

School inspection report

11 to 13 November 2025

Port Regis Preparatory School

Motcombe Park

Shaftesbury

Dorset

SP7 9QA

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The governing body maintains effective oversight of all aspects of school life. They undertake appropriate training to support their roles. Leaders report to governors through a well-established system. This enables governors to routinely assess the extent to which the school meets its aims and fulfils pupils' needs. Leaders and governors check the effectiveness of school policies and their implementation regularly. Policy reviews and updates are typically actioned in a timely manner. However, at the beginning of the inspection, the relationships and sex education (RSE) policy published on the school's website did not include the statutory content for pupils from Year 4 to Year 6 as required.
2. The management of boarding is effective. Clear policies and procedures are implemented consistently across all boarding houses. Boarding accommodation is clean, comfortable and well maintained. Boarders are well cared for because of the support offered by residential staff and through the school's medical centre.
3. The early years provision is nurturing and supportive. This promotes children's development and wellbeing. Knowledgeable and committed staff understand children's individual needs and provide a wide range of activities that cover all required areas of learning. The early years team and Year 1 staff work closely together to ensure that children are effectively prepared for the next stage of their education.
4. Leaders use an effective assessment framework to analyse and evaluate pupils' progress. This is used well to identify pupils' needs and to provide them with appropriate help, through whole-class and individualised support. Teachers provide clear and effective feedback to pupils that enables them to improve their work and learn more. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL), typically make good progress.
5. Leaders provide a stimulating and varied programme of extra-curricular activities which are well attended by pupils. Pupils' participation in these activities helps them to develop their confidence and their intellectual, emotional and practical skills.
6. Leaders meet regularly with staff to review school practices. Leaders consider the school's educational provision carefully, making changes where appropriate. The school's development plan focuses on suitable areas for improvement, such as restructuring the timetable to maximise pupils' learning and enhancing site security. The plan is followed closely and routinely evaluated.
7. Leaders, governors and staff work effectively together to promote pupils' emotional wellbeing. Leaders actively uphold the school's aims and ethos, fostering a welcoming and inclusive community. Pupils benefit from accessing the extensive school grounds and well-maintained facilities, which enhance the creative, sporting and educational opportunities available to them. Pupils approach their learning with confidence and positive self-esteem. They are well prepared to contribute to society both in Britain and in the wider world.
8. The school's ethos is reinforced through assemblies, services and the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum, creating a clear sense of community. Pupils behave well, respect one another and develop positive relationships with staff, reflecting maturity and pride in

their school. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not always receive sufficient careers information and guidance to enable them to consider their future education and potential careers effectively.

9. Arrangements to safeguard both day and boarding pupils are appropriate and effective. Governors and leaders ensure that the safeguarding policy and procedures are implemented, including the timely referral of concerns to external agencies when required. Staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training. Pupils are confident to share any worries with staff and appreciate that their concerns are addressed promptly and sensitively.

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:

- review and update the school's relationships and sex education (RSE) policy to ensure it includes the specific content to be taught for all year groups and that this is published on the school's website
- improve and embed the school's careers information, advice and guidance programme to ensure that pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 are consistently well informed about the full range of future education, training and employment opportunities available.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors make sure that leaders have the required knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including actively promoting pupils' wellbeing. Governors assure themselves that the Standards are consistently met through regular visits to the school, alongside routine scrutiny and monitoring of the school's practice and procedures, including in relation to the boarding provision. Leaders report formally to governors through a clear committee structure as well as through informal meetings and discussions. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders, such as regarding the safe use of mobile phones in boarding.
11. Leaders in the early years have developed a well-organised curriculum which includes all required areas of learning. The curriculum gives teaching staff clear guidance, so that they understand what to teach, and when, in order to support children to learn effectively.
12. Leaders effectively embed the school's aims and values through all aspects of school life. This promotes high standards of behaviour, independence and collaboration amongst pupils. Assemblies and services contribute to pupils' sense of identity and belonging.
13. Safeguarding leaders train staff effectively, maintain suitable connections with external agencies, keep appropriate records and provide different mechanisms for pupils to report any concerns to staff, including in boarding.
14. Pupils enjoy and appreciate their education. They benefit from the wider opportunities on offer in the school. Boarding provision is well managed and effective. This offers a caring and supportive environment for pupils. Leaders check that boarders feel safe and secure. Links between academic and residential staff are well developed to ensure effective communication regarding all aspects of boarders' wellbeing.
15. All required information is made available to parents of current and prospective pupils. Parents receive detailed and informative reports on their child's progress. School policies and other information, including the aims and ethos of the school, are available on the school's website or can be sent directly to parents. At the start of the inspection, the RSE policy published on the school's website did not include the content to be taught for pupils in Years 4 to 6. This issue was addressed during the inspection.
16. Leaders and staff implement the school's risk assessment policy effectively. Leaders have a clear understanding of how to mitigate any potential harm to pupils' wellbeing. They evaluate risk effectively, for example, by introducing coloured lanyards that all adults must wear when on site and restricting pupils' access to some school buildings with timed locks. House parents maintain risk assessments specific to boarding accommodation. The school site and buildings are kept secure.
17. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with any complaints. Leaders and boarding staff listen and respond to complaints promptly and effectively, in line with the school's policy. They maintain and scrutinise a log of concerns to identify any trends or patterns. Leaders take action to address these when necessary.
18. Leaders ensure that they meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The accessibility plan is detailed and reviewed annually to make sure it remains relevant. The plan includes actions that enable pupils to access both the physical environment of the school and the curriculum, for

example, providing staff training on the needs of neurodiverse pupils. There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) or for whom the school is in receipt of any state funding.

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. The curriculum is broad and well thought through. The curriculum offers a balanced blend of creative, academic and physical education. The content to be taught is organised to ensure clear progression across subjects from the early years through to Year 8. Pupils access a range of different subjects and a broad programme of enrichment opportunities that promote pupils' cross-curricular learning and problem-solving skills. Specialist teaching in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM), languages and classics provides subject-specific depth and ensures accessibility for all pupils. Teachers use a range of teaching approaches effectively, enabling pupils to develop a wide range of skills and pursue their individual talents and interests.
21. The creative and aesthetic curriculum is carefully planned to provide pupils with opportunities to develop skills across a wide range of disciplines, including music, drama, ceramics, art, craft, and design and technology (DT). High-quality displays around the school reflect the impact of the creative arts provision on pupils' progress and achievements.
22. Teachers know their pupils well. They plan learning that takes account of pupils' needs, experiences and prior knowledge, ensuring that all have equal opportunities to succeed. Teachers use a range of resources effectively to engage pupils and teach essential knowledge and skills.
23. Teachers draw on their good subject knowledge to pose well-considered questions that stimulate pupils' thinking. They provide clear explanations and identify and address pupils' misconceptions. Teachers respond to pupils' contributions with appropriate praise, feedback and further challenge through regular extension activities that deepen pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils learn successfully and make good progress across all areas of the curriculum.
24. Leaders implement a detailed assessment framework. Pupils' progress is evaluated effectively, and action plans are put in place to support pupils who need extra help with their learning. Leaders track pupils' progress thoroughly. They check closely that vulnerable groups such as pupils who have SEND, those who board and those from military backgrounds achieve as well as they can. Pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are progressing through the supportive feedback they receive from their teachers. Pupils are motivated by the improvements they make over time.
25. Pupils who have SEND are well supported through targeted strategies, specialist input and the effective use of assistive technology. Pupils' progress is closely monitored, resulting in good outcomes. Leaders support staff through ongoing professional development and careful planning to promote inclusive practice and ensure that resources are used effectively. Good collaboration between senior leaders, heads of department and the leader of provision for pupils who have SEND secures consistency of provision and ensures that pupils who have SEND receive appropriate and effective support.
26. Pupils who speak EAL benefit from focused support provided by both specialists and teachers. This enables pupils to acquire the language skills and confidence necessary to contribute during lessons and make good progress.
27. Staff in the early years plan and teach activities that help children to learn and develop. Staff assess and identify what children know and can do. They use this information to provide additional support to those children who need extra help. Staff focus on developing children's language and

communication skills. They read stories, engage in discussions while children play and provide questions and explanations to extend children's vocabulary. Activities are interesting and children are encouraged to solve problems and think critically, for example when trying to build a castle. A range of planned extra-curricular activities enrich children's experiences and enhance their learning.

28. Parents are well informed about their child's progress, attainment and achievements through a range of channels. These include parents' meetings and written reports that cover all areas of the curriculum, including PSHE.
29. Pupils enjoy taking part in the extensive weekly programme of 'hobbies'. All pupils participate in and benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities designed to develop their academic, sporting and creative talents. Activities include 'cosy corner', golf, cookery, debating and exploring world cultures. The programme is reviewed regularly in response to pupils' feedback, ensuring that the activities offered reflect pupils' talents and interests. Boarders have access to an appropriate range of activities outside the school day, alongside opportunities for recreation within their boarding houses.

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

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

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

31. Pupils benefit from a well-structured physical education (PE) curriculum. This includes an extensive range of activities that develop their skills progressively over time. All pupils participate in daily PE lessons and demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of exercise for their health and wellbeing. Children in the early years flourish in their physical development through weekly PE, swimming and dance lessons. Staff provide a balanced programme of competitive and non-competitive sporting opportunities, ensuring that all pupils can take part. Extra-curricular clubs are responsive to pupils' physical interests, including activities such as yoga, triathlon and gymnastics. Many pupils achieve prominent levels of success in competitive sport.
32. Staff develop pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem by encouraging them to persevere and take risks in their learning. Strategies such as the 'red and green' challenges enable pupils to select tasks with differing levels of difficulty, fostering their independence and resilience. Similar opportunities are evident in the early years, where children choose from a range of activities and are encouraged to 'have a go'. These experiences are accessible to all pupils and staff consistently reinforce the message that mistakes present valuable learning opportunities.
33. The comprehensive PSHE curriculum is delivered through 'life skills' lessons, assemblies, tutorials and talks from guest speakers. The curriculum is carefully structured and includes age-appropriate provision for RSE. At the start of the inspection, the RSE policy did not include the programme content for pupils in Years 4 to 6, so it was unclear if the statutory content was being taught. During the inspection, inspectors determined that pupils in Years 4 to 6 are taught the required content. However, leaders had not made sure the complete policy, including the content to be taught for all year groups, was published on the school's website. This omission was addressed and the full and complete RSE policy was in place and included on the school's website before the end of the inspection.
34. Leaders ensure a consistent and fair approach regarding behaviour. Records show that the school deals with any misbehaviour appropriately. Pupils know the school's clear expectations and understand that they must take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils behave well and show respect to each other during lessons and at breaktimes. Pupils explain the importance of good manners and demonstrate these in their interactions. They behave sensibly and are polite.
35. An appropriate and clearly defined anti-bullying strategy is in place. Pupils are taught what constitutes bullying. They are supported to develop strategies to prevent this happening or respond appropriately should bullying occur. Rare cases of bullying are managed promptly and effectively by leaders in accordance with the school's policy. In the event that they experience unkindness or bullying, pupils know how to access support through worry boxes and talking to staff, with whom they have good relationships as a result of the form and co-tutor pastoral systems.
36. Pupils are appropriately supervised during lessons and throughout the school day, including in before- and after-school care.
37. The school maintains admission and attendance registers in line with current statutory guidance and liaises effectively with local agencies to support any pupils and their families that struggle with lateness and attendance. Leaders keep track of attendance patterns and follow up any absenteeism

promptly. Local authorities are informed whenever pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times.

38. Health and safety procedures are robust. Leaders ensure that an external specialist regularly inspects fire safety equipment. Staff understand the processes for reporting health and safety concerns and do so promptly when required. Leaders respond quickly and effectively to any issues raised. Governors provide oversight of the school's health and safety arrangements. Clear and detailed records are maintained, and the premises are monitored effectively so that they remain secure and suitable for pupils.
39. Appropriate first aid arrangements and accommodation are in place to care for pupils who become unwell, are injured or who have specific medical needs. Suitably qualified medical staff provide care in the school's medical centre. Procedures for first aid and for the medical care of boarders are effective. There are suitable arrangements for overnight and weekend care when boarders are unwell.
40. Boarding houses are positive communities where trusting relationships between pupils and staff promote pupils' wellbeing. Residential staff, including house parents and their assistants, know pupils well and act effectively as a team to support them. Boarding practice is consistent across the houses and pupils are well cared for. This helps pupils new to the school, and to the United Kingdom, to settle in quickly. The houses are secure and well maintained and provide suitable accommodation for the pupils. Pupils are effectively supervised, and all boarding requirements are met.

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

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

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

42. Leaders and staff consistently model the school's values of generosity, endeavour, joy, courage and creativity for all, regardless of background or belief. The school actively promotes mutual respect and inclusivity across the curriculum. Pupils are taught the importance of listening to and valuing the perspectives of others from different social and cultural backgrounds. Pupils learn about the harm caused by prejudice and discrimination through assemblies, form time and PSHE lessons on themes such as respect and Black History Month. Additional opportunities, including the 'hobbies' programme and learning British Sign Language (BSL), further develop pupils' understanding of inclusivity.
43. Pupils collaborate with one another in a considerate way. Displays in the early years and other areas of the school encourage pupils to consider the importance of following rules and having respect for other cultures.
44. Pupils' economic understanding is developed through an appropriate curriculum alongside opportunities to engage in real-life experiences. Children in the early years begin to understand the value of money through role-play activities that involve buying and selling items. As pupils move through the school, they build on this foundation by learning about budgeting, saving and taxation, which effectively deepens their economic understanding. Fundraising events such as the school's summer fete help pupils gain experience in planning an enterprise as well as raising money for charity.
45. A culture of kindness is evident amongst both day and boarding pupils. In the boarding environment, pupils are aware of how their behaviour affects the house community. This understanding extends across the school. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how their actions impact on others and develop an age-appropriate sense of independence and accountability.
46. Staff in the early years introduce children to the concepts of respect, kindness and tolerance, modelling these consistently in their interactions. Children learn to consider and take care of one another. Staff involve children in agreeing simple class rules that support positive behaviour. Children learn how to help those around them and socialise with each other. For example, children work together to tidy up the classroom. The introduction of clubs and hobbies in the summer term helps children in the early years to develop independence and social confidence in preparation for moving to Year 1.
47. Leaders provide limited careers guidance for pupils in Years 7 and 8. Pupils receive some exposure to possible future pathways through half-termly assemblies, occasional tutor group sessions and elements of the 'Port Regis plus' programme. However, this provision does not equip pupils to consider and begin to plan for their future education or employment options as effectively as it could.
48. Pupils are prepared well for life in Britain. British values are woven through school life and align to the school's values. For example, leaders promote respect for others by organising opportunities for pupils to contribute to the local community. Pupils participate in initiatives such as tidying the local churchyard, organising bake sales and giving donations to the local foodbank.

49. Boarding staff in both the senior and junior houses provide a well-planned and varied programme of evening and weekend activities that takes account of pupils' views and interests. Boarders engage enthusiastically with these opportunities and particularly enjoy the social activities offered, such as pamper nights and self-care evenings.
50. Leaders value pupils' feedback and opinions. Pupils experience active involvement in the principle of democracy through the election of school council representatives and members of the food and nutrition committee. Pupils have opportunities to share their ideas through suggestion boxes, which leaders and staff consider when bringing about changes in the school and the boarding houses.
51. Pupils explore current affairs and ethical debates in a non-partisan way, supported by a robust visiting speaker policy that ensures pupils access balanced perspectives.

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

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

Safeguarding

53. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and in accordance with current statutory guidance. Governors provide diligent and effective oversight of safeguarding through a dedicated member of the governing body. A culture of transparency and frequent communication with members of the safeguarding team enables governors to have an accurate understanding of safeguarding policies and practice, monitor any trends and evaluate the impact of actions taken.
54. Leaders with safeguarding responsibilities have clearly defined roles. The comprehensive safeguarding policy is available to parents and outlines the school's responsibilities and procedures in full accordance with statutory guidance and local procedures. Leaders maintain records appropriately, ensuring that all concerns are recorded and monitored with sufficient detail as they arise. This facilitates efficient communication, prompt action and the provision of suitable support for pupils.
55. Leaders work collaboratively and efficiently with relevant external agencies. They have cultivated a positive relationship with local safeguarding partners where they support each other to manage concerns and keep vulnerable pupils safe. Staff are well trained. They know to record and report any issues, including for low-level concerns. They do this without delay, and leaders respond promptly and effectively. Careful record-keeping, ongoing communication with pastoral teams and high levels of vigilance help to safeguard pupils effectively.
56. Safeguarding processes for boarding pupils are equally thorough and regularly evaluated. A well-planned induction programme ensures that pupils settle into the school community quickly. Suitable support is available for boarders, and the boarding provision provides a safe environment. There are several ways for pupils to report concerns. This allows timely, additional support to be put in place.
57. Regular reviews of the school's internet filtering and monitoring systems safeguard pupils' online activities. Online safety concerns are addressed promptly, and pupils receive age-appropriate education on the risks of inappropriate internet use. Boarding pupils are protected through the careful management of mobile phones and additional restrictions beyond the school's filtering systems. In the early years, a clear mobile phone policy is understood and consistently implemented by staff.
58. Processes for safer recruitment are robust and follow statutory guidance. The school conducts the required pre-employment checks for all staff, volunteers and members of the governing body. A suitable single central record (SCR) of appointments is maintained and is regularly scrutinised by the governing body as part of the school's monitoring arrangements. Visitors to the site are closely supervised by staff, and pupils can identify safe adults through a clearly defined system that uses coloured lanyards.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Port Regis Preparatory School
Department for Education number	838/6010
Registered charity number	306218
Address	Port Regis Preparatory School Motcombe Park Shaftesbury Dorset SP7 7QA
Phone number	01747 857800
Email address	office@portregis.com
Website	www.portregis.com
Proprietor	Port Regis School Limited
Chair	Mr James Hussey
Headteacher	Mr Titus Mills
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils	303
Number of boarding pupils	163
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 September 2022

Information about the school

60. Founded in 1881, Port Regis Preparatory School is a co-educational boarding school for pupils aged 2 to 13 years. It is located in the town of Shaftesbury, Dorset. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a governing body known as the 'Council of Management'.
61. Pupils may board from Year 3 upwards. Pupils are accommodated in three boarding houses, one of which is for male and female pupils between 7 to 10 years of age. The other two houses offer single-sex accommodation for male and female pupils between 10 and 13 years of age.
62. There are 40 pupils in the early years comprising two Nursery and two Reception classes.
63. The school has identified 58 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
64. The school has identified 28 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL).
65. The school states its aims as championing an unhurried and joyful childhood, underpinned by teaching that stretches and supports every child, teaching both the discipline of study and the delight of learning. Pastoral care places the wellbeing of pupils and staff at the heart of all they do, developing each pupil's academic, sporting and creative talents to nurture their head, hand and heart alike. Developing pupils' moral, social and spiritual values, the school aims to ensure that pupils leave as capable, compassionate and inspired young people.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

11 to 13 November 2025

66. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

67. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observations of boarding meals
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

68. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net