



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**HURSTPIERPOINT COLLEGE PREPARATORY AND
PRE-PREPARATORY SCHOOLS**

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Hurstpierpoint College Preparatory and Pre-Preparatory Schools

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of Schools	Hurstpierpoint College Preparatory and Pre-Preparatory Schools		
DfE Number	938/6206		
Registered Charity Number	1076498		
Address	Hurstpierpoint College Preparatory and Pre-Preparatory Schools Chalkers Lane Hurstpierpoint West Sussex BN6 9LR		
Telephone Number	01273 834975		
Fax Number	01273 836900		
Email Address	hurstprep@hppc.co.uk		
Heads	Mrs Heather Beeby (Preparatory School) Mrs Michele Finnegan (Pre-Preparatory School)		
Chair of Governors	Rear Admiral Simon Moore		
Age Range	4 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	344		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (210 boys; 134 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-3 (EYFS)	0	5-11: 189
	4-5 (EYFS):	24	11-13: 131
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	344	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 15
Number of Boarders	Total:	0	
	Full:	0	Weekly: 0
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	25 Jan 2011 to 26 Jan 2011		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in February 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced in June 2009 by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit

- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Hurstpierpoint College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils from the ages of four to eighteen. The preparatory and pre-preparatory schools take pupils from the ages of four to thirteen and, whilst these two schools each have their own head, both heads report directly to the headmaster of the college. Pupils transfer to the prep school from the pre-prep at the end of Year 2, and most continue their secondary education at the senior school at the end of Year 8. The college is a charitable trust, administered by a governing council that governs the whole college. It is a Woodard school, opened in 1849 as an all-boys' senior boarding school. The prep school opened in 1941, becoming co-educational in 1993, and the co-educational pre-prep was established in 2001. Both schools are situated on the same 140-acre site in the Sussex countryside as the senior school of the college, with which they share many facilities.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, there were 344 pupils on the roll. A total of 82 were in the pre-prep, of whom 24 were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and 262 were in the prep. There were 210 boys and 134 girls. In all, 63 pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 34 receive specialist support with their learning. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN) and receive an education in line with the requirements of their statements. Whilst a few pupils use English as an additional language, none is at an early stage of learning English. Twelve pupils come from an ethnic minority background and most pupils come from professional, business or rural families within a radius of twenty-five miles of the school. The ability profile of the school is above the national average although the range of abilities is wide. Since the last inspection, the Nursery has closed, but both schools have expanded into refurbished classrooms. The boarding house has reduced in size and currently only caters for flexible boarding.
- 1.3 The over-arching aim of the college is to provide a genuinely excellent, all-round education with a strong academic core for each pupil. Within this, the prep and pre-prep schools aim to encourage pupils to realise their potential academically, creatively and physically so that they are prepared and properly equipped for the challenges ahead. The schools strive to provide a broad range of diverse experiences so that pupils can discover and develop their own interest and talents, becoming independent learners with an openness to new ideas and able to use their initiative, and enjoying being part of a happy community whilst making a positive contribution. They seek to respect pupils as individuals, encouraging them to develop self-confidence, self-reliance, moral values and an awareness of what it means to be a good citizen, and to respect other cultures, religions and beliefs within the Christian principles of the college.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 Pupils' achievements are excellent overall, fulfilling the schools' aims of providing an all-round education with a strong academic core for each pupil. Through a broad range of diverse experiences, pupils discover and develop their own interest and talents as the school intends. Pupils in both schools are developing their knowledge and understanding effectively across a range of subjects, whilst also successfully extending their skills, particularly in extra-curricular activities. Pupils are articulate, and their listening, reading, writing and creative skills are strong. They apply their numeracy skills well and often respond with well-reasoned answers. Academically, pupils achieve very well in gaining scholarships and awards to the senior school. They are also successful in many competitions, including mathematics challenges, public speaking and writing competitions, and in instrumental music, and speech and drama examinations, many passing with merits and distinctions. A significant number of pupils have attained county standard in a range of sports and physical skills are strong. Others are successful in the theatre, a youth orchestra, and television and film roles. These achievements make a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development.
- 2.2 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability, as shown by standardised measures of progress. Major factors in pupils' achievements are the excellent attitudes they have to their learning, their exemplary behaviour and the positive relationships they enjoy with staff. They apply themselves to most work with enthusiasm and collaborate very well, enjoying their learning and taking pride in their achievements. The broad curriculum, which has some excellent features, supports pupils' achievement and personal development very well. It encompasses all the required areas of learning, and this year pupils have been given a greater choice of modern foreign languages in Year 7. The comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship education programmes enhance the schools' aims and ethos. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities and visits, as well as the programme for gifted, talented and interested pupils, in which local primary schools participate, provides further enrichment. Amongst the links with the community of benefit to pupils, are visits from the nearby emergency services and musical performances by pupils at a local arts festival.
- 2.3 Teaching makes an effective contribution to pupils' achievements, both academically and in their personal development. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and, in the best lessons seen, an infectious enthusiasm that encouraged all pupils to do their best. Pupils are known well by the staff, and particularly effective support is given to those with LDD and statements of SEN. In the most successful lessons, well-planned tasks were provided, questioning was employed to excellent effect, pupils were encouraged to think for themselves, and high quality resources focused and interested pupils in their learning. On occasion, the expectations of staff were not as high, and this affected the pace of the lesson and the opportunities for independent learning by pupils. Marking is helpful, giving pupils tips on how they can improve their work in future. Pupils enjoy the challenge grades given, and gain a sense of achievement when they meet or exceed their teachers' expectations.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.4 Pupils' personal development is excellent. They have an outstanding sense of spiritual matters, as shown for example in their appreciation of assemblies and their response and demeanour therein. They are inspired in their worship by the stimulating environment of the chapel, enabling them to reflect on any personal faith in the weekly service. Those pupils about to embark on the next stage of their education have an emotionally uplifting experience when they participate in the 'Leavers' Challenge', walking along the South Downs and camping overnight. Pupils' moral awareness is extremely well developed; they strengthen their understanding of right and wrong by keeping to the rules and in making moral choices. They demonstrate a mature awareness of those less fortunate than themselves through their charitable fund raising that includes initiatives supporting local, national and international projects. Pupils' social development is excellent. They are understanding, helpful and responsible, taking turns to participate in class activities and playing together very well. They contribute their ideas for improvements to the school and discuss these democratically in the school council. Although a significant minority of pupils said in the pre-inspection questionnaires that they felt their views are not listened to, those spoken to on the inspection did not agree with this concern. They have a strong cultural awareness, both of their own and of other backgrounds, and they know and talk about various festivals connected with the major world faiths. This understanding has been promoted by visits to local places of worship and reinforced through the religious studies, art and music curriculum.
- 2.5 Pupils' personal development is strongly supported by the excellent pastoral care shown by staff, who are given high quality guidance through the schemes written to promote this aspect of the schools' work. Pupils in both schools enjoy being part of this happy community, in line with the schools' aims. They are confident that they have an adult to turn to should they have a problem. Behaviour is excellent, pupils say that bullying is rare, and any minor difficulty amongst pupils is quickly and constructively dealt with by staff. Whilst a significant minority of pupils raised in the pre-inspection questionnaire the issue of fairness with rewards and sanctions, and their equal treatment by staff, there was no evidence on the inspection to support this point of view. Most of the pupils spoken to during the inspection are happy at the school, and enjoy the variety of activities offered and the support and guidance given by the staff. Relationships amongst pupils themselves and between pupils and staff are strong. Robust policies safeguard pupils, and all staff have undertaken the required training for their responsibilities. Risk assessments ensure that health and safety hazards are minimised, and all measures have been taken to reduce the risk of fire. An appropriate medical room is available for those pupils who fall ill during the school day. Attendance and admission registers are completed and stored correctly. The school has a suitable plan for increasing access for pupils with disabilities to the premises and to the education offered. Including those in the EYFS, pupils have an excellent understanding of the requirements for leading a healthy lifestyle, enjoying the nutritious lunches provided, and the sports activities and facilities.
- 2.6 Currently, there are no full or weekly boarders in the prep school. The pre-inspection questionnaire responses of both the flexi-boarders and their parents indicate that they believe the strong boarding provision enhances boarders' educational experiences. Pupils say that the relationships within boarding are strong, enabling those who participate to develop further their friendships. The

boarding staff ensure that they are available to the pupils at all times. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the special evening activities, such as film nights and those related to sports. As most pupils do not board on a regular basis, there is little opportunity for them to personalise their dormitory areas. Boarders are provided with their own common room in which to relax. For some, it gives a flavour of what life will be like if they decide to board in the future.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.7 The governing council administers the schools successfully. Its committee structure and background expertise strongly support the educational direction of the schools. All governors have a specific role within the school community; one is affiliated to the prep and pre-prep, and regularly visits for discussions with the heads about the successes and challenges within the day-to-day life of the schools. The heads prepare regular reports for the council meetings. Strategic and financial planning is exceptionally strong, as evidenced in the current building of new science rooms for the prep school and the ready provision of human and material resources. The minutes of council meetings indicate that governors consider the two schools to be an important part of the college's future, as witnessed in the schools' recent expansion. The council gives strong support to, and provides challenge for, the development of the schools, fulfilling its responsibilities for welfare, health and safety, and for safeguarding.
- 2.8 Leadership and management are excellent. The headmaster of the college has overall responsibility for the prep and pre-prep schools, but devolves day-to-day management to the two respective heads, whilst remaining in regular contact. Outstanding features are the recently introduced process of departmental self-reviews linked to the monitoring of teaching and learning and staff professional development, and the sharing of information amongst staff about academic and pastoral matters. These strengths play a highly effective part in the educational achievement and personal development of pupils. Since the previous inspection, the two heads have worked closely together and, even though there is duplication in the retention of many separate school policies, these are regularly reviewed from the point of view of content and implementation. Significant progress has been made between the pre-prep and prep, and the prep and the college, concerning the transfer of pupils and curriculum progression. Both heads, supported by a strong committed staff team, have a very clear vision for the next steps in their schools' development, but the written plans are not yet focused on their priorities over the next three years, a previous recommendation that has not been fully implemented. Staff recruitment checks at the time of appointment have been suitably carried out and recorded on a single central register. The premises and grounds have many strong features and are well maintained. Pupils respect their learning environment, and bright displays around the schools, demonstrating strong creativity, celebrate their achievements.
- 2.9 Links with parents are excellent. Parents are provided with all necessary information on the website and in a detailed handbook, and regular newsletters keep them up-to-date on the schools' activities and successes, including the parents' association's strong support with fund raising. Pupils' progress is discussed at regular parents' evenings, and termly reports are informative, with the best including targets for improvement. The complaints procedure is appropriate and available to parents. Any concerns are handled with due care and detailed records are kept. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the quality of the education provided. All who responded were

particularly positive about the boarding experience, the governance of the school, and the extent to which the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and values. There were no areas of significant concern. Prep pupils, too, were positive overall about their educational experience, with considerable strengths being registered about the progress they make, the extra-curricular activities provided, the help they receive from their teachers, the encouragement to work independently and their enjoyment of school, which they view to be well run. A few pupils were concerned about the amount of homework they receive, but this was not found to be an issue when investigated.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Develop further the current focus on independent learning.
 2. Rationalise the policies between the prep and the pre-prep.
 3. Ensure that the development plans of the prep and the pre-prep concentrate on the main priorities for the next three years.
 4. Implement within the EYFS the planned improvement to cover the outside decking area.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding. The calm, welcoming, family atmosphere enables all children to settle and make significant progress in their learning and development. The individual needs of children are met effectively and they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Staff are constantly looking for ways to improve the high quality of provision. Recent developments include stronger links with parents, home visits before children start, and the introduction of an effective scheme to help the children learn to read and write.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Leadership and management are excellent. Effective policies are implemented successfully to safeguard children and eliminate discrimination. Exceptionally strong links between parents, local authorities and other settings, together with individual learning journals produced as a result of careful assessment, contribute significantly to children's welfare and development. Parents are positive about the setting's provision for their children. Regular meetings and self-evaluation within the setting enable a clear vision to be communicated, and staff work together as a happy, caring and effective team. Each child has an equal opportunity to succeed, supported by the excellent use of a wide range of appropriate resources.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. The positive environment enables children to learn and progress rapidly. Children develop their imagination and acquire problem-solving skills through role play, learning to choose from a wide range of available materials and toys. Whilst the Reception outdoor area is well resourced, the school has not yet provided cover for the outside decking, reducing its use in inclement weather. Plentiful learning materials outside, together with the 'Forest School' in nearby woods, provide strong opportunities for creative and physical development. An excellent balance is struck between child-initiated and adult-led activities. An accurate profile of each child informs staff about the next steps in learning and advises parents of their children's progress. Children are cared for extremely well, and taught about keeping safe and healthy in many contexts. Regular checks of equipment both outside and in the classrooms create a safe environment. Risk assessments for visits are carried out conscientiously.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 Outcomes for the children are excellent. From different starting points, children make substantial progress towards the achievement of the Early Learning Goals. By the end of the EYFS, most children achieve high standards in all six areas of learning. Children enjoy working individually and co-operatively, which they do very well. They are keen to answer questions and take part in all activities enthusiastically. Children care for each other, take turns, share willingly, and respond to praise and encouragement. By the end of Reception, most are able to read and write short simple sentences, are confident in dealing with numbers up to twenty, and are able to use information and communication technology to solve simple problems using click and drag techniques. Children develop a strong sense of personal safety and talk freely to adults within the setting. They clearly understand that personal hygiene, exercise and sensible eating are all required for a healthy lifestyle, and these are part of the considerable skills for future life that they develop at every opportunity.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the governor who is affiliated to the prep and pre-prep schools, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Elizabeth Coley

Mr Mick Jonas

Mr Richard Balding

Reporting Inspector

Academic Deputy, IAPS school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector