

School inspection report

30 June to 2 July 2026

The Avenue Pre-Preparatory School and Nursery

2 Highgate Avenue
Highgate
London
N6 5RX

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. The school provides an inclusive environment in which positive relationships and clear routines are well established to support pupils to develop confidence and independence. Pupils benefit from planned academic, creative and enrichment opportunities which contribute positively to their engagement and enjoyment of school and result in pupils' high levels of attendance.
2. Leaders maintain oversight of the school through self-evaluation, monitoring and review. This is supported by an experienced advisory board whose expertise contributes to strategic decision-making and school improvement. Leaders review information from a range of sources to identify priorities for development and maintain suitable oversight of statutory responsibilities. However, leaders do not consistently analyse assessment information to identify trends in the progress of different groups of pupils, which has an impact on their ability to use this information to direct future academic strategy. In the early years, leaders' supervision arrangements do not always sufficiently support the ongoing evaluation of practitioners' professional development and continuous improvement.
3. Leaders provide a broad curriculum which promotes creativity, enjoyment and ambition. Teachers use assessment information to inform planning and support pupils' progress from their starting points. Leaders provide effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
4. Leaders routinely review the provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) so that support reflects pupils' changing needs over time.
5. Leaders promote pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing consistently. Staff establish positive relationships and clear expectations and leaders maintain effective oversight of health and safety, welfare, and medical arrangements. Premises and accommodation are well maintained and support pupils' learning and wellbeing. These arrangements contribute to pupils' confidence, resilience and sense of belonging within the school community.
6. Leaders promote pupils' social development and understanding of the wider world through providing opportunities for them to take on responsibilities, contribute to the life of the school community, and participate in charitable activities. Staff also provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on creativity, music, art and the natural world whilst encouraging an appreciation of life beyond their lived experiences. Pupils share their views with staff informally and contribute through groups such as the eco-council. Leaders actively evaluate the ways in which they hear from pupils within the school community and consider ways of developing this further.
7. Leaders maintain an effective safeguarding culture in which staff understand their responsibilities and act appropriately when concerns arise. Leaders review safeguarding processes regularly and work with external agencies to support pupils and families appropriately, as required.

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:

- analyse assessment information consistently to identify trends in the progress of different groups of pupils, to help direct future academic strategy
- develop a more systematic approach to early years supervision so that practitioners are supported to reflect on and strengthen their practice, promoting children's wellbeing and development.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders have the knowledge, skills and understanding required to fulfil their responsibilities and promote pupils' wellbeing, learning and development. They have established an environment in which pupils are known as individuals and develop positive relationships. Leaders maintain regular contact with pupils, staff and families and respond appropriately to day-to-day pastoral concerns as they arise. They review pastoral information relating to pupils' wellbeing, behaviour and individual needs, and use this information to inform decisions about individual pupils. This enables leaders to respond promptly to emerging needs and maintain effective pastoral support.
9. Leaders maintain a programme of self-evaluation and review through a range of appropriate information, including lesson observations, appraisals, discussions with staff and parents, analysis of pupils' individual outcomes as well as destination schools. Leaders evaluate this information to inform school improvement planning, professional development and curriculum development. This has resulted in the extension of early reading approaches into the nursery and enhancements to the library.
10. Advisory board members maintain an accurate understanding of the positive aspects of the school's practice and areas for development while also maintaining a clear distinction between advisory and executive responsibilities. The board provides support and challenge through relevant professional expertise and regular engagement with school life. Members scrutinise policies, self-evaluation information, appraisal outcomes, safeguarding information, risk registers and strategic developments through formal meetings and ongoing communication with leaders.
11. Leaders maintain effective communication with parents and ensure that statutory information is made readily available. Parents receive annual reports and information about standardised assessments, and have opportunities to discuss their child's progress through consultation meetings. Leaders implement suitable arrangements for complaints handling, including maintaining appropriate records and adhering to published timescales. Leaders review concerns in order to identify trends to inform future action.
12. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and review the provision regularly to identify and remove potential barriers to participation and learning. They implement and review the accessibility plan appropriately and make adaptations to support inclusion such as, for example, through providing tailored support and making reasonable adjustments for individual pupils, including specialised seating. Leaders inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times and understand their responsibilities should a pupil who has an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) join the school.
13. Risk management arrangements are effective. Leaders review health and safety arrangements, contextual safeguarding risks, premises, educational visits and individual pupils' needs through regular monitoring and review of risk assessments. Advisory board members scrutinise this information through governance processes and provide challenge where required. These arrangements enable leaders to identify, review and manage risks appropriately.
14. Leaders oversee the early years provision through regular professional discussions regarding children's welfare and progress, safeguarding concerns and staff development alongside daily review of individual children's needs. Leaders review arrangements and adapt support in response to

children's changing needs. These discussions enable leaders to respond promptly to children's emerging needs. However, leaders have not established a systematic approach to early years supervision to enable them to evaluate its effectiveness in supporting practitioners' professional development and promoting children's wellbeing and development over time.

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

15. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Leaders provide a broad curriculum which promotes enjoyment and ambition by placing creativity, music and performance at the heart of pupils' learning. Specialist teaching in music, dance, drama and French, together with cross-curricular topic learning and instrumental tuition for every pupil in Years 1 and 2, enriches the curriculum and broadens pupils' experiences. Leaders review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it reflects pupils' interests, developmental needs and the school's aims and ethos. Music is a distinctive feature of the curriculum. All pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn either the violin or cello and perform regularly in choir and string groups, developing confidence, creativity and self-expression alongside their musical skills. Pupils also explore historical figures, different cultures and the wider world through carefully planned topic-based learning.
17. Teachers plan lessons effectively and use questioning, modelling, discussion and practical activities to promote understanding and develop pupils' independence and reasoning skills. For example, in mathematics, pupils in Year 1 use practical resources to represent tens and ones, explain their reasoning and compare different methods of calculation. Leaders monitor teaching through lesson observations, work scrutiny and professional discussion, and use findings to inform professional development and curriculum refinement. As a result, pupils engage positively in learning and develop confidence as learners.
18. Teachers deploy resources and support staff effectively to enhance learning and extend pupils' understanding. Typically, teachers provide pupils with carefully designed resources such as writing pyramids, which provide sentence openers, ambitious vocabulary and other prompts, to support independent writing and encourage increasingly sophisticated language choices. Skilled teaching assistants work closely alongside teachers to provide timely support, reinforce learning and adapt activities to meet pupils' individual needs. Staff encourage pupils to think independently and frequently provide challenging questions, prompts and clues rather than answers so that pupils develop resilience, problem-solving skills and confidence in applying their knowledge and understanding. Staff reinforce this approach by reminding pupils of task expectations and directing them to models and examples of expected outcomes rather than completing tasks for them, enabling pupils to take increasing ownership of their learning.
19. Leaders have established assessment systems which support teaching and inform planning. Teachers use assessment information routinely to identify pupils requiring support or additional challenge and leaders review this information through discussions about individual pupils' progress and monitoring activities. Feedback and discussion are used effectively by teachers to help pupils understand how to improve their work and build successfully on prior learning. However, leaders do not consistently analyse assessment information to identify trends in the progress of different groups of pupils, which has an impact on their ability to use this information to direct future academic strategy.
20. Pupils apply their knowledge confidently across subjects and demonstrate skills which are appropriate for their age and stage of development across reading, writing, mathematics, communication, languages, humanities and the creative arts. They explain mathematical thinking clearly, apply scientific enquiry skills successfully and discuss historical topics and significant individuals with enthusiasm. For example, pupils in Year 2 discuss the work of Jacques Cousteau confidently and explain how his curiosity and investigations contributed to our understanding of the natural world.

21. Leaders place a high priority on reading and demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring that pupils become confident readers. Reading is promoted through storytelling, songs, carefully planned interactions and regular opportunities to practise and apply skills. Leaders monitor reading development closely from the earliest stages and use assessment information to identify pupils requiring additional support or challenge. As a result, pupils read confidently and apply comprehension skills appropriate to their stage of development.
22. Leaders emphasise the importance of developing pupils' speaking and listening skills and staff provide regular opportunities for storytelling, discussion, drama and explanation within lessons. Leaders review pupils' participation and progress through observation and curriculum monitoring, and adapt provision where necessary. These opportunities enable pupils to communicate confidently, contribute to assemblies and presentations and listen respectfully to others.
23. Leaders identify and support pupils who have SEND effectively through tailored support, careful monitoring and close partnership with families and external professionals. Leaders review the provision regularly through individual pupil plans and adapt support in response to pupils' changing needs. Teachers modify teaching appropriately so that these pupils participate fully in school life and make progress from their starting points. Leaders also make effective use of external expertise, including speech and language therapists and occupational therapists, to enhance the provision and respond promptly to emerging needs.
24. Leaders support pupils who speak EAL effectively through adapted teaching, visual resources and opportunities to develop language and communication skills within lessons. As a result, pupils participate confidently in lessons and wider school life and make good progress.
25. Leaders provide a suitable programme of activities beyond the formal curriculum that reflects pupils' interests and developmental needs, and review this provision, responding to feedback, by extending opportunities such as woodwork and outdoor learning. Opportunities in music, performance, drama and touch-typing help to develop pupils' confidence, creativity, communication and practical skills, broadening their experiences and enhancing their enjoyment of school. The programme has high levels of participation and is well matched to the size of the school.
26. Leaders provide an engaging early years curriculum which promotes independence, curiosity and communication. Staff prioritise the prime areas of learning by nurturing children's personal, social and emotional development through secure relationships and responsive interactions. Adults use ambitious vocabulary and skilled questioning to enhance children's communication and language skills. For example, children explain their ideas confidently during story sessions, responding thoughtfully to adults' questions, and they use mathematical language naturally as they discuss concepts such as odd and even numbers and the time of the day. Staff respond effectively to children's individual needs and interests so that children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

27. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

28. Leaders establish positive relationships and clear routines which support pupils' growing confidence, independence and wellbeing. Staff know pupils well and build warm and trusting relationships which support pupils' personal development and encourage positive engagement with school life. Pupils take on a range of responsibilities, such as acting as lunchtime monitors and supporting younger pupils. These opportunities develop their confidence, sense of responsibility and consideration for others. Leaders review pastoral information regularly to identify the changing needs of individual pupils and use this information to tailor support where required, for example through occupational therapy or targeted wellbeing strategies.
29. Leaders focus on developing pupils' confidence, self-esteem and understanding of healthy relationships and lifestyles through a carefully planned programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE). Leaders review curriculum content regularly to ensure that provision reflects pupils' ages and stages of development, and responds appropriately to emerging needs. Staff deliver the curriculum sensitively and appropriately and pupils develop knowledge and insight about friendships, personal safety, consent, trusted adults and healthy choices. Pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of personal safety and appropriate boundaries. Leaders review the relationships and sex education policy in consultation with parents and share curriculum content appropriately so that parents understand what will be taught and can support their children's learning at home. Leaders promote positive behaviour through clear expectations and the consistent application of the school's 'golden rules', house points, stars of the week and 'kindness tree'. Pupils behave well around the school, demonstrate respect towards other members of the community and understand the difference between bullying and occasional unkindness. Leaders address concerns promptly when they arise and pupils understand who they can approach for support where required.
30. Leaders record behaviour and bullying incidents appropriately and review this information to identify themes and to inform future provision and support. They ensure that staff understand the circumstances in which restrictive physical intervention may be necessary and that any such incidents are recorded, reviewed and communicated appropriately. Advisory board members review this information as part of their oversight responsibilities and provide support and challenge. As a result, the school community consistently encourages positive relationships.
31. Leaders provide a broad and progressively sequenced physical education (PE) programme which enables pupils to develop increasingly advanced physical skills through a range of activities and sporting experiences. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to take part in swimming, dance, games and outdoor physical activities that help them to develop teamwork, resilience and co-ordination as well as promoting healthy active lifestyles. Leaders review participation to ensure that pupils have equal opportunities to engage in the programme. Pupils demonstrate increasing confidence in their physical abilities and participate enthusiastically in physical activities.
32. Health and safety arrangements are managed effectively. Leaders regularly review first aid arrangements, fire safety procedures, risk assessments, site security and medical provision, and take prompt action where a need for improvement is identified. The advisory board uses clear and regular processes to scrutinise this information and support leaders in maintaining effective health and safety arrangements. Secure entrances, CCTV coverage, well-maintained premises and suitable

medical facilities contribute to pupils' welfare and wellbeing and enable them to learn within a well-maintained environment.

33. Leaders review staffing arrangements regularly and ensure that staff are deployed effectively to maintain safe supervision across different activities and times of the school day. Appropriate adult-to-child ratios and the deployment of staff further helps to support pupils' welfare and safety effectively, including ensuring that there are staff trained in paediatric first aid in the early years at all times.
34. Leaders maintain suitable admission and attendance registers and monitor attendance appropriately. Unexplained absences are followed up promptly and leaders work closely with families where attendance concerns arise. Leaders review attendance information and act where patterns of absence emerge in order to ensure that attendance does not become a barrier to learning or wellbeing.
35. Staff in the early years support children's physical, personal and emotional development effectively through providing secure routines, positive relationships and planned opportunities to develop fine and gross motor skills. In the outdoor learning area, activities such as gardening and the use of ride-on toys promote co-ordination, control and independence. Leaders review children's progress and wellbeing regularly and adapt provision in response to children's changing needs. Children develop increasing independence through daily routines and responsibilities, and staff provide appropriate adaptations and individual support where required. As a result, children develop confidence, physically and personally, and also begin to build resilience and positive attitudes towards learning to ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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. Leaders actively promote respect, kindness and consideration for others through the delivery of the curriculum and assemblies, as well as through the daily interactions throughout the school. Staff model positive relationships and encourage pupils to demonstrate empathy, tolerance and understanding towards others in their work and play. Leaders review assemblies, curriculum content and pastoral provision to ensure that these themes are revisited across school life. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to discuss the importance of agreed rules and shared responsibilities within the school community. Through discussion, reflection and shared experiences, pupils develop an appreciation of different viewpoints, beliefs and experiences beyond their own and are encouraged to reflect on creativity, music, art and the natural world. Pupils demonstrate respectful relationships with adults and peers and understand the importance of honesty, kindness and helping others.
38. Staff provide planned opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibilities from the earliest years, with responsibilities developing from class-based roles to wider contributions across the school as pupils mature. Pupils take on roles such as line leaders and lunchtime monitors, supporting daily routines and helping younger pupils. Leaders review participation in these opportunities and adapt responsibilities as pupils develop greater independence and confidence. These responsibilities help pupils to develop leadership skills, confidence, self-esteem and an understanding of making a positive contribution to their community.
39. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community through charitable initiatives, environmental projects and links with local organisations. Through the work of the eco-council, pupils promote initiatives, including reducing food waste, increasing recycling and encouraging sustainable practices across the school. Pupils participate in fundraising activities supporting local and national charities, environmental initiatives and projects that benefit the wider community, including visits to local care settings. These experiences help pupils to develop an understanding of social responsibility, service and the importance of supporting others and contributing to society.
40. Staff promote British values appropriately through the curriculum, assemblies and wider experiences. Leaders review curriculum content and assemblies to ensure that opportunities to develop understanding of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs are embedded across school life. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of democracy by voting on their class charter, learn about the rule of law through the school's 'golden rules', and, in the PSHE curriculum, consider individual liberty through discussions about aspirations, future roles and overcoming challenges. Leaders also use religious education (RE), history and wider curriculum experiences to introduce pupils to different cultures, beliefs and traditions and to explore similarities and differences between communities and ways of life. As a result, pupils demonstrate respect for others and begin to develop an understanding of equality, diversity and their role within modern British society.
41. Visitors including authors, dentists, doctors, pilots and vets broaden pupils' understanding of the contribution individuals and public services make to society and help pupils develop an understanding of future roles and aspirations.

42. Leaders promote pupils' economic understanding through practical experiences and activities which reflect pupils' ages and stages of development. Leaders review this provision to ensure that pupils build their understanding over time, progressing from simple experiences of money through role play in the early years, to enterprise, decision-making and understanding different careers in Years 1 and 2. For example, in the early years, children grow vegetables and sell produce to parents in order to raise money for charitable causes. These experiences help pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of the value of money and enterprise and the contribution individuals make within communities.
43. Staff in the early years support children's social understanding, independence and responsibility through carefully planned routines and opportunities to collaborate with others. Leaders in the early years review children's social development and participation regularly and adapt routines and responsibilities in response to children's developing needs. Children develop confidence in sharing, taking turns and working alongside others, and demonstrate increasing independence in managing routines and responsibilities. They take pride in responsibilities within the setting, including helping to care for class pets and supporting daily routines. Through first-hand experiences, discussion and exploration, children develop an understanding of different people, roles and communities and begin to recognise their place within the wider world. This is seen through the use of role-play areas, such as the airport, police station and home corner, and supplemented by educational visits and visits from professionals such as doctors and vets.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Leaders have established a safeguarding culture in which pupils' welfare is prioritised, and safeguarding arrangements are reviewed regularly, adapting procedures in response to emerging guidance and identified need. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates, with leaders reinforcing safeguarding responsibilities through professional discussion, scenario-based training, assessments and appraisal discussions. Staff demonstrate secure knowledge of safeguarding procedures, including those relating to whistleblowing, low-level concerns, contextual safeguarding, online safety, the 'Prevent' duty and reporting arrangements. Leaders review the understanding of staff members through training activities, discussion and safeguarding updates, acting where additional support or clarification is required. As a result, staff demonstrate confidence in identifying concerns and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They remain alert to potential risks and share concerns promptly in accordance with the school's procedures.
46. Those with overall responsibility for safeguarding maintain appropriate safeguarding records and review information to inform decision-making and support for pupils and families. Leaders work with external agencies and apply local safeguarding thresholds appropriately in order to secure support for pupils and families when required. Leaders reflect carefully on safeguarding incidents and use lessons learned to enhance procedures and develop safeguarding practice further. Leaders ensure that the school is mobile phone-free and that all members of the school community comply with this policy. This reflective approach supports ongoing improvement in safeguarding practice and procedures.
47. Leaders promote online safety through the curriculum, regular discussion with pupils and suitable internet filtering and monitoring arrangements. Leaders review the internet filtering and monitoring system regularly and respond appropriately to alerts and emerging risks. Pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and know who they can approach if they have concerns. Leaders maintain suitable arrangements regarding the use of mobile technology within the school environment.
48. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to discuss personal safety and identify trusted adults who can help them if they are worried or need support. Through the delivery of the curriculum, assemblies and daily interactions, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online, how to make sensible choices when online, and how to seek help when needed.
49. The advisory board maintains oversight of safeguarding through regular meetings, safeguarding reviews and ongoing dialogue with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. Members receive safeguarding information, review safeguarding arrangements and provide support and challenge, where appropriate. This enables advisory board members to maintain an accurate understanding of safeguarding practice and leaders' responses to emerging issues.
50. Leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are implemented effectively. Those with responsibility complete the required recruitment checks appropriately and record these accurately on the single central record of appointments(SCR). Leaders review recruitment records and advisory board members scrutinise these processes as part of their oversight of safeguarding practice.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	The Avenue Pre-Preparatory School and Nursery
Department for Education number	309/6084
Address	2 Highgate Avenue Highgate London N6 5RX
Phone number	020 8348 6815
Email address	office@avenuepreprep.co.uk
Website	https://avenuepreprep.co.uk
Proprietor	Cantabile Limited
Chair	Mrs Mary Fysh
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Tapp
Age range	2 to 8
Number of pupils	77
Date of previous inspection	20 to 22 June 2023

Information about the school

52. The Avenue Pre-Preparatory School and Nursery is an independent co-educational day school in Highgate, Haringey, London. The school's proprietors are company directors and play an active role in its administration. An advisory board supports them and the leadership on matters relating to the school's operation. The school comprises two sections: the early years section, for children aged two to five years; and the pre-prep section, for children aged five to seven years.
53. There are 52 children in the early years, comprising two Nursery classes and a Reception class.
54. The school has identified six pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
55. The school has identified six pupils who speak English as an additional language.
56. The school states that its aim is to provide an exciting and stimulating learning environment. It wants every child to be valued and supported to develop self-esteem and self-confidence. It aims to enable children to reach their potential through prioritising happiness and wellbeing within a secure, friendly and nurturing environment. It aims to promote honesty, kindness, empathy and consideration for others.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 June to 2 July 2026

57. A team of 3 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

58. 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 of the advisory board
- discussions with the headteacher, principal, 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.

59. The inspection team considered the views of 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.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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