

School inspection report

11 to 13 March 2025

Wakefield Grammar Pre-Preparatory School

Margaret Street
Wakefield
West Yorkshire
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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. Governors and leaders work in close partnership so that the wellbeing needs of pupils are met. Governors keep themselves informed on the workings of the school through frequent site visits and detailed updates provided by leaders. The effectiveness of the school's strategic plan is routinely evaluated, and adaptations are promptly made when needed, so that the school continues to develop in line with its vision.
2. Leaders communicate the school's aims clearly so that pupils understand what is expected of them. Pupils are well behaved and polite as a result. Early years leaders meet regularly to share their knowledge of the children and reflect on training opportunities. This allows them to plan effectively for children's interests and learning needs.
3. The curriculum has been thoughtfully designed to engage pupils' interest and to increase their skills and understanding so that they develop secure foundations for future learning, notably in literacy and numeracy. Recent innovations in topic-based learning offers pupils insight into their local area and deepens their understanding of wider subjects, for instance in art, history and design technology. Teachers have high expectations for pupils' outcomes. Lessons are well planned and teachers use their specialist knowledge to inspire pupils' thinking. Pupils, including children in the early years, make good progress as a result.
4. As part of a school-wide focus on reading development, an extensive range of subject-specific vocabulary is introduced to expand pupils' breadth of language and heighten their understanding. However, in a few lessons, the terminology introduced is not consistently matched to pupils' learning needs, so that they are not able to apply this new vocabulary as accurately or deepen their understanding to the full.
5. Leaders make effective use of assessment data to monitor pupils' attainment over time. They use the information to offer pupils targeted support, when needed, and adapt lesson planning accordingly.
6. Pupils display confidence, self-understanding and a heightened awareness of their responsibilities to others as a result of the extensive leadership roles available to them. They strive to be inspiring role models for their peers. They take pride in helping others and treat seriously the responsibilities entrusted to them. Leaders work closely with governors to create a comprehensive 'Little Leaders' programme, with wide-ranging roles, including as prefects, wellbeing ambassadors and playground zone managers. Pupils' views and ideas are actively considered. Leaders design roles so that pupils develop skills in relationships building, sensitive communication and taking responsibility. As a result, pupils are reflective, respectful and humble. The trust afforded to them impacts positively on their behaviour towards each other and allows them to learn more about themselves as individuals. The way in which the highly effective leadership programme boosts pupils' confidence in their own worth, abilities and moral standards and enables pupils to grow as insightful and reflective role models is a significant strength of the school.
7. Leaders have recently revised the programme of study for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). They select topics carefully to provide pupils with clear strategies for managing their emotions and forming successful friendships.

8. The school demonstrates a rigorous approach to health and safety ensuring that pupils' welfare remains a priority. Effective measures reduce potential risk to pupils in the event of fire.
9. Leaders provide pupils with a range of relevant skills and opportunities in preparation for their future lives. They arrange activities, workshops and regular speakers so that pupils develop an awareness of money transactions, various occupations and experience in community engagement.
10. Safeguarding leaders implement effective measures to protect pupils from harm. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable in safeguarding procedures. All the required checks are carried out before a person starts work at the school.

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 the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary is consistently matched to pupils' learning needs so that they can develop and apply their knowledge as fully as possible.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders and governors have highly effective arrangements in place to promote pupils' wellbeing and welfare. Governors ensure that leaders are well trained and fulfil their responsibilities well. They offer leaders support, when needed, as well as an appropriate level of challenge. Governors keep themselves updated on the work of the school through frequent site visits and receive detailed reports from leaders, including on pupils' progress, complaints, attendance and behaviour.
12. In the early years, leaders meet frequently with staff to discuss children's learning and pastoral needs. They encourage staff to reflect on their practice and support their training ambitions. This allows leaders to implement planning which closely reflects children's interests and needs. Leaders use their detailed knowledge of the children to adapt their practice when needed. They keep parents updated on a regular basis. As a result, children grow in confidence, for example in language development and social interaction, and develop their skills.
13. Governors and leaders work in partnership to create a clear strategic vision in support of the school's continuing development. They evaluate its success routinely and are pro-active in adapting plans and procedures to suit the school's evolving needs. A range of recent initiatives has been designed to enhance ongoing provision for teaching and learning. For example, leaders have overseen the introduction of new schemes of work for PSHE, a school-wide focus on reading, innovation in the wider curriculum and comprehensive revisions to the early years programme of learning. Staff training, most recently in numeracy, early reading and neurodiversity, is regularly updated and thoughtfully planned to complement the school's direction and teachers' specialist knowledge. Governors work closely with leaders to create a wide range of leadership opportunities for pupils, reflecting the school's commitment to prioritising pupils' emotional wellbeing.
14. Leaders communicate the school's aims clearly so that they are well understood by pupils and easily remembered. Displays and posters reinforce values and staff model them throughout their own interactions. Leaders make purposeful use of stories during assemblies to enhance pupils' understanding.
15. Leaders and governors operate a structured approach to policy review. Policies are scrutinised through the various committees and follow up takes place to check on implementation. This enables governors to reassure themselves that policies are suitable and reflect the current statutory guidance.
16. The required information is provided to parents via the school's website, including its aims, key policies and contact details. Parents receive regular reports about their child's progress and achievement. Leaders share information about pupils' performance so that parents are kept updated.
17. Leaders liaise closely with a range of external agencies to seek specialist advice and guidance when required. This supports leaders' decision-making in response to any situations that arise.
18. Leaders implement effective risk assessments, including for specialist facilities, off-site visits, playground equipment and appliances. Risk assessments identify suitable control measures to minimise the potential risks identified.

19. An appropriate complaints process is implemented, and concerns are addressed in line with the timeframes set out in the school's complaints policy. Leaders act promptly when concerns are raised, ensuring that matters are resolved promptly.
20. Leaders and governors fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The accessibility plan details the school's commitment to equal opportunities for pupils and is regularly reviewed through leaders' frequent site walks. Adaptations, including specialist classroom resources, access ramps, and the well-planned use of ground floor classrooms enable all pupils equal access to the curriculum, school documentation and the physical environment. Pupils are not discriminated against by the school.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders have designed the curriculum with an emphasis on pupils gaining secure foundations in areas such as reading, spelling and numeracy. In this way, leaders provide pupils with relevant skill sets for their future educational journeys. Pupils acquire wider skills and knowledge, for example in creative and scientific subjects, through topic-based learning. Pupils engage enthusiastically in topic activities and increase their knowledge about local places and people of interest.
23. Teachers' in-depth subject knowledge and well-planned lessons ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points, notably in spelling and grammar, by the end of Year 2. A school-wide focus on reading development has resulted in revisions to the programme of study, further targeted reading groups and specialist training for staff. Early indications demonstrate that this is having a positive impact on pupils' reading and spelling outcomes. High expectations and stimulating activities challenge pupils' thinking and capture their interest. Learning assistants are effectively deployed to offer targeted support.
24. Teachers introduce subject-specific vocabulary to broaden pupils' breadth and understanding. However, in a few lessons, the vocabulary introduced is not always matched to pupils' current learning needs. On these occasions, pupils' understanding of key words does not enhance their acquisition of subject knowledge as fully as possible.
25. A comprehensive system of formal and informal assessment allows leaders to track pupils' attainment over time. Leaders analyse data meticulously to inform pupils' next steps in learning. They regularly monitor planning to ensure pupils' progression of skills and use assessment data to adapt lesson planning accordingly when needed.
26. Effective strategies for managing behaviour ensure that pupils are conscientious, motivated and attentive. They demonstrate secure recall of earlier learning and ask relevant questions to inform their understanding. Pupils achieve well as a result.
27. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points. Leaders identify pupils' learning needs early, through specialist assessments, and use a range of resources, including visual timetables, specialist classroom resources and social stories to reflect individual needs, where required. Staff are well trained to support pupils' additional learning and emotional needs.
28. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive targeted support when required. Resources, including words mats and vocabulary grids for practice at home, as well as small group learning in comprehension and numeracy, ensure that pupils make good progress, developing their understanding and fluency in English.
29. Leaders have recently carried out a detailed review of the early years curriculum. Its focus on language-rich stories to introduce new concepts and vocabulary provides children with the skill and confidence to develop proficiency in communication. For example, following effective modelling and high expectations by adults, children enthusiastically experiment with different adjectives. Adults are well trained to support children's speech development, and a well-stocked outdoor library encourages children to enrich their vocabulary base. Adults reinforce children's number knowledge throughout daily activities. For instance, they encourage children to count and check numbers of blocks when building towers and practise positional language with them to distinguish left and right

movements in music. Teaching methods are effective, and leaders are ambitious for children's outcomes. Children achieve well as a result.

- 30. Leaders share information in meetings and reports about pupils' performance so that parents are kept regularly updated.
- 31. A suitable programme of extra-curricular activities complements pupils' classroom learning and allows them to develop new skills and interests. After school activities provide pupils with opportunities to learn craft skills and practise dance routines.

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

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

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

33. Following their commitment to hearing pupils' views and engaging them in decision-making, leaders have designed an extensive leadership programme for pupils from Reception upwards. The 'Little Leaders' programme inspires pupils to build skills in communication, respectful relationships and caring for others, in line with the school's aims. Leaders have worked closely with pupils to design 'Little Leaders' dolls so that pupils see themselves represented in school. As a result, pupils demonstrate heightened self-confidence and increased self-esteem, resulting in their overall contentment at school. Pupils reflect maturely on their own strengths and celebrate those of others. They develop an awareness of empathy through helping others and take their responsibilities as role models seriously. Roles, including sports ambassadors, playground zone managers and prefects, are thoughtfully created to enable pupils to feel trusted and better equipped to understand themselves as individuals. This has a significant positive impact on pupils' personal development, as seen in their caring and thoughtful interactions with peers and teachers.
34. Regular swimming and physical education (PE) lessons allow pupils to keep fit and active. Well-planned lessons and teachers' specialist knowledge enable pupils to increase their level of skill and understanding. For example, effective use of questioning and modelling in a Year 2 swimming lesson resulted in pupils' improved stroke technique.
35. A new programme of study in PSHE, including relationships education, has recently been introduced and its content and resources shared with parents. Topics, including reactions to situations and conflict resolution, provide pupils with strategies for managing their emotions. In the early years, children learn about different feelings and ideas for self-help if they are sad or worried. This prepares pupils to face personal challenges when they arise.
36. The revised behaviour strategy offers pupils clear guidance. As a result, pupils are well behaved and courteous. They understand the consequences of their decisions and trust their teachers will address concerns raised. Leaders are quick to respond when behaviour falls below the school's high standards. The anti-bullying strategy is effectively implemented and instances of bullying seldom occur.
37. Supervision at breaktime is well structured and staff monitor pupils' use of playground equipment closely. Staff are pro-active in supporting pupils. In the early years, an appropriate ratio of adults to children is consistently maintained.
38. Leaders recognise the importance of pupils' regular school attendance. They monitor absence in line with the current statutory guidance and work closely with families to support pupils when needed. The local authority is informed when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.
39. Leaders promote pupils' welfare through a rigorous approach to health and safety. Appropriate safety checks are routinely carried out and monitored by leaders and facilities are well maintained. Fire evacuation notices and signage are clearly displayed, staff are well trained and regular fire drills reduce the potential risk to pupils in the event of fire.

40. Suitable medical facilities and well-stocked first aid kits cater for pupils who are unwell. Staff store medicine safely and maintain detailed first aid records. Leaders arrange regular staff training and paediatric first aid support for children in the early years during school hours and off-site visits.
41. Children in the early years increase their physical development through regular PE and outdoor sessions. Equipment, including a climbing wall, tunnels, balance bikes and obstacle courses, constructed by the children using crates and tyres, enables children to practise skills in co-ordination, balance and strength. During indoor activities, for instance in music, dance movements and hand actions heighten children's positional awareness. Adults form nurturing and purposeful relationships with children and tailor conversations and activities thoughtfully to support children's personal development.

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

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

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

43. A well-planned curriculum develops pupils' early financial awareness in preparation for their future lives. For example, children in the early years practise money transactions during role-play activities. In Year 2, pupils learn about savings accounts from a visiting speaker and problem-solve real life scenarios in numeracy.
44. Leaders have recently introduced a 'Yorkshire curriculum' to enable pupils to acquire relevant knowledge of wider subjects set against the backdrop of their locality. Topics are carefully planned to complement learning, including studying Barbara Hepworth in art, castles in history, famous inventors in design technology and a Year 2 class reader about Richard III. Leaders arrange visits, such as to Sandal Castle in Wakefield and the National Railway Museum in York, to enhance pupils' understanding. In the early years, for example, children learn about Pontefract liquorice during a workshop. An innovative curriculum allows pupils to deepen their subject knowledge while developing a sense of pride in their local area.
45. Leaders emphasise the importance of mutual respect through PSHE lessons and philosophy-based assemblies which highlight key themes, including kindness, diversity and individuality. They select texts carefully to provide pupils with strategies to promote fairness, for example, in dispelling gender stereotypes. During visits to places of cultural interest and regular food tasting sessions, pupils learn to appreciate traditions different from their own. This helps them to value their own diversity and respect others' views.
46. Pupils are introduced to potential future careers from an early age. Leaders arrange careers fairs and talks by parents and students, most recently in photography, so that pupils develop an understanding of various occupations. Older pupils express aspirations for their future careers including as farmers, vets and footballers. Children in the early years dress up, for example, as doctors, nurses and firefighters to listen to guest speakers explain their occupations. In this way, pupils develop an understanding of the world of work as a foundation for their future lives.
47. Leaders ensure pupils have smooth transitions to their next stage of learning. Adults in the early years work in close collaboration with Year 1 teachers. Pupils in Year 2 meet teachers from their future schools and learn about routines and expectations through special assemblies. At the start of each academic year, pupils create class flags and codes of conduct to encourage teamwork and help them adjust to new year groups.
48. Leaders provide regular opportunities for pupils to have meaningful conversations about moral issues, including during classroom discussions, stories and assemblies. They encourage pupils to express their opinions confidently and listen to others respectfully. Consequently, pupils become more familiar with different perspectives around right and wrong.
49. Pupils recognise their wider responsibilities as a result of varied leadership opportunities available to them, including as food councillors, scientists, charity ambassadors and prefects. Pupils show sensitive awareness of others' needs when organising fund-raising events and supporting peers.
50. Pupils engage actively with their community and lead event planning, such as 'Feel-Good Friday'. This enables them to increase their awareness of how they can enrich the lives of others. They take

part in singing performances for local residents and share chocolate and kindness notes during visits to local businesses.

51. Leaders plan activities so that pupils learn the importance of fair systems. For example, pupils vote in elections for house captains and school councillors, increasing their understanding of democracy, and take part in a court room trial role play linked to a history topic about rulers.
52. In the early years, leaders arrange suitable opportunities to promote children's social development. Adults act as positive role models so that children develop successful friendships. Through stories, workshops and educational visits, children are encouraged to experience a range of wider social situations. Clear routines, including hanging their coats and registering their arrival, enable children to develop independence and understand behaviour expectations for their future lives.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. Through frequent visits to the school and regular meetings with safeguarding leaders, governors assure themselves that the safeguarding policy is appropriately implemented. The policy reflects the current statutory guidance and staff contribute towards its annual review. Comprehensive measures, including those for children in the early years, are in place to protect pupils from harm and neglect.
55. Safeguarding leaders are suitably trained to carry out their roles. They make referrals promptly, when needed, and seek advice from specialist agencies. Detailed record-keeping informs their decision-making. Leaders remain vigilant to the possibility of wider risks in order to ensure pupils' welfare and wellbeing.
56. Staff are knowledgeable about the school's safeguarding procedures and recognise their responsibilities in protecting pupils from harm. They follow suitable procedures to report low-level concerns, including any that arise about the conduct of staff. Staff use their training to remain alert to potential safeguarding issues, such as protecting pupils from unsuitable external influences.
57. Trusting relationships between pupils and staff ensure that pupils' concerns are listened to and addressed. Leaders provide pupils with access to designated wellbeing staff and arrange regular pupil surveys. Staff use their detailed knowledge of the pupils to respond quickly to any changes in their behaviour.
58. Suitable measures are in place to allow leaders to monitor internet use. Regular testing of systems is carried out. In this way, leaders limit pupils' access to inappropriate websites.
59. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online at home and in school. They speak confidently about the dangers of sharing personal information and communicating with strangers.
60. Leaders in the early years are vigilant about the safe use and storage of electronic devices.
61. All required safer recruitment checks are carried out before a person starts work at the school and are recorded in a single central record of appointments (SCR).

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Wakefield Grammar Pre-Preparatory School
Department for Education number	384/6121
Registered charity number	1088415
Address	Wakefield Grammar Pre-Preparatory School Margaret Street Wakefield West Yorkshire WF1 2DG
Phone number	01924 231618
Email address	preprep@wgsf.net
Website	wgsf.org.uk/wgpps
Proprietor	Wakefield Grammar School Foundation
Chair	Mr Martin Shevill
Headteacher	Mrs Emma Gill
Age range	3 to 7
Number of pupils	174
Date of previous inspection	11 to 14 January 2022

Information about the school

63. Wakefield Grammar Pre-Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school located in West Yorkshire. It is part of the Wakefield Grammar School Foundation, which is a registered charity. The school is overseen by a board of governors. The current chair of governors took up their role in December 2023.
64. There are 64 children in the early years comprising one Nursery class and two Reception classes.
65. The school has identified 24 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. The school has identified English as an additional language for 33 pupils, a very small number of whom receive additional support.
67. The school states its aims are to make learning fun and exciting by igniting pupils' curiosity, building on their interests and developing the talents, passions and potential that will help them on their way to a successful, high-achieving future. It seeks to develop pupils who respect diversity and show empathy for those around them. The school aims to encourage pupils to build resilience and embrace challenge. It endeavours to create an environment where pupils support and learn from each other and celebrate each other's success.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

11 to 13 March 2025

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

69. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and an assembly
- 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
- discussions with learning support staff and visits to facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

70. 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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