



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Castle Court Preparatory School

June 2022

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School's Details

School	Castle Court Preparatory School			
DfE number	835/6023			
Registered charity number	325028			
Address	Castle Court Preparatory School Knoll Lane Corfe Mullen Wimborne Dorset BH21 3RF			
Telephone number	01202 694438			
Email address	hmsec@castlecourt.com			
Headteacher	Mr Luke Gollings			
Chair of governors	Mrs Katy Jack			
Age range	2 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	278			
	EYFS	74	Juniors	150
	Seniors	54		
Inspection dates	7 to 10 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Castle Court Preparatory School is a co-educational day school situated in a rural location near the village of Corfe Mullen, between Wimborne and Poole in Dorset. The school was founded in Parkstone in 1948 and moved to its current location in 1968. It is a registered charity, run by a limited company trust and directed by a governing body.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has a new headteacher and a new chair of governors. The school opened a new sports hall and a design centre for the creative arts. In September 2020, the school introduced the pre-senior baccalaureate (PSB) with a focus for pupils in Years 7 and 8. In September 2021, PSB was implemented across the whole school, EYFS to Year 8.
- 1.3 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims for pupils to receive an all-round and innovative education in a learning environment which cultivates a love of learning firmly rooted in Christian principles, enabling all pupils to grow and flourish in all areas of life. It seeks to provide pupils with the skills to flourish inside and outside the classroom within an atmosphere marked by respect, kindness and fun and to be prepared for future success in a global world.

About the pupils

- 1.5 The pupils are mostly from business and professional family backgrounds and live within 20 miles of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 83 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, 46 of whom receive additional support. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 13 pupils, one of whom receives additional support for their English. Data used by the school have identified 36 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are 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 FOCUSED 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 standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; 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 standards 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's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 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

- 2.12 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.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 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.

2.19 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.

The headline judgements apply 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. 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>
Badger Cubs	pre-nursery
Badgers	nursery

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Pupils are highly independent and confident communicators and keenly articulate their views and opinions.
 - Pupils demonstrate extremely high collaborative skills.
 - Pupils have excellent levels of success both academically and beyond the classroom.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils' show notably strong self-understanding and awareness which lead to them being confident, resilient individuals with high levels of self-esteem.
 - Pupils display a highly developed moral awareness and an excellent understanding of differences between right and wrong.
 - Pupils' ability to work with others to solve problems is of an extremely high standard.

Recommendations

- 3.3 The school should make the following improvement.
- Ensure that the development of pupils' higher-order thinking skills is consistent across all areas of learning.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are excellent. They are successfully developed across the different areas of learning. For example, the youngest pupils demonstrated excellent physical skills and a strong understanding of rhythm in dance, while pupils in Year 5 used their excellent prior knowledge alongside more recent learning to enable them to identify the impact of women in history. Pupils in Year 7 demonstrated extremely high knowledge, skills and understanding in English

while considering the concepts of dystopia and utopia and were able to confidently express and explore extremely effectively the importance of setting when developing a theme. Although not fully embedded into the teaching and learning throughout the school, the newly incorporated initiative by leaders and governors to introduce the pre-senior baccalaureate (PSB) into the school is welcomed by teachers and referred to in class and when planning lessons. As a result, pupils and staff work in close harmony to a shared agenda. The recently completed projects in Year 8 for the Pre-Senior Project Qualification (PSPQ) demonstrate the pupils' excellent range of skills and knowledge across all areas of learning which they communicated succinctly and effectively through presentations and creation of artefacts.

- 3.6 Pupils throughout the school achieve at levels which are good and often excellent in relation to their abilities. The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests, but the available evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own assessment data shows attainment to be above average in relation to national age-related expectations. Almost all pupils in EYFS achieve expected levels of development. Pupils' attainment over time is strong, and pupils talk with confidence and pride about their progress. Pupils, and all who teach them, have a clear picture of their learning profile because of the school's recording and monitoring systems. The high levels of achievement and progress, particularly for the older pupils, are strengthened by the implementation of the PSB programme. Pupils are very successful in senior school entrance tests, and a number gain a range of awards. There is no discernible difference in achievement between female and male pupils. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve extremely well in relation to their starting points because their needs are accurately identified, and planned interventions are implemented effectively.
- 3.7 Pupils have excellent communication skills; they are eager to inform, discuss and debate. This is because pupils are encouraged by a learning approach which stresses collaboration. Pupils of all ages are confident, respectful and articulate when talking and listening to each other and teachers. For example, pupils in an English lesson in Year 3 debated confidently about real and fake records. In a mathematics lesson in Year 5, pupils used correct mathematical language accurately to communicate reasoning effectively within a task exploring perimeter as well as demonstrating a wider sensitivity towards supporting the learning of their peers. Older pupils in a mathematics lesson used their excellent listening and speaking skills in a discursive debate on data analysis. Pupils make good progress in their reading and enjoy the opportunities to access the library in their free time. Pupils' writing skills develop rapidly from an early age. Children in the EYFS were observed writing sentences accurately and enthusiastically about constellations. Pupils in Year 5 wrote a persuasive speech from Midas to Satyr adeptly incorporating complex language, including rhetorical questions, emotive language and hyperbole. Work scrutiny and lesson observations show that pupils of all ages apply their excellent writing skills across a range of subjects.
- 3.8 Pupils' mathematical competency improves rapidly as they move through the school, supported by a curriculum that is planned and assessed well. Pupils have excellent numeracy skills. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 3, pupils applied their knowledge and understanding of data confidently and highly effectively to examine the similarities and differences between bar charts and pictograms. In a mathematics lesson in Year 5, pupils demonstrated dexterity in using their understanding of ratios and fractions to solve real-life problems. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge seamlessly across the curriculum. For instance, children in the EYFS were observed counting out stars to create their own constellations. In science, pupils in Year 3 were able to transfer their mathematical skills highly effectively to record and measure flow rates of water through soil while, in a science lesson in Year 8 using a quadrat, pupils correctly identified the number of plant species in a wildflower field and used their mathematical knowledge effectively to evaluate the prevalence of the different species.
- 3.9 Pupils are very confident and highly proficient in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) both as a discipline and as a support for learning in subjects across the curriculum.

In the younger years, pupils use school devices for a range of purposes. For example, pupils in Year 1 use them to take pictures of birds for their class project. From Year 3, pupils have their own device. This allows them to use their ICT skills adeptly for research, presentation of work, audio-visual creations and artistic work. For example, the Year 8 PSPQ projects included pieces of art inspired by non-fungible tokens. In a French lesson in Year 5, pupils demonstrated excellent ICT skills making highly effective use of editable resources to complete activities and independently check and extend their learning. In a sports class in Year 6, pupils applied their ICT skills to review and improve their hurdling technique by using the video and slow-motion facility to identify areas for improvement. Pupils' quick acquisition of ICT skills and their appropriate application of them to enhance their learning across the curriculum are because of a well-integrated curriculum and supportive staff with suitable computer competence.

- 3.10 Pupils generally demonstrate excellent higher-order thinking skills. They enjoy being challenged to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise and are adept at drawing on a wide range of sources to reach conclusions. Scrutiny of science books in Year 2 showed pupils hypothesising how seeds will grow under different conditions and analysing their results against their original hypothesis. In a geography lesson in Year 5, pupils demonstrated a notably strong ability to analyse and synthesise complex information using a wide range of sources while exploring different types of rocks, while in an English lesson in Year 6, pupils demonstrated excellent research and synthesising skills to plan and write a poem inspired by wolves. However, on the few occasions where teaching is less successful, work is either too closely directed by the teacher or the tasks are insufficiently challenging. This restricts pupils' ability to consistently develop their higher-order thinking skills including research, reasoning and analysing data.
- 3.11 In response to the school's encouragement to follow their interests and pursue their talents, pupils regularly achieve high levels of success in a wide range of non-academic activities and are successful in many sports and creative arts. Older pupils spoke with pride and confidence about their scholarship achievements and secondary school places along with the range of achievements outside the classroom. In recent years, pupils have been regional and national finalists in football, hockey, swimming and biathlon. Pupils achieve highly in ABRSM and LAMDA examinations, where they regularly obtain merits or distinctions with some reaching the higher grades. This is as a result of specialist music teaching from an early age and the many musical, creative and dramatic opportunities available for all pupils to develop their talents in these areas. Pupils have gained gold, silver and bronze medals at different levels of the UK Maths Challenge. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are taught within design and technology (DT) for pupils in the prep school, and pupils were runners up in a recent national STEM competition.
- 3.12 The pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils have taken on board the seven core values (7Cs) of the school, understanding that these provide a valuable set of reference points in determining how to be successful learners. Throughout the school, pupils have excellent independent and collaborative skills. In pairs or groups, they co-operate extremely well, conscious of the value of working together towards common goals. Children in the EYFS use their initiative to choose their own activities and resources independently on arriving at school, and they displayed great enthusiasm in a phonics lesson working collaboratively in pairs to locate words in the playground. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 show excellent independence and take leadership in their learning within their shoe-box garden project. In a history lesson in Year 8, pupils positively took leadership in their learning when choosing the most appropriate method to record their research, for example, by hand, electronically or by voice recording. Pupils contribute enthusiastically in class and are willing to answer questions and offer opinions.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate an excellent level of self-knowledge and understanding and are adept at understanding how to improve their own learning and performance. Older pupils knowledgeably discussed their PSPQ projects with inspectors and showed a mature awareness of the self-discipline and resilience required to improve their performance. Scrutiny of work showed pupils have a strong understanding of how to improve and actively engage with teachers to identify next steps. Self-assessment against agreed criteria is evident in books and lessons of all ages. For example, in an English lesson in Year 3, pupils assessed their own learning effectively identifying how an author had used humour and exaggeration. In a French lesson in Year 5, pupils demonstrated excellent self-discipline and resilience and worked very efficiently in pairs to improve their own and each other's learning in an activity exploring idioms. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, most older pupils said they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, a view endorsed by the findings of the inspection. Pupils have excellent levels of self-esteem because they benefit from a caring and supportive environment that encourages them to be themselves and express their opinions. All pupils, including those with SEND, develop increased self-confidence due to the support provided through a variety of initiatives. These include three onsite emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs), worry boxes, tutors in the upper years, and hot chocolate and chat time.
- 3.15 Pupils are confident and highly effective decision-makers, understanding the importance of this skill. Pupils respond enthusiastically to being given opportunities to decide how they will tackle a task. For instance, at the start of the day, children in the EYFS are encouraged to make their own choices of activities, whether to work in small groups, on their own or with adults. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding that the decisions they make are determinants of their own success. For example, in a sports lesson in Year 2, pupils demonstrated the ability to articulate confidently what decisions they would take to improve their performance. In an assembly, pupils in Years 7 and 8 explained to their peers the decisions they could take that would have a positive impact on their own well-being and those of others around them. Older pupils' ability to make decisions are highly developed as they choose individual research projects. This analytical exercise involves the pupils in making discerning choices about their initial topics and, subsequently, what to include and how best to present their work.
- 3.16 Pupils have an excellent awareness of the non-material aspects of life. Nurtured from their earliest years, pupils develop a keen awareness of their outdoor environment where the wonders of the natural world can be explored. For example, during a woodland activity pupils created pieces of art from nature while reflecting thoughtfully and appreciatively about the importance of animals in maintaining a balanced ecosystem. Pupils say they appreciate the opportunities for reflection, such as listening attentively to their peers playing musical pieces confidently during assembly. Pupils are supported in their spiritual development by a well-structured religious studies curriculum. Work scrutiny shows pupils develop both a good understanding of other faiths and the ability to consider philosophical questions thoughtfully. As they progress through the school, pupils develop an increasing sense of spiritual awareness which is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos in fulfilment of the school's aims.
- 3.17 Pupils have an excellent moral understanding and have high levels of self-awareness. Pupils have a strong awareness of the importance of accepting responsibility for their own behaviour and show consideration to others. For example, literacy books in Year 2 show pupils have an astute understanding of the difference between right and wrong. In a personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) discussion, pupils in Year 6 showed they were acutely aware of the impact harmful comments can have on others. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, the vast majority of parents and pupils believe the school actively promotes good behaviour and expects pupils to behave well. Pupils have a strong understanding and acceptance of the school rules and respond positively to their class charter which they helped create. From the youngest age, pupils respect the boundaries and rules requested of them. In interviews, older pupils expressed the view that they feel they have outgrown the reward system. On those occasions when they get things wrong, pupils accept the consequences.

They understand that bullying is wrong and that there are mechanisms for dealing with it of which they are part. They express confidence in the support that would be provided by the staff if required.

- 3.18 The pupils have extremely highly developed social awareness, show empathy and are willing to offer help and support to others. Collaboration is a notably strong feature of the school and evident in all aspects of school life. This is because a particular focus is placed on the development of collaboration as a skill and as such is evident in almost all lessons and clearly articulated by pupils and teachers. From the youngest age, pupils display excellent collaborative skills; for instance, at breaktime children happily share the space and equipment in a mature manner for their age. Pupils are highly adept at working collaboratively and confidently to give and receive feedback to improve areas of learning. For example, in an English lesson in Year 4, pupils worked extremely effectively together in small groups, assimilating each other's ideas before incorporating them into their Kennings poems. This ethos is due to the excellent pastoral care and pupils' relationships with staff who are consistently good role models as promoted by the senior leaders.
- 3.19 Pupils' contributions to both the school and wider communities are significant. Pupils in Year 8 willingly take responsibility for helping and supporting the younger ones in a variety of ways, for example, they support Year 1 with their sport. Pupils are voted for and represent their peers on the school council where they advise school leaders of their opinions and, as a result, the school has introduced a savoury snack, outdoor play equipment and Year 8 has been given its own changing rooms. Pupils talk confidently about the charities the school supports, and they spoke with pride about pupils in Year 8 organising the school fete where they raised money for a cancer research charity. In an assembly for older pupils, they shared ideas with each other in the context of the one kind word theme from the anti-bullying week for how they can look after each other and the wider community.
- 3.20 Pupils have a well-developed understanding of cultural diversity within society, showing an interest and appreciation for different cultures. In their history books, pupils in Year 8 demonstrated excellent sensitivity, empathy and respect for others when reflecting on the experience of minority immigrants. Pupils understand that not everyone is the same and that difference is to be understood and celebrated; they are also aware of and reject prejudice and discrimination. In pupil interviews, they demonstrated a strong knowledge of different backgrounds and cultures and the importance of inclusion for all. In a history lesson, pupils in Year 5 demonstrated a good understanding of the lives of people from different backgrounds, such as Rosa Parks. Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Pupils feel valued, and this inclusivity encourages and promotes tolerance and respect for all, irrespective of background or culture.
- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to be physically and mentally happy. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily. They confidently and articulately express the importance of a healthy diet and make sensible dietary choices. In physical education lessons, pupils demonstrate an excellent attitude to keeping healthy and are highly committed to and engaged in their sporting activities. This was also reflected in pupil interviews where they talked with enthusiasm about the depth and range of sport available at the school, the encouragement provided by daily sport both within the curriculum and via extra-curricular clubs along with the benefits of regular fixtures. Pupils show a good understanding of how to keep safe online as a result of the e-safety training they receive in PSHE and ICT lessons. Pupils understand the importance of mental health and, in interviews, expressed their appreciation of the ability to talk to the ELSAs should they wish to do so. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that they know how to keep safe online. The positive efforts of the school's leaders, governors and staff to ensure there is a strongly implemented culture based on their seven core values enable pupils to feel safe, valued and happy.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions 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 assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Timothy Cannell	Reporting inspector
Mr Oliver Chambers	Compliance team inspector (Assistant head, HMC school)
Mr James Raymond	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mrs Helen Lowe	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)