



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**Altrincham Preparatory School**

**May 2023**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Altrincham Preparatory School			
<b>DfE number</b>	358/6002			
<b>Address</b>	Altrincham Preparatory School Marlborough Road Bowdon Altrincham WA14 2RR			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 9283366			
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@altprep.co.uk			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Nick Vernon			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Andrew Hill			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Altrincham Preparatory School			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	312			
	<b>EYFS</b>	72	<b>Pre-Prep</b>	65
	<b>Prep</b>	175		
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10 to 12 May 2023			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Altrincham Preparatory School is a non-denominational day school. It is registered as a single sex school for male pupils. It is administrated by a limited company with six directors who are the majority shareholders. The school is on three sites. The EYFS centre containing the Nursery, pre-school and Reception, for pupils aged two to four. The pre-prep site for pupils aged five to seven and half a mile away is the purpose-built prep school for pupils aged seven to eleven. Since the previous inspection a woodland learning environment, science room, music room and new library have been created. The current head was appointed in January 2022.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to provide a safe, happy and stimulating learning environment and to provide a compassionate, caring and benevolent environment in which pupils are encouraged to achieve their potential develop excellence, kindness and curiosity.

### About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a range of backgrounds mostly living in a fifteen-mile radius of the school. The school's own assessment data indicates that the ability of the pupils is above average compared to those taking similar tests nationally. Three pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The school has identified 21 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which includes dyslexia and autism, all of whom receive additional specialist support. English is an additional language for 72 pupils of varying proficiency, whose needs are supported by the class teachers. Data and professional judgement used by the school has identified 60 pupils as being the most able of the school population and appropriate challenge is provided for them.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, 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, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

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

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 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 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.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

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

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

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

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

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

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

2.16 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.

**2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

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

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

**2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

**The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

#### Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well and make good and often rapid progress from their varied starting points.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning from an early age.
- Pupils have outstanding communication skills; they are able to articulate, challenge and discuss their ideas whether speaking to individuals or larger groups.
- Pupils throughout the school show excellent study skills and they consistently have a highly effective and mature approach to their learning.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils show strong self-confidence, perseverance, and motivation to work hard and improve their learning.
- Pupils from a wide range of different cultures mix extremely well with each other recognising that every pupil is unique and that differences should be celebrated.
- Pupils demonstrate strong moral development and excellent manners. They value each other and are very respectful of their community and its rules.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding about the importance of making good decisions.

#### Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Strengthen pupils' development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills and their application more widely across the curriculum.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 The school succeeds in its aims to equip its pupils with the skills for entry into their preferred secondary schools. Pupils are academically well prepared for entry to their future school with almost all gaining places at their first-choice local grammar school or selective independent school. The school does not enter pupils for national curriculum tests at age seven or eleven, but the school's own data indicates that pupils are achieving highly compared to those who take the same tests nationally.



Teacher assessed grades, observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that they make good progress across the school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make strong progress from their starting points, and this continues when they enter pre-prep. Those pupils with SEND and EAL make at least expected progress and, in some cases, good progress due to effective strategies to meet their specific needs. Teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge to good effect to ensure pupils of all abilities achieve well. A very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the range of subjects is suitable for their children and almost all agreed that teaching enables their children to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of skill, knowledge and understanding with most reaching expected levels. In geography, pupils in Year 6 expertly used their first-hand experience from a residential visit to France to evaluate features of rural and city living in Normandy and Paris. Learning activities are well-planned to meet the needs of each pupil and excellent relationships between staff and pupils are apparent in the classroom. Pupils in Year 2 demonstrated a natural confidence to explore their creative personalities by experimenting with paints and focusing on tones in the water colours. Pupils sing with enthusiasm and musical accuracy with Year 3 identifying when one group went too fast and recognising a range of musical instruments. In science lessons, pupils in Year 2 demonstrated good understanding of plant health by placing plants in the most appropriate part of the lab. The development of pupils' skills across the curriculum is supported by effective specialist teaching and appropriate curriculum planning.
- 3.7 Throughout the school, pupils have excellent communication skills as witnessed in their written work and discussions in class or with inspectors. Pupils are adept in choosing appropriate language and can articulate concepts successfully across the curriculum. This was seen when they were discussing poetry in pairs and describing how they feel when facing new challenges such as trying not to let the 'can't do monster' take over. Pupils feel able to speak out without fear of correction and talk with pride about their successes. Older pupils spoke passionately about the writing which they are most proud of and of hoping to win prizes in the national competition for their independently researched essays on such matters as the Titanic, Alexander the Great and Galileo. Teachers have high expectations for pupils to use correct technical language, as seen when Year 6 pupils were using musical words confidently and in context when describing staccato versus legato techniques. In class, pupils are confident to express their views and in particular about how their work makes them feel. The school's focus on communication starts early and children in the EYFS, make accelerated progress as a result of specialist speech and language programmes. Excellent use of Spanish vocabulary about the weather in Year 1 showed pupils had listened well and had a good understanding. In a drama enrichment session, pupils in Year 3 and 4 used 'copsing' to enable pupils to resist laughing when forgetting their lines. In Year 6, when practising for their end of year production, pupils were able to focus on their parts by speaking with clarity and projecting their voices with confidence. From an early age writing skills are well developed. Pupils' writing displayed throughout the school demonstrates the care pupils take with the presentation of their work and the high standards achieved. Teacher's marking is used effectively to identify next steps in learning. Across the school pupils display a love of reading and the new library is well used. Older pupils play an important role in encouraging younger pupils to enjoy reading by sharing books and Years 1 and 2 were excited when choosing books that demonstrate the ethnic diversity of the school.
- 3.8 Pupils' numeracy skills are particularly well developed, and pupils are genuinely excited at the prospect of learning something new. Throughout the school, work in pupil's books is of a high standard and shows clear progression of skills and knowledge. Pupils have access to more stretching materials as seen in Year 6 when more able pupils worked collaboratively in pairs to consider equations and how factorials work. Excellent teaching supports the pupils' progress in mathematics. Innovative and engaging terms engage the pupils when selecting the level of activity that they wish to follow. The EYFS children showed a good understanding of number concepts, by counting and recording numbers to 20. Older prep pupils make excellent efforts to describe different sized cuboids placed together with most pupils able to identify that the length and height of a cuboid are not the same. Similarly

pupils can identify that the volume would remain the same if the cuboid is a different way up. Recent awards in national mathematics challenges show excellent grounding based on high quality teaching and a thirst for fresh challenges by pupils.

- 3.9 Pupils are competent in their use of ICT. Weekly ICT lessons enable pupils to develop a range of skills such as word processing, presentation packages and coding. The carefully structured approach to developing coding skills culminates in pupils being able to create their own programmes such as those of 'world records' and one on 'Victorians'. Pupils with SEND access and use applications effectively which supports their learning and more able pupils use technology for their individual research. Pupils enjoy learning different skills from working with programmable toys in EYFS, or older pupils designing a video with music about a favourite hero. Pupils are less skilful at applying their knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum, often because of limited opportunities. Pupils show an excellent understanding of online safety and, in discussions with inspectors, started talking about its importance without being asked.
- 3.10 Pupils develop their study skills to a high level by the time they leave school. Scrutiny of work confirmed competent skills of analysis employed by Year 6 in many subjects where investigative work resulted in hypotheses being created and conclusions drawn. This was also seen when Year 4 hypothesised. on the movement of shadows over time, showing they could think both logically and creatively. EYFS children were seen happily working together finding insects in the outdoor area during welly Wednesday. Opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills and develop reasoning skills are prevalent during extension afternoons when pupils choose which activities will challenge them the most. A good example of this is the tower building where pupils had to find the best combinations of balance through correct distribution of weight. Pupils in Year 4 worked collaboratively to determine their arguments as to why a piece of text advertising a hotel was appealing to adults.
- 3.11 Pupils enjoy success in a wide range of academic, sporting and musical activities. Pupils talk with pride about their success with senior school entrances, music examinations, being chosen for leading roles in productions, and sporting fixtures both in school and elsewhere. They are successful musically with scholarships to senior schools and public performances at local venues and many pupils gaining distinctions in national music exams in a range of instruments and at a level often beyond their years. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their Junior Duke Awards and how through this scheme they develop their self-confidence and organisational skills. The school's governance and leadership ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to both expand and to excel in their personal interests , successfully meeting the stated aim of providing a safe, happy and stimulating learning environment and to provide a compassionate, caring and benevolent environment in which pupils are encouraged to achieve their potential develop excellence, kindness and curiosity.
- 3.12 Pupils of all ages have excellent attitudes to their learning demonstrating a willingness to engage and achieve. They quickly settle to their work, listen attentively and follow instructions well. Pupils in Year 3 demonstrated a very good understanding of game play and focused well during their cricket lesson and consequently made good progress in their skills development. Pupils make excellent use of an outdoor woodland area where older pupils listen very carefully to instruction and understand the safety aspects to working in an outside area. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 As they progress through the school pupils demonstrate excellent skills in self-understanding. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their children to be confident and independent. In discussions during the inspection pupils were polite and confident yet modest and secure in what they have already achieved. Individual feedback from their teachers in

lessons and in books, along with regular reviewing of personal targets, enables pupils to be reflective and see what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are encouraged to follow the ethos of the school to try things and not give up as seen during a PSHE lesson on defining worries. Pupils in Year 1 described their pride when creating textured artwork and how they felt good because they had made it themselves. Pupils were very keen to show pieces of work they are most proud of to the inspectors. They are confident learners and by the time the pupils leave, they have developed the personal qualities necessary to confidently begin the next stage of their education.

- 3.15 As they progress through the school, pupils develop an excellent ability to make appropriate decisions which have an impact on their own lives and those of others. Pupils in Year 4 shared roles and responsibilities when deciding what to film in the extension animation session. Pupils understand the importance of meaningful discussions around the decision-making process such as when pupils in Year 5 made excellent and collaborative decisions about suitable activities during an outdoor session. Pupils demonstrate a desire to listen to the views of others as part of the process through seeking affirmation from their work partners. In discussion pupils showed their respect for House Captains and prefects, who they looked up to as good role models. They said they appreciate the school council as it allows them to have a say in the running of the school and enabled them to get more playground equipment and a new library. The majority of pupils agreed through the pupil survey that their teachers are supportive. Pupils are able to make these choices effectively because gentle guidance from staff combines with a sense of discipline and duty to ensure that important tasks are completed to the highest standard.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of non-material aspects of life and appreciate the leadership's commitment to providing a stimulating and well-resourced outdoor environment. In discussions pupils mentioned that they also like the support and friendliness of the close school community, referring to the three values of the school: excellence, kindness and curiosity. Year 6 pupils' moving accounts of the battle fields demonstrated a keen awareness of the horrors of war after their residential trip to Normandy. It was during that trip that some pupils asked if they could pause to pray on the journey. They did so and were joined by others from different faiths. Pupils spoke about having times of reflection at the start of PSHE lessons and when in the outdoors as it gives them time to think about being calm and ready to learn.
- 3.17 Pupils are exceptionally well behaved and show enormous integrity, understanding and respect for rules both in school and in the wider society. They are unfailingly polite and throughout the visit, they were seen to behave towards each other and adults with relaxed affability and palpable respect. They make a point of introducing themselves, extending warm greetings and making genuine enquiries as to how others are. All pupils agree that the school expects them to behave well. Pupils of all ages are highly conscious of the need for appropriate behaviour and manners, displaying a mature understanding that everyone has different levels of tolerance. Pupils are encouraged to express their views and because this is practised from an early age, pupil comments are very well developed for their age as seen in a Year 5 lesson when considering human rights during the 1906 election campaign pupils made excellent observations including surprise that women had not yet got the vote. The school is successful in building a community which encourages all its members to develop a healthy respect for each other.
- 3.18 Pupil's social awareness is noticeably strong. They form positive relationships both within and outside year groups; between pupils, and between staff and pupils which are positive and supportive. Pupils are quick to recognise each other's successes and offer help and encouragement where needed as seen in a Year 4 English lesson when pupils were sharing ideas about the actions of the father in the story of the Prodigal Son. Pupils' ability to work together effectively leads to much success in a range of challenges and activities, such as participation in regional competitions and inter-house events. This was also seen in a Year 3 cricket lesson when pupils supported and encouraged each other. Equally in a Year 6 music lesson where pupils willingly shared their excellent musical skills and time keeping as they played Samba music on different instruments. The youngest children in the EYFS understand the

importance of social cohesion and show this as they speak encouragingly to each other while sharing sounds that letters make.

- 3.19 Pupils delight in making a significant contribution to the school through roles such as being a school councillor or on the eco council. Pupils talked confidently to inspectors about the fact that they enjoy opportunities to contribute to their school community such as singing in a local nursing home and taking food to a homeless centre. Pupils' PSHEE yearbooks evidence what the pupils have discussed in lessons. For the recent World Book Day, pupil charity leaders suggested donating books rather than spending money on costumes to wear on world book day. Over 1000 books were donated and pupils delivered the books to a local charity in person. Their care and respect of others was evident in discussion, as pupils expressed their appreciation of the school council obtaining more equipment for the playground. This culture is due to the commitment made by governors and leaders to create a learning environment where all pupils are valued as important social citizens and where their contributions to this community cohesion is celebrated.
- 3.20 Pupils take pleasure in being part of a diverse community and they celebrate cultural diversity. Pupils' understanding is reinforced through the addition of cultural books to the library and involvement in such themes as Black History Week when they researched inspirational people and visited places of worship. There is a genuine desire in the pupil body for all to belong and pupils themselves report that pupils mostly get on really well together. In the EYFS pupils considered the questions surrounding themes on what makes them special and how we are all humans but different. The children enjoyed thinking about the meaning of the words in the song, '*I can sing a rainbow*' and many of them were able to sign it together. The leadership and management desire to maintain an inclusive and harmonious community was continued during a Year 6 workshop on leadership, equality, diversity and inclusion session. Pupils were able to discuss what the words mean and why inclusion is important in all areas of society. Pupils develop a deep appreciation of a range of cultures, and a strong sense of community, as they share faiths in assembly and celebrate a large range of religious festivals. They are able to articulate the importance of valuing cultural traditions different from their own such as seen in a personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lesson when discussing weddings of different cultures.
- 3.21 Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe thanks to the school providing a strong framework of internet safety education for all pupils, including cyber safety. Pupils in Year 3 know that they needed to have a mixture of letters and numbers in their online passwords. They also discussed sensibly and with confidence why passwords should not be shared with others. Year 5 pupils demonstrated that they think carefully about who they are talking to online when presented with a bogus friend on the internet in class and they asked probing questions of the member of staff pretending to be an online social presence. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and the need to stay both physically and mentally healthy. For example, in discussion, pupils spoke knowledgeably about the relationship between a good diet, exercise and maintaining a healthy body. In the questionnaire, almost all pupils feel the school encourages them to be healthy. During a themed week on healthy living many pupils undertook to run a mile a day around the grounds recognising the importance of sustained exercise.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

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

### Inspectors

Mrs Daphne Cawthorne	Reporting inspector
Mr Rob Thornton	Compliance team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Nicholas Pears	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)