure that staff with responsibility for conducting risk assessments are appropriately trained.
9. Leaders and managers engage with external agencies, such as local safeguarding partners, effectively to support pupils when concerns arise. They seek informal advice and make referrals where needed. For example, when appropriate, the school refers pupils who have SEND for assessment by psychological services. Leaders follow any recommendations provided to support these pupils further.
10. Leaders ensure that the school complies with the Equality Act 2010. They implement an accessibility plan that is regularly updated. Leaders make reasonable adaptations to the curriculum and the resources and premises to ensure their accessibility. Teaching educates pupils about the importance of inclusion. Leaders ensure that no pupils are discriminated against by the school.
11. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the school's operational and strategic needs and use their effective self-evaluation to drive continuous improvement. For example, they commission specialists to undertake audits within the school to help ensure that the school meets the Standards. Leaders, supported by governors, conduct detailed analyses of teaching, learning and resource allocation to identify the school's successes and areas for development. Recent initiatives, such as cross-curricular planning and increased training for subject leaders, aim to develop the effectiveness of teaching, broaden pupils' learning experiences and enhance pupils' progress.
12. The complaints policy is suitable, accessible and clear. Leaders respond to concerns swiftly and with the intention of enabling prompt resolution. They maintain detailed and confidential records of complaints and any actions taken in response to these.
13. The school provides all required information to parents. Most of this is published on the school website or readily available upon request. Parents receive regular reports about how well their children are progressing.

## 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 provide a broad curriculum that methodically develops pupils' knowledge and skills across all areas of learning. Detailed schemes of work ensure that learning points and subject knowledge are introduced progressively, building upon prior learning and deepening understanding of language and communication, mathematics, science, technology, humanities and the arts. Schemes of work in place often extend beyond the requirements of the national curriculum, incorporating rich content that reflects leaders' high expectations. Subjects are well planned, enabling pupils to make links between different areas of study, such as relating historical context to literature and applying mathematical reasoning in science.
16. Teachers typically plan lessons that reflect pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs. They manage class time and behaviour effectively, using varied resources and teaching methods to engage pupils and promote their progress. Teachers utilise their good subject knowledge effectively to develop pupils' understanding and foster their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, so that pupils make typically good progress. Older pupils generally perform beyond national age-related expectations in mathematics, reading, spelling and writing. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on and analyse their work, promoting a culture of self-improvement. Most lessons build on prior learning and meet individual pupils' needs effectively, using well-chosen resources such as handwriting exercises tailored to specific objectives. However, some lessons lack sufficient challenge for older pupils with high prior attainment to enable them to deepen their learning and make as much progress as possible.
17. Leaders ensure that any support needed for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is integrated into class through teaching that is adapted for them as required, such as through the provision of additional support in class and the use of grouping strategies and visual aids. Such support enables pupils who speak EAL to develop their English speaking and listening skills successfully.
18. Staff assess and identify the needs of pupils who have SEND and put in place early additional provision to support their progress. When required, the leader of provision for pupils who have SEND accesses external support from, for example, educational psychologists and speech and language therapists, and follows their recommendations. Pupils who have SEND are provided with individual plans which contain clear targets for their development. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND helps teachers to identify strategies to enable pupils to make further progress, and also plan for further intervention groups to provide more tailored support. However, leaders' evaluation of the impact of additional support provided to pupils who have SEND is not always as effective as it could be. Leaders are aware of this and are working towards a more comprehensive evaluation of the effect of the additional support provided on pupils' progress.
19. A suitable assessment framework is in place. Leaders and staff regularly assess pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. Teachers use a range of methods to track pupils' progress, which include teacher assessment and observations and more formal assessments that take place each half-term. This information is typically used to adapt lessons accordingly to support pupils' next steps. Detailed reports and regular information evenings keep parents informed of progress across all areas of the curriculum.

20. A broad range of extra-curricular activities offers pupils opportunities to explore and develop their skills in areas such as sports, cookery, drama and computing. The extra-curricular programme is complemented by initiatives such as the junior version of DofE. These encourage philosophical debate, engaging pupils with big questions such as about the importance of fairness and the nature of happiness.
21. Early years staff plan their teaching to reflect children's interests and develop their learning across all seven areas of learning methodically. Children are provided with many activities that encourage them to explore and utilise their developing communication and language skills. Daily lessons about the sounds that letters make help children to develop an understanding and application of early reading skills. Children apply this understanding throughout the day as they explore the environment, when using 'writing stations' and when following instructions that require early reading skills. Language-rich interactions between staff and children support children's development of communication and language skills. Children in the early years develop their musical and rhythmic skills through singing and group performances, while creative activities enhance their development of fine motor skills. Staff's secure understanding of child development informs their planning and teaching and so contributes to children's good progress across all areas of learning.

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

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

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

23. The behaviour policy promotes positive behaviour and reflects the school aims. The policy is consistently implemented, including with regard to the use of appropriate sanctions and rewards. Leaders and staff have high expectations of behaviour both within the classroom and when moving around the school, and this supports pupils' understanding of what is expected of them and promotes positive interactions with staff and each other. As a result, pupils of all ages display kindness and respect, with the few incidents of poor behaviour dealt with effectively by staff.
24. The anti-bullying strategy is well implemented. Leaders and staff are vigilant, managing and resolving incidents effectively through appropriate support for pupils affected and the use of suitable sanctions. Leaders maintain detailed behavioural records to identify trends.
25. Staff cultivate pupils' moral understanding through a curriculum that promotes respect and empathy. Discussions about human rights and equality, such as about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, deepen pupils' understanding that everyone has rights that should be respected. Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed by teaching that explores world religions, family celebrations and the concept of faith.
26. Leaders ensure that pupils are well supported in their physical and personal health through regular physical education (PE), sports and games. The PE curriculum is designed to develop specific sports-related skills, enhance physical co-ordination and build pupils' understanding of the importance of exercise for maintaining positive physical and mental health. Pupils are encouraged to engage in activities that promote teamwork, resilience and goal setting, fostering an appreciation for staying active and healthy which in turn supports their ability to engage positively in school life.
27. The school successfully supports pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Leaders and staff publicly celebrate pupils' efforts and achievements across the school community. Teaching is conducted in an encouraging manner that helps pupils to be confident in their own abilities.
28. The PSHE curriculum is designed to equip pupils with skills including the ability to recognise and manage emotions such as sadness, happiness, anger, stress, anxiety and frustration. Lessons provide practical strategies for coping with challenging moments, such as taking time out, 'mindfulness' techniques and ways of solving friendship problems. Pupils are also taught to understand the importance of listening and empathising with others.
29. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme contains comprehensive and appropriate content and is effectively delivered. The programme includes age-appropriate teaching about healthy friendships and relationships, personal boundaries, puberty and consent. Leaders consult parents through meetings and shared policies. The RSE programme meets the requirements of current statutory guidance.
30. Leaders and managers maintain effective oversight of all areas of health and safety and scrutinise logs carefully to ensure that checks and maintenance are carried out regularly and as required. The premises and accommodation are well maintained and contain appropriate facilities, such as suitable toilets and outdoor space. Fire safety procedures, including suitable fire risk assessments and external audits, are thorough. Regular fire evacuation drills ensure that pupils understand what

to do if the fire alarm rings, and staff are provided with induction training on fire safety procedures and regular training updates during staff training days.

31. Effective supervision ensures pupils are always overseen by staff. Staff encourage pupils to make use of the support they offer, such as by wearing 'listening ears' to motivate pupils to go to them for support, should this be needed. Leaders ensure that required staff-to-child ratios are adhered to at all times in the early years.
32. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders monitor attendance and follow up any absenteeism. The school informs the local authority of any pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard transition points.
33. The school provides suitable facilities for pupils who become injured or unwell. Staff receive first aid training, including, in the early years, suitable paediatric first aid training. Staff provide pupils with prompt and appropriate support. They follow suitable procedures for any administration of medication or first aid, inform parents appropriately and keep meticulous records of any such treatment.
34. Staff provide children in the early years with activities that support their development of fine and gross motor skills. Staff also encourage children's development of self-care, for example by teaching them to wash hands.

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

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

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

36. Leaders and staff use the curriculum to actively promote pupils' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. Pupils respectfully consider how cultural differences influence holiday customs, such as how colder climates impact celebrations, and also reflect upon their own family traditions. Staff provide assemblies and lessons that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures and religions, and the similarities and differences between them.
37. Leaders ensure that pupils are prepared for life in British society through a thoughtfully designed curriculum that explicitly teaches the importance of respect, equality and inclusion. The PSHE curriculum provides a structured framework for teaching pupils about human rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and how these rights apply to people's lives in the wider world.
38. Staff provide lessons that address the principles of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. For example, pupils learn about how Parliament and elections work and about equality legislation and protected characteristics such as race, religion and sex. Pupils also participate in the democratic process when electing school council members or deciding on school initiatives. Pupils create and present manifestos, then participate in a structured voting procedure to ensure fair and transparent elections. Staff present a balanced perspective across the curriculum whenever potentially political themes or content are at hand.
39. The school develops pupils' moral understanding. For example, staff develop pupils' ideas about concepts such as social justice through discussions about, for example, the use of servants in Victorian times. Humanities lessons challenge pupils to consider the environmental and economic impacts of human activity, such as deforestation and changes to settlements, fostering pupils' thinking about the ethical impact of humanity's actions.
40. Staff model mutual respect and tolerance and provide opportunities for pupils to work together collaboratively following these principles. For example, they encourage pupils to listen and value each other's contributions and to discuss how to handle disagreements respectfully.
41. Leaders' and staff's effective communication of the school's positive ethos promotes kind and considerate social behaviour. Communal singing, performances, trips and visits, as well as collaborative playtime activities, also help foster social cohesion. Leaders actively involve pupils in supporting the local community through activities such as delivering Christmas cards to residents and litter-picking during the harvest.
42. The school develops pupils' economic awareness through activities integrated across the curriculum. Older pupils engage with topics such as taxation, national insurance, budgeting, and council tax and its distribution to maintain local services. Younger pupils learn about the concept of coins in terms of monetary value and use this in role play activities, for example, when purchasing Christmas presents.
43. Leaders of the early years nurture children's social development through thoughtfully planned activities that promote collaboration and mutual respect. Role play, carpet time discussions and turn-taking games help children learn to share, listen and resolve conflicts peacefully. Staff use tools

such as sand timers to encourage fair play and co-operative interactions, fostering a harmonious environment for learning and exploratory play.

44. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their sense of responsibility towards others. Pupils take on roles such as class monitors, friends for early years children and school council members which are all democratically elected roles. Roles such as heads of school are not democratically elected but are awarded on completion of an application form and on merit. School council members manage suggestion boxes in classrooms, encouraging other pupils to contribute ideas about how their school experience could be improved.

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

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

## Safeguarding

46. Leaders effectively manage potential safeguarding concerns through robust policies, proactive measures and a vigilant culture that prioritises the protection of pupils from harm. They ensure that staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities, adhering to a safeguarding policy and procedures that are regularly reviewed and comply with current statutory guidance. Regular training sessions and weekly updates ensure that staff maintain a high level of knowledge and remain alert to safeguarding priorities. Staff are well informed about different types of safeguarding issues, their safeguarding responsibilities and the school systems for effective and prompt reporting.
47. The school has appropriate procedures for responding to any low-level concerns or allegations against staff that might arise. Staff are confident in reporting concerns about colleagues. Leaders address any such concerns swiftly and appropriately. This comprehensive approach fosters a culture of accountability and transparency.
48. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements, including policies, procedures, safer recruitment and minor concerns about colleagues. They meet regularly with safeguarding leaders and managers to review the school's responses to any safeguarding concerns and ensure that robust practices are in place. Safeguarding training for governors is updated to ensure they remain informed and effective in their oversight roles.
49. The school's safer recruitment procedures are effective. Staff complete all necessary checks on staff, volunteers and governors before they commence their work at the school. The single central record of appointments (SCR) is meticulously maintained and those responsible for completing it have a thorough understanding of safer recruitment procedures. The designated safeguarding governors review the SCR regularly to check that it meets requirements.
50. Leaders engage effectively with external agencies to support pupils when safeguarding concerns arise. They seek informal advice, make referrals when needed and work collaboratively with agencies such as early help services. Detailed and confidential records are maintained, and pupils affected by safeguarding concerns are closely monitored to ensure their wellbeing is prioritised.
51. Appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place to protect pupils from harmful online activity, and these are reviewed daily. Pupils are taught about how to stay safe online through the PSHE programme, computer lessons, school assemblies and initiatives such as a 'safer internet day'. These measures ensure pupils have a secure understanding of online safety and know how to report concerns if they arise.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

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|--|---|
| <b>School</b>                          | Hopelands Preparatory School  |
| <b>Department for Education number</b> | 916/6051  |
| <b>Registered charity number</b>       | 1007707   |
| <b>Address</b>                         | Hopelands Preparatory School<br>38 to 40 Regent Street<br>Stonehouse<br>Gloucestershire<br>GL10 2AD |
| <b>Phone number</b>                    | 01453 822164  |
| <b>Email address</b>                   | admin@hopelands.org.uk  |
| <b>Website</b>                         | <a href="http://www.hopelands.org.uk">http://www.hopelands.org.uk</a>                               |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                      | Hopelands Preparatory School  |
| <b>Chair</b>                           | Mr Richard James  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                     | Mrs Maria Boix  |
| <b>Age range</b>                       | 3 to 11   |
| <b>Number of pupils</b>                | 81  |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>     | 27 April 2022   |

## Information about the school

53. Hopelands Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. It was founded in 1954 and is accommodated in two large Victorian houses in Stonehouse. It is a charitable foundation administered by a board of governors. Over the last two years, the school has undergone some changes, including the opening of a nursery classroom for children aged 3 to 4 years. In September 2022 there was a change in headship following retirement into a joint headship arrangement. Since April 2024 it moved back to a single headship under the current headteacher.
54. The school has identified 15 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
55. English is an additional language for three pupils.
56. The school states its aims are to be a non-selective small school with small class sizes, to provide a caring, family environment with a 'whole school' ethos where children from all age groups integrate, to achieve academic excellence and the academic potential of each pupil, to ensure respect and courtesy to others, to instil confidence in all pupils and to create self-confident independent learners.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

10 to 12 December 2024

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

58. 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 the safeguarding governor
- 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.

59. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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