

School inspection report

15 to 17 October 2024

Brighton College Prep School

Walpole Lodge

Walpole Road

Brighton

BN2 0EU

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. School leaders successfully promote the education and wellbeing of pupils. They have created an effective curriculum which enables pupils to make good progress, and to flourish in their social and emotional development.
2. The provision for pupils' emotional wellbeing and social development is a significant strength. Leaders have a well-established culture of kindness and inclusivity which permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils are confident learners who readily share their ideas and learn from making mistakes. They celebrate each other's successes as well as their own, which results in a positive learning environment in which pupils' self-esteem grows.
3. Children in the early years learn well and make good progress across all seven areas of their learning. Children have well-developed language and communication skills from a young age and have good mathematical understanding.
4. Pupils achieve well. They continue to develop their mathematical, communication and writing skills and make sustained progress across the curriculum. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to discover new knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects including sciences, an integrated humanities curriculum and the option of studying Latin and Mandarin. Pupils' technological, artistic, musical and creative skills are very well developed.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and given effective support to meet their needs. The learning support team uses a range of different strategies which help pupils who have SEND to make good progress, often in line with their peers.
6. Pupils have a very well-developed appreciation for fundamental British values (FBV) and diversity. Pupils show respect and embrace differences. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities such as becoming wellbeing and respect ambassadors. Pupils value these positions and are positive role models for their peers.
7. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in and contribute to their local community. They embrace these initiatives to make a difference and show a very well-developed appreciation for the world beyond school. Although some careers guidance is provided in Year 7 and 8, pupils would benefit from this being more fulsome in order to help them to consider their options for later life in greater detail.

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:

- improve and develop the provision of careers education for older pupils so they have a greater understanding of the wider options available and can make informed choices.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders and governors take considerable care to ensure the wellbeing and success of every pupil. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing and have developed systems that ensure pastoral support and academic aspects work effectively together.
9. Leaders are effective and have a clear grasp of their responsibilities. There is a clearly articulated vision and a drive to improve and develop further. Governance is robust through the Brighton College board of governors and there is a prep school sub-committee that oversees the prep school. Prep school governors support leaders in their aims and are closely involved in school life, visiting the school regularly for governor days and spending time with pupils and staff.
10. Leaders have established effective channels of communication with staff through formal and informal meetings. They provide regular training opportunities to ensure that staff are well informed. Leaders are self-reflective, seeking and listening to staff views. All the required policies are in place and implemented consistently.
11. Leaders have established a culture of kindness which has significant impact because it enables pupils to flourish across all aspects of school life. Pupils are demonstrably kind to one another and respect each other's individuality. Leaders intentionally promote and celebrate acts of kindness regularly in assemblies through the 'caught being kind' nominations. There are consistently high expectations for how pupils treat each other, and pupils talk comfortably and naturally about being kind people.
12. Leaders consistently model the principle that each pupil is an individual and ensure that the school is an inclusive and welcoming community. All requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 are fulfilled effectively. Pupils behave with respect and consideration towards each other at all stages. On the rare occasions when behaviour falls short of this aim, pupils support their peers to correct their behaviour, and share their concerns with teachers. There are clear systems in place to identify and respond when pupils raise a concern. Leaders have provided a variety of ways for pupils to raise concerns and pupils can choose the one that is most comfortable for them.
13. Leaders continue to create a culture where pupils learn how to understand their own emotions and behaviour through use of a rainbow to categorise and explain their feelings. This system starts in the early years and continues through to the older years. It shapes the ways in which pupils of all ages interact with each other. This contributes significantly to pupils' ability to show understanding and kindness, both verbally and in their actions. It underpins leaders' high expectations for behaviour. The behaviour policy includes an effective tiered sanction system which recognises that pupils make mistakes, but also ensures that staff help pupils to take responsibility for their actions and learn from them. Pupils appreciate how leaders support them to overcome difficulties and to work together as a team.
14. Parents receive regular reports on their children's progress and attainment. There are many opportunities for parents to visit and meet with teachers. There is a suitable complaints procedure in place and on the rare occasions when a complaint is raised, the policy is implemented as intended. Records are kept securely and appropriately.
15. The school has a well-considered approach to the management of risk, and comprehensive risk assessments are in place. Potential risks to pupils' physical and mental health are minimised.

16. There is a suitable accessibility plan in place which makes access to the curriculum and the premises easier for people who have SEND.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders provide a broad and ambitious curriculum which provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their academic knowledge, skills and understanding. Teaching inspires pupils to be curious about their learning and to ask meaningful questions. Careful planning and adept use of stimulating resources means that pupils are fully interested in and focused on their work. The school prioritises developing skills such as working memory, time management and problem solving. Pupils reflect on how they are using these skills effectively in lessons.
19. There is a new curriculum in Years 7 and 8, including a humanities programme that takes an innovative approach to teaching history, geography, religious studies and philosophy. Instead of studying these subjects separately, there is an integrated course that helps pupils to explore topics in depth and understand how these individual disciplines are connected. As a result, they have a mature understanding of the world.
20. Pupils make good progress, including those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). This is because of teachers' meticulous planning, checking during lessons and effective use of regular and rigorous assessments. Pupils who have SEND are identified early and gaps in their learning are addressed promptly. Pupils make progress in line with their peers because teachers know them well and adapt teaching to meet individual needs, including providing opportunities to work in smaller groups to support learning.
21. Children in the early years make good progress in the seven areas of their learning. This is because staff use observations and other assessment information effectively to build a well-informed profile of each child, which in turn helps teachers decide on the next area of focus and learning. Children have good mathematical and literacy skills and make good progress from their starting points. Children can write descriptively using adjectives and similes by the end of Reception. Children talk happily to adults and to each other, explaining their understanding confidently and clearly. Children enjoy the many opportunities they have to explore the stimulating outside space and local environment, which promotes their understanding of the world and their curiosity.
22. Pupils attain well across the curriculum, developing strong reasoning skills over time, particularly in English and mathematics. They are successful in entrance assessments for the senior school of their choice, with most moving on to Brighton College. Many gain scholarships across a range of disciplines each year.
23. From a young age, pupils develop good mathematical skills, which they apply across the curriculum in subjects such as geography and science. Pupils are excellent communicators, both verbally and in writing. They use a highly developed and subject-specific vocabulary in subjects other than English and mathematics, pupils have well-developed literacy skills because they are given many opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences.
24. There is ambitious and specialist teaching in music, art, and design and technology, which helps pupils to gain knowledge and skills in advance of their years. Pupils quickly show a secure understanding of pitch, rhythm and pace in music. In art, they show a sophisticated appreciation for gothic architecture, creating their own gargoyles using technology to capture images as an inspiration for their creations in clay. Strong subject knowledge combined with effective teaching techniques mean that pupils understand complex ideas and produce work of high quality.

25. Pupils talk confidently about their learning and enjoy the opportunity to work creatively and develop their own ideas. Pupils regularly learn through going on educational visits or using the outdoor environment. They enjoy learning about local architecture, for example, by visiting the College to observe the buildings and windows. Many pupils talk about 'beach school', where pupils in pre-prep and prep school learn about looking after the local environment.
26. There is a broad co-curricular programme for pupils of all ages, which meets their needs and interests and encourages them to develop new skills and work with their peers from different year groups. Pupils participate in at least one club across the week and enjoy the range of opportunities on offer.

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

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

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

28. Pupils have a very strong sense of managing their own wellbeing and supporting the wellbeing of others. Recently, leaders have introduced an approach to improving pupils' wellbeing through the use of an emotions rainbow. The strategies are explored through assemblies and in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons. Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding about wellbeing in discussions with teachers and each other.
29. Pupils learn effective strategies to understand their emotions and manage their responses across all age ranges. They have tools to help them manage their behaviour very well. Pupils use a shared language that they fully understand to explain their emotions and feelings. Teachers and other pupils listen, show empathy and help pupils to settle and reflect on the consequences of their actions, both on themselves and on others.
30. Pupils understand that there are times when they may become worried, and they help and support each other, including when they are preparing for their entrance examinations for senior school. They value the support they are given by teachers during this time.
31. The new PSHE curriculum, designed by school leaders, is well planned and taught to meet pupils' needs. The relationships and sex education programme (RSE) is age appropriate and well considered. Pupils reflect with maturity on the importance of this aspect of the curriculum for their future lives.
32. Pupils behave very well and appreciate that everyone is an individual. Behaviour is often exemplary both in lessons and in less structured times. Good behaviour is rewarded, especially for younger pupils. Older pupils willingly follow the three pillars of 'progress, participation and partnership'. Pupils are confident to try new things in lessons and share their views freely, even when they differ from their peers, because there is mutual trust and respect.
33. Leaders take a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and have a thorough oversight of bullying and behaviour incidents. They address concerns swiftly and effectively, supporting pupils to reflect on their own behaviour and its impact on others. There is a clear behaviour system in place, which is consistently applied and which pupils value. Leaders consistently model positive relationships, which encourages pupils to behave well.
34. The physical education programme is comprehensive and delivered jointly with Brighton College for pupils in Year 7 and Year 8. Pupils develop confident skills in a range of sporting disciplines, including swimming, from a young age. Pupils enjoy their games lessons and fixtures. In the early years, children have many opportunities planned for them to develop their gross and fine motor skills.
35. The school has effective systems in place for monitoring health and safety. They manage and maintain the premises and grounds well. Leaders have a well-considered approach to the management of risk, and carry out thorough risk assessments. There are regular fire drills, and a comprehensive fire risk assessment is in place.
36. First aid procedures are robust. There is a new accessible medical centre with room for pupils to be triaged and treated with appropriate privacy.

37. School attendance rates are high overall. Leaders track and monitor attendance effectively.

Registers are taken in line with the most recent statutory guidance and recorded accurately. The admission register is kept appropriately and reflects statutory guidance, including for pupils who leave and join at non-standard times.

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

38. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

39. Leaders actively encourage pupils to develop strong cultural values and to contribute to the local and global community in a wide variety of ways. Pupils can easily explain the importance of tolerance, respect and equality, and they actively celebrate diversity. Pupils demonstrate respect, kindness and empathy in their interactions with each other.
40. Pupils are valued, respected and understood. For example, they are reflective when discussing protected characteristics. Pupils are prepared for the future and helped to understand how relationships have an impact on their lives and those of others. Pupils describe how carefully teachers approach sensitive topics such as divorce and equal rights and that, in turn, they are conscious about the negative aspects of stereotyping and discrimination.
41. In the early years, children have strong social skills and show kindness as they play cooperatively with and alongside each other. Children readily take turns with toys and learn to share. They are encouraged to resolve challenges by teachers who ask them, 'how can we solve this problem?'
42. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and expect that they will treat each other well. Difficulties are resolved quickly.
43. Pupils have an understanding of democracy. They vote for their charities, school council and pupil leaders. Older pupils become prefects, and each prefect has a responsibility, such as kindness and care, respect, wellbeing and sustainability, to promote. They organise events, take assemblies and are involved in fund raising. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously.
44. Pupils are proud of the house system and the charities they choose to support. They think about those less fortunate than themselves and demonstrate kindness. Pupils develop empathy for others through their involvement in events such as 'make a difference day' when they raise money for their local charities. Pupils are actively involved in projects such as beach clean-up, pelican bags, baking for a local care home and playing board games with residents.
45. Pupils develop their understanding of mental health and FBV through participation in organised 'challenge weeks'. Examples include Black history month and 'neurodiversity week'. They contribute to a local food bank and appreciate the reasons why someone may need to use one. Pupils understand the value of money and have a well-developed understanding of economic advantage and disadvantage.
46. Older pupils have careers education primarily through a 'super curriculum day' in Year 7 and Year 8. However, more needs to be done for older pupils so they have a greater understanding of the wider career options available to help them make informed choices. Pupils would like more opportunities to learn about careers. They have ideas about how they would like to improve their understanding of the career pathways available to them in the future. This is an area for leaders to further develop.
47. Pupils have an extensive and enriching range of opportunities in the club programme, which complements the academic curriculum. Pupils continue to form friendships, develop new skills, work collaboratively and build confidence when participating in a club or hobby.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. Leaders, governors and staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities well. Robust and comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to promote the safeguarding of pupils and are implemented consistently. Safeguarding leaders liaise closely with external agencies, including the local authority designated officer (LADO).
50. Those with designated safeguarding responsibilities have the required expertise and ensure that all staff receive regular and up-to-date training in line with statutory guidance. Newly appointed staff complete thorough safeguarding training as part of their induction. Staff are confident about reporting any concerns they may have. Leaders deal with issues promptly, checking for patterns and trends.
51. Safeguarding procedures, such as the use of mobile phones and other similar devices in the setting, are followed diligently. Leaders ensure that appropriate internet filters are in place and monitored carefully through regular reporting.
52. Governors review safeguarding reports, attend regular meetings and have effective oversight. Governors have the necessary training and expertise to carry out their roles.
53. There are a number of different ways in which pupils can share concerns, including online and through use of a class 'worry box'. Pupils are comfortable sharing any worries with adults and they trust leaders to support them. Pupils feel safe and know that they are supported by teachers.
54. Pupils learn about how to keep safe in an age-appropriate way in lessons. In PSHE lessons and special focus weeks, pupils consider how to stay safe online and discuss hypothetical situations to raise their awareness. They talk confidently about how to stay safe and manage potential risks.
55. The processes for the recruitment of new staff and governors are robust. All the necessary checks are undertaken and recorded meticulously on the single central record.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Brighton College Prep School
Department for Education number	846/6015
Registered charity number	307061
Address	Brighton College Prep School Walpole Lodge Walpole Road Brighton East Sussex BN2 0EU
Phone number	01273 704210
Email address	prepoffice@brightoncollege.net
Website	www.brightoncollege.org.uk
Proprietor	Brighton College
Chair	The Rt. Hon. Lord Maude of Horsham
Headteacher	Mr Ant Falkus
Age range	3 to 13
Number of pupils	500
Date of previous inspection	16 November 2021

Information about the school

57. Brighton College Prep School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged from three to thirteen years. The school occupies two sites adjacent to Brighton College, the pre-prep for pupils from Nursery to Year 3 and the prep school for pupils from Year 4 to Year 8. The school is a registered charity overseen by a board of governors who are trustees. A prep school committee, which includes members of the main governing body, oversees the administration of the school.
58. The early years setting comprises two nursery classes and two Reception classes located on the purpose-built pre-prep site.
59. The school has identified 47 pupils who have SEND. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
60. English is an additional language for 35 pupils.
61. The school states its aims are to develop pupils with a lifelong attitude of kindness, who live with integrity and who understand how to enhance their own wellbeing and that of others; to inspire a love of learning through an innovative and challenging curriculum which encourages curiosity and confidence; to promote an appreciation of spiritual development and celebrating diversity, and to understand the importance of contributing positively to local and global communities.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

15 to 17 October 2024

62. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

63. 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 governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

64. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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