

School inspection report

11 to 13 March 2025

Herries Preparatory School

Dean Lane

Cookham Dean

Maidenhead

Berkshire

SL6 9BD

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. Herries is a small, family-focused community that provides pupils with high academic standards, a varied curriculum within an inclusive, nurturing environment and rich extra-curricular opportunities. Leaders, pupils and staff are friendly and respectful.
2. Leaders and governors ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently. Leaders use a range of information to identify what is working well and where they can be more effective. They act quickly to address issues and take decisions in the best interests of pupils. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders, ensuring that strategic decisions align with the school's ethos and priorities.
3. The school delivers a broad and well-balanced curriculum. Specialist teaching enhances provision, particularly in languages, music, art and physical education. Assessment is used effectively to identify where pupils need support or extra help. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive tailored support to access the curriculum equitably and make good progress. Most teaching is well structured, enabling pupils to learn and attain well. On occasion, teachers do not use teaching strategies to support pupils to learn and behave as well as they should or make the progress of which they are capable.
4. The youngest children in the Nursery and Reception classes are provided with a stimulating and well-structured learning environment. Early years leaders plan an engaging curriculum that builds on children's natural curiosity and interests.
5. Pupils' physical, emotional and mental wellbeing are key priorities. The pastoral care system is well established, providing additional support when pupils need it. Pupils access well-considered curriculums in relationships and sex education (RSE), personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and physical education (PE). Behaviour expectations are high and understood by pupils. A well-managed system is used by staff to support pupils to effectively express their feelings and emotions.
6. Leaders manage health and safety, including risk management, well. Leaders maintain an appropriate and secure learning environment. They ensure that there are appropriate levels of supervision. Administration of the admissions register meets requirements. However, leaders have not established co-ordinated processes for the monitoring and oversight of the register. This occasionally leads to weaker communication between leaders about how information is being stored and reviewed.
7. Pupils develop a sense of social responsibility through opportunities for leadership and community engagement. Pupils learn about democracy, cultural diversity, and economic awareness through a well-planned curriculum. They actively engage in charitable initiatives, contributing positively to both the school and wider community.
8. The school upholds a robust safeguarding culture, ensuring that policies and procedures meet statutory requirements. Staff receive regular training, and safeguarding responsibilities are well understood. Leaders maintain effective relationships with external agencies, ensuring that pupils receive appropriate support when necessary. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, both online and in daily life, and feel confident in approaching trusted adults if they have concerns.

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:

- there are clearly defined, co-ordinated processes and systems for leaders' monitoring and oversight of the admissions register
- teachers use consistently effective strategies in all lessons to support pupils to learn well so that they make the progress of which they are capable.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders actively promote the school's vision and values that aim to value pupils as individuals and help them to reach their full potential. Pupils' wellbeing underpins leaders' decision-making. They have developed a well-managed pastoral care system that provides timely and effective support to pupils. They actively promote the importance of being part of the small, welcoming community.
10. Leaders know the school well. They have an insightful understanding and provide effective oversight of the school's work. They work closely with staff, pupils and parents. Leaders have a precise understanding of the school's areas of good practice and areas for improvement. They act promptly to bring improvements in the school's provision.
11. Governors visit the school regularly. For example, they routinely attend school events, review reports and have regular visits to meet leaders and staff. Governors are knowledgeable and well informed on school life. They provide ongoing professional challenge to leaders to ensure that they are fulfilling their roles effectively and providing provision that meets the Standards. They ensure that appropriate policies are in place, communicated well and implemented effectively.
12. Leaders in the early years are knowledgeable and skilled. They ensure that the curriculum and teaching provide the youngest children with a sound start to their education. They ensure that staff are well trained to deliver the planned curriculum, and to use children's play opportunities to develop vital aspects, such as language and communication skills. They use assessment precisely to identify and support children who need extra help.
13. There is a comprehensive approach to managing risk. Leaders and health and safety governors ensure mitigations of risk are kept dynamic and are both responsive and proactive. Staff contribute to the risk and management strategies, and specific pupils' needs so that everyone uses the processes in place. There are appropriate risk assessments related to the school site, the curriculum, off-site activities and to pupils.
14. Leaders ensure that they provide appropriate information, as required by the Standards. Policies, including those related to the curriculum, safeguarding, attendance and complaints, are available on the website. Parents receive formal reports on pupil progress and attainment regularly, in addition to in-person meetings with staff. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information in relation to pupils who have an education health and care (EHC) plan, including that related to additional funding.
15. The school operates an effective complaints procedure. Complaints are dealt with promptly and in line with the published policy.
16. Leaders ensure that they meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. They create and adhere to an accessibility plan that outlines strategies to increase access to the curriculum, and improvements to the physical environment for those who require it. It is regularly reviewed and published on the school website.
17. Leaders have well-established and productive links with a range of local services, notably the local authority safeguarding and attendance teams, with whom they maintain regular contact. They ensure that they work with external agencies to get timely and effective support for pupils.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders provide a curriculum to pupils that meets the requirements of the Standards. Leaders ensure that the curriculum plans for a range of varied activities that take into account the needs of pupils and consider the best ways to engage them.
20. The curriculum is well resourced and is enriched by a well-thought-out programme of trips, visits and visiting speakers. For example, pupils benefit from inspirational talks given by visiting authors and athletes, and outings to the Science Museum and Living Rainforest. Subject leaders facilitate a range of whole school focus events, such as book week as part of World Book Day, the NSPCC's Number Day or British Science Week.
21. Most teachers deliver the curriculum with skill. They use a range of resources and tasks to help pupils learn effectively. However, in a small number of cases, teaching methods and classroom organisation are less well adapted to the age and developmental stage of pupils and so are less effective. When this happens, pupils do not learn as well as they could.
22. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to apply their learning in more complex ways and with greater independence. Younger pupils develop creative and original ideas to pursue as independent study projects. As they get older, pupils independently use devices to make effective use of online learning resources to support future tasks. Pupils in Year 6 pupils lead Science lessons for the rest of the school in British Science Week.
23. Staff in the early years are well qualified, experienced and knowledgeable. They plan effective learning activities and use questioning and modelling proficiently to support children to develop language and communication skills. Leaders use an effective mix of planned activities and child-initiated learning. They use their thorough understanding of what children know and can do to provide extra help for children when they need it. As a result, children are highly engaged, motivated to succeed and achieve well.
24. Pupils build positive relationships with staff and each other. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and most pupils value their learning and work hard. Typically, pupils are motivated learners who are engaged and confident to express their ideas readily in lessons. However, on occasion, teachers do not identify and act quickly to address where pupils are not remaining on task, or where instances of low-level disruption hinders learning.
25. Teachers understand individual pupils' needs, including those who have SEND. Leaders provide teachers with precise and detailed guidance about how best to support pupils. This information is utilised by teachers to ensure pupils have equitable access to learning. Where additional support is needed, leaders track this carefully to ensure that it is precise and well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils who have SEND learn effectively, make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.
26. Teachers are well trained to support pupils who speak EAL. They receive external training, liaise closely with families and have regular meetings with leaders to review how well pupils are progressing. Teachers provide language and communication support to pupils through adapting their teaching methods or providing additional resources. Typically, pupils acquire English fluency rapidly and attain in line with their peers.

27. Teachers know pupils well and use this knowledge to plan learning that considers pupils' needs, starting points and areas of interest. An effective assessment framework is in place to track and evaluate pupils' academic performance. By the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS), most children meet the expected early learning goals (ELGs) in almost all areas of learning. By the end of Year 6 pupils consistently achieve scores that are in alignment with, or above national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
28. Pupils appreciate the breadth of extra-curricular opportunities available to them. The after-school clubs programme enriches pupils' school experience and supports the development of new skills. Annual overnight residential trips in Years 4 to 6 to a variety of destinations also enrich pupils' personal development.

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 RSE and PSHE curriculums are delivered by well-trained and knowledgeable staff. Pupils learn about important concepts such as consent, healthy relationships, mental health and safety, in an age-appropriate way. Teachers provide activities that ensure pupils are actively involved and have opportunities to debate and discuss important topics. Parents are appropriately consulted and informed about the curriculum.
31. Leaders seek a range of ways with which to identify and support pupils' wellbeing. Leaders have created a pastoral system where pupils have a range of adults to go to when they are worried or have concerns. Regular surveys of pupils' views inform leaders' actions about their approaches to supporting pupils, including changes to the curriculum or assembly programme. Leaders provide individualised support for pupils when they need it. Leaders seek external guidance for up-to-date support available for staff and pupils related to pupils' wellbeing and emotional health.
32. Leaders' behaviour policy and process supports pupils to develop self-understanding and self-control strategies to regulate their behaviours. Staff help pupils to understand and articulate their emotions. Pupils develop an understanding of cause and effect of their actions, on themselves and others. Relationships between staff and pupils are characterised by mutual affection and trust. Pupils interact positively, readily offering one and other support. There is a mature respect between pupils of all ages. On the rare occasions of poorer behaviour, leaders act swiftly and appropriately. They ensure detailed records of the incidents are maintained.
33. Delivery of quality physical education is a priority for leaders. Weekly physical education lessons that offer a varied curriculum are provided across all ages on-site. Pupils take part in a range of additional enrichment sporting fixtures which are offered off-site for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
34. Knowledgeable and skilled staff in Nursery and Reception classes plan a range of activities to support children's physical, emotional and personal development. Staff plan physical activities, such as ball games, as well as resources in class that help develop children's co-ordination and fine motor skills. Staff teach children about healthy foods and washing hands before eating a snack. Staff teach children how to work together successfully, teaching them to use specific resources and spaces when they feel that they need some time to self-regulate.
35. As documented in the school's anti-bullying strategy, there is a proactive approach to identifying and dealing effectively with bullying. Through the PSHE curriculum and assemblies, pupils learn about the importance of being vigilant to bullying and acting to address it. Staff link their anti-bullying work closely to the school values that they expect pupils to emulate. Pupils and staff are vigilant and act appropriately if they identify any signs of concern. Instances of bullying are extremely rare and dealt with appropriately.
36. The school buildings and site are maintained to a high standard, with suitable health and safety procedures in place, including fire prevention and protection measures. Pupils are well supervised by adults, and pupils say that they feel safe and well protected by staff. First aid provision is well managed with accurate record-keeping and appropriate protocols for treatment, and administration of medicines.

37. Attendance and admissions registers are maintained according to statutory requirements. Leaders inform the local authority appropriately of relevant information related to pupils' admissions and attendance, including when pupils join or leave at non-standard transition points. However, there is a lack of clarity about leaders' responsibilities to maintain and review the admissions register.
38. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to experience leadership positions such as ambassadors for performing arts, sport, charity, digital, media, literacy and house captains. Often, pupils apply and campaign for specific roles and responsibilities, for example at the annual hustings. Pupils, as they get older, take on responsibility to help younger children and pupils through the Herries family system, creating a close-knit school community.

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 promote the school values of happiness, enthusiasm, resilience, respect, independence, excellence and sincerity. Staff model these values through their own behaviour and conduct, and through explicit teaching in assemblies and house meetings. Pupils recognise the value of being part of a diverse and varied community. Pupils value the community that is fostered by staff and pupils.
41. Leaders ensure that pupils learn and understand the importance of respect for those with different beliefs, lifestyles, faiths and cultures. For example, pupils learn about other cultures within their own school community such as Judaism, Jehovah's Witnesses or Sikhism, as well as in the wider world. A range of off-site trips and visits bring this learning to life. Leaders successfully prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and to be global citizens.
42. Pupils are encouraged to contribute, to take on responsibility and to help others. The Herries house system promotes the inclusive ethos and community spirit fostered by leaders. Year 6 pupils work with younger pupils in their house families with confidence, enthusiasm and fairness. Some pupils act as the school's 'badger buddies' supporting younger pupils or new joiners in the playground. Pupils also support their local community. For example, through visits to sing at the local care home or by raising money for a hospice charity.
43. Pupils learn about important values such as the rule of law and democracy. Through their own in-school elections they are taught about democracy in action. For example, student councillors provide pupil representation to the leadership team on behalf of their classes. Whole-school elections give pupils an opportunity to give their views about things that could improve in the school. For example, to mirror the recent national general election the school held its own vote which resulted in the implementation of juice with lunch on Friday. Charities are chosen through democratic voting processes by pupils.
44. Pupils are taught about important public services and their role in Britain. For example, the youngest children learn about the importance of the police in keeping them safe. As they get older, pupils access a more complex understanding of national institutions and a range of public services, such as the military and health service, through the PSHE curriculum. This curriculum is enhanced by trips, visits and visiting speakers, such as the Fire and Rescue Service or recent visits to Buckingham Palace and the Science Museum in London.
45. Leaders ensure effective economic education is provided to pupils, in an age-appropriate way, throughout their curriculum. This starts with Nursery and Reception children who learn about money through a range of activities such as role play, while buying and selling items in a shop. As they get older, pupils are taught economic education at a more complex level. For example, activities in Year 4 where pupils plan and manage a party budget.
46. Children in Nursery and Reception classes are well supported to develop a clearly defined sense of right and wrong. They are supported by well qualified, nurturing adults to develop their social skills. They learn to take turns, co-operate and play together with growing independence and maturity, often with the support of older pupils in the school, who act as buddies and model these behaviours to them.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

48. The school's collective approach to the management of safeguarding is effective. Designated safeguarding leaders are well trained and knowledgeable. They have established appropriate policies and procedures in line with statutory guidance. They are vigilant to the potential risks and signs of concern among pupils. They prioritise pupils' wellbeing in this small community-centred school.
49. Governors are pro-active in the checks that they make on leaders' work to safeguard pupils. They maintain strategic oversight through regular communication with safeguarding leaders, reports and visits to the site. They ensure that there is a robust culture of child protection and safeguarding of pupils within the school.
50. Designated safeguarding leaders maintain thorough and detailed records. Leaders have effective working relationships with relevant external agencies, such as children's services teams within the local authority. They keep up to date with local safeguarding issues through close working and training with local safeguarding forums. They carefully consider a range of information related to pupils' wellbeing. They seek advice and make referrals, where needed, in a timely manner.
51. Staff receive regular training through training days, access to online learning modules and through regular updates from the safeguarding team. The staff team understand their collective safeguarding responsibilities. They report any signs of concern. This includes staff in the early years, who understand the specific safeguarding issues for the youngest children.
52. Pupils are well taught about the different ways to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils are taught about online safety and appropriate online behaviours through PSHE. Staff are vigilant to pupils' access to online systems and devices. This includes Nursery and Reception classes, where staff adhere to clear guidance related to the use of devices with the youngest children. There are appropriate filtering and monitoring procedures in place related to the school's online systems and electronic devices. Where there are any signs of concern, leaders take swift and effective action.
53. Leaders are alert to the risks related to pupils' absence and missing education. They make appropriate checks on pupils when they are absent and work appropriately with external agencies when they have concerns about pupils' attendance. They report, as per statutory guidance, to the local authority on when pupils join and leave the school. When pupils move schools, leaders ensure that information is shared appropriately and in a timely way.
54. Secure processes for the recruitment of staff are in place. Records are kept and checks are carried out in a timely manner. Governors maintain oversight of the checks made on adults who work with pupils. They do this through regular meetings, site visits and reviews of records.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Herries School
Department for Education number	868/6003
Registered charity number	1085930
Address	Herries Preparatory School Dean Lane Cookham Dean Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 9BD
Phone number	01628 483350
Email address	headteacher@herries.org.uk
Website	www.herries.org.uk
Proprietor	Herries Educational Trust Ltd
Chair	Mrs Emma Dutton
Headteacher	Mr Robert Grosse
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	122
Date of previous inspection	1 to 4 March 2022

Information about the school

56. Herries School is an independent, non-selective preparatory school for boys and girls situated in Cookham Dean, near Maidenhead in Berkshire. The school is run by a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors. The school comprises the early years, a pre-prep school for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and a prep school for pupils in Years 3 to 6. A new chair of governors has taken on the role since the previous inspection.
57. There are 37 children currently in the early years which comprises one Nursery class and one Reception class.
58. The school has identified 17 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. The school has identified English as an additional language for three pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to provide an exceptional, well-rounded education for pupils aged 3 to 11. Guided by core values of happiness, enthusiasm, resilience, respect, independence, excellence, and sincerity, the children will receive a challenging and enriching academic education that fosters curiosity and a love of learning; fully develop their creative, practical, physical, emotional, and spiritual talents; thrive within a nurturing and inclusive community where each child is known, valued and cared for; learn the importance of respect, empathy, compassion and kindness; grow into confident, well-balanced individuals who are ready to be responsible citizens, future leaders, and capable of building strong, enduring relationships.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

11 to 13 March 2025

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

62. 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.

63. 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.
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