ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

25 to 27 March 2025

Avondale Preparatory School

27–29 High Street

Bulford

Salisbury

Wiltshire

SP4 9DR

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 foster an inclusive and nurturing school community where pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted, including through a comprehensive approach to risk management. They review policies and procedures to ensure that regulations and statutory guidance are followed and that the Standards are met.

2. Leaders seek the views of all stakeholders in order to reflect on provision and improve the school. They communicate effectively with parents so that they are well informed about their children's learning. They listen to the views of pupils and communicate the value of their academic and personal achievements, which promotes pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence.

3. The school's curriculum develops pupils' knowledge and skills in all the required areas. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme ensures that pupils are taught to respect others. Pupils understand the importance of keeping healthy through an effective physical education (PE) programme. Leaders are proactive in ensuring that pupils' mental health and emotional needs and wellbeing are promoted.

4. Pupils across the school make good progress and achieve well. The curriculum is adapted so that effective support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Suitable resources and strategies are used to meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). However, the curriculum is not consistently adapted to provide sufficient challenge for pupils with higher prior attainment to enable them to learn as effectively as possible.

5. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons that engage pupils in their learning. Specialist teachers develop pupils' individuality and creativity in music, art and design and technology. Teachers assess pupils' learning effectively so that they know what pupils do well and where they need to improve. However, teachers' strategies to enable pupils to think and learn for themselves are inconsistently effective.

6. In the early years, leaders ensure that children develop in all the required areas of learning through well-planned activities. Staff create opportunities to encourage curiosity through the skilful use of resources in indoor and outdoor areas. Children explore, investigate and develop communication and language skills as they play and learn in stimulating environments.

7. The proprietor and leaders ensure that health and safety laws are complied with, and that the school's premises are secure. Robust checks, record-keeping and detailed risk assessments are in place to provide a suitable environment. Staff receive appropriate training which ensures that they have the required knowledge and skills with regard to fire safety and first aid provision.

8. Leaders share the school's behaviour policy with pupils so that they follow rules and understand the processes for rewards and sanctions. Pupils are aware of the different needs of learners and behave well. Leaders keep and review appropriate records of behavioural incidents. Behaviour has improved over time due to the effective promotion of school rules and values, including in assemblies.

9. Pupils take on roles of responsibility and perform their duties considerately. Pupils are helpful and kind to others. They initiate ideas to help manage their emotions through the 'calm club' and the

'shush shed'. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop skills for the future through the curriculum and recreational activities.

10. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. The proprietor and leaders regularly monitor the school' safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that they reflect current statutory guidance, and staff are regularly updated so that they are vigilant and can take proactive steps to protect pupils from harm. Safer recruitment procedures are followed and required pre-employment checks are carried out thoroughly. However, at the start of the inspection, the single central record of appointments (SCR) was missing one required entry regarding a prohibition from management check. This was rectified during the inspection.

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 the monitoring of the SCR to ensure that it always records all pre-employment checks as required
- ensure that the teaching strategies used to enable pupils to think and learn for themselves are consistently effective
- ensure that pupils with higher prior attainment always receive sufficient challenge to develop their learning as much as possible.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders in the school create an inclusive and supportive environment that promotes pupils' wellbeing. They share the aims and values of the school effectively, including through whole-school assemblies and in lessons.

12. Leaders demonstrate a strategic approach to the management of risk by robustly reviewing and improving policies and procedures. They respond swiftly to any recommendations made in external audits that they have commissioned. Leaders ensure that staff assess potential risks in areas of provision that they are responsible for and take steps to mitigate these effectively. Risk assessments are detailed and comprehensive.

13. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of school leaders and ensures that they have appropriate knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities. The proprietor supports the professional development of leaders, including by facilitating coaching and mentoring when this is likely to be beneficial.

14. Leaders undertake careful and effective self-evaluation. They regularly evaluate different areas of provision in the school and take appropriate actions. For instance, they have made changes to the way that communication is shared with parents, to which parents have responded positively. In addition, pupils' attendance has improved, and behavioural incidents have reduced over time, as a result of leaders' actions.

15. Leaders listen to the views of parents and pupils through surveys and school council representatives. They encourage pupils to share ideas for improvements and then act upon them.

16. Leaders ensure that the school adheres to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan is in place and reviewed regularly. Leaders make adjustments to the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils who have SEND, including those who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They ensure that no pupils are discriminated against by any aspect of the school's provision.

17. The school shares all the required information with parents, mainly through the school's website. Pupils' achievements are shared with their parents through regular reports and meetings so that they are well informed. In the early years, leaders ensure that children's development is shared in appropriate ways through online platforms and daily interaction with parents. Parents share in their children's learning through events such as 'stay and play' so that parents are aware of how their children learn. The school provides the local authority with all the required information relating to any funded pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

18. The proprietor has oversight of the complaints policy and ensures that it is effectively implemented. The complaints policy sets out clear procedures and is shared with parents on the school's website. Leaders communicate closely with parents to encourage the swift resolution of any complaints. A suitable record of complaints, and of any actions taken in response to these, is in place.

19. Leaders foster a close partnership with the local church, and families of pupils in the school, to help develop their sense of community. They liaise effectively with relevant external agencies, such as educational psychologists and speech and language therapists from the local council, to support the wellbeing of the pupils.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The curriculum promotes pupils' development of knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of subjects. It is taught through suitable schemes of work that typically meet the requirements and needs of pupils at each stage. Well-planned assemblies, which complement the curriculum, promote pupils' wellbeing in line with the school's aims and ethos. In the early years, the curriculum promotes children's development in all areas of learning, following the needs and interests of the children. However, in the prep school, schemes of work are not consistently adapted to provide sufficient challenge to meet the needs of pupils with higher prior attainment in all subjects.

22. Children in the early years develop their linguistic skills using the sounds that letters make to begin to read and write. They develop their speaking and listening skills as they communicate with their peers and adults and listen to stories. In the prep school, pupils learn how to spell unfamiliar words in groups that are based on their prior attainment. They develop new vocabulary through well-chosen texts and use these in their writing, occasionally using dictionaries and technology to aid them. Pupils develop their linguistic skills and cultural knowledge in Spanish lessons.

23. Pupils' creative and aesthetic skills are well developed across the school by knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist teachers. Pupils learn to appreciate music and develop their creativity and individuality through their compositions. Older pupils work collaboratively to compose and perform music linked to topic themes such as World War 2. In art and design and technology, pupils engage with work by British and world artists, deepening their understanding of how to create effects in their own work. They regularly give and accept critiques of their work to make improvements, and produce skilful drawings, clay models and woven objects.

24. Pupils develop mathematical skills systematically through suitable schemes of work which develop their understanding of concepts. Pupils apply what they know to solve problems in mathematics and across the curriculum. For instance, in geography, pupils calculate how much water they could save by changing habits or calculate food miles in a shopping basket. Children in the early years apply their understanding of number in activities such as investigating patterns on insects.

25. Pupils develop their scientific knowledge and skills in lessons and on trips to nearby learning centres to find out about plant and animal life and sustainability. They develop technological skills across a range of software and occasionally use devices to research topics.

26. Leaders monitor teaching and learning to make improvements and ensure that fundamental British values are not undermined. Teachers plan lessons using good-quality resources to engage pupils in their learning and enable good progress. They use effective behaviour management strategies so that pupils behave well. Teachers are knowledgeable and help pupils gain new knowledge and skills. However, teachers' strategies to enable pupils to think critically and learn for themselves are not always as effective as possible.

27. Pupils who have SEND are supported through small group or one-to-one additional support. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND uses a structured process for identifying needs. Pupils' academic and personal targets, including those relating to attendance, are tracked and addressed effectively so that pupils make good progress from their starting points.

28. Most pupils who speak EAL are proficient in English language skills. Where required, effective strategies such as pre-teaching of topic-based language, and the use of hand signs to teach the sounds that letters make, enable good progress.

29. Pupils achieve well and successfully move on to secondary and senior schools of their choice. They are well motivated and apply effort in their learning. A suitable framework is in place to evaluate pupils' work and performance regularly and thoroughly. Pupils' performance is shared with parents so that they are aware of their child's progress. Teachers assess pupils' work in a variety of ways but do not use this information consistently to adapt their plans.

30. Children in the early years are provided with varied experiences which enable effective communication and language development. Staff interact well with children so that children communicate their interests and develop their confidence. Children are taught to use resources around the classroom to help them with their learning. Children are curious and creative and enjoy exploring and finding things out for themselves.

31. The extra-curricular programme enables pupils to learn new skills, such as first aid. Sports such as hockey and rounders develop pupils' physical and team-building skills. Pupils increase their understanding about nutrition and develop their mathematical skills in cookery club. They develop their creativity during needlework club and their linguistic skills in Spanish club.

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. The PSHE curriculum and assemblies enable pupils to develop understanding of the importance of showing respect for all. Pupils demonstrate kindness and care towards younger pupils in the school. They are taught that everyone learns differently and understand how to treat others with mutual respect. Pupils learn how to show respect for different types of families and people of different sex and sexual orientation.

34. Leaders actively promote pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. Children in the early years are taught to recognise their emotions using 'colour monsters'. They learn how to recognise what might trigger emotions such as sadness or anger and how to calm themselves or get help from an adult. Pupils develop their own ideas through the 'shush shed' and 'calm club' on the playground, where they go to find a quiet space to manage their emotions. They recognise the potential of music, yoga and meditation to help them feel calm. 'Little troopers' club is held weekly to foster the wellbeing of pupils who have parents in the military.

35. Through the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme, older pupils are taught how to recognise misogyny and about the dangers of sharing images online. Pupils across the school learn in an age-appropriate manner about different types of healthy relationships and the importance of consent. Pupils are taught how to develop positive relationships and deal with peer pressure. Parents are consulted about the content of RSE, in line with regulations.

36. Well-planned assemblies and lessons in religious education (RE) help to develop pupils' spiritual and moral understanding. Pupils are taught about a range of different religions and their spiritual perspectives and practices.

37. Leaders have put in place a structured approach to behaviour management, known as the 'Avondale way'. Positive behaviours are modelled by staff and reinforced in lessons. School rules are shared in classrooms and promoted by staff so that pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils recognise their achievements on class behaviour charts, which improves their self-esteem. Pupils demonstrate positive behaviours such as holding doors open and greeting others politely. Good behaviour is rewarded and in instances where behaviour is not good, leaders and staff use effective methods to address and resolve issues, including by encouraging pupils to recognise each other's perspectives and feelings.

38. The school has developed a proactive approach to managing bullying and shares its anti-bullying policy effectively. Bullying rarely occurs, but when it does, leaders take appropriate actions to support those pupils affected. Leaders keep a suitable log of behavioural and bullying incidents and how the school has responded to these.

39. Pupils are well supervised during breaks and at lunch. Staff encourage pupils to play together collaboratively and to demonstrate empathy and kindness towards each other. Appropriate staff-to-child ratios are maintained and closely monitored by leaders in the early years.

40. Admission and attendance records are maintained accurately and in line with statutory guidance. Leaders actively promote attendance with pupils and parents, which has resulted in improved rates

of attendance. The school informs the local authority whenever any pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.

41. Leaders ensure that relevant health and safety laws are complied with through regular checks and maintenance of the premises and equipment. Regular fire evacuation drills ensure that pupils know what to do in the case of emergency. Robust systems have been developed to promote safety in the physical environment of the school. This includes developed outdoor lighting and maintenance of trees around the school's premises. There are appropriate outdoor areas for pupils to participate in PE lessons and playtimes.

42. First aid is administered in a timely and competent manner. Sufficient staff are appropriately trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid in the early years. The medical facilities are suitable to meet pupils' needs.

43. The PE curriculum is well planned. Children in the early years develop their fine and gross motor skills. They learn to navigate obstacles and develop balance and co-ordination during gymnastics and dance. Older pupils develop their skills in team sports such as hockey, netball and football and develop swimming skills in nearby off-site facilities.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

45. Leaders actively promote British values such as the rule of law and individual liberty, alongside the school's values of kindness, good manners and self-belief, including through well-planned assemblies. Pupils learn about democracy through voting for school council representatives. They are encouraged to share their views with school leaders and feel listened to. Leaders have responded to pupils' suggestions, which has resulted in changes around the school playground and in classrooms.

46. PSHE lessons teach pupils to show respect and tolerance for people of diverse beliefs and for different types of families. Specially chosen texts are used to teach pupils about topics such as discrimination and disabilities. Pupils discuss the impact of historical events on the lives of different groups of people. Events such as Commonwealth Day deepen pupils' understanding of different cultures. Parents work with school leaders to share food, customs and traditions at these events.

47. Leaders invite speakers in and plan visits for pupils to learn about different careers and services that contribute to society, such as the fire service, police force and air ambulance. Pupils learn about the contributions made by the British Army, including through visits to establishments such as the Army Flying Museum.

48. Pupils contribute to the local community. They sing to people in the local care home and collect food for those in need in the community, which is distributed through the local church at harvest festival. Pupils raise money for national charities, including those that support veterans from the armed services and their families.

49. The school provides opportunities for pupils to develop their skills for the future using facilities in the local area. Children in the early years visit the local library to borrow books. Older pupils visit Stonehenge whilst learning road safety during their 'bikeability' course. Pupils sing at family church services twice a year. They visit the local graveyard on Remembrance Day to pay their respects for members of the armed forces who have died in the line of duty. Older pupils attend residential courses to help them develop independence and resilience. The school supports pupils to achieve well in entrance examinations for schools that require them.

50. Pupils' leadership skills and sense of responsibility are developed in age-appropriate ways. Pupils look after their own school environment and promote sustainability in their daily lives. In the Nursery, children tidy up the equipment they play with and grow plants. Older pupils help to clear up at lunchtimes, recycle paper and develop ideas to improve sustainability, such as using refillable glue sticks. Pupils are taught how they can make small changes in their habits to save water. Pupils carry out leadership roles when helping to organise assemblies, the summer fair or events such as book sales.

51. Children in the early years learn about the importance of kindness and respect, following school rules as they work and play together with their peers. Pupils are taught how to develop a balanced approach to arguments. They share their own views and respect different viewpoints. For instance, pupils at all ages are encouraged to express their points of view when they interpret characters and their actions. They are also taught to listen to, and respect, opposing views. Staff ensure that any discussions that contain political content or themes are carried out impartially and without any bias.

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52. Pupils develop their economic education in age-appropriate ways. In the early years, children learn about buying and selling when they role play in the ice cream shop and flower shop. Older pupils discuss entrepreneurial ways in which they can raise money to spend on something of their choice or to help people in need. They learn about how to manage a budget and calculate expenditure and profit.

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. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and that safeguarding policies and procedures reflect current statutory guidance. Leaders maintain contact with the local authority to ensure that they are aware of any contextual or local risks that may arise and take steps to mitigate them.

55. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond effectively whenever safeguarding concerns are raised, including by liaising with relevant external safeguarding partners and referring concerns onto them where necessary. Safeguarding logs are detailed and record decisions and actions taken. The safeguarding team monitors logs regularly to look for patterns and trends and adapts weekly safeguarding updates to staff so that all are appropriately informed of any issues to look out for.

56. Leaders ensure staff are trained at least annually so that they are aware of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and relevant statutory guidance. Staff are confident to identify, log and report concerns. They are also aware of how to report any concerns or allegations about any adult working in the school. The safeguarding team is suitably trained for its role.

57. The school makes effective use of resources from a national safeguarding charity to teach pupils how and when to report a concern. Pupils are aware of trusted adults to whom they can talk through posters displayed around the school. Leaders provide appropriate mechanisms for pupils to report a concern anonymously such as through posting notes in 'worry monsters' in classrooms.

58. The proprietor provides suitable oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements to ensure that they are effective. Suitable mechanisms are in place to filter and monitor online activity and to test these systems. Alerts are followed up quickly and actions taken are recorded. Leaders and the proprietor take steps to respond to any recommendations from the local authority safeguarding audit to make improvements to policies and procedures.

59. Leaders demonstrate a good understanding of safer recruitment processes. Leaders ensure that all adults who work with pupils are subject to all required pre-employment checks before they commence working at the school. Leaders typically record information about these checks thoroughly on the SCR. However, there was one missing entry at the start of the inspection. Leaders rectified this before the inspection concluded.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

60. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Avondale Preparatory School
Department for Education number	865/6005
Address	Avondale Preparatory School 27–29 High Street Bulford Salisbury Wiltshire SP4 9DR
Phone number	01980 632387
Email address	office@avondaleschool.org
Website	www.avondaleschool.org
Proprietor	Mr David Allison
Co-headteachers	Mrs Georgina Barrington-Tolan and Mrs Celina Rae
Age range	2 to 11 years
Number of pupils	90
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 February 2022

Information about the school

61. Avondale Preparatory School is a non-selective, co-educational independent day school. It was founded in 1923 and relocated to its current site in Bulford in 1957. The school is organised into the early years and a prep school. The school has been under its current proprietorship since May 2024. The two co-headteachers also took up their appointments in May 2024.

62. There are 33 children in the early years, of which 28 are in the Nursery.

63. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

64. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 12 pupils.

65. The school states its aims are to spark curiosity and open pupils' eyes to the wonder of learning, to inspire confidence so that pupils embrace new challenges without fear of failure and to foster a culture of kindness so that pupils are happy and caring members of the school community.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	25 to 27 March 2025

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

67. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with the co-headteachers, 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.

68. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

69. The previous inspection was by Ofsted. This is the first inspection of the school by ISI.

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.
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