

School inspection report

20 to 22 January 2026

Caversham Preparatory School

16 Peppard Road

Caversham

Reading

RG4 8JZ

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 promote a warm and positive learning environment, in line with the school's aims. However, the proprietors do not ensure that leaders demonstrate the required knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively in all areas. Consequently, the school does not meet all of the Standards.
2. The processes for management of risk are not effective. Actions identified in external risk assessments are not always addressed in a timely manner. Risk assessments for some activities do not identify potential hazards and how these are mitigated. The arrangements to promote the health and safety of pupils and the maintenance of the school's premises and accommodation do not meet the relevant Standards.
3. Leaders liaise effectively with external bodies such as local safeguarding and welfare agencies. Some of the required information for parents of current and prospective pupils was not provided or made available at the start of the inspection. This was rectified by the end of the inspection.
4. Leaders follow a suitable process to manage and respond to any complaints. The contact details in the complaints policy and the number of complaints received during the preceding year required updating during the inspection.
5. The curriculum is well planned and complemented by a varied extra-curricular activity programme. Teaching is effective because it is matched to the needs of pupils. Consequently, pupils make good progress and are successful in gaining places at their chosen senior schools. Lessons are engaging, and pupils typically apply themselves well as a result.
6. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress from their starting points because teachers are aware of their individual needs and the curriculum is adjusted effectively to focus on the development of their language skills.
7. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who have education, health and care plans (EHC plans), make good progress due to the targeted individual support provided by teachers.
8. Leaders create a warm and supportive environment for pupils and have high expectations of their behaviour. As a result, pupils behave well. They know they can approach a range of adults for support and guidance. Pupils are well supervised and suitable first aid provision is in place. The most recent statutory guidance to promote high levels of attendance is implemented effectively.
9. Pupils follow a well-planned programme for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), which includes learning how to develop and sustain positive relationships. Leaders promote pupils' physical development through a range of different games and extra-curricular sporting activities.
10. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for the responsibilities and opportunities of later life. They are ready for their transition to senior schools and have a secure understanding of the importance of respect and tolerance for those around them.
11. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff are suitably trained and know how to report any concerns. Pupils learn how to stay safe online, and their use of the internet is appropriately filtered

and monitored. The single central record of staff appointments (SCR) contains the required information. There were some minor administrative errors in the records maintained in staff files. This was rectified prior to the end of the on-site inspection.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:

- demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school Standards are consistently met
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school Standards are consistently met and
- actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- effective health and safety arrangements are implemented so that the school premises are maintained to the required standards
- the recommendations of external fire safety audits are implemented in a timely manner
- there are effective processes to identify and mitigate any risks or hazards.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that staff files have all the relevant evidence to confirm that suitable recruitment checks are undertaken
- provide or make available all the required information to parents of current and prospective pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. The proprietors understand and promote the ethos of the school well, and they are well known to staff, parents and pupils. However, their support and challenge for leaders is not always effective. Some policies, including the arrangements to promote health and safety and the maintenance of the premises, including fire safety, as well as processes to assess and mitigate risk, are not implemented effectively. As a result, the Standards are not met consistently.
13. Leaders promote a respectful and inclusive school community in line with the school's aims, and pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education. Leaders evaluate the school's academic provision carefully and take appropriate actions to enhance provision for pupils. For example, their curriculum planning is focused effectively on helping pupils to meet the entry requirements for local senior schools.
14. Leaders maintain positive and constructive links with external agencies, including local safeguarding partners and those agencies responsible for monitoring school attendance. The school notifies the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points. The school undertakes an appropriate annual review of EHC plans, which is shared with the local authority.
15. Leaders provide parents with information about school policies and other aspects, such as the school's academic performance, through the school website. The report of the previous inspection was not published on the school's website as required, but this was rectified during the inspection. Parents receive detailed written reports and attend regular parents' meetings.
16. The school has a suitable complaints policy. Leaders and staff are approachable and accessible to parents to discuss any informal concerns they might raise. Formal complaints are managed in line with the school's policy. They are carefully recorded, and parents receive an appropriate response. At the start of the inspection, the contact details in the complaints policy were not up to date and the number of formal complaints during the previous academic year had not been made available. Leaders rectified this before the end of the inspection.
17. Leaders in the early years effectively promote children's wellbeing. They plan and implement an appropriate curriculum, which is adapted to meet the needs of the children in the setting. Staff know the children well and monitor their progress with care, sharing this with their parents. Leaders provide a positive and nurturing environment which helps to promote children's self-esteem.
18. Leaders do not implement a thorough or systematic approach to evaluating and managing risk. Risk assessments are not always reviewed regularly, and some do not cover all potential hazards or how these may be mitigated. In other cases, actions identified in risk assessments are not undertaken in a timely manner.
19. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. All pupils are treated equally. There is a suitable accessibility plan in place which is inclusive and identifies actions to make the curriculum and school premises available for all pupils.

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

20. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The school implements a suitably broad curriculum which covers all the required elements. It is well matched to the needs of pupils. In particular, leaders focus on developing pupils' numeracy, literacy and language skills. Teachers make links between subjects and plan opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in a range of contexts. Teachers use opportunities to promote pupils' wider cultural awareness effectively, such as using a music lesson on drumming to increase their understanding of African cultural traditions. Pupils make good progress from their starting points and are typically successful in gaining places at a wide range of selective schools at age 11.
22. Leaders produce clear curriculum plans which promote the development of suitable knowledge, skills and understanding. They monitor the implementation of the curriculum through lesson observations, and leaders undertake a weekly scrutiny of teachers' planning to ensure that it is adapted to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders provide effective support for teachers' training and professional development.
23. Teachers use their knowledge of individual pupils to ask questions that explore and extend pupils' understanding of the topics covered in lessons. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge which they use to plan interesting lessons. As a result, pupils are engaged in their learning and apply themselves well. Teachers use resources effectively to promote pupils' understanding of the topics. Feedback is routinely provided for pupils, which allows them to understand how to improve their work in future, as well as providing encouragement and support.
24. In English lessons, older pupils are able to analyse a range of different texts and understand the way in which writing styles change depending on the intended audience. Teachers provide clear explanations which allow pupils to understand and empathise with characters' experiences and motivations.
25. Leaders meet with staff regularly to track and monitor pupils' progress. Leaders analyse assessment data and take appropriate actions in response. For example, younger pupils are provided with opportunities to explore and use new and more sophisticated vocabulary in their creative and persuasive writing.
26. Leaders in the early years plan the curriculum with care. It promotes children's understanding of language and numeracy, as well as developing their curiosity. Children draw shapes and then use these to plan their stories and the adventures of their characters. They develop their language skills well because teachers encourage them to explain the word choices they make.
27. Children learn to count and how to break down larger groups of objects into smaller ones as a first step towards understanding the concept of division. Teachers read a range of stories to children and ask them about the characters and events in these stories, developing children's comprehension skills. Leaders place an emphasis on outdoor learning and sensory experiences. Children typically achieve the expected levels of development by the end of their Reception year and are well prepared for the transition to Year 1.
28. Staff support pupils who have SEND effectively, so that they make good progress from their starting points. Teachers know the needs of pupils well and plan their teaching activities appropriately. Pupils who have EHC plans also make good progress as result of the support provided for them by teachers who know their specific needs.

29. As a result of leaders' curricular focus on developing pupils' language skills, teachers adapt their teaching well to support pupils who speak EAL. Teachers implement suitable strategies to support pupils' individual language needs. For instance, staff provide pupils with visual prompts and other resources matched to their needs. Pupils who speak EAL typically make good progress and develop competency in their use of English.
30. Leaders plan curriculum opportunities which provide pupils with effective opportunities to deepen their understanding of British values such as democracy and respect.
31. Leaders provide a varied extra-curricular programme which takes place after school. This includes sports and creative arts activities, as well as those that support individual wellbeing, such as mindfulness and yoga sessions. Pupils can also develop additional skills in subjects such as science and computing. These activities help pupils to develop new interests and gain new skills and knowledge.

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

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

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

33. Procedures for health and safety and the mitigation of risk, including fire safety, are not effective. The school's premises and accommodation are not always maintained to a suitable standard. During the inspection, issues were identified with the storage of cleaning substances and other materials, and with electrical safety. There are areas of the site where the outside lighting is not adequate.
34. Leaders commissioned an external company to conduct a fire risk assessment. The recommendations of this risk assessment are not always implemented in a timely manner. However, staff are trained as fire wardens, emergency evacuations routes are clearly labelled, and pupils and staff regularly practise evacuation drills.
35. In other areas of the school's provision, leaders promote pupils' emotional wellbeing effectively. Leaders are highly visible and provide a warm and welcoming environment. Staff know the pupils well and actively support their individual needs, providing emotional and mental health support as required. Pupils develop their self-awareness and demonstrate self-esteem and self-confidence because they know leaders listen and respond to their thoughts and opinions.
36. Pupils learn about spirituality as they visit local places of worship to develop their understanding of the major world religions. Mindfulness sessions allow them to reflect on their day and how to approach future challenges. In the outdoor learning environment, younger pupils are encouraged to consider the world around them. They notice, for example, newly sprouted snowdrops and how raindrops land in puddles.
37. The PSHE curriculum is well planned. It is complemented by an effective relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum which teaches pupils how to form and maintain supportive and respectful relationships. Pupils learn, at an age-appropriate level, about adolescence and puberty and how their emotions and bodies may change as they grow older.
38. Children in the early years develop an understanding of themselves and build their self-esteem. Adults model kindness and respect and reward positive behaviour. Leaders provide opportunities for children to become effective learners and develop resilience. Children know who to turn to for support and they are well supervised. They are given opportunities to develop their physical skills in the outdoor learning area.
39. Pupils participate in an appropriate programme of physical education (PE) to support their physical development, including their balance, agility and co-ordination. Leaders make effective use of facilities both on site and at a neighbouring school to provide a range of sports. Pupils enjoy engaging in an early morning exercise session which prepares them for the day ahead. They learn about healthy eating, and many pupils choose the well-prepared and balanced school lunch that is available.
40. Leaders set high behavioural expectations and model positive and respectful behaviour throughout the school. The behaviour policy has a clear process for rewards and sanctions and is implemented consistently. As a result, pupils behave well. There is an effective anti-bullying strategy which teaches pupils about the consequences of unkind actions. Suitable behaviour records are maintained by the school.

41. There are effective systems in place to ensure that pupils are well supervised. Leaders provide a reassuring and welcoming presence when pupils arrive at and depart from school. Staff supervising pupils are vigilant during breaktimes. The required child-to-staff ratios are maintained in the early years.
42. First aid and medical provision is suitable and managed competently. All staff receive first aid training, which includes training in paediatric first aid. Staff keep detailed and clear records of any medication or first aid that is administered.
43. Leaders record all the required information in the admission register. The school's attendance policy and procedures are in line with current statutory guidance. The school liaises with the local authority and provides support and monitoring in cases where attendance falls below required levels.

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

- 44. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

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

45. As a result of leaders' work, the school is a diverse and inclusive community. Pupils show respect for each other and demonstrate their interest in each other's culture and background. They understand that everyone is different and the importance of acceptance and respect for individual characteristics. The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' understanding of British values such as tolerance, individual liberty and the rule of law.
46. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of money and finance. Children in the early years shop at the 'Caversham supermarket', learn the value of coins and take part in role play as shopkeepers and customers. In PSHE lessons, older pupils learn about topics such as mortgages, the advantages and disadvantages of borrowing, how to keep money safe and how contactless payments work.
47. Leaders implement a range of opportunities so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils in Year 6 are provided with guidance about life in senior school, and the school arranges for them to attend transition events. Parents visit the school to talk to pupils about their jobs, so that pupils begin to learn about future employment possibilities and the qualifications they might need. In the early years, children learn about the importance of public services through visits from the police and fire brigade.
48. Pupils are prepared well to make a positive contribution to life in British society. They learn about British institutions, laws and democracy. Pupils create 'class charters', which promote kindness, respect towards others and the importance of taking morally responsible decisions. In PSHE lessons, pupils learn why rules and laws play an important role in democratic societies. They learn about democracy, such as how members of parliament and local councillors are elected. They also discuss how these individuals should take responsibility for their actions, including whether they are effective in addressing issues such as homelessness and mending potholes in local roads.
49. Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to undertake positions of responsibility, to build their confidence and to contribute to school life. Pupils are elected as heads of school and house captains. Other pupils can join the eco-committee and help to raise awareness of environmental issues in the school community.
50. Leaders in the early years model kindness and cheerfulness so that children learn to treat others in a friendly and respectful manner. As a result, children work well together in lessons and activities and co-operate and share resources sensibly. Children welcome and support those new to the setting, including them in activities and giving them helpful advice.
51. Pupils understand the importance of social responsibility and the need to support others. They raise money for a variety of charitable causes and visit a local residential home where they sing to the residents. Leaders' own behaviour helps pupils to learn the importance of kindness and compassion.
52. Pupils sensitively explore ethical issues, such as the importance of respecting the feelings of indigenous people when looking at the history of colonisation. They understand that people might hold differing views on different issues.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. Leaders implement effective arrangements for safeguarding the school. The safeguarding policies are written clearly, regularly reviewed and reflect current statutory guidance. The proprietor provides oversight of the school's safeguarding through regular meetings with the safeguarding team and reports to meetings of the proprietorial body.
55. Leaders carry out the required safer recruitment checks on adults before they begin working at the school. These are accurately recorded on the single central record of appointments (SCR). A few administrative errors were identified in the documentation held in supporting files, but these were rectified by the end of the inspection.
56. Leaders provide staff with effective safeguarding training, including an induction for new staff. Staff training includes information about how to recognise and respond to any allegations or low-level concerns relating to adults who work at the school, and when to refer concerns to external agencies. Staff undertake training so that they can recognise child-on-child abuse and the signs of extremism and radicalisation. Vulnerable pupils are supported consistently and effectively.
57. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are trained effectively for their role. Leaders consult constructively with local safeguarding partners and refer safeguarding concerns to them when required. Safeguarding records are maintained and show the reasons for decisions and any subsequent actions.
58. Pupils know who to approach when they need support. Leaders implement appropriate systems so that pupils can share any worries they may have. For instance, pupils can use 'worry boxes' to alert staff if they are unhappy. Staff know how to respond if a pupil makes a disclosure.
59. Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to use the internet in a safe and responsible manner. Pupils learn about online safety through PSHE lessons, assemblies and online safety talks. They understand the importance of reporting anything they feel is uncomfortable or suspicious to a trusted adult. Leaders implement a suitable internet filtering and monitoring system and follow up any concerns promptly.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 3, paragraph 16	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that —
16(a)	the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
16(b)	appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school —
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
EYFS ² 3.91	Providers must ensure that they take all reasonable steps to ensure staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks and must be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks. Providers must determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers or inspectors. Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised.

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

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

² Early years foundation stage statutory framework ('EYFS')

	premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
ISSR Part 5, paragraph 27	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that —
27(b)	external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.
EYFS 3.79	Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.
EYFS 3.80	Providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff, and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency. Providers must have: • An emergency evacuation procedure. • Appropriate fire detection and control equipment (for example, fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire blankets and/or fire extinguishers) which is in working order. Fire exits must be clearly identifiable, and fire doors free of obstruction and easily opened from the inside.

School details

School	Caversham Preparatory School
Department for Education number	870/6009
Address	Caversham Preparatory School 16 Peppard Road Caversham Reading Berkshire RG4 8JZ
Phone number	0118 947 8684
Email address	office@cavershamschool.com
Website	www.cavershamschool.com
Proprietor	Mr Ian Lawson and Mrs Jacqueline Lawson
Principal	Mr Andrew Lawson
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Kidao
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	66
Date of previous inspection	24 to 26 January 2023

Information about the school

61. Caversham Preparatory School is a co-educational day school located in Reading, Berkshire. It is owned and governed by the proprietors, who are supported by a governing body made up of members of their extended family. The current headteacher stepped down from the governing board to take on her role in September 2025.
62. There are 16 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery class and one Reception class.
63. The school has identified two pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
64. The school has identified 18 pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
65. The school states its aims are to provide a family ethos in which all pupils' needs are supported so that they learn and grow in confidence to set themselves ambitious goals. The school seeks to foster pupils' respect towards all faiths and cultures and an understanding of how they can contribute to the community.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

20 to 22 January 2026

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

67. 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 proprietors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

68. 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

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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