

School inspection report

11 to 13 March 2025

Donhead Preparatory School

33 Edge Hill

Wimbledon

London

SW19 4NP

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. Leaders are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities to promote pupils' wellbeing. Governors provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders to enable them to promote the school's aims and values and to implement school development plans effectively. Governors are rigorous in their oversight of the implementation of school policies so that pupils' welfare is effectively promoted. Leaders are effective in managing potential risks to pupils' health and safety.
2. Pupils make good progress due to the expertise and enthusiasm of the teaching they receive in lessons. Leaders and managers are effective in using data to track pupils' progress and in addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Consistently rigorous marking of pupils' work includes an effective use of comments aimed at motivating pupils to learn and ones intended to help them to improve.
3. Pupils experience a suitably broad and balanced curriculum, and their educational experience is enhanced by an extensive extra-curricular programme of clubs, performances, sports fixtures, visits, visitors and themed events. Pupils' needs are typically addressed effectively through adaptations to programmes of study in lessons. However, leaders' guidance to staff about how to adapt teaching for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to enable them to make good progress is not consistently followed in lessons.
4. Pupils enjoy high levels of self-esteem. Leaders make use of the 'Jesuit pupil profile' to help embed the school's values in every aspect of pupils' lives, from the early years to Year 6. References to Jesuit 'virtues' by leaders and staff enable pupils to develop a clear moral compass. The emphasis on these Catholic values, and moments of reflection experienced in masses, assemblies and at the end of each day have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and their attitudes towards others.
5. Governors and leaders work effectively to support pupils' physical wellbeing at school and when they travel further afield. Health and safety arrangements are rigorously implemented. Pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health are effectively promoted through the vigilance and expert support provided by well-qualified staff.
6. Pupils are well prepared for their future lives. Leaders enable them to develop a secure understanding of the role that money can play in supporting economic security and wellbeing. Pupils gain an appreciation of the diversity to be found in British society and beyond, as well as the values, institutions and services that support people living in the United Kingdom.
7. Older pupils are well supported as they prepare to transition to senior school. Leaders' effective promotion of the school's values develops in pupils a sense of service towards others. Pupils support their school community in a wide variety of ways, such as through positions of responsibility, acting as representatives on pupils' forums or buddying with children in the early years. Pupils exhibit good manners towards visitors, holding doors open and greeting guests in a friendly manner. They make regular contributions to the wider community.
8. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities have appropriate training and status within the school and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Governors provide rigorous oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and its implementation. Staff have a clear understanding of how to identify and address safeguarding concerns.

9. Children in the early years achieve successful outcomes due to the highly individualised support they receive from suitably experienced staff. Children's social and emotional development is effectively promoted through the happy, trusting relationships they enjoy with staff and the impact of the school's values that are embedded from a young age.

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 that strategies to support the progress of pupils who have SEND are applied consistently effectively across the curriculum.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing, which is seen as central to the school's mission. Children in the early years build self-confidence and high levels of self-esteem due to the effective delivery of the curriculum devised by leaders and the high standards of care and attention given to children by staff. School leaders ensure pupils' wellbeing is effectively promoted through the highly individualised understanding of and response to their emotional needs.
11. Leaders promote the school's aims and values through the effective promotion of the 16 Jesuit virtues. These virtues are regularly reinforced in lessons and assemblies and positively impact on pupils' personal development and relationships with one another.
12. Leaders are effective in their evaluation of the school's successes and areas for development. They take the views of pupils, parents and staff into consideration in a thorough self-evaluation process and comprehensive school improvement planning. Leaders and governors rigorously track progress towards goals included in the improvement plan and take effective actions to work towards these goals.
13. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school. They support and challenge leaders effectively to assure themselves that they have appropriate skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively to promote pupils' welfare and ensure that the Standards are consistently met. Governors rigorously review policies prepared by leaders and ensure that their contents reflect current statutory guidance. Governors assure themselves that policies are effectively implemented, including through regular meetings with pupils to discuss their school experience and termly reviews of pupils' work.
14. Leaders ensure that potential risks to pupils' welfare are rigorously identified and mitigated. Staff receive appropriate training to enable them to effectively support the management of risk both on and off site. Risks associated with the wellbeing of pupils are carefully considered and addressed, for example when they are experiencing mental health issues.
15. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies. They seek specialist advice to strengthen their own practice and support pupils' welfare.
16. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. A comprehensive accessibility plan identifies actions to enable pupils to access more fully the site and curriculum. For example, leaders have resurfaced pathways around the school, installed additional ramps to facilitate entry to buildings and improved access to a school minibus.
17. Parents are able to access the required information, such as policies and previous inspection reports, via the school's informative website. Leaders organise a range of helpful information-sharing events for parents. Parents are provided with regular verbal and written reports that provide clear guidance on their children's progress. Staff in the early years provide regular guidance to parents which enables them to support their children's good progress towards their early learning goals. Leaders provide the local authority with appropriate information relating to any pupils whom it funds, including those who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
18. The school's complaints policy outlines appropriate procedures for parents to follow should they wish to submit a complaint. The policy is rigorously adhered to whenever parents raise an issue with

leaders. Leaders are proactive in understanding parents' concerns through termly meetings with parental class representatives and being regularly available at the school gate at the beginning and end of the school day.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. Leaders implement a curriculum that is broad and balanced. It is planned to allow all pupils to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding in an appropriate range of subjects. Leaders and managers work effectively together to identify opportunities to link learning, enabling pupils to apply their knowledge across subject areas, such as the 'Care for Our Common Home' curriculum which incorporates geography, history, science and environmental sustainability. Leaders and managers monitor the implementation of the curriculum through regular observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work, which enables them to make adjustments to the curriculum, when necessary, in order for pupils to develop their subject knowledge well.
21. From the early years, children's good progress is supported by the expertise and enthusiasm of their form teachers and subject specialists who teach lessons that achieve high levels of pupil engagement, such as art, music, languages, computing and sport.
22. Teachers plan lessons which link to coherent programmes of study that are relevant to pupils' stages of development. Pupils are motivated to learn due to the stimulating subject matter they experience in lessons. Teachers' expertise, enthusiasm and detailed subject knowledge fosters pupils' consistently high levels of engagement and motivation to learn. Teachers deploy resources effectively to support pupils' learning and help them to make good progress.
23. Pupils' linguistic skills are well developed due to the wide range of well-chosen literature they read and the effective support they receive in developing their writing skills. They develop their public speaking skills through events such as the whole-school poetry recital competition. Pupils often undertake activities that extend their thinking and stimulate them to learn for themselves. For example, children in the early years make thoughtful predictions, using scientific terminology, when mixing different materials. Older pupils apply their scientific knowledge effectively when undertaking investigations both inside and outside the classroom.
24. The early years curriculum is designed to meet children's developmental needs, building upon their interests and fostering high levels of engagement in learning. Early years staff are effective in supporting the development of children's communication skills due to their skilful use of questions. Staff skilfully support children's good progress in identifying the relationship between letters and sounds through the use of engaging and appropriate texts. Children in the early years make good progress in relation to the early learning goals and many go beyond these.
25. Leaders and staff identify and address gaps in pupils' understanding through regular assessments and tracking of data. English, mathematics and science subject leaders regularly monitor the quality and effectiveness of the marking of pupils' work and academic data, which contributes towards pupils' good progress. Pupils make good progress from their starting points and are successful in gaining places at senior schools, the majority of which have selective entry requirements.
26. Leaders are effective in identifying pupils who have SEND at an early stage. However, the support provided in lessons for pupils who have SEND does not consistently match the guidance that leaders provide following assessment of their needs, which impedes their progress.
27. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are effectively and promptly identified. When required, suitable support is provided, including, when appropriate, through the

use of virtual learning platforms, online dictionaries and visual cues. This support enables pupils who speak EAL to grow in confidence and skill in their use of spoken and written English.

28. The learning that pupils experience in lessons is enriched by a broad and stimulating range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' skills in a wide range of areas are developed effectively in the variety of after-school clubs available to them. Pupils are motivated by the opportunities they have to participate in concerts, perform in shows and exhibit in art exhibitions, which enables them to grow in confidence. The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of interesting visitors, themed events, educational visits and residential field trips.

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

- 29. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

30. Pupils develop their self-esteem and self-understanding well due to the consistent and effective promotion of the school's positive values and the encouraging and constructive relationships between them and staff. Children in the early years are well supported and cared for by staff, which enables them to settle quickly at the school. Pupils' good behaviour and achievements are regularly celebrated in assemblies and school publications, which contributes towards their secure self-confidence.
31. Pupils' emotional development is promoted through suitable personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and what the school terms relationship and health education (RHE) programmes of study. Pupils make good progress in their understanding about how to develop healthy relationships due to the clear and helpful guidance they receive in lessons, assemblies and talks by external experts. They gain an appropriate understanding of how to build secure relationships through a wide range of topics, such as different types of families and the importance of respecting the personal boundaries of others. Pupils learn how to identify and regulate their emotions and how to respond effectively to the different emotional states they encounter in others. They are supported in regulating their emotions through the use of cards that indicate their emotional state of mind. Leaders devise effective plans to support individual pupils in managing their emotions.
32. Staff in the early years effectively develop children's ability to identify and manage their emotions. Teachers are thorough and consistent in their modelling of the school's Jesuit virtues. Values such as compassion are understood and displayed by pupils due to the positive example set by staff and the effective guidance about the school's values that pupils receive in lessons and assemblies. Pupils are well behaved both in lessons and in less structured times such as during breaks between lessons. Leaders and staff apply suitable rewards and sanctions consistently and fairly and motivate pupils to make positive choices in the way they behave. Staff are rigorous in recording instances of inappropriate behaviour. Leaders maintain effective oversight of behaviour logs to ensure a consistency of approach in terms of how staff consider and respond to the behavioural needs of pupils, including those who have SEND.
33. Leaders promote a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take due to the regular guidance they receive in lessons and specific events such as anti-bullying week. Staff support victims and perpetrators effectively on the rare occasions when bullying occurs.
34. Pupils learn about the spiritual practices of a range of religions. The Jesuit 'pupil profile' embed values in pupils that encourage them to be outward looking and considerate of the needs of others. Music played during the final 15 minutes of each day during 'examen' reflection sessions is designed to contribute towards pupils' sense of calm and wellbeing.
35. Pupils learn about the health benefits to be gained from physical exercise and healthy eating during PSHE, physical education (PE) and science lessons. Pupils' regular participation in physical activities in lessons, after-school activities and competitive fixtures enables them to develop their levels of fitness effectively. Well-qualified staff skilfully enable pupils to develop their individual and team skills in sports such as rugby, netball, football and cricket. Pupils develop a clear understanding of healthy food choices. Nutritious food options are available and regularly chosen by pupils at

lunchtimes. Children in the early years develop their understanding about the importance of oral hygiene, including through regular visits by a dental practitioner.

36. Staff supervise pupils appropriately, both in and out of lessons. Leaders allocate staff appropriately to enable children in the early years to be suitably supervised at all times. Educational activities away from the school site include suitable supervision arrangements.
37. Pupils confidently share concerns with trusted adults or through the use of worry boxes and online tools. Pupils have high levels of trust that issues they raise will be addressed promptly and appropriately. Adults with expertise and training in mental health are effective in promoting pupils' emotional wellbeing through therapy led by specialist staff and access to the school's therapy dogs.
38. The school premises are suitably maintained, and health and safety and fire safety arrangements are effective. Leaders ensure that required checks and maintenance are undertaken regularly and, when appropriate, by external experts. Issues that are identified are addressed promptly. Staff receive thorough training in health and safety and fire safety. Fire evacuation drills are undertaken regularly and evaluated rigorously to identify areas for improvement.
39. Leaders promote a positive culture of regular school attendance and efficiently address any concerns about pupils' absence. They provide appropriate support on the rare occasions that prolonged absence takes place. The school informs the local authority whenever pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.
40. Procedures for the administration of first aid and medicines are suitable and thorough. First aid is delivered in a timely and appropriate manner. Prescribed medication is securely stored. There are an appropriate number of paediatric first aiders in the early years and staff trained in first aid in other sections of the school.

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

- 41. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

42. The broad and well-balanced PSHE and RHE curriculum supports pupils in developing a sense of tolerance and respect towards the diverse backgrounds, identities and beliefs of people in society. Pupils gain a helpful insight into the harmful consequences of prejudice and discrimination, such as when studying the impact of European settlers' attitudes towards native Americans. 'Multi-cultural week' and visits to different religions' places of worship further enhance pupils' appreciation of diversity.
43. Staff are effective in teaching pupils how to work and play harmoniously together and to accept differences in others. Pupils interact well in the classroom and on the playground and have well-developed social skills. Pupils develop social skills when using a wide range of equipment during breaktimes for collaborative play. Children in the early years collaborate happily when undertaking undirected activities as a result of the positive interactions consistently modelled by staff.
44. Leaders enable pupils to understand about the positive impact of sound financial management. Older pupils learn about spending wisely and taxation in PSHE and mathematics Lessons. The economic education curriculum is supplemented by activities in which pupils practise money management skills, such as specific days during which pupils learn about budgeting, bank accounts and interest rates.
45. The curriculum introduces pupils to different British institutions and services. Younger children visit the local post office and library. Older pupils receive helpful guidance about how citizens' welfare is protected during talks by representatives from the police force and ambulance service.
46. Pupils receive age-appropriate guidance on the values that underpin British society. They learn about democratic government in history and PSHE lessons and experience democracy first-hand through elections to the school council and eco-council. Pupils are encouraged to express their views, including through debates. Staff ensure that any discussions that contain political themes are conducted fairly and impartially.
47. Pupils are able to distinguish between right and wrong choices of behaviour. Pupils contribute towards the formulation of class codes of conduct. They demonstrate a clear understanding of how a system of rules and moral values underpins a safe and respectful society due to discussions on themes such as how racism contributes towards inequality.
48. Pupils develop their understanding of service towards others through undertaking leadership roles. Younger pupils are given the opportunity to fulfil positions of responsibility such as light monitors and 'happy helpers'. Older pupils undertake a wide range of leadership roles and act as positive role models during buddying activities with children in Reception.
49. Pupils engage regularly with the wider community in line with the school's motto 'Semper Magis' ('always more'), which asks them to keep in mind at all times what more they can give. Community engagement such as supporting a local foodbank and interacting with residents in a local care home deepens pupils' sense of responsibility towards others in society.

50. Pupils are well prepared for key transition points. Children in Reception are well supported in preparing to transition into Year 1 due to the positive interactions they enjoy with their Year 6 buddies and opportunities to meet their Year 1 teachers at the end of their year in Reception. Year 6 pupils receive effective support in preparing for their senior school entrance examinations and in understanding how to stay safe when travelling independently across London. Leaders enable pupils to develop an early insight into different potential career paths through assemblies outlining job opportunities in technology and talks given by medical professionals.

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

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

52. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. Leaders maintain a robust safeguarding culture across the school.
53. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that staff have a thorough understanding of the school's safeguarding processes. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training as part of their induction to the school and at regular intervals subsequently. This enables them confidently to identify risk factors and to have a clear understanding of procedures to follow should a potential safeguarding concern arise. The safeguarding team are appropriately trained for their role. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities attend local authority training in order to understand thresholds for reporting concerns and any contextual safeguarding risks within the locality.
54. Governors receive appropriate safeguarding training and maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures, including through scrutiny of an annual safeguarding audit. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item in full meetings of the board. Governors provide suitable support and challenge to leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities. The safeguarding governor liaises regularly with senior leaders and visits the school to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.
55. Pupils' concerns are heard and addressed due to the effective mechanisms available for them to share their worries and the responsiveness of the safeguarding team. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities liaise appropriately with external agencies in order to seek advice and, when needed, to refer safeguarding concerns. Leaders maintain suitable records of safeguarding concerns, which are stored appropriately.
56. Pupils have a suitable understanding about how to keep themselves safe online due to effective teaching in computing lessons and internet safety days. They can clearly explain the risks of sharing personal information online. Leaders implement an effective system of monitoring and filtering internet usage at school and address any issues that are identified promptly.
57. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities as outlined in the school's code of conduct. They understand their duty to report low-level concerns or allegations against staff and to use the whistleblowing policy in relation to safeguarding concerns.
58. Leaders are suitably trained in safer recruitment. They ensure that all required pre-employment recruitment checks are undertaken and recorded accurately in a suitable single central record (SCR) of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 59. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Donhead Preparatory School
Department for Education number	315/6004
Registered charity number	230165
Address	Donhead Preparatory School 33 Edge Hill Wimbledon London SW19 4NP
Phone number	0208 9467000
Email address	office@donhead.org.uk
Website	www.donhead.org.uk
Proprietor	Society of Jesus Trust of 1929
Chair	Mr Jan Quant
Headteacher	Ms Catherine Hitchcock
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	305
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2024

Information about the school

60. Donhead Preparatory School is an independent Roman Catholic day school situated in Wimbledon, London. Previously a school for male pupils, it became fully co-educational from September 2024. The school comprises two sections: pre-prep for pupils aged 3 to 7 years, which includes an early years setting, and prep for pupils aged 7 to 11 years. The school is a registered charity, overseen by a governing body.
61. There are 46 children in the early years, 13 of whom are in Nursery and 33 in Reception.
62. The school has identified 43 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Eight pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
63. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 16 pupils.
64. The school states its aims are founded on the Jesuit vision of education: to develop in each child a sense of purpose and character formation for the greater glory of God and the common good.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

11 to 13 March 2025

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

66. 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.

67. 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.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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