



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION REPORT  
FOR SCHOOLS WITH RESIDENTIAL PROVISION**

**CASTERTON, SEDBERGH PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**NOVEMBER 2017**



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## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

|                                  |                                                                                              |     |                    |     |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|
| <b>School</b>                    | Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School                                                       |     |                    |     |
| <b>DfE number</b>                | 909/6005                                                                                     |     |                    |     |
| <b>Registered charity number</b> | 1080672                                                                                      |     |                    |     |
| <b>Address</b>                   | Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School<br>Casterton<br>Kirkby Lonsdale<br>Cumbria<br>LA6 2SG |     |                    |     |
| <b>Telephone number</b>          | 01524 279200                                                                                 |     |                    |     |
| <b>Email address</b>             | hmpa@sedberghprep.org                                                                        |     |                    |     |
| <b>Headteacher</b>               | Mr Will Newman                                                                               |     |                    |     |
| <b>Chair of governors</b>        | Mr Hugh Blair                                                                                |     |                    |     |
| <b>Age range</b>                 | 0 to 13                                                                                      |     |                    |     |
| <b>Number of pupils on roll</b>  | 227                                                                                          |     |                    |     |
|                                  | <b>Boys</b>                                                                                  | 122 | <b>Girls</b>       | 105 |
|                                  | <b>Day pupils</b>                                                                            | 173 | <b>Boarders</b>    | 54  |
|                                  | <b>EYFS</b>                                                                                  | 43  | <b>Preparatory</b> | 184 |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>          | 8 to 9 November 2017                                                                         |     |                    |     |

## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding school for boys and girls between the ages of 6 months and 13 years. It is located in the village of Casterton in the Lune Valley. The school opened in September 2013 following the merger of Sedbergh School and Casterton School and is now based in the original Casterton building.
- 1.2 It is a charity overseen by the same board of governors as Sedbergh School. A new headmaster joined the school in September 2017. The Nursery caters for children aged 6 months to 4 years in a separate building. Pupils in Reception and Years 1 to 8 are taught in the main school building. There are three boarding houses for pupils aged 8 to 13 years, two for girls and one for boys.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.3 The school aims to educate pupils in the fullest sense of the word, both inside and outside the classroom, from stage to games pitch. It seeks to foster a spirit of adventure so that pupils are inspired to reach their potential in all walks of life.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.4 The majority of pupils come from a range of professional and farming backgrounds, mostly from white British families living within a 50-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly average. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 18 of whom receive additional specialist support. None have an educational, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 20 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers, form tutors and an EAL specialist. Data used by the school have identified 24 pupils as being the most able in the school's population. The curriculum is modified for them to support their academic needs and a range of extra-curricular activities support their special talents.

## 2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

### Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records 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, the inspection reports 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. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards, including the boarding NMS, may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such 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.

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 full regulations 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 2015, the 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 uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 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 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.5 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. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.6 **The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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 and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 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, and NMS 2–4, 6–12, 15 and 16 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. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised.
- 2.11 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

## **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

2.12 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their medical 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.

**2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include 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 those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include 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.

**2.14 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and statement of boarding principles [NMS 1] are met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.15 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.

**2.16 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.17 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. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.

**2.18 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.**

## **THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision**

- 2.19 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is outstanding.
- 2.20 Children make good or better progress relative to their starting points due to the team of highly committed and skilled staff. Where gaps in outcomes are identified, and progress is not as expected, staff plan activities and provide resources to encourage children to develop in those areas. Leaders carefully monitor children's progress to ensure all children reach their potential. Staff maximise opportunities within the setting to ensure children are thoroughly prepared for the next stage in learning.
- 2.21 Staff plan carefully for individual children, taking note of their interests and meeting the needs of every child effectively. Activities promote learning and enjoyment, and children are keen to interact with staff.
- 2.22 Children's well-being is a strength of the setting. They are extremely happy, safe and secure in their environment. Staff have a secure knowledge of safeguarding and welfare arrangements for the children and all requirements are met.
- 2.23 Leadership and management are committed to continuous improvement, and practice is regularly evaluated. The strategic plan has evidence of targets that have been met, and those which are ongoing. High priority is given to ensuring young children in the setting receive the highest possible standards of care.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

- 2.24 The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding.
- 2.25 There is a clear and ambitious vision for the setting and high expectations are set for what children can achieve. Management lead by example and staff are fully committed to achieving excellent levels of care.
- 2.26 Regular supervision meetings and annual appraisals ensure that staff are expertly supported in their roles and any training needs are identified. Leaders encourage staff to further their skills and consider opportunities for new roles and responsibilities.
- 2.27 Robust systems are in place for evaluating the quality of the provision and outcomes, and managers consider the views of staff, parents and children in this process. Recently the setting has introduced an online system for collating and sharing information about children's progress; staff use this most effectively.
- 2.28 Staff have excellent knowledge of the EYFS requirements and plan age-appropriate activities to cover the curriculum and support children's development. Children's next steps are identified through observations. These are incorporated into planning so that activities are meaningful and relevant to all individuals in the group. The setting ensures all children receive an excellent start and are thoroughly prepared for their next stage in learning.
- 2.29 Staff actively promote equality, diversity and British values in the setting. There is a strong emphasis on sharing and respecting others. Children were observed waiting for their turn to have a toy and older children are respectful of the needs of the babies. Staff promote good manners at all times and young children are encouraged to say 'please' and 'thank you' at mealtimes. Statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements are fully met, and staff are very knowledgeable about how to keep children safe.
- 2.30 In discussion with parents, they expressed highly positive views about the provision and commented on how staff are approachable and friendly, and know their children exceptionally well.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

- 2.31 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.
- 2.32 The well-qualified and knowledgeable staff have high expectations of what children can achieve, regardless of their starting points. They have a secure understanding of the age group they are working with and plan activities to promote the prime areas of learning. They skilfully build on children's interests and preferences when teaching new skills or encouraging participation. For example, a member of staff used a traditional clapping song to encourage a young child to join in and repeat the word 'clap', which he did enthusiastically, recognising it as a favourite song.
- 2.33 Regular observations provide accurate assessment data for staff which is effectively analysed and provides next steps for children's learning. Leaders are fully involved in overseeing how assessment data is gathered, so that they quickly identify children who require any extra support or challenge. All staff ensure activities are planned to close gaps in outcomes for children and meet their individual needs. Staff have a thorough understanding of the children and plan activities that engage and enthuse them. Carefully chosen resources allow children to have sensory and creative experiences and provide them with opportunities to explore imaginative resources, such as a tray of leaves and pine cones which kept a child absorbed for an appreciable length of time.
- 2.34 Staff are enthusiastic and interact fully with children, enabling them to acquire and develop communication and language skills. For example, staff use their voices and facial expressions to capture the fixed attention of the youngest babies who watch and listen intently. They choose resources to stimulate wonder, communication and imagination. Children gazed in fascination as staff put sparkly sequinned material out in the sunlight to reflect on the ceiling for them to see. Staff encourage children to participate in regular singing sessions and children happily babble or clap to familiar songs. Staff make the most of every opportunity to extend children's learning through their play. For example, a child joined in counting with a member of staff as he was adding wooden rings to a toy. The youngest children do not always have the opportunity to explore the possibilities of the outdoor area fully.
- 2.35 Parents can contribute to the setting's data-sharing platform and can see, through frequent observations, how their child is progressing. They receive reports each term and there are regular opportunities for parents to speak to staff about their child's progress. Parents say that they would readily ask staff for advice on how to advance their children's learning, if they were unsure, and that they feel positively involved in their child's development. Daily verbal feedback and a communication book ensure parents understand and engage regularly in their child's learning. A weekly newsletter is sent to parents and offers an insight into the activities the children have undertaken that week.
- 2.36 High quality teaching and support, with a strong emphasis on the prime areas, ensures children acquire the necessary skills for future learning. Children are carefully prepared for transition and move seamlessly into the next class.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

- 2.37 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are outstanding.
- 2.38 There is a strong commitment to learning in the setting. Staff act as excellent role models and encourage the children to share their toys and express their needs. They create a positive and nurturing learning environment, and encourage children to follow their interests and gain the confidence to try new things. Consequently, children seek out their own challenges. For example, one child endeavoured successfully to climb onto a chair without adult help, and enjoyed this achievement and the praise he received. Children clearly feel confident and secure in their environment and develop their independence as they access available resources from around the room. They develop their imagination through imaginative resources such as the themed circle time toys.

- 2.39 Children form exceptionally strong bonds with staff. The effective key person system ensures warm relationships are formed with both children and their families. This is demonstrated by children actively seeking out their key person when they need reassurance or support, such as when they are upset or have just woken from their nap. The partnership with home is strong. The setting aims to emulate the children's home routines and therefore children can sleep in cots, pushchairs or on mats depending on their needs. Attendance is carefully recorded and monitored.
- 2.40 The setting makes the most of daily opportunities for the younger children to mix with older children in the next room. This ensures, when the time comes, that children move confidently into their new environment as they are already familiar with the staff, the other children and their surroundings.
- 2.41 Children settle quickly, and their behaviour is excellent. Staff employ a consistent approach to reminding the children about expected standards of behaviour and manners. As a result, children are content to play alongside each other, share toys and resources, and learn to take turns.
- 2.42 Staff explain risks to children and act briskly and diligently to minimise these. Children enjoy a variety of healthy snacks and meals, sitting together around the table with staff at mealtimes, and make the most of opportunities during the day to have fresh air and exercise.
- 2.43 As a result of the emphasis on personal growth and the development of social skills in the setting, children learn to be respectful of each other's feelings and develop an awareness of being part of a community.

### **Outcomes for children**

- 2.44 Outcomes for children are outstanding.
- 2.45 All children progress successfully from their individual starting points, meeting and sometimes exceeding, the level of development that is typical for their age.
- 2.46 The youngest babies display high levels of engagement as they study carefully the faces of staff who chat and sing to them and respond readily with smiles to show their contentment and enjoyment. Older babies wave and clap their hands when prompted and are keen to demonstrate these skills. Crawling babies display high levels of independence as they explore their surroundings and practise new-found capabilities, such as pulling up to a standing position. They react to ensuing praise from staff with beams of pride. All the children enjoy listening to stories and songs, and show interest by joining in with actions and attempting to repeat words.
- 2.47 Older children have the confidence to walk around the room and select the resources they want to play with. They unhesitatingly interact with staff and other children, and are eager to develop their communication skills whenever staff model language for them to repeat. Children use crayons and paintbrushes with developing strength and control, and demonstrate boldness when climbing in and out of rides on toys and when pushing themselves along on trikes. As a result of their enthusiasm to attempt new activities, they are ready for their move from one room to the next.

### **Compliance with statutory requirements**

- 2.48 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.**

### **Recommendation for further improvement**

The school is advised to make the following improvement to its provision for children in the early years.

- Ensure that the outdoor area provides opportunities and resources for the youngest children to explore and develop their independence and physical skills.

### 3. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 3.1 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, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and an assembly. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

#### Inspectors

|                            |                                                                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mrs Louise Harwood         | Reporting inspector                                                            |
| Mr Mark Groome             | Compliance team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)                           |
| Mr Martin Ford             | Team inspector for boarding (Senior teacher, IAPS school)                      |
| Miss Victoria Plenderleith | Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Former head of pre-prep, IAPS school) |