

School inspection report

21 to 23 November 2023

Caterham Prep School

Harestone Valley Road

Caterham

CR3 6YB

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. School leaders have developed a forward-looking curriculum, including a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which responds to the needs of pupils and enables them to make good progress. The school prioritises wellbeing and considers carefully how best to help pupils develop the skills and attributes they need to transfer successfully to senior school.
2. Pupils' knowledge, understanding and application of technological skills are a significant strength of the school. This is the result of decisions made by leaders to focus on and resource this area. The quality of pupils' digital work is extremely high. The highly effective and adaptive use of technology is woven through the entire curriculum. Technological skills, including coding and the use of artificial intelligence, are taught through the technology curriculum, which provides pupils with skills for life beyond school that are applied across all areas of learning and prepare them for life beyond school.
3. Teachers implement technology creatively, and pupils of all ages and aptitudes including those with special educational needs (SEND), clearly enjoy the many opportunities they are given to use their technological skills in a wide variety of lessons and in their independent work. Leaders have thought carefully about what to introduce when and so pupils are extremely confident in using technology and their skills are well developed for their age.
4. Pupils achieve well at all stages. The school quickly identifies pupils who need additional support and effective individual plans are in place to support their learning. Pupils, including those who have SEND and those in the early years, make good progress from their starting points. Teachers know pupils' academic strengths, and planning is often well matched to their abilities. Teaching styles are varied and often adapted to facilitate learning. However, this is not consistently the case. As a result, although pupils learn well in most lessons, not all teachers plan effectively to cater for pupils' needs, which on occasion, limits their progress. Additionally, the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils varies.
5. Pupils are happy in school due to the positive relationships they have with their teachers and the consistent approach leaders take to promote the school values. Leaders understand their responsibility to actively promote pupils' wellbeing and there is a culture of self-evaluation which means that the provision is constantly reviewed. There is a clear link between the pastoral care provided for pupils and the active promotion of wellbeing through the taught curriculum. Effective systems are in place to monitor pupils' wellbeing and to provide support. Whilst pupils are confident to talk about wellbeing with their teachers, they are sometimes reticent about sharing their views about wellbeing in front of their peers in some lessons.
6. Leaders have clearly articulated school priorities expressed in an ambitious strategic plan. Trustees support the leadership team to implement its objectives and are well informed about the school. Leaders focus on continuing to evaluate and improve all areas of pupils' school experience. There have been a number of innovations in recent years which are being embedded, for example an ambitious curriculum which enables pupils to develop learning skills and to apply them across subjects.
7. Leaders and governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities well and effective policies and procedures are in place to ensure that they meet the statutory requirements. Staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training as part of their induction as well as annual update training,

which staff understand well. Leaders carefully consider the management of risk and effectively communicate their decisions to parents.

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 teaching is more consistent by supporting teachers to develop their pedagogy, so that all teachers plan effectively to build on pupils' prior knowledge and provide clear feedback about how to improve
- explore ways to ensure that older pupils have the opportunities and confidence to discuss aspects of wellbeing in their wellbeing lessons.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Trustees and school leaders set clear aims and through a deep and analytical knowledge of school life, ensure that these aims are met. Trustees are well known in school and visit regularly, spending time with pupils and attending school events to inform their understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. Individual trustees have specific and relevant knowledge, skills and understanding to support the school appropriately and they provide insightful and critical strategic oversight of the school's ambitious development plan.
9. Leaders take a balanced approach to identifying and managing risk. A detailed risk assessment policy is in place which takes account of the school context and this is reviewed regularly. Pupils are encouraged to take a sensible approach to managing risks in school life and so they develop the confidence to try new challenges, for example in their assured use of the extensive outdoor learning spaces. An annual safeguarding review is undertaken, which considers any contextual risks. School leaders apply the safeguarding policy effectively, responding consistently to any concerns raised and promoting the wellbeing of pupils.
10. Leaders and staff fulfil their individual and collective responsibilities effectively. A clear vision for the school is effectively articulated in 'The Caterham Way' which permeates school life. There is mutual respect and an ethos that underpins the school's mantra of 'courageous reporting' of any issues, which actively promotes pupils' wellbeing. Pupils and staff show a firm commitment to putting the core school values into practice.
11. Leaders promote a robust culture of self-evaluation and reflection. They consider carefully the impact of decisions on members of the school community, including any minority groups. They seek ways to notice and listen to pupils. Leaders understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act. The school does not discriminate and provides reasonable adjustments for pupils who have SEND. A suitable accessibility plan is in place.
12. Leaders show a clear commitment to delivering effective personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), and relationships and sex education (RSE), through the wellbeing curriculum and 'The Caterham Way'. Staff are appropriately trained in child mental health and wellbeing and additional support is offered to pupils who need it. The school consulted with parents before the implementation of the curriculum and learning resources for RSE have been shared with parents.
13. Leaders and school staff are available to meet with parents and there are many opportunities for parents to speak with staff formally and informally. Parents are made aware of the complaints procedures and concerns are managed in accordance with the suitable policy. Parents in the early years receive regular information about their children's learning journey. Parents have opportunities to visit classrooms, which enable the children to share what they are learning and to take pride in their work.
14. Leaders in the early years have the skills they need to deliver an exciting and inspiring experience for the children, fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum and making full use of the grounds and outdoor learning opportunities. Leaders in the early years have weekly supervision meetings with staff for support and coaching, and train staff well.

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

15. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Pupils of all abilities experience and benefit from an ambitious and innovative curriculum which meets their needs and stimulates them to explore their interests. The effective use of technology is woven through the entire curriculum. Technology is implemented creatively through teaching which encourages pupils to work independently and develop their own ideas in many lessons. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those who have SEND, clearly enjoy the many opportunities they are given to demonstrate their well-developed technological skills in their independent work.
17. Leaders' evaluation of teaching and learning has led to the introduction of the 'global curriculum' which aims to stretch and extend pupils' knowledge and skills by linking their learning across subjects including humanities, creative and performing arts. As a result, pupils think deeply, connect their knowledge and understanding and develop research, technological and presentation skills. Pupils develop mathematical skills because well-sequenced teaching encourages them to test out ideas and use their knowledge to solve mathematical problems.
18. The curriculum in the early years is planned well for the ages and needs of children, including who have SEND, and as a result, they make swift progress through the carefully planned teaching of phonics and writing skills. The curriculum provides opportunities for children to learn outside the classroom and this means that they are curious and explore with great interest the world around them. Children's language skills in the early years are secure because they have many opportunities to talk to each other and their teachers model a rich vocabulary. Teachers' focus on developing secure communication and language skills means that there is no difference in outcomes at the end of the Reception year for pupils who have EAL.
19. Leaders have a well-established system for monitoring and reviewing the quality of teaching and learning which means that they are able to identify and track pupils' progress effectively, including pupils who have SEND. Pupils across the school make good progress and those who have SEND benefit from the targeted learning support they receive.
20. Teaching is typically engaging. Teachers use effective teaching methods and understand the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils are interested in their work, think for themselves and work well collaboratively. However, this is not consistent across the ages. When teachers have lower expectations, pupils are less engaged in the work and the pace of lessons slows. When prompt and personalised feedback is given pupils respond quickly to improve their work. However, the quality of feedback varies and this means that in some subjects pupils are less clear about how to improve their work.
21. There is a diverse range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils, which they enjoy. Sports teams are open to pupils of all abilities and aptitudes and pupils enjoy the opportunity to participate. Pupils benefit from a wide range of outdoor learning and recreation facilities on site, which are well used and support their physical and aesthetic skills.

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

22. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

23. Leaders provide a well-planned PSHE curriculum which is part of the wellbeing curriculum and includes appropriate provision for relationships and sex education. Wellbeing lessons reflect the school's aims to provide an education for life for all pupils, and to enable them to develop a clear appreciation of and respect for the views and potential of others. Leaders promote empathy, initiative, independence and resilience through the school values displayed throughout the school, which are affirmed in everyday school life. Pupils put these into practice thus developing their moral understanding and mutual respect.
24. Leaders consider pupils' welfare carefully. A pastoral structure is in place to nurture pupils. There are supportive relationships between pupils and teachers. Pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted through the taught curriculum as well as through form time and assemblies when pupils are encouraged to reflect on issues affecting their lives. Pupils develop the skills they need to navigate the transition to senior school successfully and to be confident in themselves through the many opportunities they have to take on responsibilities and to participate in school life.
25. Pupils are respectful and treat each other well. They understand who to talk to if problems arise. They show a clear moral understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are encouraged by leaders to become 'courageous reporters' and as a result they learn to look after themselves and each other well. There is a clear anti-bullying policy in place and any concerns are dealt with quickly and fairly. Leaders encourage pupils to reflect on the impact of their actions and there is an embedded culture of restorative action in behaviour expectations, which pupils appreciate because there is the opportunity to put things right.
26. School leaders encourage pupils to appreciate and value differences in people. Pupils say that they can be themselves at school and they welcome the opportunities they are given to share their individual beliefs and values within school life. Pupils are comfortable in school and feel safe. Leaders regularly seek pupils' opinions through surveys and individual conversations with teachers. Whilst younger pupils are spontaneous and lively in discussions, sharing ideas readily without being self-conscious, leaders recognise that sometimes older pupils are more reticent and hold back in discussions, being less comfortable to talk openly and easily in groups.
27. Leaders in the early years encourage children to talk about their emotions and to successfully manage their behaviour. They are actively encouraged to show kindness to each other and to build positive friendships. Pupils learn together well and play together creatively because of the positive culture created by staff.
28. Effective health and safety policies and practices are in place and implemented appropriately. There is an appropriate fire risk assessment and termly fire drills take place. The school grounds and buildings are well maintained. As a result, teachers can safely allow pupils to take risks, for example on climbing apparatus during breaktimes. There are appropriate arrangements in place to support medical needs and administer first aid. Staff receive regular training in first aid and staff in the early years receive paediatric first aid training. Pupils receive prompt treatment for minor ailments. Attendance and admissions registers are kept properly.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. Pupils have a broad experience of social and economic education. Pupils show a healthy and informed understanding of the world around them, caring significantly for each other alongside those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils understand the fundamental British values and the implications to themselves, in particular about the value of democracy, because leaders provide opportunities for pupils to exercise these values in school life, for example through leadership responsibilities and sports teams, in which all pupils can participate.
31. Economic understanding is taught through the technology curriculum and wellbeing lessons where pupils learn about money, savings and making financial decisions. Pupils can talk about how their current learning links to their future lives. Pupils actively engage in social issues, writing persuasive letters to their local Member of Parliament to support international aid relief and raising money for a charity that supports the homeless. Teachers encourage pupils from a young age, to consider local and ethical issues. Early years leaders ask children to reflect on the importance of protecting the natural environment and the beauty of the natural world.
32. Leaders actively encourage a culture of inclusion and pupils show respect for different groups of people in the school and beyond. Pupils care about their school and the people in it. Older pupils value the opportunities they have to serve the school community as monitors and they take this responsibility seriously. Leaders continuously affirm pupils' efforts and achievements through positive praise and through the rewards system. Consequently, pupils acclaim the successes of others, as well as aiming to succeed themselves.
33. The school actively promotes a values-driven curriculum in which pupils accept responsibility for their behaviour and respect others. Through the global curriculum and other opportunities leaders support the growth of pupils' social and cultural knowledge and understanding, which is well-developed.
34. Leaders understand the importance of preparing pupils well for the next stage of their education. Older pupils say that they feel ready for senior school and look forward to it. They are given opportunities to experience the senior school facilities on a regular basis and benefit from being part of the wider Caterham family, participating in sporting and musical events with the senior school.

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

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

Safeguarding

36. Robust arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including children in the early years, which meet the requirements of statutory guidance. The school works effectively with external agencies and they make timely referrals to children's services when needed.
37. Those with responsibility for safeguarding are well informed about local procedures and receive regular training to keep their knowledge up to date. Staff and volunteers joining the school receive safeguarding training. There are regular safeguarding updates for staff, who are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.
38. Staff know the correct procedures for reporting child protection concerns, as well as having a good understanding of the safeguarding policies, including those relating to radicalisation and whistleblowing.
39. School leaders take effective measures to manage risk and protect pupils from harm, and to manage well any incidents that do occur. Safeguarding arrangements are reviewed regularly, with the completion of an annual external audit and regular reports to trustees. Trustees receive the appropriate annual safeguarding update training which enables them to have effective oversight of safeguarding procedures.
40. Pupils know how to stay safe, including online, and this is taught through the wellbeing and technology curriculum. There is an appropriate filtering system in place, which is monitored effectively. Pupils know who to go to if they have concerns and pastoral leaders provide a variety of ways for them to share a concern, including in worry boxes and through a school-based application they can use to share a concern online.
41. Appropriate safer recruitment checks are undertaken for all staff, volunteers and trustees, and a suitable record of appointments is kept.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Caterham Prep School
Department for Education number	936/6567
Registered charity number	1109508
Address	Harestone Valley Road Caterham CR3 6YB
Phone number	01883 342097
Email address	prep.reception@caterhamschool.co.uk
Website	caterhamprep.co.uk
Proprietor	Caterham School Limited
Chair	Ms Monisha Shah
Headteacher	Mr Ben Purkiss
Age range	4-11
Number of pupils	276
Date of previous inspection	30 April to 2 May 2019

Information about the school

43. Caterham Prep School is a co-educational day school located in Caterham, Surrey. The school consists of a pre-prep from Reception to Year 2 and a prep school from Year 3 to Year 6. The school is part of the Caterham School family and is a charitable trust overseen by a board of trustees. Caterham senior school occupies an adjacent site and some facilities are shared. Since the previous inspection a new chair of trustees was appointed in January 2022.
44. There are 30 children in the early years comprising two Reception classes.
45. The school has identified 33 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
46. English is an additional language for a very small proportion of pupils.
47. The school states its aims are to provide an education for life for all pupils, blending the best of tradition with the opportunities provided by new technology and developing the whole child. The school aims to ensure that pupils understand their responsibility towards others and are well equipped to engage positively with a rapidly changing world as accomplished problem solvers and innovators, confident in their ability to lead and with a clear appreciation of and respect for the views and potential of others.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 November 2023

48. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

49. 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 with pupils and leaders
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

50. 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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