



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Hilden Grange Preparatory School

March 2022

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School's Details

School	Hilden Grange Preparatory School			
DfE number	886/6031			
Address	Hilden Grange Preparatory School Dry Hill Park Road Tonbridge Kent TN10 3BX			
Telephone number	01732 352706			
Email address	office@hildengrange.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Malcolm Gough			
Proprietor	Alpha Plus Group			
Age range	3 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	277			
	EYFS	59	Juniors	186
	Seniors	32		
Inspection dates	2 to 4 March 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Hilden Grange Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. Founded in 1929 the school moved to its current site in Tonbridge in 1943. The school was purchased by Alpha Plus in 2010. A designated group of Alpha Plus directors and board members have governance responsibility. Since the previous inspection the school has acquired a further eight acres of land and new cricket nets have been constructed. Most recently a new seated outdoor area was opened in the school courtyard which has many varied uses. A new headmaster was appointed in September 2019.
- 1.2 During the period March to May 2020 the whole school remained open only for children of key workers.
- 1.3 During this period of closure the school provided remote learning for all pupils.
- 1.4 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.5 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.7 Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.8 The school aims to provide a stimulating, friendly and secure environment in which each child's potential may be realised in the academic, creative, physical and spiritual areas. It strives to ensure that pupils achieve high standards, both inside and outside the classroom, take pride in their achievements and enjoy participating wholeheartedly in the life of the school.

About the pupils

- 1.9 Pupils come mostly from a range of professional, business and cultural backgrounds generally living within a 10-mile radius of the school. The school has identified 34 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include dyslexia and dyscalculia, 28 of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language for 36 pupils but they do not require specific additional support. The curriculum is modified to meet the needs of all pupils, reflecting their potential, ability or talent across one or more subjects or skills.

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 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.

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 in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. 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 well-being 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'.

Key findings

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

- Pupils' exemplary attitudes enable them to become highly effective learners.
- Excellent knowledge, skills and understanding are demonstrated by all pupils.
- Throughout the school pupils display outstanding speaking skills.
- Pupils of all ages develop strong study skills which they apply successfully to all areas of the curriculum.

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

- Pupils show a highly developed sense of moral responsibility supported wholly by the school's code of conduct.
- Pupils have an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects of life and often define the world around them in that spiritual context.
- Pupils' excellent confidence and resilience is supported most effectively through the school's *Language of Learning* initiative.
- Pupils are socially aware and so are able to work extremely well with others.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider making the following improvement:

- Increase pupils' opportunities to take responsibility for and make self-initiated decisions.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils' exemplary attitudes are supported by creative and engaging teaching which enables them to become highly effective learners. Pupils are very productive in individual, group and whole class activities. They report that collaboration is a part of every lesson whether in partners or larger groups. Pupils of all ages are engaged and enthusiastic during lessons; they settle down to studies quickly and work independently and with diligence. Older pupils are adept at accessing a wide range of sources, especially through the internet and they can synthesise these to produce sophisticated pieces of independent research as seen in history and geography fieldwork. The school fully achieves its aim to ensure that each pupil's academic, creative and physical potential is realised.

- 3.6 From the evidence available in lesson observations, pupils' discussions and work scrutiny, inspectors judge that pupils' achievement across the school and in nursery is of an excellent standard. A large majority of the youngest children achieve a very high level of development by the time they leave the early years setting. As pupils move up through the school, they maintain this strong start and make rapid progress with standardised tests scores in English and mathematics being well above national age-related norms. Pupils achieve excellent results in their entry examinations to senior schools and regularly win academic, sports, music, art and drama scholarship awards. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language also make rapid progress which is at least in line with their peers. This is because they are identified swiftly through the school's robust and consistent use of tracking data and from thereon supported through effective and highly personalised interventions. The school prides itself in offering suitable challenge to all pupils but those with particular talents receive enrichment activities both within and outside the curriculum. For example, members of the school quiz team have recently achieved success in a competition outside school, displaying a wealth of high-level knowledge.
- 3.7 High level skills in the core subjects are established in the EYFS and, as pupils progress through the school, they display a well-developed fund of knowledge. This is a result of specialist teaching provided in all subjects from Year 3 upwards. In the questionnaires, although a few expressed the view that lessons were not interesting, a very large majority of pupils reported that teachers are supportive and know their subjects well. From an early age, pupils listen attentively in class and can express their ideas clearly and confidently. Pupils' evident knowledge is developed further through regular focused subject days and a programme of extra-curricular activities. Creativity is encouraged in a variety of ways and exhibits around the school indicate pupils' high achievement in these areas. Younger children can successfully use Van Gogh's techniques in their own still life paintings, whilst older pupils are inspired to produce their own version of gestural drawings in the style of Quentin Blake. Pupils exhibit good design technology skills as they turn upcycled plastic bottles into bird feeders. Throughout the school specialist foreign languages lessons enable even the younger pupils to establish early linguist skills as was evidenced by Year 1 pupils who could recognise and confidently pronounce many Spanish words.
- 3.8 Pupils have outstanding speaking skills which are developed through regular drama lessons, assemblies and school productions. From the earliest years they are encouraged to share their opinions and ideas. Children in EYFS develop excellent communication skills through active promotion of the sharing of their experiences; for example, younger pupils spoke with enjoyment about the exciting robots which they created from recycled materials. Older pupils confidently use scientific terms to describe their practical experiments and excellent emotive language to analyse extracts of poetry. Pupils become fluent readers from a very early age, encouraged by frequent reading tasks and the provision of an extensive range of reading resources in the school library. Children in the EYFS are beginning to write simple sentences and as they move through the school pupils develop a secure understanding of different types of text. Older pupils' creative writing is imaginative showing an accurate use of punctuation and grammar. They write at length and use a richness in their vocabulary which captivates the reader.
- 3.9 Pupils are highly competent numerically. They clearly enjoy mathematics and feel well supported by the teaching. This was confirmed by pupils with SEND who reported in discussions that their understanding of mathematical processes had significantly increased as a result of the individual support provided. Pupils' competence was evidenced in lessons and through discussions and work scrutiny, as was the application of their mathematical knowledge in many other subjects of the curriculum. For example, younger pupils studied the shapes in a Tangram Egg and linked their learning to art to create images of birds and in music pupils counted the numbers of repeated rhythms. Pupils also apply their strong mathematical skills in completing graphs in science and timelines in history. Pupils' effective strategies for recalling prior learning were put to good use in many lessons. Through their play Nursery children were observed cutting circles, triangles and squares out of moulding materials whilst those in Year 5 skilfully converted improper fractions to mixed numbers. Scholarship

pupils successfully completed a quick-fire activity to rapidly solve a magic square and calculate missing angles within an isosceles triangle.

- 3.10 During recent periods of remote learning, pupils have embraced many new aspects of technology. They apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills confidently across the curriculum. For example, children in the EYFS successfully use applications on their tablet computers to create comic style stories, complete with their own uploaded photographs; while pupils in Year 2 programme robots through a self-designed course and Year 8 pupils successfully produce and edit video clips. Pupils' strong achievement in ICT is supported by the governors' investment in laptop and tablet computers which enables every pupil in the school to have access to their own school electronic device.
- 3.11 Throughout the school pupils achieve considerable success in academic subjects outside the curriculum. For example, excellent results are gained by pupils in Years 5 to 8 in the National Maths Challenges and by the school's general knowledge and science quiz teams. Pupils flourish beyond the classroom in sports, music and the arts. Sports teams achieve highly in inter-school matches in rugby, cricket and athletics. Excellent musicality is promoted through individual instrumental lessons, choirs, and music ensembles ranging from Year 1 ocarinas to senior wind band. Individual pupils reach exceptionally high standards for their age; choristers sing with Tonbridge School Chapel Choir and some pupils perform in National Opera and the National Youth Concert Orchestra. Pupils benefit considerably from a variety of exciting lunchtime and after-school clubs ranging from mad science to film editing.
- 3.12 Pupils of all ages develop strong study skills which they apply successfully to all areas of the curriculum. Children in the EYFS develop keen observation and questioning skills as they explore the wide range of activities provided within the setting. Young children think critically as they embed their understanding of number through making up real life problems such as parking a fire engine and estimating the height of the brick structure they will need for the garage. Older pupils can analyse and hypothesise as seen in science when they solved the theft of a missing rabbit using chromatology. Research skills are encouraged through challenges in history and geography where pupils work independently and in groups to gather facts to present to their peers. All parents who responded to the questionnaire reported 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 Pupils show a highly developed sense of moral responsibility supported wholly by the *Hilden Grange Way* code of conduct. In the questionnaires an overwhelming majority of pupils agreed that the school expects good standards of behaviour and the pupils' impeccable conduct was observed by inspectors at all times during the inspection. Pupils exhibit their strong leadership skills throughout the school by enthusiastically taking on responsibilities from class helpers in the EYFS to heads of school in Year 8. Senior pupils gain experience through mentoring and supporting younger children by offering friendship and guidance. Pupils show high levels of respect and consideration for each other and form productive relationships. In discussions pupils were keen to explain that their confidence to take responsibility has grown considerably during their time at the school.
- 3.15 Pupils have an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects of life and show a keen awareness of the spiritual world around them. Children in EYFS explore the coming of spring in their woodland area showing fascination with the jelly ear fungus growing amongst the branches of the elder tree. In assembly beautiful hymn singing by the school choir uplifted the community as they were tasked to consider the beauty of the natural world. In gardening club younger pupils were delighted to see how their seeds had developed into colourful primroses whilst older pupils used their emotional intelligence to consider the poem *Nothing Gold can Stay* by Robert Frost. They discussed the intentions

of the poet and collaboratively came up with the conclusion that the Garden of Eden was lost because of the natural curiosity of humans which made the perfection of it impossible to sustain.

- 3.16 Pupils' strong appreciation and deepening understanding of cultural traditions different to their own is gained as a result of their work in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and religious studies lessons and through the cultural events at the school. In discussions pupils enthused about what they learnt during Black History month but they were keen to share that equality is a natural part of the school's ethos. Pupils gain a strong understanding of different cultures by marking many of the major festivals of world faiths and cultures. They exhibit respect, sensitivity and interest as they discuss their annual visits to a gurdwara and synagogue. In the questionnaires all parents and staff who responded were totally supportive of the school's promotion of the values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 3.17 Pupils benefit from many links with the local community. They have a strong association with nearby churches and sports clubs and they take part in local competitions and festivals. EYFS children's awareness of people who help us is developed through trips to the fire station and from visits by the mayor and members of the ambulance service. Pupils start to formulate an awareness of those less fortunate than themselves by willingly raising funds for local charities including for the children's hospital. Pupils also demonstrate kindness and empathy in their support of the local foodbank with those in Year 8 assisting with the packing and distribution of food parcels. For the wider world the older pupils organised and ran a recent school fair with profits being donated to support a school in Kenya.
- 3.18 Pupils have an excellent understanding of exercise and diet and older pupils understand that good mental and physical health are equally important. Pupils know that regular exercise plays an important role in staying healthy and the school provides significant opportunities to take part in physical activity. All pupils benefit from a strong awareness of mental health which they develop through the school's PSHE programme and through activities offered during a dedicated week. In addition to within structured lessons, pupils can further develop their knowledge and understanding of keeping safe and healthy in dedicated tutor sessions which provide time specifically set aside for pupils' well-being. Children in EYFS know why it is important to wash their hands before eating and older pupils develop the knowledge to select a balanced diet at lunch. In discussions pupils spoke confidently about their use of the internet and commented that they stayed safe because of the excellent guidance provided by the school.
- 3.19 Pupils of all ages make well-informed decisions and are encouraged to do so through the pupil council whose representatives advise school leaders of their opinions. A recent initiative which has been requested by the council and agreed by school leaders is to allow girls to wear shorts as part of their uniform. Pupils in the EYFS make their own choices of activities and whether they work in small groups, on their own or with adults. In a form period, pupils were charged to make decisions on personal goals such as how to improve their football skills. Marking of work enables pupils to make informed evaluations of how well they are doing and allows them to decide on how to improve. In discussions older pupils reported that they do make choices about clubs and projects, but they were less sure of the decisions they make using their own initiative.
- 3.20 Pupils show excellent confidence and self-esteem which is promoted through the broad and exciting curriculum, initiated by school leaders and fully supported by the governance. Pupils exhibit strong positivity which is nurtured through the six aims of the school's *Language of Learning*. This is an everyday common focus for pupils and staff which is embedded within the culture of the school. Pupils of all ages exhibit pride as they receive awards in assembly to acknowledge their success in achieving one of these aims, namely, confidence, perseverance, communication, positivity, challenge and responsibility. Pupils benefit from the school's promotion of agreeing their next steps for improvement, through discussions, assessments and reports which is helpful in supporting their progress in curricular and co-curricular areas. Pupils' excellent resilience and self-discipline is fostered further through residential trips where a range of activities, such as climbing a suspended ladder of

logs, requires perseverance and self-belief. In discussions pupils reported that they feel strongly motivated to always try their best and consequently they have the determination to succeed.

- 3.21 Pupils are socially aware and so are able to work extremely effectively with others and strive towards common goals. Pupils benefit from collaborative opportunities in many curricular and extra-curricular activities such as conducting shadow experiments in science and respecting the opinions of others in debating. Pupils' collaborative skills have been further developed through a recent whole school campaign to switch off lights, organised by the environmental club. In all group work observed by inspectors, pupils listened to each other and demonstrated good skills of negotiation and compromise, articulating their opinions with confidence and balanced reasoning. During the inspection, many examples were seen of older pupils taking an active role in assisting their younger peers, reinforced at all times by the ethos of the school and modelled on excellent relationships between staff and pupils.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Bridget Windley	Reporting inspector
Mrs Kaye Lovejoy	Compliance team inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Mr Kit Thompson	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)