

School inspection report

20 to 22 May 2025

Prenton Preparatory School

Mount Pleasant

Oxton

Birkenhead

Merseyside

CH43 5SY

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. Leaders make well-considered decisions. They think carefully about how best to maximise the impact of improvement initiatives on pupils' academic and personal development, as well as to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
2. Staff are provided with expert training and advice through a wide range of professional development opportunities. The opportunities for staff to share good practice and training experiences make a positive difference to the school's work in areas such as safeguarding and early years education and in the effectiveness of support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
3. Leaders at all levels promote and uphold the school's aims consistently. They reflect routinely on how effectively the school's vision and ethos is promoted and celebrated. As a result, pupils are integrated into a successful and close-knit community.
4. Pupils feel safe, secure and valued across the school. As a result, they are enthusiastic learners who strive to give their best.
5. Arrangements for pupils who have SEND, including those who have education, health and care (EHC) plans, are particularly effective. Pupils benefit from the tailored support and guidance that they receive, making good progress from their individual starting points. Support for pupils who have SEND includes guidance on their mental health and emotional needs, as well as a focus on their academic success.
6. Teaching is effective overall. However, sometimes teachers do not plan enough opportunities to extend learning for pupils with higher prior attainment. When this happens, pupils do not learn as much or as deeply as they could.
7. Children build secure foundations for learning in the early years. Staff understand the needs of the children in their care. They structure opportunities that are tailored effectively to individual needs. Pupils build confidence and become well-motivated learners in a caring and nurturing environment. They have high levels of self-esteem. Pupils engage readily with visitors and are proud of their school.
8. Leaders prioritise pupils' understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. Consequently, pupils are clear about the importance of showing respect for one another. They appreciate and celebrate others' individual differences.
9. Comprehensive systems ensure that the expected standards for aspects such as first aid and health and safety are met. The effectiveness of these systems contributes positively to pupils' wellbeing.
10. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in school in a variety of ways. This strengthens pupils' awareness of how they can make a difference to school society and demonstrates the value that the school places on pupils' views.
11. Pupils' moral development is actively promoted from the outset in the early years. They understand the importance of making the right decisions, for example, about their own behaviour. Pupils know

that by making the right choices they contribute positively to their own lives and to the lives of others.

12. Safeguarding leads work effectively with safeguarding partners to place the best interests of the pupils at the centre of any decisions made. The school's safeguarding culture is deep-seated. This is reflected in the rigour of staff training and their general awareness and understanding of pupils' needs and wellbeing.

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:

- strengthen teaching so that pupils are consistently well supported with opportunities to extend their learning, to maximise their progress and to achieve their full potential as a result.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Leaders make well-informed decisions about school development. They consider the impact of their decision-making on pupils' success and wellbeing carefully. Thoughtful reflections cover the outcomes of their projects, in terms of both the intended and any potential unintended consequences. A review of assessment arrangements, for example, checked the usefulness of the information gathered for the school and considered how helpful it might be for pupils' future schools. The school's aims and ethos are embedded in the decision taken. As a result, values such as compassion and tolerance are woven into daily aspects of school life.
14. Risk management is effective. A comprehensive system records any potential risks. Leaders are skilled in identifying risks and in detailing how any perceived risks can be mitigated. Extensive risk assessments cover aspects of health and safety and fire as well as pupils' educational visits. Risks are also reviewed around other aspects of school life. For example, when introducing new behaviour management strategies, leaders consider how changes may be perceived. They ensure that pupils are fully involved in the development process. Informative individual risk assessments support pupils in areas such as accessing the curriculum and improving their behaviour when needed.
15. Effective links are made with external agencies. These include the local authority and partners such as children's services and specialist education providers. These partnerships facilitate access, for example, to wellbeing support for both staff and pupils.
16. All the required information is made available to parents. Most information is displayed on the school's informative website. Any policies or arrangements that are not uploaded to the website are appropriately signposted via the school office. Reports of pupils' progress are sent at least annually to parents and/or carers. Leaders ensure that information about the use of funding for pupils who have an EHC plan is made available to parents and the relevant local authority.
17. A detailed complaints procedure allows parents to make a complaint informally and then formally, should this be required. It also provides for a third stage in the process, which includes a panel hearing. Any complaints are dealt with according to the timescales stated on the associated policy. Detailed records are kept. The policy also displays the number of complaints received at the formal stage during the preceding academic year.
18. Leaders ensure that due attention is paid to The Equality Act 2010. They check that every aspect of school life is accessible to all. Consequently, the school's accessibility plan takes appropriate account of pupils' needs. The plan leads to relevant adjustments, such as using different rooms for easier access. Teachers plan their teaching areas carefully. They think about how to use the space and where pupils who have SEND might be best seated. The accessibility plan also includes training for teachers, investigates technological solutions, details access changes for pupils who have disabilities and shows extra-curricular activities designed for pupils' different needs. Leaders review arrangements regularly, including by considering the day-to-day experiences of those pupils who have SEND.
19. Governors have effective oversight of school leaders' work, through link governors assigned to aspects of the school's offer. They have relevant expertise in key areas such as safeguarding, health and safety and early years education. Working closely with school leaders, they ensure that the Standards are met consistently.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders have developed a curriculum that meets pupils' needs, and which prepares them appropriately for the next stage in their education. Many subjects are taught using cross-curricular topics. This supports pupils to make links across their learning rather than seeing a subject in isolation. Taught classes are enriched by a wide range of trips and visits. This strengthens pupils' understanding of the subject content taught. Such trips include residential visits for older pupils and day trips to museums, galleries and sites of historic interest. The curriculum is supported by a range of co-curricular activities that widen pupils' skills and knowledge. Activities include football, chess, knitting, karate and learning to play the ocarina.
22. In the early years, the learning environment is centred around activities that promote children's interest and are designed to develop enquiring minds. Many activities are play-based. These focus on children's language and numeracy skills alongside their social development. In the Nursery, children are confident to write short words and letters, using structured writing frames. They respond well to encouragement from their teachers. Children match letters and sounds appropriately as they develop their early reading skills. Many write their names with ease. In the Kindergarten class, for example, children are adept at doubling given numbers when using two bowls of grapes as they practise their early numeracy skills. Teachers use focused questioning techniques to reflect children's interests and abilities. Consequently, children enjoy their learning and achieve well.
23. In Years 1 and 2, teachers build successfully on the knowledge and skills base that children establish in the early years. Across the school, teaching is generally well planned. Teachers have secure subject knowledge. Typically, they use this well, so that pupils make good progress overall. Fundamental British values are woven successfully into lessons, so pupils know and understand what it means to be a British citizen.
24. Teachers plan consistently effectively to meet the needs of pupils who have SEND. They provide additional support and guidance as well as adapted work when necessary. As a result, these pupils access the curriculum successfully, together with their peers.
25. Pupils who speak EAL benefit from teachers who provide effective support and guidance. Teachers structure pupils' learning carefully to strengthen vocabulary acquisition and development of the English language. The needs of pupils who have higher prior attainment are not always met as fully. Occasionally, teachers set activities that are too easy for a few pupils. When this happens, those pupils do not learn as much, or as deeply as they could.
26. Pupils' creative and aesthetic education are well catered for. Music activities, whether taught in the classroom, through instrumental lessons or visits to theatres, strengthen pupils' understanding and appreciation for the subject. As a result, pupils participate enthusiastically in choirs and musical productions. Equally, the quality of pupils' artwork is noteworthy. Pupils develop a range of creative skills and techniques which they readily apply to their creations. Many of their art pieces are displayed thoughtfully around the school.
27. Teachers use a wide range of formal and informal assessments effectively to identify pupils' achievement and to address any gaps in their learning. Assessments include checks on learning in

areas such as reading, spelling and science. The results guide teachers' planning, highlighting areas where more focused intervention may be required to support pupils' ongoing progress.

28. Teachers use resources well to enhance pupils' learning. This includes access to technology, reading schemes and practical mathematics apparatus. The use of some electronic devices is limited because of the poor infrastructure within the school, with areas where access to Wi-Fi can be challenging.

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. Pupils' physical wellbeing is prioritised. The curriculum for physical education (PE) is well devised. Pupils experience a range of opportunities for physical skills development and sport. These include football, netball and swimming. Within these sports, pupils participate successfully in both regional and national competitions. The PE curriculum for younger pupils also provides effective skills development in dance and gymnastics.
31. In the early years, children enjoy opportunities for their physical development. Children in the Nursery, for example, engage in a 'finger disco' to strengthen their hands. They use age-appropriate exercise videos to strengthen their core muscles. Throughout the setting, there are numerous activities to develop children's fine-motor control, such as using modelling dough, cutting out shapes and glueing objects together. The outside areas are well resourced to help children with gross-motor skills development. These include climbing and balancing apparatus.
32. Leaders have developed a detailed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education policy and associated schemes of work. Fundamental British values, such as those relating to tolerance, respect and democracy, are integrated appropriately into units of study. As a result, pupils develop a secure understanding of these aspects, while recognising their importance in a successfully functioning society. Relationships education is also interwoven within the PSHE curriculum. From an early age, children in the early years understand the importance of positive social interaction. This is modelled effectively by their teachers. Consequently, children learn quickly to take turns and to interact positively with one another.
33. Pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing is promoted thoughtfully in the PSHE curriculum and in lessons more widely. Priority is given to ensuring that pupils feel positive about themselves. Teachers promote positive thinking at every opportunity. They use appropriate praise and encouragement to support pupils to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils understand that talking about how they feel helps them to deal with any worries or anxieties. Appropriate levels of supervision ensure that there are always staff available for pupils to share their feelings with if they are worried.
34. Pupils build their sense of self-worth through a range of roles and responsibilities. They contribute positively to school life in roles such as head boy and head girl, house captains and prefects. Younger pupils take on class responsibilities with enthusiasm and diligence.
35. The arrangements for the management of pupils' behaviour and any bullying are secure. However, leaders act quickly to support continuous improvement. This includes in response to the results of pupil surveys. In one case, some pupils did not fully understand why certain rewards and sanctions were applied. As a result, their views were used to contribute to the development of new policy and procedures. Leaders ensure that the opinions of pupils are heard and acted upon. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are infrequent and are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
36. Premises are maintained in a fit and safe state. They are suitable for learning and reflect due regard for pupils' wellbeing. The relevant health and safety laws, including fire regulations and first aid, are addressed appropriately. Leaders have a comprehensive range of training in place. They ensure that staff are qualified to carry out specific roles such as that of fire marshal or when preparing food.

Proprietors maintain a clear oversight of all health and safety matters through effective links with specialists and through focused health and safety visits to the school. Fire evacuation drills are undertaken regularly. Visitors are provided with important information on how to proceed should the fire alarm sound. Appropriate records of all aspects of health and safety are maintained.

37. Leaders' approach to securing pupils' regular attendance follows the most recent statutory guidance. The policy is available on the school's website and is implemented effectively. Registration of pupils' attendance occurs twice each day. The details are recorded electronically. The school office follows up on any unknown reasons for absences promptly. The admission register contains all the required information. The local authority is informed when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.

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. In the early years, appropriate focus is given to ensuring that children develop positive social skills. Children support one another. They remember the importance of saying 'please' and 'thank you'. They understand, when playing on the climbing apparatus in the garden, that they must sit and wait patiently for an adult to be available to supervise their endeavours. Older pupils speak respectfully to one another and to adults. They hold doors open for others instinctively, knowing that this is an important social skill.
40. Pupils are taught respect for individual differences through a range of activities and within the PSHE curriculum. Events such as 'odd socks day' demonstrate to pupils that not everyone has to be the same. They learn quickly that variety and individuality add to the fabric of society. They understand that what is normal to one person may be different to another. Events such as Downs syndrome day further promote their understanding. Other events are used for a range of different learning experiences. At Easter, for example, the school did not just focus on the Christian calendar but looked to see what else was happening around the world at this time. These experiences contribute to pupils' knowledge and the development of their cultural understanding.
41. Other British values, such as democracy, are covered in taught sessions and through specific initiatives such as voting for pupil leaders. Pupils understand that they have an important voice. They know that there are different routes for them to express their views, for example through the election of members of the school council and through regular pupil surveys. Pupils carefully consider their responses, reflecting on the most effective way to voice their opinion to ensure that it will be heard and responded to. When discussions occurred, for example, around the possibility for zoning the playground spaces, pupils were mindful that their own views had to be balanced alongside the views of others.
42. Leaders support pupils' economic understanding through many cross-curricular links. This includes units on money in the mathematics curriculum, as well as discussions around matters such as understanding debt and the need to pay bills. The PSHE programme includes consideration of, for example, the minimum wage and the dangers associated with gambling. Another unit considers the value of money and how it is not always possible to purchase everything that an individual may want. In English, leaders link linguistic presentation skills with economic understanding by holding a day during which pupils can pitch their ideas to encourage mock investors. This understanding is also enriched by visiting speakers, such as parents in the financial industry who talk to pupils about responsible spending and saving.
43. The focus on pupils' reflection on different behaviours means that they have a secure understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are encouraged to think about their own actions when things go wrong. They discuss matters such as where they went wrong, the impact of their decisions and how to redress any resulting consequences. As a result, pupils are thoughtful about the impact of their social interactions. PSHE units link pupils' understanding of English institutions such as the legal system. Such skills support pupils' effective preparation for life in British society.
44. Leaders have forged meaningful links in the local area. Appropriate use is made of places such as the local church for religious celebrations and the theatre where pupils stage their musical and dramatic productions. Pupils also learn more about the area in which they live through a range of fundraising

events in support of local charities. These include a local hospice, a dog's trust and a children's hospital. Pupils understand the importance of charity as a positive element within a harmonious society.

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 ensure that staff are suitably trained in safeguarding, including around the potential dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Training is delivered effectively through in-person sessions, online modules or the proprietorial hub. As a result, staff understand the importance of their roles with regard to safeguarding. They place pupils' wellbeing at the heart of everything they do. They appreciate the importance of recording all their safeguarding concerns. They know that that issues arising may form part of a larger picture of concern.
47. Staff understand the school's whistleblowing arrangements should they wish to escalate any concerns beyond school leaders. The staff code of conduct provides appropriate guidance about how to ensure pupils' safety in the school and in the wider community. Staff are well supported by the safeguarding leads.
48. Leaders work effectively with safeguarding partners. These include healthcare professionals and partners from the local authority. Leaders always place the best interests of the pupils at the centre of their interactions. They record any safeguarding matters carefully on the electronic management system, including all supporting documentation and correspondence. This ensures a comprehensive set of information that can be readily shared as required.
49. The proprietor has effective oversight of the safeguarding arrangements at the school. A regular review of policy and procedures provides appropriate support and challenge for leaders in the school. The designated governor for safeguarding liaises effectively with the school's safeguarding team.
50. There are effective systems in place to ensure that internet content is suitably filtered. Any perceived misuse results in alerts for the safeguarding team. Leaders monitor internet use well. They look to determine if there are any features or trends that require further actions. Pupils are taught about filtering and monitoring systems, why they are used and their importance for pupils' safety and wellbeing.
51. Safer recruitment procedures are secure. All the required checks are completed before new staff start work at the school. Checks are recorded, as required, on the single central record (SCR) of appointments. This process is supported by comprehensive staff files which contain all required copies of key documents such as qualifications, identity checks and proof of the right to work in the United Kingdom.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Prenton Preparatory School
Department for Education number	344/6005
Address	Prenton Preparatory School 12 Mount Pleasant Oxton Wirral CH43 5SY
Phone number	0151 652 3182
Email address	headteacher@prentonprep.co.uk
Website	www.prentonprep.co.uk
Proprietor	Prenton Preparatory School Ltd
Chair	Mr John Forsyth
Interim headteacher	Mr Alex Brough
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	94
Date of previous inspection	28 June to 1 July 2022

Information about the school

53. Prenton Preparatory School is a proprietorial, co-educational day school. It was founded in Prenton in 1935 and moved to its present site in Oxton in 1974. The school belongs to the Forfar Education Group, who are responsible for governance oversight.
54. Children in the early years are divided into two classes. The pre-school class accommodates children between the ages of two and four years whilst the Kindergarten class caters for ages four and five.
55. The school has identified 17 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for three pupils.
57. The school states its aims are 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.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

20 to 22 May 2025

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

59. 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.

60. 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.
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