



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Prenton Preparatory School

June 2022

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School's Details

School	Prenton Preparatory School			
DfE number	344/6005			
Address	Prenton Preparatory School Mount Pleasant Oxton Birkenhead Merseyside CH43 5SY			
Telephone number	0151 6523182			
Email address	enquiry@prentonprep.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Mike Jones			
Proprietor	Prenton Preparatory School Ltd.			
Age range	2½ to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	128			
	EYFS	39	Juniors	89
Inspection dates	28 June to 1 July 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Prenton Preparatory School is a proprietorial, co-educational school. It was founded in Prenton in 1935 and moved to its present site in Oxtun in 1974. The school is a limited company, with governance and the financial management of the school undertaken by the proprietors.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide for the educational and emotional needs of its pupils in a caring, nurturing, disciplined and stimulating environment, liaising closely with the home to the benefit of the individual child. It believes that every child, regardless of ability, should have the opportunity to develop self-esteem and achieve their true potential. Through a broad and balanced curriculum, the school seeks to equip pupils to take their place in a multi-cultural society, as confident, polite, compassionate and tolerant individuals.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come primarily from professional families living locally, and also from more distant locations such as North Wales. The school's own assessment data using nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average when compared to pupils taking similar tests elsewhere. The school has identified twenty-four pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional support within the classroom. Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Four pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and are supported as necessary during lessons. The school has identified twenty-three pupils as being the most able in the school's population, including those who have particular talents in sport or the creative arts, and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with special educational needs, make excellent progress and achieve well, academically and in extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent, pupils seek to achieve their best in all they do.
- Pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills develop extremely well, enabling them to be highly effective communicators.
- Pupils display excellent knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of learning.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate excellent self-understanding and self-knowledge and have an assured confidence.
- Pupils know it is important to make the right decisions in life, to take responsibility for their actions and to be considerate to others.
- Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and during other activities, in school and in other settings.
- Pupils' social development is strong, they work well together, value each other's efforts, are proud of their school and keen to contribute to all aspects of school life.

Recommendations

The school should make the following improvements:

- Ensure that pupils consistently take responsibility for their own learning and become less dependent on teacher direction.
- Enable pupils to apply and develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in all their subjects and in project work by ensuring they have timely access to suitable resources.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.3 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.4 Pupils of all ages and abilities make excellent progress and achieve extremely well. The school does not select pupils on the basis of their academic ability. Nationally standardised test results show that pupils attain at high levels in relation to their starting points and individual abilities, including those with SEND or for whom English is an additional language. Pupils with SEND succeed well because their

additional learning requirements are identified accurately by suitably qualified school staff and addressed effectively by their class teachers who receive appropriate guidance and advice about adjustments in teaching. Pupils having EAL receive similarly high quality support and flourish as a result. Almost all pupils seeking places at selective secondary schools pass their entrance examinations and transfer to the schools of their choice.

- 3.5 The school's own pupil performance tracking data indicate that from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) onwards pupils make consistently strong progress through to Year 6. These excellent academic outcomes are the result of the dedicated attention provided by leadership and classroom teachers to each pupil's individual needs, and the responsiveness of pupils to their consistent encouragement, support and challenge. Pupils are inspired to do their best and demonstrate an enthusiastic commitment to fulfil this aspiration. Their attitude to learning in lessons was observed to be positive at all times, characterised by a keenness to find things out and to complete tasks to a high standard. This was reflected in their written work which demonstrated their care in presentation, ability to think issues through, and determination to continually improve on their previous performance. They take appreciative account of, and respond positively to, teachers' constructive marking, advice and guidance. A previous inspection recommendation regarding improving adherence to teaching and marking policies has been fully addressed by the school. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, almost all parents and pupils agreed that the school enables pupils to achieve well academically. Many parents contributed additional comments to express their appreciation for the school's focus on their child's education.
- 3.6 Pupils' excellent academic outcomes are matched by their successes in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have competed successfully in a variety of regional sports tournaments such as those organised by the Independent Schools Association (ISA), including football, water polo, basketball, netball and cross-country. Pupils have gained excellent awards in mathematics competitions and in the performing and martial arts. During the inspection, pupils were observed rehearsing at a local theatre for a school event displaying high levels of skill in their music and drama performances. Pupils are motivated to succeed because the adults in the school explicitly value and reward their efforts, providing constructive feedback on a daily basis and celebrating their accomplishments at weekly assemblies and end of term prize award events. The vast majority of pupils' questionnaire responses were in agreement regarding leaders' and staff's effectiveness in encouraging and supporting their endeavours across the full range of curriculum opportunities, academic and non-academic.
- 3.7 Pupils make excellent progress in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding in all curriculum areas. This is evident for pupils at every stage of their schooling, for example: in an EYFS French lesson, children could identify and speak the words for various items related to going to the beach and the supermarket; in Year 1, pupils made assured progress in mathematics, identifying shapes and dealing accurately with multiplication and fractions and, in English, they competently added suffixes to a wide variety of different words. By Year 5, in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson, pupils displayed knowledgeable responses to questions about health risks posed by smoking and high energy drinks and, in a Year 6 art lesson, pupils employed skilful techniques using charcoal to produce images in ancient Egyptian style. Pupils' progress is facilitated by astute and focused teaching founded on a stimulating curriculum and well-planned lessons based on carefully selected schemes of work. Recommendations from a previous inspection regarding required improvements to the EYFS leadership and provision have been entirely fulfilled. The children quickly develop independent problem solving, creative and critical thinking skills through an enriching variety of experiences, indoors and outdoors, with due emphasis on the natural environment. The proprietor and school's leadership have been resolute in ensuring that the required improvements have been made.
- 3.8 Pupils have excellent communication skills. They are attentive listeners, they speak with clarity and confidence in conversation, when reading from text, or performing in front of their peers. They produce written work of a high standard and read well. Their strengths in communicating enable them

to discuss issues well and to competently complete written tasks in class or when participating interactively in extra-curricular activities. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson on foetal development, pupils discussed the topic thoroughly and sensitively and produced accurate labelled diagrams of what they had learnt, thereby reinforcing their understandings. During an after-school martial arts class, pupils' keen listening skills were essential and they used them effectively. The commands and instructions given to them demanded their continual total attention and a readiness to accurately respond verbally to specific phrases and act as required. They displayed a highly competent, focused response.

- 3.9 Pupils' ICT skills are good and represent an important aspect of their research and communication expertise. For example, in a Year 4 ICT lesson focusing on Mayan culture, pupils followed up internet searches about the topic and provided knowledgeable and articulate verbal feedback to their classmates regarding their findings. Pupils display competent ICT expertise generally and make full use of the school's digital resources whenever the devices, which are shared between classes and pupils, are available. Pupils' ability to apply their ICT skills to assist their learning is adequate but is currently limited by the number of devices available in the school.
- 3.10 Pupils' competent numeracy abilities are founded early on when the youngest children in the school learn to have fun with number and shape-recognition whilst playing and exploring their environment, including outdoors. By Year 2, pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding of mathematical calculations, including addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as well as questions involving fractions; the standard was high for the age group. This strong progress in mathematics continues, as evidenced by pupils' standardised mathematical scores in Year 6 which are consistently above normal expectations for pupils of their age. The highly effective teaching of mathematics and the school's 'can do' stance regarding the subject gives pupils confidence and a love of using number, and they readily apply their numerical skills in other curriculum areas. The on-going tracking of progress in numeracy throughout the school ensures that all pupils can make excellent progress, because if supportive intervention or more challenge is required it is identified and provided. Pupils told inspectors that if you get temporarily 'stuck' on something you do not immediately understand in mathematics, you can just ask for extra help and the teachers 'un-stick you'. Similarly, pupils confirmed that if you feel you can challenge yourself even more, teachers are quick to help you do so.
- 3.11 Pupils acquire strong study skills because the school understands that becoming a successful learner is not just about what you learn but how you learn. Pupils of all abilities gain a helpful insight into the benefits of strategies such as explaining what they are reading across a range of texts, so that they develop effective inference and prediction skills. Pupils develop good independent research skills, using the library, tablets and computers to delve deeper into topics. They also, as observed, are familiar with classroom practice that promotes cooperative and collaborative work, for example paired work, group work and peer support, resulting in increased shared understandings and sustained extended thinking. However, during lesson observations, inspectors noted that the school's small class numbers and highly attentive teaching, which, though having many benefits for the pupils, does sometimes result in lessons becoming predominantly teacher-led with less opportunities for pupils to work independently. In these instances, pupils had less scope to develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning; as they followed the teacher's directions and were not given sufficient opportunity to explore issues or to build on one another's thinking.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.13 Pupils demonstrate excellent self-knowledge and an understanding of their own strengths and areas for improvement. They respond enthusiastically to the many opportunities the school gives them to identify and then develop their interests and talents, academically and non-academically. Pupils display a readiness to have a go, to face challenges and to strive to improve. This commitment to

extend themselves is reinforced by leaders' and staff's regular positive feedback and encouragement. Pupils across the school pay earnest attention to the school's house point reward system, regarding it as a measure of, and spur to, their individual and corporate success. As a result, pupil's self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and personal resilience go from strength to strength. Pupils learn to understand themselves well and become suitably prepared for the next stage of their education. The preparations for the end of year celebration event allowed inspectors to observe pupils of all ages rehearsing confidently in a wide range of presentation activities. Their self-assurance was evident, though tempered with modesty and honest self-appraisal of their own performance. When meeting with inspectors, pupils related with this same well-founded, measured confidence. This assuredness enabled them to discuss issues, such as some of the more sensitive areas of the PSHE and relationships education curriculum, in a mature manner. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school enables their child to become confident. Pupils told inspectors that the school's leaders and staff are always there for them to talk things through and this gives them a sense of security and trust which establishes their confidence over time. The school's aim to provide a nurturing environment in which pupils' self-esteem can flourish, whatever their individual ability, is clearly fulfilled.

- 3.14 Pupils become extremely effective decision makers. They appreciate that the decisions they make academically, in their relationships, and in the choices they make about their lifestyle, will have an impact on them both now and in their futures. They realise that their own decisions have an effect on others and that they have a responsibility in this regard. From the EYFS, where children learn to make appropriate choices about all aspects of their daily school life, through to Year 6, pupils incrementally refine their ability to make the most suitable decisions with regard to situations and circumstances, and with appropriate integrity. This is developed through the well-established PSHE programme and the caring and trusted pastoral support offered by the school's leaders and teaching staff. Inspectors observed instances of positive decision-making by pupils on many occasions. In a Year 5 PSHE lesson pupils discussed various social scenarios, and clearly distinguished between the right way to behave and the wrong way to respond.
- 3.15 Throughout all lessons observed and at other times, pupils' behaviour was excellent. At playtime, pupils displayed appropriately exuberant behaviour, but always showed respect for others' safety and feelings. The school keeps a close watch on the quality of pupils' behaviour and its records show that incidents of unkindness or lack of consideration for others are very rare. Pupils confirmed that the school is a happy and safe place, where behaviour is good almost all of the time. The vast majority of parents and pupils surveyed, agreed that the school effectively promotes good behaviour and that any misbehaviour, however slight, is quickly dealt with and resolved. Inspectors observed that pupils' good behaviour is maintained when they are in settings outside of the school, such as during rehearsals at a local theatre. Pupils' commitment to behaving well and being kind to each other becomes firmly embedded. The school's emphasis on these personal qualities is unremitting and is reflected in the positive role modelling by staff, in displays and notices around the school, and in the content of assemblies.
- 3.16 Pupils develop an excellent spiritual understanding. Their fulsome engagement in expressive art and music activities demonstrates their openness to appreciating the non-material aspects of life on a personal and shared level. During discussions with inspectors, pupils displayed a sensitivity to current world issues of military conflict and discussed their effect on individuals and populations with profound empathy. Their commitment to, and understanding of, fundamental British values including respect, tolerance and democracy went beyond a reiteration of expected standards and reflected a heartfelt feeling of the importance of decency towards others. Pupils referred to the content of their religious education lessons with reverence for the beliefs and cultures of different faiths. When referring to the PSHE programme, pupils indicated that it had helped them appreciate that family structures can be different, that individuals can have diverse personal orientation and gender identities, and that racial and disability discrimination must not be tolerated. Almost all parents in their questionnaire responses agreed that the school has a strong positive impact on instilling values

of tolerance and respect in their children. Inspectors found that the schools' leaders and staff have created a school ethos that prepares pupils well for life in a multi-cultural British and global community.

- 3.17 Pupils work extremely well together as was consistently demonstrated in class, through sport, music, drama and other collaborative activities seen. The pupils fully understand the need to work as a team to achieve a common goal. Pupils value each other's efforts, are proud of their school and keen to contribute to all aspects of school life. All parents responding to the questionnaire agreed that the school promotes team work highly effectively and the vast majority of pupils reflected the same view. In discussion with pupils, inspectors found that they display a strong sense of social collaboration and develop an effective set of interpersonal skills that enables all views to be heard and considered with due courtesy and regard. In class, pupils were observed kindly helping other pupils who had recently joined the school from overseas with the challenges they were experiencing with EAL. The school's leaders and staff present a strong model of collaboration between themselves and with pupils, and this has a positive impact on pupils' acquisition of the same attribute. The school team takes every opportunity to promote pupils' social skills through formal programmes of study and when relating informally with pupils throughout the school day.
- 3.18 Pupils contribute positively and proactively to the school and the local and wider community. They take on a wide range of positions of responsibility as they move up through the school, as well as having a strong focus, through the school's extensive charity work, on helping to improve the lives of others in the local community or further afield. Recently, after learning about fair trade and the Barnardo's charity in English lessons, Year 5 pupils took the initiative to raise awareness of associated issues with the whole school. Annually, pupils undertake a sponsored swim to aid local and regional charities; they make donations to food banks and meet with members of the charities concerned to better understand the causes they are supporting. Pupils visit a local nursing home, taking gifts and singing to the residents. They raise funds for international humanitarian relief. Through all of these activities pupils learn the importance of contributing to the lives of others and, as a result, they grow into young people who understand the importance of actively caring for others.
- 3.19 Pupils are extremely aware of why they should stay safe and healthy and they know how to do so. They swim weekly and participate in professionally coached physical education lessons, thereby establishing good habits for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils reflect on their own mental health needs during PSHE and mindfulness breaks during lessons, and confirm that staff are always there for them if they have any personal worries. They are well aware of the risks associated with social media, how to avoid them and what to do if a problem occurs online. Almost all parents responding to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Every pupil in the survey agreed that the school teaches them how to keep safe. Pupils are resoundingly positive about the school's overall contribution to their own personal development as they stated during discussion with inspectors. In the questionnaire, every pupil said that they would recommend the school to a friend.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Andrew Farren	Reporting inspector
Mrs Kate Tripp	Compliance team inspector (Head of human resources, HMC and IAPS school)
Mr Richard Evans	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)