

School inspection report

12 to 14 November 2024

Gidea Park Preparatory School and Nursery

2 Balgores Lane

Gidea Park

Romford

Essex

RM2 5JR

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 are committed to developing pupils' wellbeing and ensuring that staff possess the requisite knowledge, expertise and resources to perform their roles effectively. The school's ethos is integrated throughout the curriculum and reinforced through comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE).
2. Relationships among staff and pupils, as well as between peers, are constructive, promoting a culture of mutual respect, trust and safety. Leaders ensure adherence to the Equality Act (2010), supported by a routinely updated accessibility plan.
3. Through clear policies, safeguarding protocols, and comprehensive health and safety strategies, leaders cultivate a secure and supportive environment.
4. Leaders empower staff to deliver engaging, well-structured lessons and provide a variety of extracurricular activities, enabling pupils to make progress across linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological and artistic disciplines. Pupils demonstrate appropriate skills for their age and exhibit strong self-motivation.
5. A well-rounded curriculum in the prep school ensures broad skills development, while specialist teaching in core subjects bolsters pupils' achievement. However, some inconsistencies in the early years curriculum and approach have an impact on the education of younger children.
6. Teachers continually assess pupils' progress, offer tailored feedback, and adapt lessons to meet individual needs, including for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
7. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported in their day-to-day school life to ensure that they are able to make expected levels of progress.
8. Leaders use robust assessment and tracking systems to support teachers to promote pupils' academic growth.
9. Governors have a thorough oversight of what is happening in school through regular communication with leaders and managers.
10. Leaders promote exemplary behaviour through an effective behaviour and anti-bullying policy, taking a preventative approach that educates pupils on appropriate conduct. By modelling positive behaviour and prioritising pupils' wellbeing, leaders foster respect, a strong moral compass and outstanding conduct among pupils, all underpinned by the school's core values.
11. Leaders have a suitable knowledge and understanding of new attendance guidance. Processes for admissions and attendance meet legal requirements, with absences followed up promptly. Some issues in relation to attendance and admissions were rectified on inspection.

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 consistency in the application of guidance around attendance and admissions
- improve the oversight and provision of training in the early years to ensure consistency of practice so that children make good progress in all areas
- strengthen early years curriculum planning to improve the systematic development of skills through well-planned activities suited to the needs of all children.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders ensure that the school's aims and values are integrated into all aspects of daily life. Pupils are curious in their learning and proud of their achievements. Displays, reward assemblies and regular interactions reinforce values such as respect, which pupils demonstrate in their exemplary behaviour.
13. A comprehensive curriculum in the prep school fosters broad skills development in all subject areas. Leaders and managers monitor lessons to ensure that policies are being implemented effectively. This is done through lesson walks and lesson observations in order to ascertain the impact of new initiatives on pupils' progress. This also helps to facilitate the consistent quality of teaching, supported by structured lesson planning and formative feedback. In the early years, this is less evident, and oversight is unclear.
14. Leaders and managers ensure that staff address the diverse needs of pupils. They have a good understanding of pupils, both academically and pastorally, and work closely with staff to ensure that needs are met. This is undertaken through regular meetings to discuss individual pupils, their progress and general wellbeing, and through monitoring in class.
15. The school collaborates with parents of pupils with individual education plans in order to meet the needs of pupils who have SEND. An annual account of income and expenditure related to pupils in receipt of an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) is made to the local authority. Leaders manage resources carefully and provide appropriate support, for example through the provision of specialist visiting teachers. This is regularly reviewed by leaders and managers.
16. Leaders track pupils' progress carefully, providing parents with regular reports on attainment, effort and assessments. Leaders use an online platform to keep Nursery and Reception parents updated.
17. Leaders ensure that the school complies with the Equality Act (2010). They produce, implement and review a three-year accessibility plan which improves physical access and ensures inclusion and equal opportunities across the school.
18. Leaders have a thorough oversight with regards to all areas of health and safety and make sure that the school maintains robust safety measures.
19. Leaders assess risks carefully and put appropriate mitigation into place to reduce the chance of those on the school site being harmed. Leaders ensure that staff receive effective training so that they are competent in completing detailed risk assessments, including daily checks in the early years.
20. Safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively and reviewed annually by the governing body in line with statutory guidance. Leaders demonstrate their competence through the consistent application of policy in practice.
21. The school contacts outside agencies in order to support the education and wellbeing of the pupils. They are aware of the support from the local area designated officer (LADO) and have links with the local social services.

22. A clear complaints policy is accessible on the school's website, with leaders addressing concerns promptly and effectively. Governors have oversight of the complaints process and ensure that leaders follow policy and procedures correctly
23. Senior leaders ensure that all statutory checks are completed before employment begins. The single central record is well maintained with thorough oversight by the advisory body in order to safeguard pupils' welfare.
24. Leaders ensure that there is a clear process of self-evaluation in place around the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This is achieved through the monitoring of provision, listening to stakeholders and evaluating how resources and training can be used to enhance provision further. Leaders have evaluated all areas of the curriculum in order to develop more breadth of opportunity for pupils and as a result there is an improved offering in terms of the creative arts.

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

25. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

26. The school offers a structured and nurturing environment that encourages pupils to engage in a varied breadth of subjects. Pupils are interested in their learning experiences and make good progress across the curriculum. This is enhanced further through a wide range of educational trips and visits.
27. Leaders ensure that appropriate schemes of work and programmes of activities are in place. Lessons are well planned with a clear understanding of the individual needs of pupils linked to a good knowledge of their prior attainment. The curriculum provides a balanced educational journey, combining academic rigour with real-world exploration. Pupils demonstrate curiosity and self-motivation. They are provided with opportunities within lessons to think critically and to deepen their understanding of topics studied.
28. Leaders and managers monitor planning to ascertain its quality. Teachers' planning is effective in identifying and addressing the needs of the pupils. Leaders provide a wealth of opportunities for staff to discuss individual needs which feed into detailed planning showing an understanding of pupils' aptitudes.
29. Assessment tracking and analysis systems are in place across the school so that staff are aware of performance in formative assessments and are able to track pupils' progress over time. Teachers identify where further support is needed and provide this for pupils as necessary. Staff monitor progress within lessons and work with pupils to ensure that they fulfil their academic potential. Teachers adapt their teaching to accommodate pupils' needs and address areas of misunderstanding or missing knowledge. While Reception pupils had lower attainment in the early learning goals in 2024, Year 1 interventions are addressing gaps effectively and ensuring good progress. Reception staff are addressing the skills needed to fulfil the expected levels in the early learning goals.
30. Teachers assess and provide feedback to pupils regularly in order to support further progress and development. Self-assessment and regular feedback are also an integral part of lesson time which supports pupils' development and confidence in their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress across linguistic, mathematical, scientific, creative and technological domains.
31. Early years leaders implement structured assessment processes and maintain communication with parents. However, inconsistencies in understanding developmental stages and planning for early learning are evident in some areas of the provision. This is reflected in the significant proportion of Reception pupils who did not achieve expected levels in the early learning goals in summer 2024. Year 1 staff are addressing these gaps through targeted interventions.
32. The school have developed their phonics teaching, in response to previous attainment levels at the end of Reception. There are clear groupings and structured phonic sessions in place to ensure that pupils are currently on track to reach expected levels of progress in the early learning goals for literacy at the end of the reception year.
33. Planning in the early years is mostly responsive to children's needs and interests, incorporating all seven areas of learning. On the whole staff are aware of the skills children need to learn to make further progress and meet their developmental milestones. However, structured progression of skills is not always evident in some areas and not all staff are clear on the skills and knowledge that they want the children to develop.

34. Lessons in the prep school are tailored to the age, abilities and needs of pupils, including those who have SEND. This tailored instruction ensures individual pupils, including those with prior high attainment, are challenged appropriately. Teaching staff and support staff work collaboratively to plan and to support pupils. They use effective provision in the form of teaching methods which are well-matched to pupils' needs, careful questioning, visual aids and access to technology, which is used to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum effectively.
35. Pupils who speak EAL are identified in teachers' planning and benefit from targeted strategies and support in class to help them understand instructions more clearly. Teachers provide visual prompts and pair pupils carefully to help them to access the curriculum and develop confidence in their learning. Pupils who speak EAL also benefit from targeted sessions outside of lesson time to help develop their language acquisition further.
36. Staff manage class time and resources effectively and pupils behave impeccably across the school. This in turn means that learning is uninterrupted and takes place in an atmosphere that is calm and productive.
37. Extra-curricular opportunities, such as musical theatre and early morning music concerts, karate and board games, enrich the curriculum and allow pupils to showcase their creative talents. Staff are knowledgeable and well prepared, ensuring pupils acquire new skills while consolidating prior learning effectively.

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

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

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

39. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding is developed through assemblies and activities that celebrate diversity. Weekly assemblies and discussions on cultural and moral topics engage pupils and help to develop their knowledge and understanding. There is a close community within the school that is both inclusive and supportive. Friendships develop across the community as pupils interact across classes and this is further encouraged when older pupils help younger ones in their roles as prefects, fostering responsibility across the school. The school actively promotes fundamental British values through the sharing of its own school values and approach to learning.
40. School leaders have consistent oversight with regards to health and safety and the security of the school premises. They check all appropriate areas such as fire doors, fire routes and fire and intruder systems routinely. Fire drills are undertaken with appropriate regularity. Regular inspections and risk assessments are conducted to ensure that identified risks are appropriately mitigated
41. Leaders ensure high levels of supervision at all times including during mealtimes and outdoor play. Staff promote the school's values during interactions with pupils and engage well with pupils whilst supervising outside on duty.
42. Pupils are given further roles of responsibility across the school in the form of captains of each class, elected to represent their form each week in a meeting, where they put forward the ideas from each class to further enhance the school. This in turn helps to develop pupils' sense of worth and self-esteem as they see their efforts rewarded with developments around the school.
43. The PSHE and RSE programme deliver a detailed and effective understanding of all areas of relationship development and personal and emotional development. This is enhanced by regular check-ins of pupil and staff emotions through a mood board and classroom displays celebrating achievements.
44. PSHE is delivered and then further reinforced across school events, clubs, and community involvement. Extra-curricular activities, including visits to government institutions and community service projects, promote civic responsibility and respect for diversity. The PSHE curriculum is supported by reflection opportunities and discussion, encouraging personal growth.
45. Cultural appreciation is enriched through cultural days where pupils share their cultural experiences through dress, food, celebrations, stories and traditions. Staff also adapt their teaching to incorporate spontaneous learning moments when pupils bring their experiences to share and therefore develop the knowledge of their peer group about different cultures.
46. Teachers' use of wellness activities encourages pupils to recognise and learn how to deal with emotions, and robust home-school communication contributes to a supportive environment for pupils.
47. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is provided through age-appropriate lessons that cover healthy relationships, boundaries, consent and respect. These topics are reinforced through assemblies, reflective activities, and a school-wide emphasis on kindness, respect, and inclusivity. Pupils demonstrate these values effectively as they move around the school, within lessons and

when speaking to visitors, consistently showing their understanding in the way that they implement them into their daily lives. Staff are trained to approach RSE topics with sensitivity and to address pupils' questions and concerns with care. Good communication with parents ensures that they are well-informed. Pupils are taught about safe relationships and personal safety which covers body awareness, reproduction, and topics on safety and protection.

48. In the early years, activities promote personal, emotional and physical development through sharing, turn-taking and empathy-building exercises. Physical health and motor skills are developed through outdoor play. Fine motor tasks and co-ordination activities enhance body awareness.
49. Leaders have effective oversight of bullying and behaviour incidents within the school. They address concerns promptly and offer pupils opportunities to reflect upon their behaviour. Leaders are proactive in demonstrating behaviour expectations and provide role models for pupils to follow. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of respect, tolerance and looking after their own personal wellbeing. Behaviour across the school is impeccable.
50. Leaders put into place a suitable physical education (PE) and games curriculum to provide pupils with a breadth of experiences and opportunities in physical education. In order to enhance this provision further and provide specialist coaches, the school also utilises a range of local off-site recreational facilities. This combination ensures that the pupils are provided with regular exercise and experience a range of sporting opportunities. Physical and mental wellbeing is also promoted through the curriculum. Playtime opportunities provide a range of varied equipment that help to support social and physical development across key stages.
51. Leaders monitor attendance carefully in line with recent statutory guidance and work closely with parents to support good attendance. Some issues in relation to attendance and admissions were rectified during the inspection.
52. Appropriate systems are in place to support pupils who are ill, injured or have an accident or require the administration of medicines. Facilities and resources are in place to deal with incidents promptly and effectively. Pupils understand how to access support when needed and parents are notified in line with school policies on first aid and administering medicines.

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

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

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

54. Leaders ensure that there is a focus on developing pupils' social and economic wellbeing as well as fostering their contribution to wider society. Key aspects include lessons that encourage pupils to understand right from wrong, take responsibility, develop independence and respect diversity, particularly through initiatives such as Year 6 pupils supporting younger children and taking on leadership roles, as seen in prefect duties and helping in Reception classes. These experiences also promote mutual respect among pupils, aligning with the school's ethos.
55. Pupils develop social and cultural knowledge and understanding that reflects the school's aims and ethos. Activities such as mock elections in Year 6 and discussions around class rules, give pupils an insight into democratic processes.
56. Assemblies and PSHE lessons emphasise British values, helping pupils to gain a solid understanding of societal expectations and behaviours. Staff are mindful of providing balanced political perspectives and ensure a fair representation of diverse viewpoints during discussions.
57. Pupils develop social and economic awareness through opportunities to learn about monetary systems as part of the curriculum, which are supported by activities and trips to deepen their understanding and provide real life experiences.
58. Pupils are encouraged to show initiative and contribute positively to the local area and wider society. The school organises community-centred activities, including food bank drives, choir performances at various venues, visits to old people's homes and a local litter-picking event. These initiatives encourage pupils to contribute positively to the local and broader community.
59. Staff encourage pupils to express their views and as a result they speak confidently to staff, other pupils and visitors. They are happy, confident and self-aware as they move through the school and are proud when they develop leadership skills, as school prefects and monitors, supervising younger pupils at lunchtimes and breaktimes
60. Staff model acceptable social behaviour, respect and tolerance and as a result pupils mirror this behaviour and have a good sense of right and wrong.
61. In the early years, staff support children's social development by creating structured yet flexible opportunities for interaction and co-operative play, where they are curious learners exploring the opportunities laid out for them to further their development. Through role-play activities, children engage in imaginative play allowing them to experiment with different roles, practise empathy, and communicate their ideas with peers. Group activities, like circle time or collaborative games, encourage turn-taking, listening skills and co-operative problem solving.
62. The school supports pupils' understanding of future pathways through a careers fair. Pupils benefit from opportunities to learn about a range of different careers, what they entail and what they need to do in order to aspire to these, for example the subjects they will need to work especially hard in or the areas they may want to research further to deepen their understanding.

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

63. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

64. Leaders put in place policies and procedures that are closely monitored to keep pupils safe at the school and pupils identify who they can speak to if they have worries or concerns. Leaders and managers put in place robust systems for filtering and monitoring so that pupils are protected. Staff educate pupils so that they are aware of how to stay safe online and put in place a policy so that parents and pupils, as well as visitors to the site, have a clear understanding of the rules associated with mobile phones and what is required if one is brought into school.
65. Leaders ensure that processes for safeguarding and safer recruitment are thorough and follow statutory guidance, with regular training and updates in place for governors and staff. Governors' oversight ensures that leaders and managers have an in depth understanding of safeguarding processes in place. They provide suitable support and challenge for those responsible for safeguarding in the school. Governors also have suitable oversight of the reviews and updates which take place with regards to the safeguarding policy in line with statutory guidance.
66. Leaders provide a comprehensive level of training and staff are confident in matters of safeguarding. Staff receive an appropriate induction and regular updates in line with statutory guidance. This ensures that staff understand the reporting processes which are in place and how to keep pupils safe, as well as the importance of noticing changes in pupils' behaviour and the importance of contextual risks that may cause harm. Staff mitigate against these risks by acting promptly in response to any concerns raised.
67. Staff are confident in the processes around reporting low level concerns. Concerns raised around staff behaviours are correctly reported and investigated with appropriate actions taken. These are recorded in detail and support and training put in place as required.
68. Leaders implement policies around image taking devices, online filtering and monitoring, the use of social media and lone working. Staff have a good knowledge of the expectations for them around each of these areas, explained within their staff code of conduct, to help keep pupils safe.
69. Leaders understand their duty in terms of contact with the local authority designated officer and the multi-agency support hub. They report appropriate and timely referrals and keep detailed records of incidents and outcomes, along with records of pupils being monitored and supported.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

70. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Gidea Park Preparatory School and Nursery
Department for Education number	311/6052
Address	2 Balgores Lane Gidea Park Romford Essex RM2 5JR
Phone number	01708 740381
Email address	office@gideaparkprep.co.uk
Website	www.gideaparkprep.co.uk
Proprietor	Mr Amit Mehta
Headteacher	Mr Callum Douglas
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	152
Date of previous inspection	5 to 8 October

Information about the school

71. Gidea Park Preparatory School and Nursery is a small co-educational preparatory school established in 1917 that takes pupils from 2 years to 11 years. The school is part of the Inspired Learning Group of independent schools and nurseries, which is owned by a proprietor who is supported by a board of advisory governors. The current head was appointed in April 2021.
72. The Early Years Foundation Stage unit contains two Reception classes and two Nursery classes which cater for children from the age of 2 years. There are currently 69 children in the early years provision.
73. The school has identified 13 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
74. English is an additional language for 29 pupils.
75. The school states that its aims are to give pupils the skills and knowledge they need to get to the schools they want to go to and the experience and confidence they need to thrive when they get there.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 November 2024

76. A team of 3 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

77. 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 advisory governors
- discussions with the head, 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.

78. 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**.

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