

School inspection report

24 to 26 June 2025

Rowan Preparatory School

6 Fitzalan Road

Claygate

Esher

Surrey

KT10 0LX

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 and governors collectively ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met and that they prioritise the wellbeing of pupils. They have a mutual understanding about the vision of the school. This vision underpins their ambitions and actions to bring continual improvement in the provision for pupils. Governors have effective oversight of leaders' work, and ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and expertise they need.
2. The early years provision is a significant strength of the school. The early years curriculum is very well planned to ensure continuity and progression. This planning is routinely reviewed to ensure that learning remains relevant, engaging, and developmentally appropriate. Adults are highly responsive to the needs and abilities of children, including the youngest two-year-olds. They use precise and routine approaches to assessment that identify where children need more help or support, and ensure that they receive it. The environment is very well equipped to support children's learning. Children are particularly well prepared to transition into Year 1.
3. As they get older, the curriculum for pupils, and teachers' delivery of this curriculum, ensures that pupils are ready to move onto secondary school by the end of Year 6. The curriculum provides pupils with a breadth and richness across a range of subjects. Teachers ensure that lessons are well planned and build on pupils' prior knowledge, understanding and skills. The resources provided in lessons support learning. Assessment is used well to identify pupils who need support, and appropriate support is provided. Consequently, pupils learn well in lessons and progress effectively over time.
4. Leaders ensure that the physical, emotional and mental health of pupils are well supported. Health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety. Pupils are well behaved, leading to a calm and co-operative atmosphere across the school. Comprehensive policies are implemented, including in first aid and the administering of medication, promoting a safe and supportive environment. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and relationships. Pupils develop their physical health through the curriculum, competitive events and through physical activity in an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities.
5. Leaders ensure that pupils' understanding of British society and the importance of respect for those with different beliefs, faiths and viewpoints is well developed. Pupils learn about a range of important values, such as democracy, through the curriculum. The curriculum is enhanced by the opportunity to take part in and understand the democratic process by voting for a variety of council members and the head girl. However, pupils' contribution to activities outside of these school-based opportunities, are more limited.
6. Leaders and governors ensure that pupils are well protected through the effective implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff, leaders and governors are suitably trained to carry out their respective roles. Records are well maintained and informative. Leaders work closely with external agencies, where needed, to get timely and effective support for pupils. Systems for ensuring the suitability of adults working with pupils are appropriate.

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:

- strengthen pupils' participation in community activities that develop their understanding of contribution, community and responsibility as citizens in Britain.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders work harmoniously together to provide high-quality experiences for pupils. They share a moral purpose and vision for the school. They prioritise the wellbeing of pupils in the decisions that they make, including when making changes at the school. They work closely with staff, pupils and parents to seek their views to inform their planning. Where needed, leaders engage with external agencies in a timely and effective way, to promote the wellbeing of pupils. For example, a programme of parent partnership events invites outside experts and agencies to work with parents, to support the wellbeing their children.
8. Leaders have a very detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas that can be further improved. Their self-evaluation of the school is accurate, precise and incisive. Leaders use this to inform strategic planning and subject improvement plans that contribute to pupils achieving high levels of success. For example, leaders use information gathered through regular reviews of pupils' classroom experiences, to bring necessary subject improvements, provide challenge and support for teachers and develop a wide-ranging package of relevant training. Staff morale is high, staff are open to new ideas, embrace challenge and relish the opportunity to refine and improve their practice.
9. Early years leaders are highly effective. They have a collective vision, and a strong commitment to nurturing children's individuality. They ensure that the curriculum is planned to encourage children's personal, social, emotional, and academic development. Staff are well trained to deliver the curriculum, including for two-year-olds, who are in the earlier stages of their development. Leaders monitor children's learning to understand where they can be more effective, and act promptly. Leaders invest in a high quality, stimulating, well-resourced indoor and outdoor environment.
10. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and has a comprehensive accessibility plan that is regularly reviewed. Physical access, curriculum support, and information provision are all considered as part of this plan. Leaders provide the necessary information relating to pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan to the local authority, including the information related to funding and finance.
11. Leaders provide the required information for parents, mainly through the school's website. Parents are provided with regular updates on their child's attendance, achievement and progress through termly and annual reports. There is a complaints policy that leaders use when addressing any concerns raised, and records of these are kept appropriately.
12. Leaders are knowledgeable about how to identify and manage potential risk. They ensure that there are a range of risk assessments and precautions in place which are documented and reviewed, including those related to educational visits, site safety, and for specific pupils' needs. These are regularly reviewed by leaders. Prompt follow-up takes place when issues are identified, with actions recorded and tracked to resolution. Leaders ensure that risks are reasonably and routinely managed.
13. Governors possess in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. While they work in close partnership with senior leaders, they also provide scrutiny and challenge. Governors undertake a range of activities to ensure that leaders are held accountable for their work. For example, they visit the school on a regular basis, speak to pupils and staff, review leaders'

records and documentation, and visit lessons so that they can evaluate the impact of leaders' actions.

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

14. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders provide pupils with a rich and well considered curriculum. They ensure that the curriculum plans to build pupils' knowledge and skills incrementally. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop their learning across different subjects, for instance studying Amelia Earhart across geography, English and history. Leaders regularly review the curriculum and seek pupils' views about where they think it could be improved. Alongside English, mathematics and science, leaders also ensure that there is a breadth in the curriculum, through subjects such as art, music, engineering and design and technology.
16. Early years leaders are highly knowledgeable about the way that the youngest children learn and develop. They prioritise communication and language, investing in high-quality texts and targeted time in the curriculum to develop children's oracy, comprehension and listening skills. Alongside well-planned sessions, adults are highly adept at developing children's speech, language and communication through play opportunities, helping children to extend their learning, vocabulary, and thinking. Leaders use ongoing precise assessment to inform planning and identify where they need to adapt teaching or offer further support for individual children.
17. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They ensure that lessons are purposeful and use time effectively. They are skilled at checking pupils' learning and comprehension through thoughtful and well-structured questioning. They provide pupils with high quality resources to enhance pupils' understanding, for instance such as constructing nets to create 3D shapes in engineering and technology. Teachers use a range of regular and well considered assessment information to provide effective feedback and guidance to pupils so that they can address any gaps in their understanding and can apply their learning in more complex ways.
18. As a result of a well-planned curriculum and effective teaching, pupils learn well in lessons and make effective progress over time. Pupils, as they get older, produce high-quality work, which showcases the range of skills that they have developed over time. For example, in their writing, older pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of grammar skills, including expanded noun phrases, possessive apostrophes, and the past progressive tense, which supports the accurate construction of sentences across their work in all subjects. They use a wide range of vocabulary, particularly developed through the school's 'word-Wednesday' sessions.
19. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified in a timely manner. They make good progress from their starting points because of well-targeted support through adapted teaching strategies in lessons and a structured programme of effective interventions.
20. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) achieve as well as other pupils in school. They receive well-targeted support in lessons. This ensures that these pupils acquire the language skills that they need to access the curriculum effectively and achieve well.
21. Pupils participate in a range of extra-curricular activities and sports at a level that suits them. For example, there are beginner, core, and elite level activities planned to develop pupils' teamwork and physical skills. Pupils value the opportunities available to them, and so attendance at clubs and activities, including sports and the arts, is high. Leaders routinely monitor pupils' engagement with

extra-curricular activities to ensure that a range of pupils are accessing them successfully, and to review what additional clubs might be appropriate.

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

22. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

23. Leaders ensure that a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is in place and is well taught. The curriculum includes the required content for relationships and sex education (RSE) which is taught in an age-appropriate way. Parents are consulted on the content of these lessons which is communicated clearly to them before it is delivered to pupils. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of important topics, including healthy relationships, healthy lifestyles, and the impact of substances such as drugs and alcohol.
24. Staff develop pupils' health through physical education (PE) lessons that include weekly competitive sport. Many pupils also play sports at lunchtime or after school. This contributes well to maintaining their physical and mental wellbeing. Leaders provide a wide range of options for pupils, including access to high quality resources and premises such as swimming pools, leisure centres and sports grounds for weekly competitive activities and events.
25. The youngest children in the early years are provided with daily physical activities that build strength, co-ordination, and balance. Both the indoor and outdoor environments are integral to children's physical, personal and emotional development. The garden is very well equipped with natural resources and equipment, such as obstacle courses, ride-on toys, and a mud kitchen, to encourage active exploration. Pupils learn to take turns, play collaboratively, and express how they feel, enabling them to build highly positive relationships with their classmates.
26. Leaders have implemented appropriate policies and processes for behaviour and anti-bullying. These processes are well understood, valued and implemented by staff and pupils. Pupils are polite and welcoming to staff, visitors and to one another. Pupils learn how to think about their role in the wider school community. For instance, they actively contribute ideas to improve the school experience, such as playground zoning initiatives. Pupils respect the school premises and wear their uniform with pride. Leaders ensure that any behavioural and bullying concerns are followed up thoroughly and promptly, and effective additional support is quickly provided if required. Consequently, the school is a calm, industrious and productive learning environment.
27. Leaders ensure that they are effective in undertaking their responsibilities towards maintaining health and safety, including that related to fire. There are appropriate and regular checks on all aspects of health and safety, including using external specialists where appropriate. Records of these checks are well maintained. Any action needed is taken promptly and effectively. The sites are maintained very well. The requirements for first aid and medical care are implemented well, including those related to paediatric first aid. Pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the school day, including during transition periods, at breaktimes and during extensive extra-curricular activities.
28. The school maintains suitable admission and attendance registers in accordance with current statutory guidance. The attendance policy is available on the school's website. Leaders ensure that any concerns about pupils' attendance are dealt with effectively. Leaders also review attendance information over time, to look for wider trends and concerns that need addressing. The school informs the local authority appropriately whenever pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. Leaders ensure that the PSHE curriculum provides pupils with an understanding of economic wellbeing at an age-appropriate level. This is consolidated in life skills lessons where pupils develop independence, prepare for secondary school and learn vital skills for the future. They visit local banks, participate in financial workshops, and take part in enterprise activities, as well as first aid, self-defence, and cookery classes, to prepare them for adult life. The school also hold a careers fair, so pupils can learn about future career options.
31. Teachers use the well-planned early years classrooms and outdoor resources to promote children's independence, curiosity, and purposeful learning. Children successfully make independent choices, follow their interests, and engage in self-directed play because they are well-supported by adults to do so. Staff utilise activities to celebrate diversity, promote equality, and foster positive relationships with one another. Children get a very strong start in the early years and are typically, very well prepared to transition into Year 1.
32. Leaders ensure there are opportunities for pupils to take on roles of responsibility in school. For example, many pupils undertake roles in the school council, as head girl and deputies or undertake wider responsibilities in the classroom. Pupils across the school are also encouraged to work together in a highly collaborative way, valuing the importance of being a team member. This ethos is shown in lessons where pupils readily support one another in their learning, adopting the school's star qualities of resilience, collaboration, flexibility, and responsibility.
33. There are some limited opportunities for pupils to contribute to the local community. For instance, pupils are developing understanding of environmental responsibility through activities linked to sustainability, such as woodland activities to support natural habitats by removing plastic waste, recycling and reusing materials, and exploring composting. Although pupils are engaged in some other local community events, there are limited opportunities for a wider range of pupils to be active contributors to the local community and develop an understanding of responsibility in their local community and society.
34. Pupils are involved in a range of activities aimed at tackling stereotypes and promoting diversity. Through the curriculum they study a range of information, including high-quality texts that focus on the importance of understanding and respecting those with protected characteristics. They study a range of religions, illustrated by comparative topics such as Christian teachings on poverty and justice, the six charitable acts of self-sacrifice in Islam, and the importance of symbols in Hinduism, including Hindu gods. As a result, pupils show a high level of consideration for others. They possess an exceptionally well-developed understanding and respect for individuals with a range of diverse backgrounds, disabilities, ethnicities, faiths, beliefs and lifestyles.
35. The school actively promotes fundamental British values, such as individual liberty, democracy, the rule of law, and tolerance, through social, emotional, and wellbeing lessons. Pupils develop a thorough understanding of these topics, including the importance of the police, courts, Parliament and legislation. Through some pupils' roles and responsibilities in the school, they are provided with an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of democracy and balanced political perspectives when voting for representatives in elections for leadership roles. This fosters a sense of

responsibility and inclusion. Pupil are listened to, and some have seen their suggestions result in tangible changes.

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

36. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

37. Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable, appropriately trained, and have a thorough understanding about their statutory responsibilities. Safeguarding and pastoral staff share important information regularly and effectively. They consider pupils' range of needs and wishes. Leaders review information to collectively agree on appropriate action, including the drawing up and implementation of additional specific support, where needed. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, making referrals and seeking guidance from local partners such as social services and the local authority designated officer (LADO).
38. Staff are effectively trained in their safeguarding responsibilities. They receive regular training and updates that reflect current statutory guidance. Staff use the school's policy and procedures for sharing concerns and disclosures and record these appropriately, including any related to adults working with pupils.
39. Leaders and governors are knowledgeable about the recruitment checks that need to be undertaken on adults working with pupils. Adults are suitably recruited and vetted. All required safeguarding checks are completed before staff start working at the school. A record of these checks is maintained appropriately on the single central record of appointments.
40. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils know how to talk to a trusted adult if they do not feel safe. Leaders ensure that effective filtering and monitoring are in place to ensure that school devices and online safety in the school is maintained. They regularly check the system to verify that the filtering systems are effective and that staff and pupils are protected. They act quickly to address any concerns that arise.
41. Governors are well trained and knowledgeable. They undertake regular checks on leaders' actions and recruitment procedures, such as visits to review the single central record and discussions about referrals and pupil support. Governors ensure that leaders take all reasonable action to keep pupils safe.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Rowan Preparatory School
Department for Education number	936/6031
Registered charity number	1016538
Address	Rowan Preparatory School 6 Fitzalan Road Claygate Esher Surrey KT10 0LX
Phone number	01372 462627
Email address	school.office@rowanprepschool.co.uk
Website	www.rowanprepschool.co.uk
Proprietor	United Church Schools Trust
Chair	Sir Jon Coles
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Raja
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	291
Date of previous inspection	18 to 20 May 2022

Information about the school

43. Rowan Preparatory School is an independent day school registered as a single-sex school for female pupils aged two to eleven years old. The school consists of a pre-prep, for pupils in the early years through to Year 2 and a prep school, for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The pre-prep school is located on a separate location at Rowan Brae, in Gordon Road, Esher. The prep school is based at Rowan Hill at the registered address.
44. The proprietor body is United Church Schools Trust (UCST). A second registered company, United Learning Limited, is the significant shareholder of the proprietor body. The school also has a local governing body which undertakes delegated roles from the proprietor body. Since the previous inspection a new headteacher was appointed in January 2023.
45. There are 69 children in the early years, comprising two Nursery classes and one Reception class.
46. The school has identified 73 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
47. The school has identified English as an additional language for a very small number of pupils.
48. The school states its aims are to provide a happy, friendly and purposeful environment where all pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential. Pupils are encouraged to strive for excellence, with the school celebrating achievement. The school seeks to help pupils gain an appreciation of their own and other cultures and become responsible citizens in the wider world.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

24 to 26 June 2025

49. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

50. 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 governors
- discussions with the headteacher, 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.

51. 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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