



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Avon House School

January 2020



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School's Details

School	Avon House Preparatory School			
DfE number	317/6059			
Address	Avon House School 490 High Road Woodford green Essex IG8 0PN			
Telephone number	020 8504 1749			
Email address	office@ahprep.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Campbell			
Chair of governors	Mrs Cheryl Macnair			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	242			
	EYFS	61	Juniors	181
Inspection dates	14 to 16 January 2020			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Avon House School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 3 and 11.
- 1.2 The school is situated on the edge of Woodford Green in the heart of Epping Forest. The school is a limited company and has a board of trustees who oversee the legal and financial matters of school. There are four governors and they meet regularly at the school.
- 1.3 The school comprises three sections: Early Years Foundation Stage, Pre-Prep and Prep.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to celebrate and support every child, building self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others in a caring environment. An emphasis is placed on recognising the needs of each individual child and helping pupils develop necessary skills for the next phase of their lives.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds and reflect the local community's diverse ethnic makeup. Standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 42 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which includes dyslexia and dyspraxia; some of these receive specialist support. No pupils have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC). English is an additional language (EAL) for 21 pupils whose needs are supported by the classroom teachers and two of them receive extra support. Data used by the school identifies pupils who are the most able, and the curriculum is modified for them through Individual Outcome Plans.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

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

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

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

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

Key findings

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

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

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

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

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.11 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

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

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

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

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

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

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

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

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

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

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

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

Key findings

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

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are of the highest quality.
- Pupils of all ages display excellent communication skills.
- Pupils' literacy skills are particularly strong.
- Children in EYFS achieve an excellent level of development.
- Pupils do not always demonstrate the ability to take the initiative or learn independently across the curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils are courteous, considerate and fully accept responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils celebrate and embrace their differences, respecting and valuing the cultural diversity of the school.
- Pupils display high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils' social awareness is strong; they form positive relationships and get on well together in the classroom and at play.

Recommendations

3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that all pupils are able to learn independently through increasing opportunities for them to take the initiative in their learning across the curriculum.
- Offer more chances for pupils to apply their advanced ICT skills across the curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.4 The overall achievement of the pupils is good and represents successful fulfilment of the school's aims to achieve a strong academic ethos beginning with firm foundations in EYFS. Analysis of assessment data provided by the school indicates that most pupils across the school make excellent progress in English, and reach age related expectation in mathematics. SEND and EAL pupils make particularly strong progress and are well-supported in their learning by staff and expert teaching assistants. The more able pupils make good progress and achieve well. All leavers gain places at the senior school of their choice, some of which have demanding entrance criteria. Every year several pupils are awarded scholarships. All the pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that the school offers a good range of subjects.

3.5 Outcomes in EYFS are excellent across the range of learning. Children's attainment at the end of the EYFS is well above the national average. Information on children's attainment at the end of EYFS is used effectively to plan future learning. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve well due to the high levels of support and timely procedures for intervention. Teachers know all their pupils well and use this knowledge to good effect to ensure pupils of all abilities achieve their potential.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate very good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. Pupils are confidently numerate, with children in the EYFS accurately counting the numbered pebbles in the sand pit. Literacy skills were seen in a class discussion, when younger pupils explained their scientific understanding of habitats with clear understanding and excellent vocabulary. Pupils said, 'camouflage is when an animal blends in with its surroundings'. Pupils demonstrate good scientific enquiry skills and are increasingly competent with technological and ICT skills as demonstrated by pupils' work from STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) themed week where they had worked together to create a helicopter or balloon hovercraft, when designing vehicles and their use of protractors to find angles on complex shapes. Knowledgeable, consistent teaching and marking provides pupils of all ages and abilities with a variety of tasks to engage their interest so that they learn well.
- 3.7 Pupils display excellent communication skills. They listen well to one another and are able to express themselves both clearly and concisely. All pupils willingly answer questions in class and are keen to express their views. The school's ethos of valuing what pupils have to say, along with the 'I can', approach promotes open communication. It also provides many opportunities for them to develop their skills such as writing and reading out match reports confidently in assembly. Pupils talked positively about their school and their aspirations, and showed maturity when describing their responsibilities as school eco, sport, and other council members. Pupils were articulate, having considered their global rights, about how they can support others through the initiatives they have set up. Pupils' writing skills are excellent as seen in well-presented work displayed throughout the school and the high standards achieved in pupils' historical newspaper reports on the Trojan horse and World War I diary entries. Pupils spoke of their pride in achieving a pen handwriting licence.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of numeracy. Children in EYFS are confident when using the interactive whiteboard for pirate ship number games. Pupils have a secure grasp of mathematical skills and show strength in number such as Reception pupils finding numbers the monster had eaten on a number line. Pupils apply relevant skills such as constructing graphs and data-handling in subjects such as history and geography and are increasingly learning to apply these skills through the school's STEM, curriculum. Focused support aided by good resources helps to ensure SEND pupils develop their numeracy and mathematical skills at a rate appropriate for their abilities. More able pupils are withdrawn for a weekly mathematics lesson which provides them with additional challenge and the opportunity to further develop their problem-solving skills.
- 3.9 Pupils are competent in their use of ICT skills in discrete computing lessons and designated STEM workshops. Many pupils, research effectively and use software to produce excellent written work and presentations as well as designing chess pieces, printing them out using a 3D printer. However, although pupils use the internet for research in some subjects they do not always have the opportunity to apply their more advanced skills consistently across the curriculum.
- 3.10 Older pupils develop strong study skills through their bespoke preparations for senior school, and in some subjects, pupils show perseverance in problem-solving for themselves. However, consistent opportunities for pupils to take the initiative in their learning in all subjects are limited. Pupils apply themselves in lessons as seen where pupils demonstrated competent thinking skills in French when asked to decode the months of the year and work out the learning objective. Pupils are challenged to develop life skills such as cookery, organising an activity or using bank cards to pay for lunch at senior school through the school's own challenge scheme 'Plume of Feathers' created by the leadership and management. Pupil's good levels of understanding are broadened further by outings of educational interest to such places as the Florence Nightingale Museum, Legoland, the National Gallery and with thematic days for history, maths and science.

- 3.11 Pupils' artistic skills are encouraged and are very well-developed as evidenced in displays around the school and the opportunity for all pupils to perform in and out of school. Inspectors found through discussions and observations of activities before, during and after school, an appropriate range of extracurricular activities to provide opportunities to strengthen pupils' skills. Pupils enjoy success in a wide range of activities including art, music, problem-solving, robots, photography and sports clubs. Pupils who have performed in a West End musical, put their success down to the confidence gained in the drama club, and some others thanked the school for their opportunity to take part in international karate competitions. Pupils represent the school by competing in the national mathematics and quiz club competitions, a few local and national sports competitions, external speaking assessments and musical festivals. These are encouraged by the leadership and management who ensure there is a broad curriculum and wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.12 All pupils, including children in EYFS, exhibit excellent attitudes to learning. The tasks and teaching methods employed in class encourage enthusiastic participation. In lessons, pupils listen well, are fully engaged and apply themselves in a conscientious manner. They recognise that making mistakes is part of the learning process, and extol the virtues of doing their best and trying hard. They enjoy opportunities to work together, but also respond well when asked to work individually. Pupils have some opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, such as researching for a non-chronological report on an animal or responding to improvement points in their written work, but these opportunities for independence are not consistent across all areas of the curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils display very high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. This was commented on by governors who had undertaken practice interviews. They are self-disciplined, and informally assess risk to themselves and others, especially at break and playtimes for instance when playing ball games. The leadership and management encourages the ethos of mutual respect, perseverance and resilience which inspires pupils to be open in expressing their thoughts and feelings and to risk making mistakes. This was seen in a lesson when one pupil persevered spontaneously to re-calculate the age of a famous person showing application of mathematics out of context. Pupils are keen to do well and fully appreciate the support and regular encouragement they receive from their teachers. In most subjects, pupils use a red pen to record their reflections and feedback on their work to the teachers which enhances their learning. During break times, pupils spontaneously engaged with visitors with confidence and curiosity.
- 3.15 Pupils understand that they are responsible for making the right age appropriate decisions in relation to their behaviour. This starts in EYFS when children choose activities of interest to them, supported by resources and encouragement from staff. This continues through to the oldest pupils who choose their own topics for debating such as climate change. They make sensible choices and understand the impact their decisions can have on those around them. For example, when the school council allowed their peers to inform their decisions about the type of new climbing frame and how they would raise the funds. Pupils recognise the importance of a healthy lifestyle and were seen making good dietary choices at lunchtime. Opportunities through participation of the various councils help pupils develop their decision making.

- 3.16 Pupils appreciate non-material aspects of life and show well developed aesthetic and cultural awareness. This was seen when younger pupils discussed their life aspirations and were able to articulate clear and sensible ways to achieve these. The high standard of artwork on display showed the pupils' sensitivity to the world around them and their spontaneous joy of singing in assembly was palpable. In EYFS, children on their weekly walk share their delight and wonder in the natural world, returning to class with interesting items they have found. Pupils have opportunities for time to reflect in quiet places or reflect and respond to questions posed on the 'Wonder Wall'. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the opportunities they have to celebrate their different faiths, cultures and religious festivals through theme days and visiting speakers.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness of right and wrong, from the youngest years. They understand the need for rules in order to have a safe and comfortable environment with respect for all, and behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Each class has its own charter which reflects the *United Nations Rights of the Child* which enables pupils to focus on creating a caring and respectful community together, with clear procedures for promoting good behaviour and a consideration of others. Pupils are courteous and regularly stop to talk to anyone sitting on the 'buddy bench'. In discussions, pupils talked about their respect for the rewards and sanctions system, and happily explained how the behaviour management system works well in each classroom. On the rare occasions when pupils exhibit poor behaviour, the opportunity to reflect on their actions helps them resolve to amend their behaviour or encourages them to ask to be part of 'the circle of friends' for less confident pupils. Pupils appreciate the chance to nominate pupils for one of the weekly awards such as, organisation, helpfulness, perseverance and exemplary behaviour during celebration assemblies. Parent, pupil and staff responses to the questionnaires, all stated that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Pupils appreciate the chance to nominate pupils for one of the weekly awards such as
- 3.18 Pupils social awareness is extremely strong. They form positive relationships and get on well together in the classroom and at play. This was seen in all areas of school life. Pupils worked well collaboratively in pairs, as seen when discussing their ideas such as how to construct different types of sentences, when reading and discussing homework and in music composition on the keyboards. Those interviewed said they appreciate the opportunities to be a member of a house and to play in a sports team.
- 3.19 Pupils willingly help those less fortunate than themselves through fundraising and participation in the local community. They demonstrate their strong desire to help by offering to take the initiative in planning and organising events such as the recent shoe appeal for a mental health trust charity. Every year, each of the four houses holds a vote to decide which charity they will support. Pupils empathise with the plight of others who are less fortunate than themselves. Each year they take harvest goods to a charity for the homeless, who send a representative into school to talk about the difficult position of these people. The pupils also had a litter picking day to help the local common parkland, and regularly sing at a club for blind people. Pupils are proud of their school and relish their roles of responsibility, enjoying the opportunity to contribute to their school community, to help visitors and represent their classmates on one of the five councils. Older pupils are excellent role models and are keen to support younger pupils such as being a 'playground buddy'. They relish challenging themselves to gain an award for making a difference as part of the recently developed Plume of Feathers which Leadership and Management have developed as part of their role in supporting the excellent attitudes demonstrated across the school community.

- 3.20 Pupils celebrate and embrace their differences, respecting and valuing the cultural diversity of the school. The religious, personal and social curriculum, together with thoughtful assemblies and the inclusive nature of house meetings, ensure that pupils develop a broad knowledge of their own and other cultures. Recent visitors have included parents who helped pupils understand the celebration of different religions. The respect for each other's differences, shown by pupils, is fundamental to the positive relationships seen across the whole school community strongly supported by leadership and management.
- 3.21 Pupils in their questionnaire responses and interviews were clear that they feel secure in school and know what steps they need to take to keep themselves safe in and out of school. They know how to keep themselves safe online and how to respond to any worrying messages they might receive. This was demonstrated by older pupils who created advisory leaflets about keeping safe online and presented these at a whole school assembly. Pupils appreciate the need to eat sensibly and to exercise in order to be healthy. Pupils who could not run more than a few steps in house cross country at the start of the year soon progress to keep up with others. Healthy Living week is an annual event which gives pupils the opportunity to be healthy and achieve celebration for talent and participation.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and an assembly. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Daphne Cawthorne

Reporting inspector

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Compliance team inspector (Bursar, IAPS school)

Mr Mark Hammond

Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)