

School inspection report

4 to 6 March 2025

Yarm Preparatory School

Grammar School Lane

Yarm

TS15 9ES

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 use their educational expertise to create a purposeful school community. They focus consistently and effectively on the promotion of pupils' wellbeing. Appropriate policies are developed and shared with parents so that positive collaboration between home and school supports the activities, aspirations and development of the pupils.
2. Detailed proprietorial oversight ensures that leaders possess the skills and knowledge to implement policies successfully. Leaders evaluate the curriculum, pastoral care and all aspects of health and safety carefully and regularly. This enables leaders to draw up a school development plan which is also subject to regular review. This process of continuous review ensures that the school meets the Standards and that staff work towards the attainment of agreed objectives that prioritise pupil wellbeing.
3. Leaders develop a curriculum that takes account of the pupils' ages, interests, aptitudes and individual needs. Children in early years benefit from well-planned activities that promote their communication and language skills, their understanding of number and their personal, social and emotional development. Teachers of Years 1 to 6 build on the progress made during the early years. They use their subject knowledge to plan typically interesting, stimulating lessons that successfully employ a range of resources. As a result, pupils show interest in their work, ask thoughtful questions and sustain their concentration on set tasks.
4. Pupils take part enthusiastically in the wide-ranging extra-curricular activity programme that leaders provide to support the physical, intellectual and creative development of pupils. Leaders provide pupils with extensive opportunities to develop their dramatic, sporting, musical and debating skills.
5. Leaders create a calm, positive environment based on thoughtful, consistent behaviour management. Staff encourage pupils and commend them for their contribution and attainment thereby building pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Well-established routines and regular tracking of pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing, through form periods and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons, foster resilience and emotional intelligence in pupils.
6. Pupils learn about diversity through the curriculum and in assemblies. They learn about different lifestyles and beliefs and the importance of fundamental values such as tolerance and respect for others. As a result, pupils understand how showing kindness to those around them helps to sustain a harmonious community.
7. Leaders promote the physical development and wellbeing of pupils effectively. Early years staff use a variety of resources to help children develop their physical skills. Through physical education (PE) lessons, games teaching and extra-curricular activities, older pupils build on these skills and learn how to maintain their fitness. Health and safety leaders institute frequent checks to ensure that the premises are well maintained so that pupils learn in a secure environment.
8. Through the social and economic education programme, pupils learn about and contribute to the local community. Leaders provide financial education which teaches pupils how businesses function and gives them direct experience of entrepreneurship and how to manage money. Pupils learn about democracy and the importance of freedom of speech. They do not, however, fully understand how the law is used more widely to promote a democratic society.

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:

- develop pupils' understanding of how democracy is promoted in Britain so that pupils are fully prepared for life in contemporary society.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders consistently promote pupil wellbeing and the school's core values. Governors' wide professional experience in education, commerce and safeguarding supports them to fulfil their roles. Individual governors conduct formal visits to the school annually and provide a written report on their findings to the relevant governance committee. These visits include lesson observations, documentary checks and meetings with staff and pupils. As a result of their detailed oversight, governors have a thorough understanding of the everyday working of the school and take appropriate action to support and challenge school leaders.
10. Leaders provide a well-planned curriculum accompanied by comprehensive schemes of work that successfully promote pupils' academic development. This provision is supported by a broad range of early morning, lunchtime and after-school activities that capture pupils' interests and embed pupils' skills and knowledge.
11. Leaders promote a positive and productive partnership between the school and parents. An informative website, regular written communication and parent information evenings provide parents with important details of the school's ethos and policies. Parents receive regular reports of their child's progress, including guidance as to the next steps in pupils' learning and development. In addition to planned opportunities to meet with parents, senior members of staff are regularly available at convenient times, such as pupil drop off or collection times, to hold informal conversations with parents.
12. The school's comprehensive complaints policy is available to parents on the website. Leaders maintain detailed records of the small number of complaints made and respond in a consistently prompt and appropriate manner in accordance with the complaints policy.
13. Risk assessments with appropriate mitigation measures are in place as part of leaders' risk management strategy. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed for school activities and educational visits. Leaders also address contextual risks such as the potential for radicalisation, including from far-right political views. Leaders track trends carefully, reviewing incidents and taking any necessary remedial action promptly.
14. School leaders maintain effective links with external agencies and educational professionals, including the local authority, speech and language therapists and mental health specialists. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results are reported to the local authority, as required.
15. Leaders maintain an appropriate accessibility plan which is reviewed regularly. The local authority is also informed about the use of funds for the small proportion of pupils who have education, health and care (EHC) plans. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
16. Early years leaders ensure that the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage framework are met. Leaders provide staff with effective training so that they understand and implement procedures which successfully meet pupils' needs.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. The broad and relevant curriculum enables pupils to build their knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum. Regular reviews, which take account of pupils' and parents' opinions, result in beneficial changes. For example, since the last inspection, the language offering has been broadened so that pupils now study German and Spanish in addition to French. There have also been beneficial revisions of the geography, history, religious studies and PSHE education schemes of work to ensure the content is more relevant and stimulates pupils' interest.
19. Teachers in the early years focus on promoting literacy through developing children's understanding of the sounds that letters make. Teachers also develop children's early numeracy skills by, for example, teaching children about the different numbers which can be added together to make ten. Children use this knowledge when taking part in role play, such as buying items in the class shop.
20. Children know the class routines well and teachers use lesson time efficiently to deliver well-planned play opportunities that help children to practice the skills they have learned. Children are purposefully engaged in lessons and are happy to talk to trusted adults who listen carefully. Teachers ask targeted questions which move children on to the next steps in their learning and model appropriate language so that children develop their communication skills successfully. Staff know the children well and provide focused support according to children's individual needs. As a result, children in the early years make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
21. Teachers plan effectively, making use of a range of different resources, such as photographs and whiteboards, to support learning. Teachers have a thorough understanding of their subject matter which enables them to find out what pupils know about specific topics and then provide targeted support, addressing misconceptions, so that pupils can move on to the next stage in their learning. Teachers use effective questioning, matched to pupils' abilities and needs which develops pupils' critical thinking skills.
22. Pupils have well developed listening skills. They work purposefully in pairs, in small groups or independently. In discussion work, pupils share their ideas readily and explain them confidently and articulately. Pupils want to do well, are intellectually curious and take pride in their work.
23. Teachers implement an effective assessment framework which includes class tests, formal school examinations and nationally benchmarked assessments. Staff use the information gathered to monitor key groups and plan any support required for pupils. Regular meetings with leaders and subject staff consider the progress and attainment of individual pupils and leaders ensure that specific action is taken to meet pupils' needs. Information from assessments is used in the regular process of curriculum review and to support teachers' lesson planning.
24. Staff provide pupils with helpful feedback, both written and verbal. Pupils discuss this with their teachers and use the feedback to help them to progress to the next steps in their learning. Pupils of all ages and across the ability range value the feedback from their teachers about their work and this supports pupils to make good progress.
25. Pupils are assessed prior to joining the school which enables leaders to ensure that appropriate provision is in place to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils are carefully monitored and their progress is regularly discussed by teaching staff and teaching assistants so that effective support can be

provided. Appropriate adjustments are made so that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can participate fully in school activities and make good progress alongside their classmates.

26. Leaders carry out dedicated assessments of the language level of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and use this information to ensure that teaching meets pupils' needs. Teachers adapt their resources effectively, for example, using word banks, targeted questioning and individual support so that pupils who speak EAL can access the full curriculum. As a result, pupils who speak EAL make good progress from their starting points.
27. Leaders provide an extensive range of extra-curricular activities in which pupils participate enthusiastically. Pupils can engage in sports such as rugby, hockey and netball and there are clubs for debating, robotics and art, amongst many others. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and they can join a variety of ensembles and choirs. In drama, pupils of all ages develop their communication and performance skills. Through all these activities, pupils learn to work constructively with their teachers and peers and acquire interests and attributes which are of value as they move into the senior school and adult life.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. Through carefully planned assemblies, form periods and an effective PSHE education programme, leaders teach pupils the importance of compassion, respect and responsible behaviour. These values characterise the school and contribute to the friendly and tolerant ethos which prevails. Staff model appropriate behaviour and pupils are kind and supportive of each other.
30. Leaders establish effective procedures to support the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils. For example, pupils complete daily wellbeing check-ins with their form teachers. When pupils have concerns or worries, they receive prompt and effective support from their teachers and from the school's trained mental health practitioner. Pupils are taught to manage their mental health and emotional wellbeing through a mindfulness programme and weekly opportunities for personal reflection. Consistent praise from adults, structured routines and embedded opportunities for pupils' self-expression further develop pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence.
31. Effective behaviour management systems are based on a clear and consistently implemented code of conduct which is well understood by pupils. This supports pupils to be courteous and to behave well in lessons and during activities. Leaders review behavioural records to identify any trends seen and introduce changes to procedures when required.
32. Pupils are suitably supervised by staff during the school day. Serious misbehaviour is rare and dealt with appropriately in line with the school's behaviour policy. Staff provide effective support for pupils involved in behaviour incidents, helping pupils to reflect on their own behaviour and teaching pupils strategies to promote positive behaviour in the future.
33. Leaders use assemblies, PSHE and religious studies lessons to teach pupils about the importance of understanding difference and respecting all groups of people. The study of art, music and literature supports pupils' appreciation of the non-materialistic, spiritual aspects of life.
34. Pupils learn about relationships and sex education through PSHE education. Staff are suitably trained to teach from a well-structured scheme of work. This ensures that pupils learn about key topics such as different family structures, puberty, consent in relationships, and human reproduction. Leaders provide parents with detailed information about the programme and with opportunities each year for parents to ask questions or to raise any concerns.
35. Pupils of all ages benefit from physical education lessons taught by specialist teachers. Pupils develop their skills in teamwork and other key skills, for example, their balance and agility. Pupils also learn about the impact of exercise on different joints and muscle groups and the importance of warming up and cooling down properly.
36. Teachers in the early years deliver a planned programme enabling children to develop their physical skills. Imaginative play in the classroom and outdoors helps children to build their gross motor skills. Creative activities such as sign-writing, painting, modelling with clay and dressing dolls enhance children's fine motor skills. Teaching about the importance of oral hygiene and healthy snacks further promotes children's physical wellbeing.

37. Leaders monitor attendance carefully and ensure that accurate admission and attendance registers are maintained. Leaders provide the local authority with timely information about pupils joining and leaving the school at non-standard transition times in line with statutory guidance.
38. There is suitable medical accommodation and first aid is implemented effectively. Leaders analyse information relating to any accidents or injuries to identify patterns and take remedial action when required. They ensure suitable arrangements are in place for the appropriate administration of medicines. All staff are trained in first aid with effective deployment of those with paediatric first aid qualifications.
39. Leaders ensure that the premises and accommodation are well maintained through a programme of frequent checks and prompt action. Leaders give appropriate and effective attention to all aspects of health and safety, including those related to fire and electrical risk.

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

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

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

41. During form periods and PSHE education lessons, teachers ensure that pupils understand the importance of key values such as democracy, individual freedom and tolerance. Staff promote awareness of social issues, responsibility and diversity, preparing pupils to engage with wider society and to understand their rights and roles within it.
42. Early years staff help children to settle in successfully with a focus on teaching appropriate behaviour and establishing routines based on consistent behaviour management. Children learn how to use equipment, to listen to adults and each other and to share resources. The children develop an understanding of right and wrong and, as they move through the early years and into Years 1 and 2, they are given opportunities to take on positions of responsibility. Children take turns each term to be form captains and vice-captains and model good behaviour for their peers and younger pupils.
43. Leadership opportunities extend throughout the school. For example, Year 6 pupils act as peer mentors who help other pupils when they are worried or have social concerns, and involve teachers in providing further support.
44. Staff actively promote pupils' understanding and appreciation of democracy. Pupils vote for their form representatives on the school council. Other opportunities to learn about democracy include a mock election where pupils stand for the principal political parties, giving speeches and seeking to win support from their peers. The local member of parliament visits the school to speak to pupils about the role of democracy in everyday life and pupils tour the Palace of Westminster, learning how the British democratic system works in practice.
45. Leaders organise visits from the police and a barrister to provide pupils with an understanding of law enforcement in Britain. However, pupils are not taught systematically about the rule of law and how this relates to parliamentary democracy.
46. Through the school's extensive partnership work, pupils play an active and valuable role supporting others in the local community. For example, digital leaders from Years 5 and 6 work with teachers to organise technology workshops, using virtual reality headsets, for pupils in local schools. Younger pupils write and read stories both online and in person at local care homes and pupils are involved with support for the local foodbank. Leaders further enhance pupils' understanding of the wider world through fund-raising activities for national and international charities.
47. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about finance and the use of money in society. Money is introduced for younger children through numeracy lessons and role play activities. Children then apply their understanding of using money when they visit the local town to buy items from a shopping list for cookery in school. Older pupils take part in several enterprise projects with support from local business leaders. Pupils learn about project management, development of a marketing plan and profit and loss.
48. The 'dreams and goals' unit in the PSHE education programme enables pupils to explore future careers they might pursue in adult life. Younger children learn about 'people who help us' and benefit from visits by the police and fire service. Science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) days provide careers information for older pupils with presentations by

professionals such as pilots, vets, dentists and doctors. This extends pupils' knowledge and develops their interest in a wide range of careers.

49. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. For younger pupils there are moving up days at the end of the summer term when they visit their new classroom and meet their form teacher for the next year. Typically, older pupils move to the senior school and they visit it several times to take part in activities. Teachers provide effective support for pupils in preparation for life beyond Year 6.

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

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

Safeguarding

51. Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding policy, which reflects current statutory guidance and is available to parents on the website, is followed by all staff including in the early years.
52. Safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained and they ensure that all members of staff receive the required training, including at induction. Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding issues and procedures. As a result, they know how to manage any pupil disclosures or concerns about adults working at the school.
53. Leaders maintain close links with the local authority, children's services and the police. Any referrals to external agencies are made promptly and leaders maintain detailed records of any such action.
54. Leaders fulfil the school's statutory responsibilities regarding filtering and monitoring of the school's internet. Safeguarding leaders receive notifications of any inappropriate searches, which they investigate promptly and act upon. In lessons, assemblies and through presentations by external specialists, staff teach pupils how to stay safe, including online and when using the roads.
55. Leaders ensure that statutory safer recruitment procedures are implemented effectively. All mandatory checks on adults are completed before they begin work at the school. Leaders maintain an accurate single central record of appointments.
56. The governor with specific responsibility for safeguarding visits the school frequently to check documentation, including the single central record of appointments, and speak to staff and pupils. A report on these visits is submitted to the governing body. These visits enable governors to maintain effective oversight of all safeguarding procedures. Safeguarding leaders report formally to the governing body each term and there is an annual review of safeguarding practice and procedures. The safeguarding policy is reviewed and revised in accordance with statutory guidance and formally approved by the governing body.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

57. All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	Yarm Preparatory School
Department for Education number	808/6003
Registered charity number	1093434
Address	Yarm Preparatory School Grammar School Lane Yarm TS15 9ES
Phone number	01642 781447
Email address	prepschool@yarmschool.org
Website	http://www.yarmschool.org/prep
Proprietor	Yarm School
Chair	Mr Mark Thompson
Headteacher	Mr Bill Sawyer
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	383
Date of previous inspection	8 to 11 February 2022

Information about the school

58. Yarm Preparatory School is a co-educational day school. It is located in the market town of Yarm which is in North Yorkshire. The school is overseen by a board of governors who are also responsible for the senior school, which is in the same foundation.
59. There are 85 children in the early years comprising one Nursery and two Reception classes.
60. The school has identified 15 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. The school has identified English as an additional language for 26 pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to bring out the best in every pupil in their care and give them the best possible all-round education. It seeks to build and sustain a friendly, tolerant, and supportive community in which all its members are valued equally. The school endeavours for pupils to pursue higher personal academic and social standards and take full advantage of the opportunities on offer to them. It aims to ensure that pupils show a sense of responsibility towards the local and wider community and prepares them for life beyond school.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

4 to 6 March 2025

63. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. 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.

65. 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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