



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Carleton House Preparatory School

June 2022

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School's Details

School	Carleton House Preparatory School			
DfE number	341/6004			
Registered charity number	505310			
Address	Carleton House Preparatory School 145 Menlove Avenue Liverpool Merseyside L18 3EE			
Telephone number	0151 7220756			
Email address	schooloffice@carletonhouse.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Sandy Coleman			
Chair of governors	Mr Gareth Beck			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	182			
	EYFS	47		
	Lower school	45	Upper school	90
Inspection dates	29 March 2022 and 16–17 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Carleton House Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. It was founded by a group of parents in 1974 to replace a preparatory school which had closed, with the aim of preserving the traditions and values of a Catholic education. It is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, new chair of governors and a new deputy headteacher have been appointed.
- 1.2 The school is divided into three sections: the Early Years Foundation Stage which comprises Nursery for children aged 3, who may attend on a full or part-time basis, and Reception; lower school for pupils in Years 1 and 2; and upper school for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- 1.3 The inspection took into account the circumstances experienced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic. The inspection took place over two different dates due to illness on the team at the time of the initial visit.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to help pupils fulfil their potential intellectually, morally, spiritually, emotionally and physically. It seeks to inspire a love of learning, to foster intellectual curiosity and expand cultural horizons. In keeping with its mission statement, 'We love, live and learn with Jesus', the school aims to be an inclusive and welcoming family community and thus a place of growth, self-discovery and celebration, rooted in its core Catholic values.

About the pupils

- 1.5 The majority of pupils live within a 10-mile radius of the school and come from families with business or professional backgrounds and a wide range of cultural heritages. Approximately half the pupils are from Roman Catholic families. The school's own assessment data and results of standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 11 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional help. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for two pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Those children identified as the most able by the school have the curriculum modified for them and for other pupils because of their special talents in sport, drama, music and art.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are

maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils apply themselves exceptionally well in lessons and demonstrate an excellent attitude to learning.
- From an early stage, pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills; they articulately express their ideas and over time develop a sophisticated use of vocabulary, sentence structure and syntax in their writing.
- Pupils across the school demonstrate highly competent information and communication technology (ICT) skills for their age, confidently applying their skills across the full range of the curriculum.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent and demonstrates a deep understanding of the values and virtues that help them appreciate the non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils demonstrate an excellent and hugely positive understanding of the importance of inclusivity and appreciation of faiths and cultures other than their own.
- Pupils enthusiastically take on a range of responsibilities and show they have a well-developed sense of care for others less fortunate than themselves.

Recommendations

- Ensure that children in the EYFS are able to fully develop their decision-making skills and extend their learning as strongly in the outdoor area as they do in the indoor environment.
- Continue to develop curriculum links to further extend the pupils' thinking and skills for analysis and synthesis.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.3 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.4 The school's aims to develop a love of learning, foster intellectual curiosity and expand cultural horizons are successfully met. Pupils from the EYFS onwards make excellent progress from a broad range of starting points with almost all the youngest children achieving the expected level of development by the time they leave the EYFS setting. Levels of attainment rise rapidly as pupils move through the school as observed in lesson observations, scrutiny of books and the results of nationally

standardised and internal assessments. Pupils of all ages make progress at least in line with and in many cases exceeding national age- and ability-related expectations. Pupils achieve excellent results in entrance examinations to senior schools with high standards of entry, and a high proportion gain scholarships for academic success, music and sport. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the range of subjects, including for online learning, is suitable for their children and a similarly high proportion also agreed that teaching enables their children to make progress.

- 3.5 Pupils with additional needs make similar progress to other pupils because of the excellent quality of intervention provided. Sensitively targeted support in lessons is well managed, overseen and reviewed regularly. Pupils confidently report that teachers always find a way of helping them understand areas of learning that are more challenging for them. Pupils with English as an additional language make excellent progress in using English; their needs are assessed, and individual programmes of support put in place. The most able pupils extend their own learning in lessons and successfully complete projects of their own. Subject staff are particularly skilful in providing appropriate levels of challenge.
- 3.6 Pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum due to the reflective learning approaches they are taught from an early age. This includes the use of directed, independent, reflective time (DIRT) each morning where pupils go over work they have completed and review where they could improve or consolidate understanding for key skills. Pupils enjoy their learning and across the age range are confident and curious learners who acquire new skills quickly and demonstrate high levels of understanding. Younger children demonstrate excellent understanding of the way that plants grow and successfully identify the elements they would need to thrive. Older pupils express their skills in highly creative ways to show the results of their own independent research into a range of topics, and others accurately identify the physical and human elements of a seaside town successfully using a range of resources including aerial photographs to extend their learning. Teachers are excellent role models who provide learning opportunities that are diverse and engaging.
- 3.7 Pupils' speaking, listening reading and writing skills develop to particularly high levels as they move through the school. Pupils are articulate and feel confident to contribute their own ideas in class and in a range of contexts. For example, younger pupils spoke confidently and clearly in their assembly on the subject of 'why rules are important', and older pupils confidently lead sessions of daily worship. Pupils entering the English-Speaking Board examinations have consistently performed well and recently the whole group achieved the highest grade. Pupils demonstrate an excellent knowledge of writing for different purposes, whether persuasively, descriptively, fiction or fact. They use an excellent range of techniques to build tension in their writing and a wide range of vocabulary to show the emotions of their characters and to make their writing interesting for the reader, as was seen in Year 6 diary entries as written by soldiers landing on the beaches of Normandy in World War 2. Older pupils display superior analytical writing skills, when considering poetry or writing in response to ethical questions, for example, when considering the impact of body image in the media. Leadership has been highly successful at developing and embedding opportunities for pupils to develop their communications skills to the full.
- 3.8 Pupils develop excellent skills for mathematics by the time they leave the school. Lessons are structured well to support and extend learning for all abilities including a strong focus on ensuring full understanding of the core concepts before moving on, resulting in high levels of progress throughout the age range. A continuous process of reflection and development by senior leaders has contributed positively to the way that pupils enjoy and engage with mathematics, demonstrated as younger pupils successfully identified numbers to 12 and explained whether they were odd or even and the reason why. Older pupils apply complex operations in algebra by applying their knowledge of underlying rules. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and skills effectively to other areas of learning such as when using coordinates and interpreting data in geography, measuring data handling in science and

when designing and building moving models in design and technology. They confidently explore their mathematical thinking and analyse different strategies to solve problems.

- 3.9 The skills pupils develop for the use of technology are at a high level by the time they leave the school. Using a range of devices, they learn how to code, use the internet for research, use presentation software with confidence, and record their work in innovative ways. Younger children in Nursery show high levels of independence and skill as they choose to use tablet devices to take photographs of their friends with excellent results. Older pupils demonstrate highly sophisticated skills and understanding when coding and writing simple algorithms, using a robot to create 2D shapes or develop their own websites including animated advertising for a product of their choice. The significant investment in external expertise, hardware and software and the introduction of a new computing curriculum as well as investment in training for staff has transformed the way that pupils use ICT across the curriculum.
- 3.10 From an early stage, pupils demonstrate effective study skills. Over time, they develop strong research skills and enjoy gathering and analysing information from a good range of sources, exploring their significance and validity and employing good reasoning skills. Pupils start to identify when they can be confident, take leadership in their learning and be resilient. This was demonstrated by younger pupils as they identified suitable sources of information to use and work collaboratively to discover interesting facts about frogs and their life cycles. Older pupils develop excellent skills for debate as they consider interesting questions such as, 'Is it possible to read the minds of others'. The school is in the early stages of developing links across curriculum areas to develop pupils' thinking and skills for analysis. Pupils confirm that where this has happened, they feel more confident to build their own bridges between different sources of information and understand the way that detail discovered in one subject area can have an impact on their understanding of other subjects.
- 3.11 Pupils are rightly proud of their excellent academic and other achievements and speak enthusiastically about the support they receive from the school. Pupils develop their own interests and talents to a high level through a range of extra-curricular opportunities which is extensive for the size of the school. Skills for the performing arts develop rapidly from an early stage as children from Nursery onwards benefit from opportunities to take part in concerts and events throughout the year. Pupils from Year 3 onwards all play an instrument and are highly successful in music board examinations up to grade 3, with a significant proportion achieving the higher grades. Skills for artistic and design endeavour are well developed. Pupils work competently with a wide range of materials and styles and enjoy exploring the techniques of a range of well-known artists.
- 3.12 Pupils actively enjoy the wide range of sports available to them. Sporting ability develops at a good level as the pupils move up the school, resulting in a good range of success in local and regional competitions. Pupils of all ages develop their physical fitness and skills for sports due to high-quality teaching and coaching. In recent times, pupils have been champion of champions in local competitions for cross country, athletics and badminton. The U11 boys football team were Catholic Schools Champions, and the quiz team won the regional final for general knowledge.
- 3.13 Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive. They are enthusiastic, curious, very supportive of each other and understand how to make positive decisions about their learning or future success. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups and consistently show the confidence to collaborate whether sorting light and heavy items in Reception or debating the best way to solve a mathematics problem in Year 6. They have a keen ability to link what they learn to contemporary issues such as the impact of World War 2 and the current situation in Ukraine. Pupils' positive attitudes are well developed by staff who provide challenge and support in equal measure and who willingly give of their time to provide sensitive help and encouragement. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt well prepared to move on to their senior schools.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 Pupils develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, enthusiastically pushing and challenging themselves to succeed. They value the culture created in the school which teaches that mistakes can be positive experiences. They feel safe, secure, valued and happy which meets the aim of the school to be an inclusive and welcoming family community. The reflective management team regularly consults pupils to develop and promote systems for personal development such as when developing the new behaviour code. The well-structured assembly programme, daily opportunities to spend time with their class teachers and a comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum provide them with an excellent framework in which to develop their knowledge of themselves and their place in the world.
- 3.16 At each stage, pupils show a good ability to make decisions about their learning and friendships. They are keen to improve and generally make good choices leading to better understanding across all facets of their life at school and home. Pupils have many opportunities to play a significant role in the way that the school works for them and are confident that their ideas and decisions are heard and acted upon. They report that they feel they are allowed ownership of their learning and they can make effective decisions to seek support if they have difficulties in their work or their personal well-being. Opportunities for the youngest children to develop decision-making skills and extend their learning in their outdoor environment are less well developed.
- 3.17 Pupils are happy to openly articulate their thoughts on spirituality in its broadest sense. The strong underlying Catholic ethos allows pupils time and space to explore their beliefs and appreciate the quiet times they have to reflect and think about their day in daily collective worship often led by the pupils themselves. Their strong spirituality was particularly evident in the way that they sang together in the choir and discussed the impact of the music on their emotions and the way that music can lift people's spirits. It was also demonstrated in the natural way that they shared prayers in the newly established prayer garden and show genuine concern and care for the feelings of others.
- 3.18 Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate an excellent moral compass and there is a tangible sense of pupils endeavouring to do the right thing. Pupils have been fully involved with the recent review of the school's behaviour code and, as a result, have an excellent understanding and respect for the guidelines now in place. They understand why communities need rules and can adapt these to the wider community, thus recognising the need to respect the country's laws. As a result, behaviour in the school is exemplary. Pupils respect the reward and sanction system and are keen to work with staff to ensure a happy and safe school environment. Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between unkindness and bullying, and they are aware that both are unacceptable.
- 3.19 Pupils develop excellent social skills. They readily support each other to achieve success, due to the deeply embedded family ethos running throughout the school community. Older pupils take pride in ensuring the happiness of the younger children during breaktimes as they organise games for them as playground buddies and provide excellent role models for them. They enjoy reading with them, preparing books for them to enjoy and provide a listening ear. Regular collaboration in class, preparation for assemblies and concerts or taking full responsibility for organising house events are all ways in which pupils demonstrate strong social awareness.
- 3.20 There is a genuine sense of mutual care evident across the school. Pupils want to make a difference and make the community a happy place. They relish taking on a wide range of responsibilities to help the smooth running of the school, and pupils of all ages take a lead in discussing concerns and issues affecting the whole community in their classes, then reporting back to the school council and senior leaders to effect change for all. They cite the introduction of new playground equipment and the completion of the prayer garden among others as successful outcomes from school council discussions. Pupils are keen to raise money in self-generated initiatives of cake sales and fun runs for charities, supporting issues close to their own hearts and lives enabling them to understand the

importance of being thankful for the contribution of others and thus learning to contribute themselves. They have a well-developed sense of responsibility for others less fortunate than themselves.

- 3.21 Pupils show high levels of curiosity, respect, tolerance and acceptance of different faiths, actively enjoying sharing their own customs with each other. Although the school is a Catholic foundation, the school welcomes pupils from many different religions and cultural traditions and this supports a natural approach to integration and acceptance. Pupils show a strong appreciation of the richness of their cultural backgrounds and show interest in each other's customs and practices. They recognise diversity within their community, yet they understand the value of equality. Their accepting and inclusive attitudes are developed through a comprehensive PSHE programme and through assemblies and regular theme days that focus on accepting everyone as an individual. Older pupils warmly welcome new children to the school and are quick to offer them support and help to ensure that they settle in quickly and are confident in their new community.
- 3.22 Pupils develop an extremely good awareness of the importance of a balanced lifestyle in terms of diet, exercise and mental and emotional health. They demonstrate a strong awareness of the importance of making good food choices in order to stay healthy and explain that it is important to have a balance of different food groups on the plate. Pupils of all ages enjoy developing sporting skills and are keen participants in sport and PE activities and enjoy representing their school in matches against other schools. They have a strong understanding of the negative impact of the use of tobacco or drugs as demonstrated in a PSHE lesson in Year 6. Pupils are very aware of the need to be emotionally healthy and enjoy taking time for reflection, taking part in mindfulness sessions and yoga or listening to music and having time with their friends. They are particularly appreciative of the opportunities made available for them and for teachers taking time to allow them to relax in the local park before potentially stressful events such as entrance tests or examinations. Their awareness of the need to be safe when using the internet or mobile phones is extremely strong from a very early stage. The strong focus on e-safety across the school in PSHE and ICT lessons as well as assemblies and themed events results in pupils having a strong awareness of what to do in all circumstances including when receiving material they are not comfortable with and keeping their personal information secure. Pupils are confident they know how to report concerns to a trusted adult, and all those who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school is a safe place.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and the safeguarding governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Diane Gardiner	Reporting inspector
Mr Stuart Bain	Compliance team inspector (Deputy principal, ISA school)
Mr Umeshchandra Raja	Team inspector (Former head, ISA school)