



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report
For Schools with Residential Provision**

Millfield Preparatory School

January 2023

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School's Details

School	Millfield Preparatory School		
DfE number	933/6115		
Registered charity number	310283		
Address	Millfield Preparatory School Edgarley Hall Glastonbury Somerset BA6 8LD		
Telephone number	01458 832446		
Email address	prepoffice@millfieldschool.com		
Headmaster	Mr Dan Thornburn		
Chair of governors	Mr Roland Rudd		
Proprietor	Millfield Board of Governors		
Age range	2 to 13		
Number of pupils on roll	472		
	Day pupils	348	Boarders 124
	Pre-prep	82	Prep 390
Inspection dates	24 to 26 January 2023		

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Millfield Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school located on the outskirts of Glastonbury. Founded in 1946, it is part of the Millfield Foundation, which is a charitable trust and whose trustees provide governance. The Foundation also oversees the senior school, which was inspected at the same time in a separate inspection. The school accommodates boarders from Year 3 to Year 8 in three houses for male pupils and two houses for female pupils. These are located on or adjacent to the school site.
- 1.2 The headmaster was appointed in January 2022.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to enable each pupil to develop their own unique talents and abilities by providing an all-round education that encourages them to explore the range of opportunities available to them in order to discover what they enjoy and at what they excel. The school aims to help pupils of all abilities build firm foundations for their future lives by encouraging them to be kind, curious, challenging and brilliant.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come mainly from professional family backgrounds, with day pupils living within a 20-mile radius of the school. Boarders come from across the country, particularly the home-counties, alongside international boarders from European, Asian, African and American countries. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 103 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, of whom 91 receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 61 pupils of whom 22 receive specialist support in this regard. Pupils identified as being the most able and those with special talents academically or in sport, art, music and drama are given additional support by specialist teachers and coaches specific to their needs.

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, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. 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 (EYFS) 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, including the boarding NMS. 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.

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, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, 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, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, 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. Boarders have access to a suitable programme of activities.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior 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. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Boarders are supported to develop good relationships with fellow pupils and staff which are based on mutual trust and respect. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 13, 17 and 21 are 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 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 3, 5–12, 15, 16 and 20 are met.**

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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.12 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 19 and 22 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.13 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. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.14 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 4, 7 and 23 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.15 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. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.16 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.17 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, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.18 **The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.19 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 wellbeing of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 **The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 2 are 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 achieve excellence in both curricular and extra-curricular activities.
 - Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning. They are highly motivated, collaborative and engage fully in lessons.
 - Pupils are articulate and confident in communication.
 - Pupils' study skills are strong, supported by a school culture of enquiry-led learning. However, when undertaking research pupils are over-reliant on online sources of information.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils' deep social awareness enables them to be strongly supportive of each other's achievements.
 - Pupils have high self-esteem and resilience. They understand how to improve in their learning.
 - Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle.
 - Pupils make a generous contribution to the school community.

Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
- Enable pupils to broaden their reading skills by more strongly encouraging them to read for pleasure.
 - Enable pupils to draw on a greater range of information sources when undertaking research activities.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils achieve highly and make strong progress in relation to their abilities. Data provided by the school indicate that pupils at the end of Year 8 have consistently achieved above national expectations compared to those taking the same tests nationally. Likewise, almost all pupils at the end of Year 6 met, and the majority exceeded, national expectations. In 2022, the majority of EYFS children achieved a good level of development in the prime areas and these results were reflected in outcomes recorded for 2020 and 2021. Those pupils with SEND are highly successful in matching the progress of their

peers as a result of the carefully structured individual support provided by school leaders through the Learning Development Centre. Pupils with EAL also achieve strongly as a result of the school's skilfully delivered provision. Many pupils have gained scholarships and exhibitions for academic achievement, sporting ability and success in art, music and design technology on progression to the senior school. Pupils' excellent academic achievement is a consequence of the pupils' positive attitudes to learning, supported by teaching which shows comprehensive subject knowledge, combined with excellent learning resources. The school succeeds in meeting its aim to enable pupils to develop their individual academic talents.

- 3.6 Pupils are consistently positive, focused and display mature attitudes to learning. They engage with enthusiasm, showing initiative and resilience in their approach. Year 8 pupils explained with conviction the school-wide strategies that enable them to successfully overcome blocks to learning. For example, by reading the question, checking online, asking a buddy and then asking the teacher. Pupils frequently take inspiration from lessons to undertake their own independent research to deepen their understanding. For example, Year 8 pupils made detailed notes based on their own research in history to revise for an examination. Pupils' collaborative working skills are excellent and enhance their learning across the curriculum. Older pupils' purposeful collaboration in a cookery activity enabled them to successfully prepare a Chinese style meal. Pupils readily identified the key skills needed for successfully working together such as patience, flexibility and listening. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, nearly all parents agreed that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life. Inspection evidence confirms this.
- 3.7 Pupils' communication skills are excellent. They are articulate, responding with clarity to questions in lessons. Year 7 pupils gave detailed and succinct explanations of how they had created etching designs on projects. They listen actively when working in collaboration with one another. EYFS children gave clear and well-expressed ideas for activities they could undertake to develop their topic about penguins. Pupils have outstanding writing skills. For example, Year 8 pupils' written responses in English to nineteenth-century poetry, were nuanced, detailed and successfully argued, supported by highly effective feedback from teachers. Pupils apply their communication skills with significant impact across all areas of the curriculum, as seen when Year 4 pupils concisely explained the outcomes of investigations in mathematics. Pupils have well-developed reading skills and many with SEND have made significant progress to improve these skills to meet their potential. Whilst pupils make effective use of their reading skills to support their learning, many do not broaden these skills further by choosing to read for pleasure.
- 3.8 Pupils are deeply motivated to gain new knowledge and have well-developed skills for learning. They are naturally inquisitive, readily undertaking investigations. In science, Year 8 pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of how to make a simple source of electricity using fruit. They have empathic understanding of key historical events, such as the battle of Agincourt, and can readily explain geographical phenomena. Year 8 pupils successfully explained the causes of coastal erosion. Pupils demonstrate bold artistic flair in the extensive range of 2-D and 3-D art works displayed around the school. They are skilfully proficient in design technology (DT), showing innovation in design and precision in the manufacture of their projects. They display strong musical expertise. Year 7 pupils rapidly developed the techniques necessary to perform vibrantly on a range of African drums. A large proportion of pupils actively participate with singing activities, performing with great verve. They have secure skills in learning modern foreign languages. More able Year 8 pupils' extensive knowledge of Spanish vocabulary enabled them to make rapid and accurate translations into English from a video excerpt. Pupils' adept co-ordination skills, particularly in sport, enable many to perform at a high standard across a range of sports.
- 3.9 Pupils are confident mathematicians. They demonstrate rapid recall of mental arithmetic facts and show mastery in their numerical work. Year 5 pupils' excellent calculational skills enabled them to successfully convert improper fractions into mixed numbers. Pupils enjoy the challenge of working through complex problems, giving clear explanations for their reasoning and methods. Year 6 pupils

successfully formulated algebraic equations to calculate baby-sitting charges accounting for hours worked and travel. Pupils readily and frequently apply their mathematical skills with confidence and accuracy in other subjects. Year 7 pupils' excellent measuring skills enabled them to complete their DT projects with great precision.

- 3.10 Pupils are adept users of digital technology, skilfully using the school's virtual learning environment to support their learning across the whole curriculum. Year 8 pupils' ability to create electrical circuits both practically and then virtually enabled pupils to successfully explore and deepen their scientific understanding of the underlying concepts. Pupils readily undertake online research, for example when Year 8 pupils were exploring gothic literature in English and successfully identified the ten most interesting facts about Shelley. Pupils make excellent use of applications across many areas of learning. Year 7 pupils' proficient use of sequencing software enabled them to create complex musical compositions, blending live instrumental recordings with synthesized sounds. Pupils' success in ICT has been supported by trustees significant and ongoing investment in digital technology.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve great success outside of the formal curriculum, mostly in sport. They achieve strongly in a wide range of sports at national and international level, including fencing and skiing. Sports teams achieve outstanding success in regional and national tournaments in many different sports, including modern biathlon. Pupils achieve well in art, music and drama. They are confident and accomplished performers in the many concerts and plays arranged across the school year. Many pupils learn musical instruments achieving individual success in grade examinations, at high levels for their age and across a broad range of instruments. Many pupils participate in public speaking, performing assuredly and successfully in school organised competitions and grade examinations. Pupils do well in mathematics competitions with many achieving at national level.
- 3.12 Pupils have well-developed study skills for their age, supported and encouraged by school leaders' strong focus on enquiry led learning. They are efficient in the organisation of their books and notes. They explain with clarity how they have reached a solution, for example when Year 2 pupils justified the answers they found when completing multiplication calculations in mathematics. Pupils demonstrate excellent thinking skills, as when Year 6 pupils explained with clarity the range of successful strategies devised for simplifying ratios. They have sophisticated skills of analysis. Year 8 pupils successfully identified and differentiated between the styles and techniques used by different artists. Pupils readily hypothesise as a result of teachers frequent use of open questioning techniques. Year 1 pupils made well-considered suggestions regarding how larger objects might behave differently to smaller ones on a pendulum. Pupils thoughtfully synthesize learning from across topics to develop their understanding. Year 8 pupils astutely applied their knowledge of shoreline defences to consider the impact of these on ecology and coastal communities. Pupils demonstrate secure research skills, drawing on recommended online sources. They do not, however, make sufficient or confident use of other sources of information, such as reference books, as a result of over-reliance in teaching on ready access to online information.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are deeply self-aware for their age and emotionally mature. They have high self-esteem tempered by modesty. Year 8 pupils' drama role plays about refugees demonstrated excellent emotional control and strong self-confidence. Pupils are self-disciplined and understand that achievement comes from persistence and practice. Year 7 pupils displayed unstinting resilience when mastering a technique to accurately bisect the sides of a triangle using a pair of compasses. Pupils recognise that making mistakes is part of the learning process and are not disheartened by set-backs. Boarders recognise the importance of self-dependence, many reflecting that boarding has helped them to develop this. Whilst a small number of parents in questionnaire responses indicated concern that their children were not well-prepared for transition to senior school life, Year 8 pupils expressed

that they felt ready and confident for the next stage of their education. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils are well-prepared for the transition to senior school.

- 3.15 Pupil's social development is excellent. They form strongly productive relationships with one another showing consistent commitment to mutual support. They are open and trusting, readily working closely together to solve problems, demonstrating a willingness to undertake tasks with anyone. Pupils in Year 8 collaborated effectively when discussing in groups legal and illegal drugs. Pupils recognise and celebrate the achievements of others with genuine appreciation. Older pupils offer compassionate support to younger pupils, for example as Year 8 mentors to pupils in the junior years. Boarders recognised how boarding enables them to benefit from the school's many opportunities to develop their individual talents, and that being part of such a community gives them unique support. This sense of community leads them to readily offer mutual support to one another and to invest in the corporate life of their residential setting. For example, Year 8 boarders explained with enthusiasm their responsibilities in ensuring dormitories are kept tidy and that their laundry is duly processed and returned safely to each individual.
- 3.16 Pupils take earnest personal responsibility for their own safety and health. They have a clear understanding of the link between physical fitness and mental well-being, striving to achieve a sensible balance in their lives. They understand the need for a healthy diet and good nutrition. They are mature in their consideration of work-life balance supported by the school's specialist sports coaches and fitness advisors who enable pupils to temper their ambition against their long-term needs. Pupils have a clear awareness of the steps they need to take to remain safe when working both online and out in the world. They also have clear strategies for managing their own mental health needs and can readily identify where to turn to for support, demonstrating an eagerness and resilience to both resolve these needs for themselves wherever possible, but also a readiness to seek support from others when required, such as the school's medical staff and school counsellors. Boarders demonstrate high levels of personal resilience in adapting, when new, to the boarding environment, strongly supported by older boarders and boarding house staff. In questionnaire responses, nearly all pupils agreed that the school encourages them to be healthy. Inspection evidence confirms this, as seen in the high levels of enthusiastic participation in the broad variety of sporting activities offered by the school.
- 3.17 Pupils contribute generously to their school community. They recognise their responsibilities to maintain order, for instance by readily clearing up their own work spaces at the end of practical lessons. Boarders give strong mutual support to one another, especially when welcoming new boarders into their house community. They show concern for others less privileged than they are by willingly engaging with charitable fundraising events organised by the school, supporting charities locally, nationally and internationally. Pupils also readily recognise charitable needs and take the initiative to organise fundraising events on their own account, for example by selling cakes to raise funds for a local food bank. Pupils show strong empathy for the needs of others, by adapting their play in sporting competitions to enable those with specific needs to play competitively against them. Year 8 pupils successfully fulfil roles of responsibility, such as house leaders, heads of school and pupil mentors with dignity and humility.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate a sincere moral understanding. They behave well and take responsibility when they fail to meet the school's high expectations of them. During breaktimes, pupils maintain suitable standards of self-regulation when making use of the extensive outdoor equipment. They take full advantage of the many and varied facilities, such as the exercise machines, table-tennis tables and quiet covered seating areas provided by school leaders. Pupils' behaviour during lunch was excellent, both whilst waiting in the queue on entry and when eating. Pupils understand the need for rules, and comply with them to enable the safe functioning of the school. They maintain good manners at all times, both to adults and in their interactions with one another.
- 3.19 Pupils exhibit sensitive spiritual awareness and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life, supported by the strong culture of enquiry and questioning. This is underpinned in lessons such as religious studies, where teaching actively encourages pupils to think in terms of ethics and philosophy.

In discussions, pupils identified that beauty can be found in the minutiae of the natural world, a sunrise or the view of Earth from space. They have a deep appreciation for art, as reflected in their thoughtful art displayed around the school. Pupils respond emotionally to discovering new ideas and skills, as when Year 1 pupils in the woodland classroom excitedly tied knots for the first time. Underlying many pupils emotional and spiritual understanding is a deep awareness, inquisitiveness and appreciation regarding nature and animals, as seen in Year 7 pupils' animal-themed totem poles.

- 3.20 Pupils are highly inclusive of one another, embracing and accepting the diversity enabled by the range of nationalities within the boarding community. They readily celebrate their different cultures, with pupils of all ages showing interest, for example in the recent celebration of the Chinese lunar calendar. They are tolerant and accepting of individuals' differences, including those with SEND, recognising that all people have a variety of talents and skills. They strongly articulate the school's values of openness and kindness to one another and demonstrate this in their positive interactions around the school and in lessons. Boarders show deep tolerance for one another, understanding the need to resolve any disagreements quickly and without ongoing animosity.
- 3.21 Pupils make confident and informed choices. EYFS children made excellent and healthy selections of food from a wide range of options available at lunchtime. Pupils show confidence in making decisions in lessons. Year 8 pupils in food technology made creative and thoughtful decisions about how to present and plate their meals. Pupils make excellent choices of activities to ensure their all-round development. Pupils reflected thoughtfully on their reasons for choosing to come to this school, recognising the significant sacrifices made by families to enable this, whilst showing appreciation for the life-changing opportunities available to them. Many older pupils make significant well-informed decisions to undertake additional sports coaching and training in order to meet their own ambitions. They also make sensible choices between different sporting activities, to ensure they maintain a sensible balance.

4. Inspection Evidence

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

Inspectors

Mr Matthew Lovett	Reporting inspector
Mrs Annette Nightingale	Compliance team inspector (Senior teacher, IAPS school)
Mr Gareth Davies	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr David Pafford	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mr Ian Raybould	Team inspector for boarding (Head, IAPS school)