

School inspection report

3 to 5 December 2024

Charlotte House Preparatory School

88 The Drive

Rickmansworth

Hertfordshire

WD3 4DU

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. The school is well led and managed. Leaders create a warm, positive and nurturing environment that prioritises the wellbeing and care of pupils. Governors maintain close and effective oversight, including through a well-structured system of committees. They know the school well and work effectively with leaders to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities, and that the Standards are met.
2. The broad and balanced curriculum enables pupils to develop knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of areas. Subject leaders and staff work well together to plan and teach stimulating programmes of study. Pupils are highly motivated and fully engaged in lessons. They make good progress and develop particularly advanced linguistic skills. Teachers make effective use of their subject knowledge and resources and modify their lessons well to meet pupils' learning needs. They use a variety of methods to extend pupils' learning and enable them to achieve well. However, some teaching does not support pupils to apply their learning in more complex ways when they are ready.
3. Leaders ensure that the youngest children get off to a good start in their education. They provide a nurturing and supportive environment and communicate effectively with parents to actively promote children's wellbeing. Staff prioritise the development of literacy and communication and enable children in Nursery and Reception classes to develop high-quality reading and speaking skills.
4. Pupils have high levels of confidence and self-esteem. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are positive and reflect the school's ethos of kindness and mutual respect. Standards of behaviour are consistently high. Staff set clear expectations and make effective use of a range of rewards to motivate and engage pupils. Older pupils act as effective role models for younger ones.
5. Leaders take care to support pupils' physical, emotional and mental health. They provide a well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme alongside assemblies, visitors, trips and visits. The premises and buildings are well maintained, and arrangements for health and safety, fire safety, supervision and first aid are in place. Pupils are well supervised and supported. They access high-quality physical education (PE) and exercise programmes and information.
6. Pupils are taught about the importance of respect and tolerance of those from different faiths, backgrounds, beliefs and lifestyles. They actively contribute to the wider school community and local area, including through charity work. Pupils collaborate well with each other in lessons and at breaktimes. Staff are effective in teaching pupils how to work and play together. Consequently, pupils have well-developed social skills for their age.
7. The school has a strong safeguarding culture with robust policies and procedures. Staff receive regular training and fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders maintain effective links with local safeguarding agencies and refer any concerns to them when 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:

- ensure that teachers more consistently identify and support pupils who are ready for more complex learning and challenge in lessons so that they make the progress of which they are capable.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors and leaders work together to ensure that the school delivers an education in line with its aims. Leaders create a warm and positive atmosphere, enabling pupils to successfully embody the school's motto, 'I am, I can, I ought, I will'. A genuine care for the wellbeing and welfare of pupils and the whole community is central to leaders' decision making. Leaders have established highly effective relationships with pupils and their families. Their personable approach and commitment to care for each pupil is greatly valued. The school is well led and managed.
9. Governors are well informed about the school's work through regular reports and meetings with senior leaders. They monitor the school's work closely to ensure that those in management positions carry out their roles effectively. Governors regularly visit the school, observe lessons, meet formally and informally with pupils and contribute to school activities such as the Year 6 enterprise project. They ensure that the Standards are consistently met.
10. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's effectiveness and areas for development. They prioritise pupils' wellbeing in this work. For example, they have implemented several initiatives designed to support pupils' wellbeing, such as the introduction of 'worry boxes' in classrooms, and the use of emotion cards through which pupils can indicate their feelings. Leaders celebrate pupils' achievements in a variety of ways, including weekly celebration assemblies and the 'excellence book'.
11. Leaders in the early years actively promote the wellbeing of children. They provide a warm and nurturing environment and maintain effective communication with parents to support children's development. This includes an online system to record pupils' activities and achievements. Leaders provide close and effective support for staff, working together to maintain a focus on the individual needs of pupils.
12. Areas of risk are managed appropriately. A range of suitable risk assessments are in place. For example, leaders understand the contextual risks of the school and ensure that risk is mitigated effectively across a wide range of activities on and off the school site, including day and residential trips. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about how to promote the safety of pupils. Risk assessments are well written and regularly reviewed.
13. The school meets its requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate against pupils. The three-year accessibility plan is appropriate and identifies suitable measures to ensure that everyone is able to access the curriculum and provision effectively. Principles of respect and equality are promoted widely by leaders and staff across all aspects of school life. Pupils show mutual respect and tolerance.
14. Leaders and governors ensure that all relevant information is provided appropriately to relevant stakeholders, including parents. Leaders and governors regularly review school policies to ensure that they are up to date with statutory guidance and effectively implemented across the school. Parents are provided with the required information through regular communication and via the school website. Parents are provided with regular detailed and informative reports on their children's progress and attainment. The small number of complaints that the school receives are dealt with and recorded effectively in line with the school's complaints policy.

15. Where necessary, leaders link with external agencies and specialists to ensure that pupils receive suitable educational support and are safeguarded effectively. For example, the local authority provides regular safeguarding training for staff.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum that is broad and balanced and fulfils the requirements of the early years framework and ensures that the relevant Standards are met. Pupils are taught by knowledgeable teachers who have specialist expertise in many subjects such as music, Spanish and PE.
18. Subject leaders and staff work together closely to plan detailed and stimulating programmes of study that promote pupils' interest in their learning, including in subjects such as computing, drama, art and design, music and French. Lessons are calm, orderly and well-structured to support pupils to learn effectively. Pupils are motivated and curious to learn. They work well individually and collaboratively. They are keen to learn from their mistakes and exhibit high levels of resilience in their learning.
19. Teachers employ their good subject knowledge to enable pupils to learn and achieve well. They know pupils well and modify their teaching methods to meet pupils' learning needs. They make effective use of resources and teaching assistants. Most teachers use a variety of methods to extend and deepen pupils' learning. These include effective use of questioning and the setting of tasks that allow pupils to apply their knowledge in increasingly complex ways. However, some teaching does not support pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding as fully.
20. Pupils learn well across a wide range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. Starting with the youngest children, pupils learn to read, write and use number effectively. As they get older, pupils access a range of high-quality texts, develop writing skills with a wide range of vocabulary and sophisticated sentence structure, and work confidently with more complex fractions in mathematics. Pupils also learn to speak confidently and articulately when sharing their ideas, presenting to the whole class and performing on stage.
21. Teachers provide detailed and constructive feedback to pupils, who reflect and act well on the advice provided. Teachers use this information to adapt their lessons to meet pupils' learning needs. Leaders use their school-wide assessment framework to track pupils' progress. Leaders meet regularly to analyse pupils' performance and implement strategies to enhance progress. As a result, pupils learn and achieve well over time. Year 6 pupils are very well prepared for and ready to move on to secondary school. Many successfully go on to complete entrance examinations and gain entry for selective secondary schools.
22. Teachers ensure that the youngest children get off to a good start in their education. They prioritise language, communication and reading in their curriculum. For example, daily individual reading sessions with an adult enable children to develop advanced reading skills for their age. Leaders use effective baseline and ongoing assessment and regular tracking to identify any children who need extra help or support and ensure that they keep up with their peers. Children are well prepared to start Year 1 by the end of the early years.
23. Learning support leaders are highly effective in providing support for pupils and staff, including through the setting of targets and the tracking of progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Learning plans for pupils are reviewed and updated regularly. Pupils who require additional support receive intervention and extra help, for example through pre-

school individual booster sessions in reading and spelling. Consequently, those who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.

24. Staff identify any areas where pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) may need additional support for their English. They have an effective identification and tracking programme to support pupils. They provide timely and well-thought through support to help pupils access their learning. For example, in the early years, picture cards are used effectively to aid the learning of key vocabulary. Staff communicate effectively with parents. Pupils develop their skills in English quickly and learn well alongside their peers.
25. The extra-curricular programme is varied and well attended. A selection of academic, sporting, creative and performing arts opportunities changes termly and develops pupils' skills. These include swimming, choir, chess, taekwondo and logic puzzles.

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

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

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

27. Leaders and staff create an inclusive, nurturing environment that promotes care and kindness. Pupils trust that staff will take care of them. For example, pupils use emotion cards to let staff know how they are feeling, and staff provide timely support. Leaders appoint and train pupils in Year 6 to act as buddies for pupils in the playground and at lunch to support younger pupils during social times. Pupils develop confidence and self-esteem. They share their views confidently. They are friendly and generous in the way they support and celebrate the success of each other. This creates a culture of collaboration, support, belonging and community.
28. Leaders have created an effective PSHE programme, and appropriate coverage of relationships and sex education (RSE). Pupils study age-appropriate topics such as growing up, relationships, racism, healthy diets, online safety and anti-bullying. This helps pupils to understand moral issues, such as those relating to equality and rights, and develop an understanding of themselves, physically, emotionally and mentally. Staff receive appropriate training so that they deliver sensitive information adeptly. The curriculum content is published to parents in advance, which enables them to view lesson content and topics.
29. Leaders set clear expectations and use rewards such as house points and merits to ensure consistently high standards of behaviour. Pupils appreciate the importance of good behaviour, and the school is a calm and happy environment. On the few occasions that poor behaviour occurs, it is resolved quickly and appropriately by staff. Bullying is rare. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively and proactively by trained staff. Pupils reflect leaders' calm, caring and confident approach.
30. Leaders ensure that children regularly engage in outdoor physical activity. An appropriate PE programme is taught well by sports specialists and includes sports such as gymnastics, netball, football, cricket and athletics. Pupils are taught about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. A healthy choice of food is served for lunch. This helps to develop pupils' skills and understanding in these areas and promotes the importance of exercise and a healthy lifestyle.
31. Leaders support the personal, emotional and physical development of the youngest children in Nursery and Reception. Teachers model kind and thoughtful behaviours, so that children learn to co-operate with their peers and understand their own feelings as well as those of others. Pupils build physical confidence through their use of play equipment, including in the spacious dedicated area for outdoor learning.
32. Leaders ensure that the school site is a well-maintained environment for the pupils. Adults supervise pupils well, providing close and caring support in and out of lessons. Appropriate health and safety arrangements are in place which are monitored and reviewed regularly. The school makes effective use of external specialists to audit and provide advice on health and safety and fire safety. Prompt action is taken to remedy any issues. Fire drills are carried out regularly and appropriately.
33. First aid is delivered in a caring and timely manner. There are an appropriate number of paediatric first aiders in the school, including in the early years. Procedures for the administration of first aid and medication are effective. The school identifies and caters well for the dietary needs of pupils.

34. Admission and attendance registers are maintained appropriately and in line with current statutory guidance. The local authority is notified of any pupils leaving or joining the school at non-standard transition points. Attendance rates are high, and leaders work closely with parents to address pupils' absences.

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

35. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

36. Pupils learn about economics and finance effectively. Pupils discover how and why money originated, learn about bank accounts and enjoy visits from local bank representatives who lead workshops on money. Pupils in Year 6 plan and execute their own enterprise projects by pitching their ideas to a parents' committee, which provides initial funding, and by using spreadsheets to calculate the income and expenditure of their mini start-up companies.
37. The school develops pupils' understanding of democracy through the taught curriculum and extra-curricular experiences. For example, pupils learn about the origins of democracy in ancient Greece and study the electoral system in the United Kingdom. Pupils' appreciation of democracy is enhanced by visits from external speakers, including Members of Parliament, and by communicating directly with them through writing.
38. Staff listen to pupils and consider their views and opinions carefully. For example, pupils have their views heard through the pupil-elected school council, assemblies and debating activities. The school council has made a valuable contribution to the school's sustainability work, for example through a design project for a new pond. School council members lead assemblies and help the wider pupil body to choose charities for the school to support.
39. Pupils develop a broad understanding and appreciation of people of different faiths through religious education (RE) lessons that cover the major world faiths and include visits to places of worship, such as churches and temples. Children in the early years learn about the importance of Diwali, and whole-school assemblies focus on religious festivals such as Ramadan, Easter and Hanukkah.
40. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about the range of diverse backgrounds, cultures, genders, lifestyles and beliefs. Respect for other cultures is also developed through the PSHE curriculum and other subjects, for example history and modern foreign languages. Assemblies provide valuable support to the PSHE programme. This contributes to pupils' understanding of diversity and the need for mutual respect. For example, a British sign-language club has been established which develops pupils' understanding about different forms of communication.
41. Pupils develop their ability to take responsibility and support others. Younger pupils are responsible for helping the teacher organise resources. Year 6 pupils undertake positions of responsibility, and many act as house captains and elected school council members. Older pupils act as highly effective role models to younger ones and are proactive in supporting them.
42. Leaders and staff actively promote the importance of the rule of law and encourage an understanding of right and wrong by providing clear expectations and being consistent in their application. Pupils value house points and merit awards and appreciate the need for sanctions on the few occasions that misbehaviour occurs.
43. Staff are effective in teaching pupils how to work and play together. In the early years, children learn how to share, take turns, listen and wait patiently. Older pupils are taught how to co-operate with each other, both in the classroom and on the sports fields. The PSHE programme covers topics such as friendship and respect, enabling pupils to learn about the importance of supporting and

encouraging each other. Consequently, pupils collaborate effectively and have well-developed social skills for their age.

44. Leaders have designed an effective programme to develop pupils' awareness of future career choices. This includes a range of speakers, often parents, who make presentations to pupils about their work in areas such as engineering, banking, optometry, acting and professional sport. Authors regularly visit the school to speak about their books and literary life.
45. Pupils connect well with the locality and participate in events such as the Rickmansworth Winter Fair and charity running events. The choir sings at a care home. Charities selected by pupils include the local foodbank, for which they provide support. This helps pupils to develop an understanding of the value of charity work and a sense of responsibility towards others.

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

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

Safeguarding

47. Knowledgeable leaders have established effective safeguarding arrangements. The policy and procedures follow statutory guidance and are well documented in the school's safeguarding policy. Leaders are aware of the contextual safeguarding risks of the school and are effective in mitigating them. Leaders have created a strong culture of care that prioritises pupils' wellbeing and safety.
48. Staff are appropriately trained through regular training sessions delivered by safeguarding leaders and external safeguarding specialists. This includes training in the 'Prevent' duty and the staff code of conduct. Staff understand the whistleblowing policy and the school's safeguarding procedures, including those relating to allegations against staff. Staff follow policy and procedures carefully and report any concerns appropriately.
49. Staff listen carefully to the views of pupils. Pupils are confident to share concerns with adults directly or use the worry boxes around school. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond to concerns in a timely way. They work effectively with external agencies to seek advice and refer safeguarding concerns. The safeguarding team keep appropriate records of concerns, and the actions taken in response to them.
50. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through their curriculum, including through regular online safety lessons. Leaders have established an appropriate internet filtering and monitoring system that safeguards online activities at the school.
51. Appropriate pre-employment recruitment checks are carried out and recorded on a single central record. Leaders are appropriately trained in safer recruitment. They ensure that procedures related to the recruitment of adults working with pupils are followed.
52. The governors regularly review the school's safeguarding work to ensure that everyone follows appropriate procedures. Governors monitor the school's safeguarding arrangements effectively, including through an annual review, regular meetings with safeguarding leaders, and through full board meetings each term.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Charlotte House Preparatory School
Department for Education number	919/6126
Registered charity number	311075
Address	Charlotte House School 88 The Drive Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 4DU
Phone number	01923 772101
Email address	office@chpschool.co.uk
Website	https://www.charlottehouseprepschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Charlotte House School Limited
Chair	Mr Simon Reader
Headteacher	Miss Penny Woodcock
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	91
Date of previous inspection	5 to 8 October 2021

Information about the school

54. Charlotte House Preparatory School is an independent day school for female pupils aged from 3 to 11 in Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire. The school was founded in 1931 as the Rickmansworth PNEU (Parents' National Educational Union) School and became Charlotte House Preparatory School in 2011. It is a registered charity overseen by a governing body consisting of directors of the company. Since the previous inspection in October 2021, a new chair of governors has been appointed. The school comprises three sections: the early years, Years 1 and 2, and Years 3 to 6.
55. There are 17 children in the early years setting comprising one Nursery and one Reception class, both situated on the main school site.
56. The school has identified six pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. English is an additional language for a small number of pupils.
58. The school states its aims are to provide a supportive, happy and stimulating environment in which pupils are equipped with a broad range of skills, knowledge and experiences through a challenging, innovative and comprehensive curriculum. It aspires to encourage appreciation, respect, independence, co-operation and courtesy and to enable pupils to flourish and reach their potential, so that they transfer to senior school life successfully and are prepared for the demands of modern life.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

3 to 5 December 2024

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

60. 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.

61. 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.
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Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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