ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

24 to 26 June 2025

The Paragon School

Lyncombe House
Lyncombe Vale
Bath
Somerset
BA2 4LT

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. Trustees collaborate with leaders to develop and review key policies and systems that impact the school's operations, curriculum, and overall pupils' wellbeing. Trustees provide strategic direction and oversight to ensure that leaders enable the school to meet the Standards. By engaging with staff, pupils, and parents, trustees gather insights that inform their monitoring of the school. This enables them to offer effective guidance, encouragement, and challenge to school leaders, ensuring that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

2. Leaders are reflective and have a clear vision for the school. Pupils' wellbeing is a priority in any actions taken and leaders' decision-making reflects the school's core values. The leadership team work closely together to make sensible decisions, manage risks effectively and ensure that they know pupils well. This contributes to an environment where pupils feel secure and which helps them achieve well and be prepared for the next stage of their education.

3. Children in the early years benefit from a well-planned introduction to school life in a stimulating learning environment. Adults facilitate children's learning through topics that interest them and effective use of the school's woodland when appropriate. Children learn to communicate and collaborate with one another well and make good progress across all areas of learning.

4. Teachers utilise assessment information effectively, particularly in mathematics and English. Leaders use assessment data to inform a robust cycle of curriculum monitoring. However, a detailed analysis of pupil performance data is not fully embedded across all subjects, leading to inconsistencies in how effectively pupils' progress is evaluated.

5. Pupils experience a comprehensive curriculum and a large amount of extra-curricular opportunities. Specialist art, music and physical education (PE) lessons form an integral part of the curriculum, where highly effective teaching ensures pupils achieve well in these areas. Consistently effective teaching and planning, tailored to individual pupils' needs, ensure that pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and who speak English as an additional language (EAL), make good progress.

6. The personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education programme, known as the personal development (PD) programme, instils positive values that deepen pupils' understanding of qualities such as compassion and honesty. These values are reflected in the positive behaviours exhibited by pupils and contribute to the development of an inclusive community. Pupils learn to recognise that everyone is unique and the importance of showing respect to all.

7. Pupils develop their sense of social responsibility through a range of themed days and trips, combined with opportunities for leadership and community engagement. Pupils engage positively in activities related to these and develop empathy and understanding. They are keen to support others and respond readily and supportively to community projects.

8. Leaders foster an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. Safeguarding liaison within the three-school trust is effective, with safeguarding leaders from the different schools meeting on a termly basis to discuss and action any emerging risks to pupils, as well as share ideas about best practice. Leaders maintain effective liaison with external safeguarding partners and take advantage of their support.

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The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure the use of assessment data to evaluate pupils' progress is equally effective across all subjects.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders set high expectations for pupils and actively foster an inclusive and harmonious environment that supports their pastoral and academic needs. Trustees engage in comprehensive oversight by regularly receiving reports, making frequent visits, commissioning external reviews, and conducting surveys to gather feedback from all stakeholder groups. As a result, trustees both support and challenge leaders, ensuring they have the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities, thereby ensuring the school consistently meets the Standards.

10. Reflective leaders ensure pupils' wellbeing sits at the heart of their decision-making. They work together to carefully identify the necessary steps to enhance pupils' overall experience. Leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to continuous improvement, focusing on academic achievement while also taking decisions designed to support pupils' communication, creativity, and social skills. Leaders seek input from staff, pupils, and parents to identify key areas for development, working effectively to address these areas and embed improvements throughout the school. Recently, they have emphasised enhancing pupils' contributions to the community through the 'outward looking, globally aware' initiative, positively impacting pupils' sense of social responsibility.

11. Leaders ensure that the school adheres to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. They implement a suitable accessibility plan and review it annually to ensure its continued effectiveness. This plan identifies the measures taken by the school to enable pupils to access the site and curriculum more fully. For example, ramps and railings have been installed and pathways to the woodland area resurfaced, thereby improving access to, and around all buildings.

12. Leaders effectively promote and convey the school's aims, ensuring that policies and procedures are implemented consistently and efficiently. They make all required information available to parents, primarily through the school's informative website. Parents' evenings and regular detailed reports inform parents about their child's progress and targets.

13. When needed, leaders work effectively with relevant external agencies, such as children's services, and mental health services to ensure that pupils are appropriately safeguarded and receive the educational support they require. Leaders collaborate closely with the local authority to support pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Leaders ensure that no groups of pupils are discriminated against by any part of the school's provision.

14. Leaders have a thorough understanding of risk management, recognising both sector-wide risks and those specific to the school, such as being located on a large open site. They prioritise effective risk management and ensure that well-crafted procedures are in place for writing and implementing risk assessments, such as with regard to vehicle movement and site security. Suitable risk assessments are in place for all aspects of school life, including educational visits, premises and accommodation. These assessments put forward appropriate measures to mitigate identified risks.

15. Leaders implement a suitable complaints policy effectively, providing procedures for parents to voice concerns both formally and informally. They maintain careful records regarding complaints at all levels and conduct detailed analysis to identify any patterns or trends that may emerge.

16. Early years leaders demonstrate high expectations for what children can achieve. They create nurturing and stimulating indoor and outdoor environments that support play-based and child- and adult-directed learning, and ensure that each child's developmental needs are met. Leaders

promote clear communication with parents to foster a supportive and collaborative early years community.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. The curriculum is well structured, with programmes of study that extend beyond the age-related expectations of the national curriculum, exposing pupils to varied and complex concepts. Leaders regularly review the curriculum to build on individual interests and achievements, ensuring all pupils have opportunities to learn and progress across a wide array of subjects. Teachers effectively supplement the core curriculum with additional opportunities, such as outdoor learning in wooded environments and philosophy lessons. The provision of specialist teaching from the early years in music, art, French, physical education (PE) and games motivates pupils and promotes a positive attitude towards the development of new skills and knowledge.

19. Middle leaders demonstrate enthusiasm for their subjects. Teachers effectively share their secure subject knowledge, provide clear explanations and give pupils appropriate time to think carefully, which fosters pupils' deeper understanding and encourages their active participation. Well-planned lessons that incorporate engaging activities help pupils think critically, reflect deeply and make good progress. Teachers communicate high expectations of learning and achievement. Effective questioning that builds on prior knowledge, combined with the use of effective teaching assistants and opportunities for pupils to learn and think for themselves, leads pupils to develop independence and creativity. A calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons encourages pupils to focus and exhibit positive behaviour. Pupils listen attentively to other pupils' perspectives and observations and respond appropriately.

20. In the early years, the well-planned curriculum enables children to gain a solid grasp of key mathematical ideas and develop their communication skills and early literacy. Staff connect activities to children's interests to enhance engagement and support cross-curricular learning, such as through topics, and expressive arts. By encouraging meaningful conversations through role-play, dialogue and collaborative activities, teachers promote children's language development and enhance their problem-solving abilities. This approach fosters a motivating and engaging environment, ensuring children make good progress from their differing starting points.

21. Leaders and staff make effective use of the school's assessment framework to evaluate pupils' work and performance. This works particularly well for English and mathematics, where leaders and staff closely monitor pupils' progress through a range of regular assessments, including standardised tests and teacher-led evaluations. Staff use termly pupil progress meetings to inform planning and identify when pupils need more support or challenge. However, the assessment framework for most other subjects is still developing and is not consistently effective in tracking pupils' progress and the impact of teaching strategies over time. Teachers provide feedback across all subjects in various forms, with a focus on verbal feedback in line with the school feedback policy. They encourage pupils to discuss their learning, helping them recognise successful aspects of their work and identify areas for improvement. Teachers' effective feedback supports pupils' ownership of their own learning, enhancing their motivation and self-awareness.

22. When required, pupils who speak EAL receive tailored support that meets their linguistic needs. This provision includes vocabulary development, targeted one-to-one and small-group sessions, and adapted teaching strategies. Teachers support these pupils in accessing the entire curriculum and developing confidence in their communication skills. Staff regularly review and track the progress made by pupils who speak EAL and plan their next steps appropriately.

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23. Leaders implement an effective support system for pupils who have SEND. Leaders carefully identify pupils' needs and create detailed pupil passports. Teachers implement these support plans effectively, ensuring pupils receive the assistance that they require, including, when appropriate, additional adult help and tailored resources that help engage pupils in their learning. Leaders regularly review the provision for pupils who have SEND in collaboration with parents, specialists, and pupils themselves, resulting in positive outcomes for this group of pupils.

24. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities that help them develop skills in areas such as creative and performing arts, sports, and wellbeing. Leaders monitor participation and gather feedback from pupils and staff to assess where the recreational programme is most successful, adjusting the programme as needed. This inclusive offering enables pupils to explore new interests in clubs, such as daylight stargazing, and develop their skills and confidence in the areas that they engage with.

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

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

26. Pupils develop their spiritual and moral understanding through a carefully designed religious education (RE) programme, moments of prayer, and regular assemblies. These activities, combined with weekly philosophy lessons, create opportunities for thoughtful discussions and informative debates on ethical and spiritual issues. For example, pupils engage in discussions about themes such as forgiveness and ask questions such as, 'Is revenge ever right?' RE lessons enhance pupils' knowledge of different religions and faiths, encouraging them to reflect on the similarities and differences between them.

27. Staff support pupils' emotional wellbeing effectively, by providing opportunities for pupils to build self-confidence, self-esteem and self-understanding. These include, when helpful, outdoor learning and activities that provide opportunities for pupils to tackle challenges, learn new skills, and experience a sense of accomplishment. For example, in the outdoor yurt classroom, pupils' express creativity and develop problem-solving skills by whittling wood to create items ranging from birdhouses to Anglo-Saxon-inspired artefacts. Growing vegetables in the 'allotment' builds pupils independence, resilience and self-belief. Staff utilise activities such as lighting fires, making chilli hot chocolate, or roasting marshmallows to enable pupils to develop their confidence, communication, and teamwork skills.

28. The PE curriculum, which includes regular swimming lessons, is supported by a range of activities and games fixtures that effectively develop pupils' sports-specific skills. The curriculum follows a 'sport for all' philosophy, where pupils learn to have fun, be inclusive in their approach, keep themselves safe, and achieve highly, using the acronym 'FISH'. Additionally, pupils learn the importance of healthy eating, exercising, and getting enough sleep to support their emotional and physical wellbeing.

29. Leaders implement a tailored PSHE curriculum that is referred to as PD and includes a suitable relationships and sex education (RSE) component. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, diverse family structures, and the concept of consent. This well-planned PD curriculum equips pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate social situations and develops pupils' empathy towards others through effective communication. Pupils begin to share their feelings from a young age, using a mood board, and older pupils express confidence in talking to staff about various topics, including puberty.

30. The behaviour policy establishes high expectations for conduct and includes clear reward strategies and consequences. Leaders promote a culture of being 'good friends' and ensure that pupils understand the behaviours expected of them. Staff's emphasis on what the school terms *terrific transitions* helps pupils manage potential flashpoints during lesson changes, fostering a culture where pupils mix convivially between year groups. Leaders and staff use the curriculum and assemblies to teach pupils about different forms of bullying and their harmful consequences. Incidents of bullying are rare, and when they occur, leaders and staff manage them effectively with immediate action to address unfavourable behaviour and resolve friendship issues.

31. The bespoke PD programme starts in the early years and effectively supports children's emotional and physical skills development and understanding. Caring staff build trusting relationships that encourage children to be inquisitive and thoughtful. As a result of established daily routines and

careful planning tailored to individual interests, children demonstrate independence, sustained engagement, and self-esteem.

32. Leaders maintain thorough oversight of the management of the estate. They utilise detailed plans and support from wider trust members to ensure compliance with all health and safety regulations. Leaders and staff maintain the suitable premises well, keep accurate records and regularly carry out required checks and maintenance. Appropriate fire risk assessments, routine fire evacuation drills and the diligent upkeep of fire safety equipment are all in place. Leaders actively seek pupils' opinions on managing various aspects of the estate, resulting in recent developments including changes to lunchtime food choices and improvements to toilet facilities.

33. The school has suitable procedures in place for administering medications and first aid promptly and competently by qualified staff, including paediatric first aiders in the early years. Pupils know whom to approach if they feel hurt or unwell.

34. Pupils are well supervised by caring adults who take the time to get to know each pupil individually. Staff maintain an active presence around the school. Leaders ensure suitable staff-to-child ratios in the early years and provide visible and effective supervision during times of potentially higher risk, such as pick-up and drop-off or outdoor learning.

35. The school maintains admission and attendance registers in accordance with current statutory guidance. Leaders work collaboratively with parents to ensure pupils maximise their attendance, with clear systems to address any persistent lateness and absences. The school informs the local authority about pupil transfers into and out of the school at non-standard transition points.

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

36. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

37. The promotion of pupils' financial literacy is embedded throughout the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about money in mathematics, how to manage a bank account in PD, and budgeting in geography. They further develop their skills and understanding in these areas through an enterprise challenge where pupils from Year 3 work in houses to design and present proposals for new environmental products. This approach effectively promotes pupils' leadership, teamwork, and financial literacy.

38. Teachers consistently emphasise the importance of respect for diversity. Together with high behavioural expectations and consistent modelling of inclusive attitudes by staff, this emphasis reinforces the importance of respecting other people, guiding pupils to develop an appreciation of diversity.

39. Pupils explore various forms of prejudice and their effects on individuals. They participate in discussions about equality and challenge stereotypes, asking questions such as 'Is it fair that some people have more opportunities than others?' or 'Is respect a given or a privilege?' Pupils' engagement with such considerations helps develop pupils' sense of right and wrong.

40. Pupils learn about the law, British institutions, and democratic principles through the curriculum, assemblies and broader activities. They explore themes such as the nature and application of justice, and study key figures in history to understand how democracy and the rule of law have developed over time. In the early years, children learn about the role of the local community police officer. As they progress, older pupils gain a deeper understanding of Parliament's role, the rule of law, and citizens' responsibilities towards evolving society. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote to the local MP to highlight the environmental impact of sea-bed trawling, and Year 5 expressed their concerns about palm oil use in a letter to the Prime Minister. Pupils participate in class voting which develops their understanding of democratic decision-making processes and the notion of representing others.

41. Pupils engage in structured debates in philosophy and PD lessons, which teach them to think critically and respectfully about social and cultural issues, such as how different cities compare and how resources such as water are differently accessible in different parts of the world. They examine different viewpoints in discussions organised so that no partisan political perspectives or bias are promoted. Pupils demonstrate increasing confidence, knowledge, and understanding when discussing complex topics, and debating themes such as 'Will time ever stop?' with maturity.

42. Adults in the early years promote positive interactions by encouraging turn-taking, listening, and collaboration, which are embedded in daily routines and play-based learning. They engage children in activities focused on kindness and shared tasks to help them understand relationships and their roles within a group. The calm and inclusive learning environment directly contributes to children's emotional security and social readiness for later stages of schooling. Staff develop children's ability to collaborate confidently, show kindness, follow rules and resolve conflicts peacefully. They prepare children well for the smooth transition to Year 1.

43. The school fosters a sense of responsibility and community engagement. All Year 6 pupils undertake leadership responsibilities, including in areas such as the library, art, music, and sports. Pupils actively participate in fundraising efforts for local and wider organisations, such as a care home and

international charities. On the school's regular 'Queen Elizabeth days', every pupil engages in charitable work at one of a range of local charities and organisations that the leaders have established relationships with. These experiences allow pupils to collaborate effectively within a team, connect with diverse groups, understand broader needs, and positively impact others in the community. Pupils develop their understanding of the importance of empathising with others.

44. Teachers ensure that pupils are well-prepared academically and socially for the next stages of their education and life in British society. Leaders guide older pupils to help them develop interview and presentation skills and prepare for examinations. leaders and staff provide additional support for those with anxiety or have SEND during the transition to secondary school, helping pupils feel secure in their ability to cope with the changes. Careers education is integrated throughout the curriculum, offering talks that give pupils an understanding of potential career paths. For instance, the school organises a 'skills day' with local emergency services, including the police, where pupils explore future job opportunities while also learning how to keep themselves safe.

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

45. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

46. Leaders and staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. The safeguarding policy reflects current statutory guidance, and leaders and staff implement safeguarding procedures effectively. Trustees review safeguarding practices to ensure effective oversight. During monitoring visits, they engage with leaders and analyse reports to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's actions and safeguarding arrangements.

47. Safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained for their role. They provide effective induction training for new staff and volunteers and deliver suitable ongoing support and training for established staff. This ensures that staff are well prepared to identify and address any safeguarding concerns. Staff are confident in knowing how to report a concern about an adult working in the school and recognise and respond to any concerns, including those about child-on-child abuse or extremism, that may arise.

48. Pupils are informed of how they can share any worries in confidence, such as by talking to trusted adults or using the classroom thoughts and worry boxes. Staff respond appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that pupils raise.

49. Safeguarding leaders engage regularly and effectively with external agencies to support pupils where there are any safeguarding concerns. They seek informal advice and make referrals when necessary and put in place appropriate support for pupils affected by safeguarding issues. A positive culture of referrals exists throughout the school, including for low-level concerns. Staff record and report any issues promptly, and leaders respond effectively. Well-organised record-keeping, appropriate communication with staff, and high levels of vigilance help safeguard pupils effectively. The safeguarding team regularly monitors safeguarding records to check for any patterns and trends.

50. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems are in place and routinely checked by the safeguarding team. Any alerts are followed up on swiftly, and the action taken is recorded. Assemblies, computing and PD lessons teach pupils how to stay safe, including when online. For example, pupils learn about road safety and the dangers of talking to strangers, whether face-to-face or online.

51. Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of safer recruitment processes. All required pre-employment checks are completed before staff, volunteers and governors join the school. A suitable single central record of appointments (SCR) and associated records of checks are kept and regularly reviewed by leaders, including trustees.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	The Paragon School
Department for Education number	800/6004
Registered charity number	281242
Address	The Paragon School Lyncombe House Lyncombe Vale Bath Somerset BA2 4LT
Phone number	01225 310837
Email address	office.tps@priorparkschools.com
Website	www.paragonschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Prior Park Educational Trust
Chair	Mr David Catlow
Headteacher	Mrs Rosie Allen
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	243
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 June 2022

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Information about the school

53. The Paragon School is an independent co-educational day school. Founded in 1911, the school moved to its present location near Bath in 1983 and became part of the Prior Park Schools group in 2005. It is organised into a pre-school for children aged 3 to 4 years, a pre-prep for pupils aged 4 to 7 years, and a prep for pupils aged 7 to 11 years. The school is governed within the charitable foundation of the Prior Park Education Trust. The chair of trustees has been in post since January 2024.

54. There are 44 children in the early years setting, comprising one Nursery class and two Reception classes.

55. The school has identified 35 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). The school does not receive funding for pupils who have EHC plans.

56. The school has identified English as an additional language for four pupils.

57. The school states its aims are to enable pupils to be on a journey of limitless discovery through enjoying a fully immersive educational experience. It intends for this to be rooted in the school values of kindness, compassion, honesty, self-belief and aspiration whilst exploring and developing their attributes as learners. The school endeavours to provide what it refers to as adventures that are wide and varied, centring on the beauty and joy of childhood alongside preparation for the world beyond.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	24 to 26 June 2025

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

59. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
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Independent Schools Inspectorate

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