



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

ROWAN PREPARATORY SCHOOL

APRIL 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

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|----------------------------------|---|-----|-------------|----|
| School | Rowan Preparatory School | | | |
| DfE number | 936/6031 | | | |
| Registered charity number | 1016538 | | | |
| Address | Rowan Preparatory School 6 Fitzalan Road Claygate Surrey KT10 0LX | | | |
| Telephone number | 01372 462627 | | | |
| Email address | school.office@rowanprepschool.co.uk | | | |
| Head | Mrs Susan Clarke | | | |
| Chair of governors | Mrs Karen Bowles | | | |
| Age range | 2 to 11 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 320 | | | |
| | Girls | 320 | Boys | 0 |
| | EYFS | 77 | 5-7 | 73 |
| | 7-11 | 170 | | |
| Inspection dates | 26 to 27 April 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 and with the chair of governors, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. 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

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Mrs Jan Preece | Reporting inspector |
| Mr Chris Calvey | Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school) |
| Mr Mark Turner | Team inspector (Headmaster, ISA school) |

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Rowan Preparatory school is an independent day school for girls between the ages of 2 and 11. It is part of United Learning whose schools are governed by United Church Schools Trust (UCST). Members of the UCST Board are the governors of the school and the chair of the UCST Board is the chair of governors of the school. The school also has its own local governing body which has delegated responsibilities from the UCST board. The current head was appointed in 2013. Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has been restructured to include two deputy head teachers with joint responsibility for assessment, curriculum, pastoral and well-being. Buildings at Rowan Hill have been extended to allow the preparatory department to become three-form entry.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1936 and is located on 2 sites about half a mile apart. Pupils up to the age of 7 years are educated at Rowan Brae, and Rowan Hill accommodates 7 to 11 year olds.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to encourage all pupils to develop their full potential. It seeks to help pupils to appreciate their own and other cultures, and become responsible citizens. The school strives to prepare girls to face the future as educated, caring and confident people, able to make a valuable contribution to society.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of business and professional backgrounds. Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 27 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include cognition and communication difficulties, all of whom receive additional support. Also, 3 pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. A total of 82 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), 2 of whom require their needs to be supported by class teachers and additional individual tuition where necessary. The school has identified 77 pupils as gifted or talented, and teaching and provision are modified for them.
- 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 (2-3 years) |
| Kindergarten | Nursery (3-4 years) |

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- From the EYFS, pupils demonstrate excellent standards across a broad curriculum as teachers' high expectations are based on thorough assessment of their learning needs.
- Pupils including those with SEND or EAL make rapid progress according to their abilities, resulting in attainment which often exceeds that expected for their age.
- Pupils demonstrate well-developed creativity and the ability to draw upon a range of sources for research and to refine their own ideas.
- Individual pupils and school teams achieve considerable success in sport, music and drama.
- The pupils' excellent achievements are strongly underpinned by their motivated and enthusiastic approach to learning.

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

- Pupils demonstrate exceptionally strong levels of self-awareness and self-acceptance due to the school's strong pastoral support programme.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent; they understand and respect the school's rules, and relationships with staff are warm and positive.
- Pupils understand the importance of developing social skills, and are caring and mutually supportive of one another.
- Pupils eagerly and conscientiously take on responsibilities that contribute towards the well-being of others.
- Pupils are very tolerant and respectful of one another within their inclusive and friendly school community.

Recommendation

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

- Ensuring that the excellent teaching observed in many lessons is employed more consistently to promote deeper thinking.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The school successfully meets its aim to encourage all pupils to develop their full potential and celebrate achievement within a happy, friendly and purposeful environment. As a result, pupils of all ages make excellent progress and achieve well according to their varying abilities.
- 3.3 Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make rapid progress from their various starting points so that they reach the expected levels of development for their age, and many exceed them. Pupils continue to make excellent progress throughout the school. The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests but the available evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' books and the school's own assessment data shows attainment to be above average in relation to national age-related expectations. Consequently pupils are successful in gaining places at the senior school of their choice, many of which are academically selective, and each year a significant number are offered scholarships. Pupils with SEND or EAL make similar progress to other pupils and achieve well in relation to their needs due to leaders' and staff's accurate interpretation of assessment results and close liaison with parents, which lead to highly effective interventions and well-targeted teaching and support in the classroom. More able pupils attain highly in response to teachers' high expectations and the additional challenge they are provided in class. A key factor in the excellent progress of all pupils is the leaders' meticulous use of assessment data to track the progress of individuals and cohorts. This regular analysis highlights pupils who are under-performing or in need of additional support, and results in highly effective and prompt interventions. All pupils and most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the school enables pupils to learn and make good progress.
- 3.4 Pupils throughout the school acquire high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across a wide range of subjects. Children in the EYFS demonstrate excellent retention of their learning due to thorough observation and identification of next steps by staff, ensuring that they move on or consolidate as necessary. Staff in the EYFS have responded positively to a recommendation of the previous inspection to share best practice in observational assessment. The school places a high priority on the establishment of competency in English and mathematics so that pupils develop high standards in these subjects. Pupils display similarly well-developed skills and knowledge in subjects such as French, music and art due to the broad range of subjects offered across and in addition to the curriculum. For example, the inspection noted singing of high quality by one of the choirs where pupils maintained breath control and accurate pitch in a complex two-part arrangement. An overwhelming majority of parents indicated in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses that they are happy with the range of subjects offered, and every pupil agreed that the school provides them the opportunity to learn and make good progress and that teachers are supportive and helpful when addressing any problems in their work. Pupils' physical skills develop well as they move through the school; children in Kindergarten were seen cutting out shapes extremely accurately, and excellent hand-eye coordination was obvious in observed activities for older pupils such as badminton. As they grow older, pupils develop the ability to write in well-controlled cursive script.

- 3.5 Pupils of all ages demonstrate outstanding communication skills. Younger children in the EYFS develop their oral fluency rapidly as they are encouraged to speak clearly and to answer teachers' open questions in full sentences. Older pupils are highly articulate and able to express their ideas and explain their reasoning confidently. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils are therefore successful in public speaking competitions and drama performances. The pupils are effective listeners who can reflect back what they have heard due to the teaching of active listening strategies, as was observed in a class discussion about the enlightenment of the Buddha and in a circle time when pupils responded to each other's views about what constitutes bullying. Reading standards across the school are particularly high, starting with strong phonics teaching in the EYFS. Pupils manipulate language imaginatively in their creative writing across a wide range of genres; poems on display about endangered animals were written using vivid imagery. They apply their skills in reading and writing effectively across the curriculum which raises achievement in other subjects; pupils in Year 2 used relevant vocabulary such as 'legacy' and 'chronological order' as they described the Beatrix Potter characters that they had researched in their topic work.
- 3.6 Mathematical skills are high across the school. Children in the EYFS develop a secure understanding of numbers, shape and space; children in Kindergarten ordered plastic bottles from one to ten and wrote some of these numerals unaided. Pupils continue to make rapid progress due to the systematic development of their mathematical skills, which are applied in science and engineering technology. They use their mathematical knowledge to explain their reasoning to their peers and to solve problems. Pupils are highly competent users of information and communication technology (ICT) resources, and opportunities for which are profuse. Children in the EYFS use computers and programmable toys competently as part of their daily activities, and the youngest children in the Nursery enjoy using tablets independently to take photographs of classroom activities. Older pupils use ICT with assurance to support their learning; pupils in Year 2 use the thesaurus on tablets to add greater variety to their writing. Pupils with SEND further their literacy and numeracy skills through their confident use of software which addresses their individual learning needs. Outside of the curriculum, pupils develop and apply their use of technology to support their work in the school council, in organising events for charitable causes and for Radio Rowan, where they use a dedicated broadcasting studio proficiently.
- 3.7 Pupils throughout the school demonstrate considerable creativity in their approach to learning, as is highly evident in the many attractive and varied displays of art and writing. They consider the views and ideas of others, and use them to inform and refine their own opinions. Pupils can exercise critical reasoning such as when younger pupils in the prep school analysed which puppets would tell a story better than others in engineering and technology, and older ones discussed the reasons behind Jonah's actions in a philosophy and religious education (RE) lesson. The oldest pupils can draw on a variety of sources to synthesise information to complete an extended piece of work, such as when they used facts they had previously learnt together with information from a video to explain the factors relating to tourist activities on the British coast. Where teaching is particularly effective, staff use a variety of strategies to develop higher-order thinking. This approach is not consistently employed; lessons sometimes provide pupils tasks that require only superficial answers, or are dominated by teacher talk, rather than extend pupils' thinking in partner or group activities with more open-ended tasks. Pupils are successful in their learning as a result of the high expectations of their teachers, who use information from assessments to plan appropriate challenge for their individual needs. In many lessons pupils grasp concepts more easily due to the use of interesting practical and interactive resources.

- 3.8 Due to leaders' and governors' provision of a broad curriculum and wide range of extra-curricular activities which enrich learning and encourage pupils to broaden their interests, pupils achieve well across a wide range of activities outside academic areas. In their questionnaire responses, a few parents did not agree that a good choice of extra-curricular activities is provided. Inspection evidence found that good extra-curricular provision is provided before school, at lunchtime and after school, and all the pupils indicated satisfaction with these opportunities both in their questionnaire responses and in interview. Most pupils learn at least one instrument and are successful in national music examinations appropriate to their age, as well as in examinations in musical theatre and speech and drama. Their performing experience and skills are enriched by attending local workshops and concerts as well as performance opportunities in school. Pupils achieve many successes both in team sports and individual activities such as swimming and gymnastics.
- 3.9 Throughout the school, pupils' achievements are strongly promoted by their strongly enthusiastic and motivated attitude towards their learning. They display initiative and independence and thrive on challenge, such as when they develop their own charitable projects. Pupils are ambitious yet demonstrate a composed approach to their personal progress, which they evaluate perceptively as a result of helpful marking. They are supportive of one another, which raises their confidence. They work purposefully with partners and in groups. A very large majority of parents' questionnaire responses indicated were satisfied that teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future, and that their children's educational needs are effectively met by the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate well-developed personal skills due to the priority placed by the leadership on their all-round development and well-being. This strongly accords with the school's mission statement to prepare girls to face the future as educated, caring and confident people, able to make a valuable contribution to society. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire thought that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils develop exceptionally strong self-understanding as they progress through the school. Highly effective use of the key person system and an open-door policy, where staff work with parents to aid the settling-in process, ensures that children in the EYFS soon become confident, and able to describe their needs and develop trusting relationships with the adults who work with them. Older pupils continue to build self-confidence and emotional resilience through the provision of suitable experiences and training within a strong pastoral support system which enables them to discover and accommodate their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils develop strong self-esteem as they are provided challenging tasks which teach them that, with encouragement, they can achieve a solution independently. For example, pupils in a mathematics lesson were challenged to visualise complex three-dimensional shapes from two-dimensional views and build them with cubes. Older pupils are confident and proud of their ability to persevere with work, saying they use the system of consulting 'brain/book/buddy' before requesting help. As they grow older, pupils demonstrate considerable self-discipline as they apply themselves to achieving their personal goals, supported by teachers through helpful feedback. Relationships between teachers and pupils are calm and positive, and create an environment where pupils can express their thoughts and understand that it is acceptable to make mistakes.
- 4.4 Most pupils are self-assured and are confident directors of their own learning; older pupils undertake a science project of their own choosing. The capacity for decision-making is well-established in the EYFS where children make confident choices for their activities, supported by the provision of well-organised resources which reflect their interests and by gentle support from staff. Pupils are prepared to take risks in their learning, unafraid of making mistakes due to the positive and supportive nature of classroom relationships. In the school council and social change projects pupils engage in the mature thought processes and conversation required to organise events, supported sensitively by staff who are ready to listen to and encourage their ideas.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate a strong moral sense and good awareness of the need for rules, commensurate with their age. They understand and respect the school's straightforward rules which are first taught in the EYFS and remain unchanged throughout the school, and they appreciate that incidents have consequences. Pupils readily accept the need to rectify misdemeanours due to the school's positive approach to behaviour management which supports them in reflecting on the right choices and in making reparation, rather than emphasising sanctions. Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is excellent and serious sanctions are rarely required. This is recognised by an overwhelming majority of both parents and pupils, whose questionnaire responses indicated agreement that good behaviour is promoted and sanctions understood. Pupils have a well-informed understanding of the law appropriate to their ages, which is promoted in the EYFS by visits from the police and in the upper part of the school by a representative of the legal profession. They discuss moral dilemmas sensibly and with understanding due to the frequent opportunities within personal, social and health education (PSHE), science and philosophy. For example, younger pupils discuss their response to a range of moral

- challenges that they may encounter within school and older ones explore the impact of humans on the planet in science.
- 4.6 Pupils are strongly aware of the importance of gaining social skills and can evaluate their progress in this area since the school tracks and provides them feedback on their social development. From an early age they learn to take turns and share resources, receiving focused praise for co-operative behaviour. By the end of the EYFS most children exceed nationally expected levels of development for their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils collaborate well, such as when rehearsing for school productions and demonstrating strong teamwork in sports. The skills required for effective teamwork are developed in a team building day for older pupils and promoted through off-site and residential visits and the house system, which enable pupils to broaden their friendship groups whilst working towards common goals. Pupils appraise each other's work constructively due to much teaching incorporating the use of partner and small group work; younger pupils in philosophy worked supportively and encouragingly in pairs when discussing the age they felt it was appropriate to own a pet, and older pupils made supportive suggestions to their partners about how their art work could be improved.
- 4.7 Pupils value their positions of responsibility and exercise these roles conscientiously. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 6 are proud to lead tours of their respective sites at open mornings. They display considerable maturity as they describe their roles, such as when senior pupils act as reading buddies with younger ones, understanding that they are contributing to the school community. Pupils play an active part in the local community such as by providing a window display at a local café, taking part in local flower shows, singing carols at a hospice and providing tea for a care home. The pupils suggest the charities that they would like to support, often linked to their personal experience. They make presentations at assembly about issues they care deeply about and organise events in support of them, such as raising money for endangered animals and to enable girls to go to school in Afghanistan. During the inspection, the school won an award for its activities in support of a national epilepsy charity.
- 4.8 Pupils appreciate and value qualities such as happiness, gratitude and friendship, as a result of frequent opportunities to explore non-material values in circle times and mindfulness sessions. The joy and pride displayed by children in the EYFS as they show their work to visitors strongly reflects the school's motto 'Hic feliciter laboramus' ('Here we work happily') and is evident throughout the school. Pupils develop a good understanding of spirituality through their exploration of the underlying philosophy of major world religions, which results in increasing sophistication in the depth of their responses to spiritual issues.
- 4.9 Pupils have a positive approach to diversity, whether it be the result of cultural background or ability. This is evident in warm relationships in class and around school, their empathetic attitudes expressed in interview, and displays which acknowledge and celebrate differences. Pupils throughout the school are sensitive and mutually supportive of one another, and express genuine praise of one another's achievements. Their understanding of diversity is deepened when the school invites parents to explain their cultural traditions and celebrations. The pupils' awareness of major world faiths is enhanced by an interfaith fortnight in which pupils visit different places of worship and external speakers make presentations. All pupils and almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy and respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

- 4.10 Pupils have an excellent awareness of a healthy and safe lifestyle, gained from topics in science and PSHE and visits from external speakers. They know what constitutes a balanced diet and make sensible choices at lunchtime. Pupils' good understanding of healthy eating is effectively taught and modelled by staff and also by pupils in Year 6 who assist in the dining hall. They help to ensure that younger pupils have eaten sufficiently well and in exercising this role their own understanding of healthy eating is reinforced as they prepare to move to senior school. Pupils appreciate the frequent opportunities they are provided for exercise both in the school day and extra-curricular activities, and assert its importance to their physical and emotional health. They have a strong understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet as a result of regular guidance which is also offered to parents. They also understand what to do in emergency situations due to a life skills programme for older pupils which includes life changes, first aid and cycling proficiency.
- 4.11 In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority of parents agreed that the school meets their child's pastoral and welfare needs effectively. As the result of highly effective pastoral care and advice within the curriculum, pupils leave the school with well-rounded and resilient personalities which enable them to meet the challenge of the next stage of their education.