



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

ST MARGARET'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

MAY 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	St Margaret's Preparatory School			
DfE number	865/6016			
Registered charity number	309482			
Address	Curzon Street Calne Wiltshire SN11 0DF			
Telephone number	01249 857220			
Email address	office@stmargaretsprep.org.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Karen Cordon			
Chair of governors	Mr Simon Knight			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	191			
	Boys	78	Girls	113
	EYFS	41	Pre-prep	44
	Prep	106		
Inspection dates	17 to 18 May 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. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates on behalf of the DfE, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest report on the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

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, the chair of governors and the chair of the St Margaret's sub-committee, 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. 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 Geoffrey Marston	Reporting inspector
Mrs Patricia Guy	Team inspector (Specialist teacher, HMC school)
Mr Alexander Mitchell	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Dr Carolyn Shelley	Team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 St Margaret's Preparatory School is an independent, co-educational day preparatory school for boys and girls aged three to eleven years. It is closely linked to St Mary's, Calne, and the schools owe their foundation to Canon John Duncan, the Vicar of Calne in 1873.
- 1.2 The school operates as a charitable trust, with governors acting as trustees of the school. The St Margaret's sub-committee of governors oversees the day-to-day management of the school, with a full board of governors having overall responsibility for its strategic development.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school has invested in new changing rooms, a music studio, a medical room and a library.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school seeks to promote the highest standards of attainment and levels of progress for all its pupils through a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish.
- 1.5 The school supports its pupils to grow into positive and responsible people who can work and co-operate with others, while at the same time developing their knowledge and skills in order to achieve their true potential.

About the pupils

- 1.6 Pupils come from a range of professional, business and agricultural backgrounds, mostly from White British families living within a 20-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicates that the ability of the pupils on entry is above average. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 48, of whom 37 receive additional specialist help with issues such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 5 pupils, of whom 1 receives additional support with their grasp of English. Data used by the school has identified 40 pupils as the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 45 other pupils due to their special talents in music, sport, art, and design and technology (DT). A further 30 pupils are supported for very high levels of emotional intelligence.
- 1.7 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>
Kindergarten	Nursery

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- The pupils make excellent progress throughout the school, across both academic and co-curricular areas.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) develop strong foundations for learning through a varied and vibrant curriculum which is carefully planned to meet their individual needs.
- The pupils are highly successful in gaining first-choice places at senior schools, with many achieving scholarships and awards.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, as a result of a whole-school approach to effective learning strategies.

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

- The pupils display very high levels of self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience at all ages.
- Pupils have excellent rapport with their peers and are highly supportive of each other.
- The pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning in and out of the classroom, and children in the EYFS have high levels of self-assurance for their age.
- The pupils appreciate non-material aspects of life and display great empathy for those less fortunate than themselves, reflecting the ethos of the school.

Recommendation

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school may wish to consider:

- Embedding further opportunities for the pupils' use of interactive whiteboards to enhance their learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils including those in the EYFS make rapid progress, with no significant difference between defined groups of pupils or areas of learning. The pupils have a very high level of knowledge, skills and understanding in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and also achieve very well in other areas. Their creative and physical skills are highly developed in areas such as games, swimming, art, music, DT and computing. Pupils have strong linguistic skills and enjoy learning new languages. They demonstrate a very good command and understanding of the French language as it is introduced from an early age in the school; Year 1 successfully performed 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' in French during an assembly which was highly appreciated by parents and pupils. In the Nursery, children demonstrated excellent application and enthusiasm for number skills by solving addition and subtraction challenges set within the wildlife area. Year 4 pupils were able to rapidly solve decimal number challenges and develop their own accurate times tables grids as a result of enthusiasm and support provided by the teacher. Pupils exhibit very good information and communication technology skills across a range of technological equipment and this enhances their learning and high-order thinking skills. Pupils in Year 1 demonstrated high levels of computer programming techniques for successfully navigating robots through increasingly complex mazes they designed. In Year 3, pupils were successful in using tablets in science to film their initial predictions on how germinating seeds would grow under different light conditions, which would be viewed again for assessing their final results. In some lessons, opportunity for pupils to enhance their learning by directly using the interactive capability of the interactive whiteboards was missed.
- 3.3 Pupils' achievement in extra-curricular activities such as music, drama, swimming and sport is excellent throughout the school. Investment in high-quality facilities, some of which are shared with the senior school, has supported a good range of clubs and societies and contributed significantly to pupils' achievements. Pupils have excellent opportunities to perform in the school's choirs and in school productions such as *Hansel and Gretel* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, both on stage and as support crew. The chamber choir and recorder ensemble are regular class winners at local festivals and Eisteddfods; the chamber choir won the local county Choir of the Year competition in 2016. Success in musical examinations is notable with many pupils from Year 1 upwards achieving merits or distinctions across a range of instruments, due to the excellent specialist support provided by visiting musicians. The pupils achieve great success in sport with individual and team successes in local, county and national competitions across fencing, athletics, swimming and judo; other pupils' team successes have included winning a regional maths event in both 2015 and 2017, and a national robot design competition in 2016.

- 3.4 The school does not take part in national curriculum tests at age 7 or 11, but evidence from the school's own assessment data and standardised tests shows pupils' attainment to be above and in some cases well above national age-related expectations. All groups of pupils including those who have SEND or EAL and the more able make excellent progress and achieve very well in relation to their abilities, as evidenced through lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books. Those pupils with particular needs are supported and monitored highly effectively by teachers who know them well and plan activities to ensure that they maintain a high rate of progress. More able pupils also make rapid progress due to the early identification of and support for potential scholars and those pupils with additional talents across music, sport and art through the school's 'gifted and talented' and 'all rounder' programmes. The school has high aspirations as to its outcomes for its pupils. Pupils' written work is of a very high standard, neatly presented and organised at all ages and abilities, successfully meeting the recommendation of the previous inspection to raise standards in writing. The communication skills of pupils are strong; they speak with highly developed fluency for their age. Unprompted a child in the EYFS asked confidently and politely if they could have a go at sand marking. In Year 6, pupils described articulately the points regarding the style of their handwriting techniques used. Excellent progress is achieved due to the regular and developmental feedback provided across all subject areas by teachers. In the EYFS, learning journeys are sent home for parents to comment on and return, in order to ensure that their children's educational needs are met. From Year 1 upwards, pupils are able to make comments on the feedback made in their progress book and set their own 'next steps' for improvement. All pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses agreed that the school provides them the opportunity to learn and make progress, and that they know how well they are doing in their subjects.
- 3.5 Children in the EYFS develop strong foundations for learning through a varied and vibrant curriculum which is carefully planned to meet individual needs, underpinned by rigorous initial assessments of each child's abilities within the first four weeks of the child joining Reception. They experience a broad range of activities including learning outside under the new canopies over the courtyard classroom, in the new purpose-built play area and in the new wildlife garden, all of which support the excellent progress the children make. In the Nursery, children choose from a varied range of high-quality toys and games which inspire collaborative play opportunities to create imaginative stories of adventure, such as with flying spaceships. Those in Reception were observed making excellent progress with the spelling of new words, using their prior knowledge of blending consonants together to sound complex words. Prep pupils spoke highly of the opportunities to use the shared sporting and theatre facilities with the senior school to enhance their learning.
- 3.6 Pupils are highly successful in gaining places in their first choice of senior school, with many gaining scholarships and other awards particularly in art, drama, sport and music. Their success is due to the support they receive from the specialist and caring teaching staff who have a thorough knowledge of the entrance exam requirements.
- 3.7 Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary as a result of the high expectations set by their teachers; pupils take a pride in their learning and regularly enjoy celebrating the achievements of others in assembly. All pupils celebrated the successful completion of Year 6 pupils' recent outward bound trip to the Isle of Wight. Pupils proactively take risks with their learning and are confident in asking for help when they need it in order to explore new ways of improving their own performance. As a result, pupils respond extremely well to the high expectations and standards set by the teachers, which is underpinned by the effective learning skills programme.

- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate real enjoyment of and participation in lessons, with pupils of all abilities keen to answer questions; they use high-order thinking skills successfully in group work to review and solve any challenges set, supporting each other in the process. In the EYFS, children listen attentively during story time and are eager to respond to the teacher's questioning with enthusiasm and great confidence. Year 3 pupils responded positively and naturally to the sculptures of Henry Moore, displaying real interest and amazement. Those in Year 3 also exhibited excellent collaboration and high-order skills when challenged to research, design and produce a Welsh tourism advertisement for television, as a result of the enthusiasm and expertise of the teacher. Pupils have extremely good concentration and are quick to apply skills gained across other areas of study to reinforce their learning. In Year 2, pupils quickly applied their drama and acting skills within a history lesson to present the sequence of events which caused the Great Fire of London, having gained an understanding from a fire brigade officer the week before on how fire can start. Older pupils extended their prior knowledge of science in a geography lesson to debate how high an ash cloud could travel from a volcanic eruption and whether the explosion would be larger than a nuclear bomb. The opportunity to undertake research projects in Years 5 and 6 has enabled pupils to develop independent and enquiry methods of learning, preparing them well for the next stage in their education. Pupils regularly think about their own future ambitions and appreciate hearing speakers from different industry sectors providing talks on their careers such as working as a comic book author or performing as an athlete in the Paralympics.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages display very high levels of self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience. Their outstanding personal development is underpinned by excellent pastoral care and a high level of commitment by all staff to support the individual needs of every pupil. All pupils understand how to improve their own learning through regular opportunities provided for reflection on their own performance, as part of the whole-school effective learning skills programme. In the Nursery, children were able to review their fine motor skills and co-ordination to vastly improve their techniques when manipulating playdough to music. Year 2 pupils successfully persevered with making high-quality tile patterns when reflecting and learning from mistakes during the lesson. In Year 4, pupils demonstrated high levels of self-esteem when providing constructive peer criticism and receiving praise for their new ideas on adapting circuits to further improve the designs of their games. Prep and pre-prep pupils have an accurate understanding of how well they are progressing as a result of the regular opportunities they have to reflect on teachers' feedback in their progress workbooks and to set their own targets for improvement.
- 4.3 Excellent relationships were observed between teachers and pupils as well as between pupils themselves, as highlighted in the school's ethos and culture. Pupils spoke very highly of the support they receive with their learning, and the encouragement from teachers to possess a 'have a go' attitude about anything they undertake at school. More able pupils in Year 1 responded with vigour when instructed to build more complex mazes for their programmable robots, refining their calculations and modifying their teamwork approaches repeatedly to ensure that successful navigation was achieved. Pupils in Year 5 exhibited excellent perseverance by improving their African drumming techniques through tackling solo pieces as well as improvising, due to the supportive atmosphere provided by the teacher.
- 4.4 Pupils' behaviour both in and out of the classroom is exemplary, as they possess high degrees of empathy and self-assurance for their age. Children in the EYFS understand the importance of sharing and taking turns as well as of helping each other when needed; without being prompted, a group of Nursery children quickly decided to help another child to tidy away toy cakes when they had accidentally spilled them on the floor. At lunchtime, a Year 3 pupil took the time without being asked to help a younger pupil who was struggling to cut the meat on her plate. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors, school staff and each other. They challenge any unkindness or misbehaviour if it occurs. The inspection's scrutiny of bullying logs indicates that incidences of misbehaviour are rare. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, almost all parents stated that the school deals effectively with all types of bullying. Pupils have a highly developed sense of moral responsibility and respect for the rule of law, as staff allow pupils to reflect on and understand the impact of their misbehaviour on others. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, all pupils felt that the school encourages them to behave well and that they understand the sanctions for poor behaviour. The pupils' high moral understanding is enhanced by the annual opportunity for them to develop and display a children's charter in every classroom, as part of the school's programme respecting children's rights. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong; Reception children were highly articulate in explaining why it would be wrong for Paddington Bear to try to shoplift with his sticky fingers when he was in town. The 'eco officers' articulated very clearly why it is wrong to leave lights on in the classroom when they are not in use as this wastes energy and is bad for the planet.

- 4.5 Pupils relish the opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities and contribute positively to the school community. The school council officers, house captains, classroom monitors and 'eco drivers' provide excellent role models for younger pupils, and enable pupils in those roles to appreciate how their decisions can impact on others. Further responsibilities include prep pupils providing mentoring support to younger pupils to help them with their reading, as well as the house buddy system which successfully supports children as they leave the EYFS and move up the school. Pupils also speak highly of the 'buddy bench' in the playground which allows pupils to look out for each other and find a play buddy if they are ever on their own. The pupils have a high degree of awareness of the democratic process and of public institutions and services through opportunities to debate news and current affairs; Year 4 pupils during a French lesson discussed confidently their views of the French presidential election.
- 4.6 Pupils fully appreciate non-material aspects of life and display empathy for those less fortunate than themselves, reflecting the ethos of the school. Prep pupils successfully support patients at a local dementia-friendly care home either with supervised companionship time or by performing for them in the chamber choir, which is greatly appreciated by staff and patients. Pupils are successful in regularly collaborating on the numerous charity and fundraising initiatives; these support both local and overseas charities to help partially sighted people or children who are experiencing suffering in war zones. Children in the Nursery expressed enjoyment and wonder as they came across a spider's web and spider within the school's wildlife garden, and Year 1 pupils appreciated the nesting behaviour of a blue tit with its chicks by watching them live on the school's webcam during a computing lesson.
- 4.7 The Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent. Pupils of all ages demonstrate a growing awareness of the school's ethos and values through opportunities provided within personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE), religious education and the assembly programme to share their own beliefs and backgrounds. Assemblies provide opportunities for daily prayer and to learn on a weekly basis about different aspects of Christianity from the local chaplain. Pupils also benefit from opportunities to appreciate different genres of music, including classical composers, such as through listening to the chamber choir perform musical arrangements. Their understanding of different religions is enhanced by opportunities to visit local churches and mosques.
- 4.8 Pupils demonstrate well-developed aesthetic and cultural awareness through the high standard and proliferation of art displays around the school, including African-inspired paintings. In the Nursery, children confidently described why it was all right to be different and why Henrietta the Hippo should not have been laughed at by the other animals. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, all pupils agreed that the school encourages them to be tolerant of those with different faiths and beliefs.

- 4.9 Pupils know how to stay safe, maintain a healthy lifestyle and develop positive mental health due to the numerous opportunities provided to reflect on their own performance and for undertaking practical activities in the school's grounds, which is a strength of the school. Reception children confidently explained that one way they stay safe is by always holding hands going down to lunch and following teachers' instructions. Year 6 pupils develop an excellent awareness of road safety by successfully undertaking a cycling safety course. Pupils have an excellent awareness of the importance of making healthy choices such as participating in the range of sports clubs and teams, in opportunities for exercise in the curriculum and at playtime. Children in the Nursery demonstrate a high degree of awareness by successfully sorting healthy and non-healthy foods as shown in their learning journeys; they choose healthy snacks at break time and healthy desserts in the dining room. From Year 1 upwards, pupils regularly choose healthy food options from menus provided, thereby meeting a recommendation from the previous inspection. Older pupils appreciate the importance of eating a balanced diet, about which they learn in assemblies, science and PSHEE. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe online due to the regular updates from teachers and computing staff. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, almost all parents agreed that the school does all it can to ensure that their children learn in a healthy and safe environment.
- 4.10 Through the investment in outside learning spaces, the restructuring of the school day, the introduction of the effective learning skills programme and the new adventure activity residential visit in Year 6, leadership and management have ensured that pupils develop skills, competence and resilience which prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. Pupils leave the school as confident, independent, highly mature and thoughtful young people, thereby successfully meeting the school aims.