



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**RYDES HILL PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**JUNE 2017**



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### SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Rydes Hill Preparatory School			
<b>DfE Number</b>	936/6049			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	299411			
<b>Address</b>	Rydes Hill Preparatory School Rydes Hill House Aldershot Road Guildford Surrey GU2 8BP			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01483 563160			
<b>Email address</b>	admissions@rydeshill.com			
<b>Headmistress</b>	Mrs Stephanie Bell			
<b>Chairman of governors</b>	Mr Dermot Gleeson			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	185			
	<b>Boys</b>	14	<b>Girls</b>	171
	<b>Day pupils</b>	185	<b>Boarders</b>	0
	<b>EYFS</b>	63	<b>Juniors</b>	122
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28 to 29 June 2017			

## 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.

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 following their inspection 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.

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.

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 an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting 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.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. 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'.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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 vice-chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended Mass. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Timothy Holgate

Reporting inspector

Mrs Claire Delo

Team inspector (Senior teacher, IAPS school)

Mr Brian Melia

Team inspector (Former headmaster, IAPS school)

## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### About the school

- 1.1 Rydes Hill Preparatory School is an independent day school for girls aged between three and eleven years, with boys up to the age of seven. The school was founded in 1945 by the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, housed in a seventeenth-century town house in Guildford. In 1989, the ownership was transferred to a charitable trust, which was established specifically for the purpose of continuing the work of the Foundation Order. The charity's trustees act as the board of governors and hold proprietorial responsibility.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection in 2011, extensive rebuilding and refurbishment work has taken place. Most notable are the improved hall facilities for the performing arts, a new vehicle entrance and driveway, a new adventure playground, and improved outdoor learning areas for the Nursery and Reception children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Resources for information and communication technology (ICT) have been enhanced.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to foster the Christian virtues of love and kindness, faith and courage, hope and perseverance; to promote excellence in all areas, and to develop each pupil's abilities and character to the full. It aims to promote a purposeful and disciplined atmosphere, in which children are encouraged to achieve their full potential, and to recognise each other as unique individuals with talents to develop and a contribution to make, and aspires to ensure that equal opportunities are available to all.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come mainly from a range of professional and business backgrounds, mostly from British families typical of the local cultural mix. Most live within 40-minutes travelling time from the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified twelve pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Of these, seven require support for dyslexia, speech and language difficulties, and medical conditions. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. None have English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Nursery	Nursery
Kindergarten	Reception
Lower Transition	Year 1
Upper Transition	Year 2
Lower Prep	Year 3
Middle Prep	Year 4

Higher Prep	Year 5
Form One	Year 6

## 2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils' communication skills are outstanding and their creative writing is exceptional.
- Pupils use their highly competent subject knowledge to make good progress and, for many, their progress is excellent.
- Pupils' study skills develop very strongly as they move up the school, and they use these to produce high quality project work.
- Pupils show outstanding attitudes to work and study.
- Pupils' technological skills and their wider application of numeracy across other subjects are not consistently developed.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils develop very strong confidence during their time in the school, particularly in the area of speaking in public.
- They show excellent spiritual and moral awareness which lie at the heart of the extremely positive relationships they form with each other.
- Their excellent social development enables them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and make a highly beneficial contribution to the lives of others.
- Pupils have a pronounced sense of respect and tolerance for others, nurtured by the school's strong Christian ethos.

### Recommendations

2.3 Within the context of these excellent outcomes, the school is recommended to consider the following improvements.

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to broaden their creative and technological skills, particularly in the production of three-dimensional artefacts.
- Enable pupils to apply their numeracy and mathematical skills more widely across other curricular subjects.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge and understanding and display excellent subject-specific skills, relative to their age. Nursery children made coconut mice and applied their knowledge of prepositions of place when decorating them. Year 2 pupils displayed good understanding and awareness of the purpose and operations of a dairy farm and older pupils used their excellent presentation skills to demonstrate their knowledge of the features of the solar system. Pupils' creative writing is exceptional, enhanced by high standards of technical English, including strong knowledge of punctuation and paragraphing. Their aesthetic skills are evident in the high quality of their art displayed around the school, and in their music making. Pupils show highly effective and well-developed performance skills, particularly evident in the dress rehearsal for the end-of-year school musical. Pupils' ability to apply their technological skills, for example in constructing three-dimensional artefacts, is often good, but these are not developed consistently across the year groups.
- 3.3 The school does not take part in externally standardised National Curriculum tests, but the available evidence shows attainment to be well above national age-related expectations. This judgement is based on a range of assessment data available, including standardised tests of mathematics and English, and standard tests for determining pupils' spelling and reading ages. Taking inspection evidence into account, derived from lesson observations, evaluation of pupils' work, and interviews with them, they make good progress from their starting points and, for many, progress is excellent. The progress of pupils with SEND is good and they benefit from the additional support they receive. Pupils in the EYFS make rapid progress in the development of literacy, numeracy and social development. The most able pupils generally make a high rate of progress, especially when consistently challenged in lessons. Pupils' achievement and progress are strongly influenced by teaching that provides inspiration and challenge for pupils, and employs well-planned learning tasks, suitably matched to their needs. Almost all parents' questionnaire responses indicated that the teaching enables their children to make good progress. Academic outcomes for pupils are enhanced by the efficient and effective systems employed by the school for tracking pupils' achievement and monitoring their progress. The rapid progress shown by the very youngest children owes much to the highly effective organisation and management of the Early Years setting.
- 3.4 Pupils of all ages show outstanding communication skills. They are very confident orally and express their views eloquently, clearly and logically. They read aloud particularly well and listen attentively to each other. Pupils write very effectively, with a strong appreciation and understanding of correct vocabulary and grammar and the need to communicate their ideas clearly. Reception children show good reading skills for their age and are already assimilating and building on the sounds that letter combinations make. Pupils' strong communication skills benefit from encouragement by the school of public speaking, and speech and drama activities. Teachers put great stress on correct writing and reading. The strong curriculum focus on both literacy and numeracy enables pupils to benefit from their highly secure knowledge base of basic structural linguistic and arithmetical concepts and skills. Pupils' numerical understanding is well developed for their age. Their strong arithmetical skills, honed by excellent reinforcement of multiplication tables and number relationships and operations, enable them to measure accurately, perform mental calculations well, and apply their knowledge enthusiastically to problem-solving activities. The youngest children can compare quantities and shapes and have very good ability to recognise and sequence numbers up to 10 and beyond. Pupils' numeracy is not always applied as effectively as it could be across other subjects of the curriculum. For some, graphical skills are underdeveloped.

- 3.5 At all ages, including the youngest, pupils use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well and develop this competence to support their learning across many subjects. They use appropriate spreadsheet, presentation and publishing software applications with great confidence, enhancing the quality of their excellent research projects by the effective integration of text and images and producing imaginative and technically polished posters and booklets. Pupils use elementary programming techniques to control the movements of a robot. They demonstrate great skill in using drawing software and in their hand-eye coordination in using the mouse.
- 3.6 Pupils' study skills develop very strongly as they move up the school. This is reinforced by their teachers' strong focus on developing independent learning habits and encouraging pupils to think for themselves. They develop these strong skills of independent learning especially when carrying out detailed research to complete individual projects on a wide range of topics, using well-chosen and telling source material. Pupils used historical information effectively to demonstrate empathy and understanding when describing the challenges faced by children in Tudor times. Pupils draw on a variety of sources to inspire their creative writing shown, for example, by a pupil who imagined she was in the picture of Constable's *Hay Wain* after a school visit to the National Gallery. Older pupils apply higher-order thinking skills effectively, being able to draw conclusions from newly acquired information, to analyse data, and to apply theoretical concepts to everyday and practical situations. Year 4 pupils applied their understanding of science concepts, and their reasoning ability was evident in their conclusions to an investigation into water resistance. Pupils' problem-solving skills are well developed in mathematics.
- 3.7 While a small minority of parents responding to the questionnaire were not satisfied with the choice of extra-curricular activities, a very large proportion of pupils were satisfied. Inspectors felt that pupils generally enjoy good levels of personal success and satisfaction within the range of extra-curricular opportunities offered. These enable talents and interests to be developed well. Sporting success is achieved in external matches and competitions locally in netball, tennis and athletics for example. Pupils have performed well in ballet examinations, in local art competitions, and in speech and drama sessions. Their high level of success in this latter area is well applied in their confident public speaking. Pupils enjoy their participation in gymnastics and swimming. Year 6 leavers have consistently performed well in achieving scholarships to senior schools.
- 3.8 Pupils show outstanding attitudes to work and study. They enjoy learning for its own sake, and derive great satisfaction from working hard and doing their best. Their handwriting and the presentation of their work are excellent for their age, and they take great pride in their achievements. Pupils work highly productively, both on their own, and when collaborating with others in small groups, even from the youngest age. They show considerable effort in completing set tasks and, in the case of their project work, this is often sustained over a considerable period of time. These highly positive attitudes benefit from the strong support and help given by approachable and committed teachers, who form excellent relationships with their pupils and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. It is also underpinned by the clear sense of purpose promoted by school leaders and a shared commitment by staff at all levels to enable pupils of all ages and abilities to do the best they can.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils develop very strong self-confidence throughout their time in the school. They report that they gain the self-belief to speak out in public and express their opinions, secure in the knowledge that their views will be respected by others. Pupils have the confidence to enunciate their strengths sensitively and identify their weaknesses honestly. Older pupils, in particular, have the self-esteem to accept positive criticism by teachers of their mistakes and comment from peers on how to improve their work. They show significant resilience in meeting and responding to challenge, both academic and personal. Although a few pupils responding to the questionnaire felt that marking did not always help them to improve their work, most of those spoken to disagreed and said that they value the feedback teachers provide, so that they are able to focus on future improvement in their work.
- 4.3 Pupils of all ages learn to make appropriate decisions about their lives based, for older pupils, on an understanding of choice and consequence. The youngest pupils made interesting and thoughtful choices about features to include in their imaginary islands, while the oldest pupils developed independent decision-making skills, in helping to organise administrative matters for the school play. School council representatives make suitable choices for amenities to improve the school environment. Older pupils recognise that voting for school leaders should take into account those most likely to make the school a better place. They realise that the decisions they make can have an impact on others, shown, for example, in their writing on the effects of careless littering.
- 4.4 Pupils show excellent spiritual awareness for their age. They value the opportunities they have to reflect quietly during the busy school day. They appreciate the opportunities for quiet prayer and moments for private reflection in assemblies. They say that this enables them to focus on the day ahead and think about any challenges they will face. Pupils regard the great collaborative endeavours, like the school musical, as inspiring and uplifting. Class circle time for all year groups enables pupils to think about their feelings and provide support for others. The letters written by older pupils to an unborn child provided moving examples of their ability to reflect on the sanctity of life and its infinite potential. In Mass, pupils contemplated thoughtfully the meaning of friendship. Spiritual awareness is strongly developed in religious studies lessons: pupils considered the impact of Peter letting Jesus down, and considered how a candidate wishing to become an apostle might be interviewed. The youngest pupils showed sensitive appreciation and respect when a pupil proudly showed off her pet fish, brought in for 'show and tell'.
- 4.5 Pupils show a pronounced and instinctive sense of right and wrong. This strong moral awareness is enhanced by their acceptance of the class golden rules, the kindness code and, for older pupils, an understanding of the school's mission statement. They acknowledge that school rules are necessary for the smooth running of the school community. Pupils benefit from the effective personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and its clear promotion of tolerance and respect for others. They feel that these lessons provide the freedom and security to learn about acceptable behaviour and develop their own ideas of right and wrong. They have a strong sense of responsibility for their own behaviour. They explained that if they made a mistake or, for instance, caused accidental damage, they were all willing to own up and acknowledge their error. They have a strong understanding of the right way to treat other people, and were perceptive when describing occasional incidents where conflict between pupils might arise. They appreciate the school's response to any such occasion which, they said, enabled the protagonists to balance the need for resilience and empathy.

- 4.6 Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent social development, and show exemplary manners and courtesy for others. From the Nursery onwards, they exhibit a welcoming and friendly engagement with visitors. Pupils develop strong teamwork and initiative in many out-of-class activities and competitions. The oldest pupils feel that they benefited hugely from the collaborative activities and challenges encountered during their residential week, enabling them to develop initiative and team work. Many pupils love the social experience of playing in team sports. They say that, in common with many corporate endeavours, they appreciate that everyone has a different role, but that everyone is collectively responsible for the success of the outcome. Pupils are very keen to help each other in a cooperative and supportive manner, such as providing encouragement in games and helping each other with any problems at break times. The youngest children integrate well with each other when playing in the adventure playground and taking turns.
- 4.7 Pupils are very keen to make a positive contribution to others in school and to those less fortunate than themselves elsewhere in the community. They are naturally and spontaneously helpful to their peers, whether it be providing help and support for the youngest pupils or mopping up spilt water at lunch without being asked. Many pupils of all ages discharge their responsibilities very effectively as team and form captains and council representatives. Prefects and other pupils with positions of responsibility provide service to others, helping at school events, and contributing to the smooth running of school life, for example in the library, the ICT room or in church, and serving on the school council. They feel that they gain satisfaction from a job well done and this heightens their sense of responsibility. Pupils show a very strong commitment to raising money for many local and international charities. They particularly enjoy the Reindeer Run, in aid of a hospice, and the Bunny Hop to support a local disabled charity, and recognise that they should put significant physical effort into such sponsored events. Pupils say that they learnt a great deal about themselves and their attitudes to other cultures from their engagement and communication with children from a school in Uganda. They very much enjoy writing to their pen pals in Africa. Through initiatives such as these, pupils develop a good understanding and appreciation of other cultures, enhanced also through lessons and their research activities in various subjects. High-quality projects about the life and nature of society in different EU countries were produced by the oldest pupils. In lessons, pupils encountered and raised their awareness of the concepts and origins of racism and terrorism, and recognised important implications for society when tolerance and an acceptance of difference break down. They developed empathy and understanding for those being brought up in contemporary India. Pupils demonstrate respect and appreciation for those from different backgrounds. They felt strongly that all people should be treated with equal respect and cited unfair prejudice shown to black Americans in the past. Pupils' work displays great respect for their own culture, especially the monarchy. The overwhelming majority of responses to the parents' and pupils' questionnaires confirmed the school's strong promotion of respect and tolerance.
- 4.8 Pupils have an excellent understanding and appreciation of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle, appropriate to their age. Early Years children learn about basic personal hygiene. Pupils feel very well equipped with appropriate knowledge to make informed decisions about lifestyle choices through PSHCE and science lessons. Older pupils understand the importance of good nutrition, enhanced by the excellent quality of school lunches. All pupils spoken to had a pronounced awareness of keeping themselves safe, particularly with regard to e-safety and misuse of the internet, and this was confirmed by almost all of their questionnaire responses. Older pupils are reassured that their emotional well-being is taken seriously by the school. Many pupils value the swimming sessions, both to enhance fitness and also to relieve stress.

- 4.9 All these excellent personal attributes and the pupils' well-developed personalities ensure that, by the time they leave, they are very well equipped to move on to their senior schools and prepare for adult life. The success of the school's initiatives to enhance pupils' personal development owes much to: the clear expectations promoted by staff, who provide excellent role models; the strong and supportive pastoral care framework, that enhances pupils' confidence and well-being; and the care and attention provided by teaching and non-teaching staff alike throughout the school. A very large majority of parents' questionnaire responses praised the school environment that successfully supports their children's personal development. Above all, the pupils' success is nurtured by the clear and ambitious ethos and mission that are promoted strongly by school leadership and governors. The school's Christian ethos is clearly evident in everything it does.