

School inspection report

20 to 22 January 2026

Alleyn Court Preparatory School

Wakering Road
Great Wakering
Southend-on-Sea
SS3 0PW

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Trustees gain appropriate oversight of school activities, challenge leaders effectively and monitor the implementation of policies diligently. As a result, they ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
2. Leaders' comprehensive evaluation results in a detailed development strategy to improve the school's educational provision. They action each of the five strands within their planning framework, such as teaching and learning, and assessment and reporting, thoroughly and efficiently and update aspects of the school's practice accordingly. For instance, leaders have recently expanded procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic performance.
3. Leaders implement a curriculum that prioritises the development of skills in mathematics and English to help pupils to gain entry into their preferred senior schools. Staff complement these areas with a full and diverse range of other subjects, typically delivered by specialist teachers. An extensive programme of clubs and optional activities operates throughout the day and enables pupils to personalise their learning as they develop a range of different talents and skills.
4. Teachers promote the values of compassion, courage and curiosity consistently well. Known as the 'three Cs', these values encourage pupils to develop respectful and inclusive character traits. Pupils empathise with each other and demonstrate an appreciation of the non-material aspects of life.
5. Pupils are taught to be physically and mentally healthy. They participate in a wide range of well-planned sporting activities. Pupils understand and practise effective strategies to regulate their emotions and to commit themselves wholeheartedly to academic challenge.
6. The school's expectation that pupils will be 'ready, respectful and safe' encourages them to become valued members of a harmonious and supportive community. Pupils are appropriately prepared to play an active role in society. In lessons, pupils behave well and apply themselves wholeheartedly to what they are asked to do. However, teachers do not respond consistently when pupils' conduct sometimes falls below the school's high expectations during breaktimes and between lessons.
7. Pupils appreciate the importance of democracy and the rule of law. Leaders work with the school council to implement school improvements following votes cast by the entire community. After visiting the Houses of Parliament, older pupils promote respect for Parliament and government by informing the rest of the school about how laws are passed.
8. Teachers develop pupils' economic awareness by teaching them about topics including banking, interest rates and profit and loss margins effectively. Pupils use their financial understanding when they raise funds for charities and undertake age-appropriate business enterprises.
9. The school premises are well maintained and checked daily. Leaders receive appropriate training in health and safety management and complete their duties competently. Trustees monitor the school's health and safety procedures effectively.
10. Leaders and staff implement suitable safeguarding protocols and procedures. Staff receive effective training and respond appropriately to any concerns that are raised. The required checks are carried out on adults joining the school in a timely manner, including those who volunteer their services. These checks are diligently recorded on the school's single central record (SCR) of appointments.

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 staff consistently apply the behaviour management policy during breaktimes and between lessons.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Trustees work closely with senior leaders to challenge and support their work. Trustees know and understand the school well, including through frequent visits, consulting with staff and pupils and scrutinising documentation and policies. As a result, trustees assure themselves that the school is being managed competently and effectively, so that the Standards are met consistently.
12. Leaders' recent revisions of the school's procedures for self-evaluation and development planning result in an appropriate structure to drive the school forwards. Leaders plan all aspects of the school's provision carefully and ensure that pupils' wellbeing is prioritised. Leaders take active steps to improve and develop the school. For instance, they have introduced an enhanced assessment framework that compares pupils' current academic performance with their baseline standardised assessment outcomes. As a result, pupils' ongoing work is now analysed across a broader range of subjects than was previously the case.
13. Trustees, leaders and staff have a secure understanding of the major risks facing the school and maintain a robust set of thorough risk assessments that are regularly reviewed. They implement effective measures, including daily checks of all areas of the school, to manage risk appropriately. Staff receive regular training so that they write and evaluate risk assessments consistently. For instance, staff consult and consider a range of scenarios and potential risks so that the risk assessments they write are well informed and effective.
14. Leaders forge effective links with the local authority, other external agencies and local schools. For example, the school hosts a number of local schools who participate in a sporting event for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils develop leadership skills by helping to run this event and participate in the planned activities. The school provides the local authority with appropriate information about pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.
15. Leaders ensure that required information is made available to parents of current and prospective pupils through a detailed and informative website. Parents receive written reports about their child's progress and attend a regular schedule of consultation meetings.
16. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders implement a comprehensive accessibility plan which aims to make the premises and curriculum accessible for staff, pupils and visitors. Leaders promote respect throughout the school community and support pupils' understanding of cultural diversity and inclusion. Leaders consult appropriately with the local authority about the funding arrangements for pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
17. Leaders address concerns appropriately, effectively and in a timely manner. They manage any submitted formal complaints in line with the school's policy. Leaders keep appropriate and detailed records, including the actions that are taken and the resolutions reached.
18. Leaders in the early years provide children with a nurturing and stimulating environment. They provide staff with effective training and mentoring so that children's individual needs are supported well. Teachers develop their knowledge and skills, enrich children's learning experiences and help them to develop self-esteem, independence and confidence.

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 an appropriate and well-planned curriculum. It prioritises mathematics and English so that pupils who sit competitive selection tests for their preferred senior schools are prepared well. Pupils are also taught a diverse and balanced range of subjects, including drama, French, art, and design technology. Teachers plan curriculum activities which, when appropriate, use different areas of the school site and locality, including the woodland, lake and nearby beach. Pupils learn successfully in different contexts and gain an appreciation of, and respect for, the natural world.
21. Teachers deliver a comprehensive extra-curricular programme which provides pupils with opportunities to refine and customise their learning throughout the school day. Pupils who arrive at school early engage in physical activities such as cross-country running. They participate in instrumental ensembles, sing in school choirs and develop the confidence to perform in public. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their technological skills in a video editing club and to expand their general knowledge by competing successfully in inter-school science and general knowledge quiz competitions. Pupils hone their debating skills and practise public speaking. The school offers pupils a range of alternative sports such as archery and dodgeball. Leaders allow and encourage pupils to participate in clubs to explore the many activities available so that they experience a range of pursuits and diversify their interests.
22. Older pupils are taught by subject specialists who successfully convey their passions and expertise in well-planned lessons. This helps pupils to widen and extend their knowledge and skills effectively. Younger pupils are provided with a careful blend of specialist and class teaching. For example, children in Nursery are supported by staff from the early years in French lessons taught by a subject specialist. Children respond positively to the French activities they undertake and learn to name colours and animals in English and French.
23. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and hold ambitious expectations for pupils to make good progress in their learning. They typically plan and pace lessons appropriately, building on pupils' prior learning and making increasing use of the school's assessment framework. This has recently been developed and enhanced to compare teachers' current assessment of pupils alongside their standardised test scores. This approach enables teachers to measure pupils' progress and identify how to provide them with ongoing, individual and precise support. For example, teachers typically begin mathematics lessons with a revision of previously taught concepts before supporting pupils as they progress through a range of increasingly challenging tasks. As a result of such measures, pupils learn at an appropriate pace and make good progress in their work.
24. Teachers ask probing philosophical questions which challenge pupils to reconsider and refine their ideas and opinions and enable them to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, in history, pupils study and interpret different portraits of Henry VIII. They demonstrate independence and secure study skills by annotating and discussing their interpretations and are respectful to those who hold different perspectives.
25. Pupils are prepared consistently well for their transition to senior schools. Leaders regularly consult with former pupils to ensure that the preparation the school provides continues to be relevant and effective. Pupils visit subject classrooms and are taught by specialist staff so that they learn to arrive at lessons punctually and with the correct resources. Leaders provide well-planned opportunities for

pupils to write and deliver presentations, preparing them effectively to speak in public with confidence. As pupils progress through the school, teachers encourage them to take greater responsibility for their learning. For instance, older pupils complete science projects which answer individually chosen scientific research questions. They carry out appropriate enquiries and experiments, and produce reports, displays and presentations to share their well-considered conclusions.

26. Specialist teachers support pupils who have SEND both within and outside the classroom. They assess individual pupils' needs carefully and create focused plans to ensure these needs are addressed effectively. Leaders communicate clearly with the staff team so that pupils continue to receive consistent help. Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure their continued suitability. Pupils who have SEND make good progress in their work and achieve well.
27. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) communicate fluently in English. Teachers ensure these pupils receive appropriate help when required. For example, staff reinforce instructions and provide resources such as explanations of particular pieces of vocabulary when necessary.
28. Children in the early years work confidently with language and numbers. They count accurately, write addition calculations and discuss their work using vocabulary such as 'more than' and 'less than'. Children use their imagination creatively and communicate their ideas confidently. For instance, they actively discuss and recall what they have learnt about the development of trains and railways, including Stevenson's Rocket and bullet trains in Japan, a country they knowledgeably explain is 'far away'. Children enjoy sharing stories and enthusiastically demonstrate their understanding by arranging toys on, under or next to other items to show the development and sequence of the storyline. They are keen to show their understanding of phonics and frequently choose to make use of an outdoor easel on which they practise writing and word-building.

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. Leaders emphasise the importance of mutual respect between all members of the school's diverse community. The school celebrates pupils' individuality, the personal choices they make and their achievements in and out of school. Pupils and their parents share information about their heritage, culture and religions. The school community is knowledgeable about a range of different celebrations and events such as Hanukkah, Thanksgiving and Chinese New Year. As a result, pupils develop a secure understanding of cultural diversity and respect those who are different.
31. Teachers' emphasis on the '3 Cs' develops pupils' character and understanding of responsibility and morality. Pupils consider and explore topical issues during assemblies and lessons which teach them how to respond to others appropriately and empathetically. Pupils present drama and musical productions that emphasise the importance of individuality and personal integrity, learning to make the most of their own abilities in an appropriate and responsible manner.
32. Leaders provide a broad range of suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their self-confidence. For instance, as well as the musical and dramatic performances, pupils participate in a range of extra-curricular activities and competitive sporting fixtures. Pupils' self-esteem is fostered appropriately through teachers' frequent verbal praise and affirmation, often recorded in pupils' personal planners in the form of merit stickers. The school reinforces responsible and kind actions, such as through awarding plaques which celebrate inclusive, positive citizenship. Teachers' frequent discussions with pupils effectively inform their self-knowledge and help them to understand their progress and achievements.
33. Children in the early years work individually and in collaboration with others to explore their environment and to solve problems. They show persistence and determination when challenging themselves to use equipment. For example, they use bucket stilts to walk between base blocks set at different heights which develops their co-ordination and balance. They confidently choose from a variety of tools, including large-scale pipettes and wheelbarrows, and use them in practical tasks such as making potions and building walls with wooden blocks.
34. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to engage in a comprehensive physical education (PE) programme. Pupils are taught and coached specific skills in well-planned and regular games lessons. They participate in a range of sports that include football, netball, cricket, rounders and athletics. Pupils compete successfully against other schools and are taught to demonstrate positive sporting values towards opposing teams and match officials. A complementary programme of PE includes gymnastics and fitness training which promote pupils' physical and mental health. These routines reinforce the work pupils undertake in other subjects such as science and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) effectively. For example, pupils learn about the importance of regulating their breathing, eating healthily and develop an understanding that regular exercise helps to maintain positive emotional wellbeing. Staff provide pupils with opportunities to develop their leadership skills. For instance, sports captains help staff to run a club that is available to all pupils but particularly developed for those who may not initially find sports appealing or accessible. Activities covered include table tennis, table cricket, bowling and indoor curling.
35. Leaders develop and refine a comprehensive PSHE programme that includes an age-appropriate element of relationships education. They engage in ongoing consultation with parents and pupils

and amend the curriculum accordingly. For example, staff revised the curriculum to teach female pupils at a younger age about how their bodies will change as they approach puberty and adolescence. Pupils explore topics such as consent effectively and are prepared well to build respectful relationships and take responsible personal decisions which promote their health and wellbeing.

36. Pupils behave well in lessons, showing respect to their teachers and to each other. They settle to work quickly, listen carefully and apply themselves wholeheartedly to what they are asked to do. Leaders keep detailed behavioural records of any reported misbehaviour and the actions they take. However, during less structured times of the school day, such as breaktimes and moving between lessons, teachers do not always implement the behaviour policy or intervene promptly when pupils' behaviour falls beneath the school's high expectations.
37. Leaders implement a robust anti-bullying programme. Pupils hold positions as anti-bullying ambassadors. They help leaders to communicate the definition of bullying and support the implementation of a range of strategies to prevent it. On the rare occasions when bullying takes place, leaders provide effective and appropriate support to those who are involved.
38. The school premises are well maintained. Leaders with responsibility for health and safety provide effective oversight, for example through a programme of daily checks which are carried out in all parts of the school. Leaders implement regular fire evacuation drills so that pupils know how to respond during an emergency. Fire safety equipment is checked and serviced regularly, as required. Trustees provide thorough and regular oversight. Leaders receive specific training so that the school's health and safety procedures are managed competently.
39. The school provides suitable first aid and medical provision. Staff are appropriately qualified in first aid, including in paediatric first aid for those who work in the early years. First aid and the administration of medicine is managed competently.
40. Leaders arrange suitable supervision duty rotas to ensure that adults are in the vicinity of pupils throughout all activities. Appropriate staff-to-child ratios are maintained in the early years.
41. Leaders maintain admission and attendance registers that are in accordance with current statutory guidance. They analyse attendance data, take action when absence patterns are concerning and liaise with the local authority when required.

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

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

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

43. Pupils learn about democracy and respecting the views of others effectively. Children in the early years cast votes to decide upon their favourite books. Teachers emphasise the importance of the democratic process in making collective choices. For example, classes meet to select aspects of provision that the school could potentially develop. Senior pupils analyse the votes cast by each form and work with leaders to implement proposed school improvements. In response, leaders have provided outdoor benches, introduced relaxation and colouring clubs and implemented additional fundraising activities. When suggestions are not adopted, the senior members of the school council demonstrate responsibility and leadership by explaining the decisions taken to their peers.
44. Pupils understand the value of rules to help them to distinguish the difference between right and wrong. In addition to the whole-school credo to be 'ready, respectful and safe', pupils know that more hazardous activities, like those undertaken in the forest area, require them to comply with additional rules to mitigate risk.
45. Teachers discuss matters in the news with pupils of all ages in weekly lessons and use these conversations to emphasise concepts such as equality, diversity and discrimination. Pupils learn about the rule of law effectively, for example by visiting the Houses of Parliament, meeting their local MP and discovering how national laws are passed. Pupils learn about British politics in PSHE lessons and from the wider curriculum. Leaders take appropriate steps to ensure that balanced perspectives are presented to pupils whenever political matters are discussed.
46. Throughout the school, pupils receive age-appropriate education in matters of economics and finance. Teachers of children in the early years provide opportunities for them to handle coins as they role play going to venues such as a coffee shop and a French market stall. Older pupils undertake money-related calculations which teach them about credit and debt. They develop a secure understanding of how bank accounts operate and explore topics such as interest rates and loans. Leaders work with members of the school council, encouraging them to apply this knowledge to run enterprises. These generate profit to enhance the school's provision, such as by purchasing additional outdoor equipment.
47. Pupils also learn about the value and cost of resources through contributing to fundraising initiatives that raise money for charities. Each of the school's houses selects an appropriate cause to support within the local and national community, such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. Pupils run a range of activities to generate funds to support the charities they choose. As a result, pupils are provided with opportunities to support charities and causes which interest them. They develop an understanding of social responsibility and learn that it is kind to make a positive difference to others.
48. Leaders provide pupils with suitable opportunities to accept responsibilities that enable them to play an active and effective role within the school and to develop their leadership skills. Pupils, for example, assume positions as prefects and captains and help staff by assisting at school events and supporting younger pupils. Pupils serve as librarians and help to maintain the library as a tidy and peaceful area of the school. As a result of such opportunities, pupils develop an understanding of social responsibility and learn that it is responsible and kind to offer help to others.

49. Staff in the early years model positive and kind language and inclusive conduct so that children learn how to interact supportively and respectfully with others. Children take turns in their conversations at lunchtime, use cutlery appropriately and understand the importance of finding a compromise when they need to share equipment or wait for their turn. They willingly help each other when things do not go according to plan, such as picking up beads when they accidentally fall on the floor.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. As part of the school's emphasis on being 'ready, respectful and safe,' leaders promote a vigilant and robust culture of safeguarding. The safeguarding policy is reviewed regularly and reflects current statutory guidance. Trustees provide appropriately thorough oversight and support of the school's safeguarding procedures, such as by conducting regular scrutiny of key documentation and the SCR.
52. Leaders carry out appropriate processes when appointing new staff members and volunteers. They complete all required safer recruitment checks within an appropriate timescale. These checks are recorded accurately in the SCR.
53. Leaders provide staff with effective safeguarding training, which begins as part of the induction process. They explain safeguarding protocols and procedures, including those relating to whistleblowing, should staff need to raise an allegation about another adult working at the school. Staff receive the latest updates to the 'Prevent' duty to combat extremism and radicalisation. Staff regularly review and update their training during meetings. They complete questionnaires after training to demonstrate their secure understanding of the school's safeguarding practices. Throughout the school, staff are knowledgeable and confident about their safeguarding duties and know how to manage any concerns that may be raised.
54. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding have the necessary authority, time and higher-level training to carry out their responsibilities competently. They respond appropriately to concerns and provide effective support as necessary. The safeguarding team liaises constructively with the local authority, referring concerns to them when required. Leaders use information and training provided by local safeguarding partners to inform the school's safeguarding procedures and ensure they remain suitable.
55. Pupils know they can approach any member of staff if they have a worry. Leaders provide '3 Cs boxes' around school, should pupils prefer to express any concerns they may have in writing. These boxes are checked on a daily basis by the safeguarding team who take appropriate measures to address any matters that are raised.
56. Leaders ensure that pupils receive effective teaching so that they know how to promote their personal safety, including when they are online. Pupils learn about how to be digitally responsible in computing and PSHE lessons and through presentations by external visiting speakers. They understand the importance of maintaining secure passwords and know that it is wrong to post inappropriate messages online. Pupils learn to be wary of misinformation and 'deepfakes' on the internet. Leaders ensure that material accessed from online sources is robustly filtered so that only appropriate content is viewed. The safeguarding team takes suitable action and maintains clear records when they receive alerts relating to any inappropriate online requests.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Alleyn Court Preparatory School
Department for Education number	882/6002
Registered charity number	1017369
Address	Alleyn Court Preparatory School Wakering Road Great Wakering Southend-on-Sea Essex SS3 0PW
Phone number	01702 582553
Email address	office@alleyn-court.co.uk
Website	www.alleyn-court.co.uk
Proprietor	Alleyn Court Educational Trust
Chair	Mr Graham Reeder
Headteacher	Mrs Hannah Sanders
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	219
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 March 2023

Information about the school

57. Alleyn Court Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school located in Southend-on-Sea, Essex. Founded in 1904, it moved to its present site in 1993. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of trustees. The early years classes moved into new accommodation on the main school site in September 2023. The school appointed a new headteacher in September 2024.
58. There are 63 children in the early years, comprising two Nursery classes and one Reception class.
59. The school has identified that 17 pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
60. A very small number of pupils in the school speak English as an additional language.
61. The school states its aims are to educate children to be curious, courageous and compassionate. It endeavours for childhood to be a wondrous adventure where learning is present at every opportunity. The school believes that a child's natural happiness and curiosity are the keys to a truly exceptional education.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

20 to 22 January 2026

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

63. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and an assembly
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other trustees
- 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.

64. 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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