

School inspection report

11 to 13 February 2025

The Ursuline Preparatory School Ilford

2 – 4 Coventry Road

Ilford

Essex

IG1 4QR

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. Leaders have established a reflective culture in line with the principles of the Ursuline community's motto, 'serviam'. This encourages staff to find opportunities to serve and support others. Leaders and governors collaborate well, making informed decisions, effectively managing risks and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.
2. Governors provide effective oversight of all aspects of the school. They follow a clear cycle that includes visits, meetings, reviewing documentation and conversations with pupils and staff. This approach keeps governors well informed about the school, highlighting good practice and areas needing improvement. As a result, they assure themselves that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively while prioritising pupils' wellbeing.
3. Leaders emphasise the teaching of mathematics, English and religious education (RE), helping pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in these subjects well. There are appropriate schemes of work for all subjects and pupils make good progress. However, art, design technology (DT) and information and communication technology (ICT) are not given sufficient time and attention for delivery of the curriculum to be fully effective. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress and their knowledge and skills are less well developed in these subjects.
4. The school has a suitable assessment framework in place. It is used effectively in the humanities and science and particularly so in mathematics, RE and English. However, the assessment framework has not been adopted fully in all subjects. In subjects where assessment is less well developed, pupils' progress is not monitored as closely and teaching is not adapted as effectively to meet pupils' identified needs.
5. Teaching is typically effective, with teachers using their secure subject knowledge to create engaging lessons that build on prior learning. Pupils make good progress because lessons are usually well planned, engaging and present suitable challenge. However, at times, pupils are given activities to do that are not sufficiently challenging, particularly for those with higher prior attainment. Where this is the case, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
6. In the early years, children are encouraged to collaborate and support each other, emphasising politeness and consideration. Teachers and teaching assistants provide engaging activities, ensuring that children are supervised effectively and that appropriate staff-to-child ratios are maintained. As a result, children settle in and make progress within a secure and purposeful environment, in an atmosphere of joyful engagement.
7. The school fosters an inclusive community where equality and inclusion are stressed from the earliest years. These values are evident in pupils' positive attitudes throughout the school. Pupils recognise and appreciate the uniqueness of each individual, demonstrating respect and acceptance for everyone. They learn to understand that every person is different and valuable.
8. Robust safeguarding arrangements are in place. Staff are suitably trained and take prompt action when any concerns or potential issues are identified. Pupils know who to approach if they ever feel upset or unhappy. Staff listen to their views and opinions and swiftly take supportive action, when necessary. At the start of the inspection, there were some minor errors in the safeguarding policy. These were quickly rectified.

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 the safeguarding policy is always an accurate reflection of the school's current practice
- ensure that art, DT and ICT are given sufficient time and attention so that these subjects are taught consistently and pupils make the same good progress as they do in other parts of the curriculum
- ensure that the assessment framework is employed effectively across the curriculum so that pupils' progress is monitored appropriately, and teaching is adapted to meet pupils' identified needs, in all subjects
- ensure teaching always provides suitable levels of challenge, particularly for pupils with higher prior attainment, in order that all pupils make the progress that they are capable of.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors have a secure understanding of the school's effectiveness. They collaborate well with leaders and ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities successfully. Governors monitor the quality of education closely. They visit regularly, such as attending masses delivered by the pupil-led chaplaincy team and engaging in regular discussions with leaders. This helps governors enhance their understanding of the school's achievements and areas needing improvement. This insight allows them to provide ongoing support and appropriate challenge to the leadership team, ensuring that the Standards are consistently met.
10. Leaders adopt an inclusive and collaborative approach, creating a harmonious environment. They promote the school's aims effectively. They cultivate a culture where pupils and staff maintain mutually respectful and positive relationships. Open, tolerant relationships between pupils are evident throughout the school day. Staff recognise each pupil as an individual. They prioritise pupils' wellbeing, contributing to an atmosphere that encourages learning and personal growth.
11. Leaders are knowledgeable and well informed about risk management. They identify potential risks to pupils' wellbeing, such as from harmful behaviours and attitudes, including those that are not immediately obvious. They carry out a range of assessments, such as for educational visits and site security, and employ effective strategies to effectively mitigate risks. Leaders review and update risk assessments regularly.
12. Leaders effectively evaluate the school and plan for improvements. They consider the opinions of staff when deciding on actions to promote pupils' wellbeing. For example, following discussions, leaders introduced a 'cultural capital' component to the curriculum to help pupils understand the value of different cultures and develop a sense of curiosity and excitement about the world.
13. Leaders keep up to date with changes to legislation and guidance. Policies are implemented effectively and consistently and are refined and updated as necessary. Leaders use the expertise of external agencies to inform their decision-making on various matters, including safeguarding, academic support and attendance.
14. The school meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. It is inclusive and celebrates all races, religions and cultures. The accessibility plan clearly outlines the school's commitment to ensuring no pupils face discrimination.
15. The school's website provides appropriate information for parents, such as key policies and contact details for key staff and governors. Parents receive valuable information about their children's progress, including updates throughout the term, especially in the early years. Pupils receive progress reports twice a year detailing their achievement levels, efforts and recommendations for future learning steps. This information helps pupils and parents understand current performance and identify areas for improvement.
16. A suitable complaints policy is successfully implemented. Staff address parental concerns promptly and efficiently, taking each concern seriously and resolving issues quickly through open discussions.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum that enables pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across a suitable range of subjects. It provides an academic education with a particular focus on English, mathematics and RE. All subjects have a coherent scheme of work that considers the ages, aptitudes and needs of pupils, ensuring they learn and make good progress. However, art, DT and ICT are not given sufficient time and attention. As a result, pupils' skills and knowledge in these subjects are less well developed and they make less progress than they do in the rest of the curriculum.
19. The early years curriculum is coherently planned and well sequenced. Teachers use their knowledge of children's interests to plan activities that encourage engagement with tasks and promote learning. By the time they leave Reception, most children achieve all the early learning goals. They become effective communicators who are confident in discussing their hopes and feelings. Nursery children develop age-appropriate numeracy skills, confidently counting to 20 while building towers with one-centimetre bricks to match the height of their water bottles. Staff routinely engage children in high-quality conversations, which helps them to communicate effectively.
20. Pupils typically achieve results that are in line with or better than those of pupils taking the same assessments nationally. An assessment framework evaluates pupils' work and performance effectively. This works well in humanities and science and particularly well in English, mathematics and RE, as it includes one-to-one meetings between each class teacher and the headteacher. During these meetings, teachers reflect on the most recent assessments. They then use this information to adapt lesson planning and identify pupils who need additional support. However, implementation of the assessment framework in some subjects is less well developed. Where this is the case, progress is not monitored as effectively and teaching is not adapted accordingly to meet pupils' identified needs.
21. Teachers are typically secure in their subject knowledge and plan lessons with engaging activities that build on pupils' prior learning and develop their understanding. Pupils across all year groups support each other in explaining answers and working together on solutions. Teachers support the purposeful engagement of pupils through careful use of appropriate and well-judged teaching methods. The best teaching is characterised by effective questioning and appropriate levels of challenge. Where this is the case, pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation, develop skills and acquire subject knowledge well. Occasionally, activities in lessons are not matched well enough to pupils' abilities, particularly for pupils with higher prior attainment, and they are not offered sufficient challenge. As a result, some pupils make less progress than they could.
22. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils of all ages enjoy their learning and are motivated to succeed. They take an active part in lessons, making good use of a range of resources which support learning.
23. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported to ensure they make good progress in accordance with their abilities. Teaching is tailored to address their needs sensitively. For example, teachers regularly 'check in' with pupils and provide word lists to aid understanding, where appropriate. Learning plans for pupils are reviewed, implemented fully and regularly updated.

24. Similarly, pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive appropriate support. Teachers structure activities well, providing timely and well-thought-out support to help pupils access their learning. For example, picture cards are used to help younger children understand the meanings of words. Pupils develop their skills in English quickly and learn well alongside their peers.
25. A range of extra-curricular activities encourage pupils to broaden their horizons, learn new skills and develop their personal interests. Activities such as yoga, Bollywood dancing, 'mad scientists' and Mandarin language sessions provide opportunities for pupils to interact socially with one another and help boost their self-confidence.

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

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

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

27. Pupils' spiritual understanding and knowledge are developed well because of the thorough RE curriculum. The recently introduced curriculum builds pupils' knowledge of scripture in a way that is appropriate to their age and ability. Teachers facilitate high-quality discussions that develop pupils' understanding of religions such as Hinduism, Judaism and Islam, alongside Christianity. Prayer areas in every class and whole school displays, such as about being 'pilgrims of hope', encourage pupils to appreciate different values and develop respect and empathy.
28. The 'cultural capital' curriculum develops pupils' understanding and knowledge of different cultures and backgrounds. It supports pupils effectively in developing mutual trust and respect for others. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 investigate discoveries made by scientists from a range of backgrounds. This teaching helps foster an inclusive and respectful school culture. Pupils learn about the unacceptability of prejudice and discrimination, including that based on age, gender, race or religion.
29. Pupils are well supported in developing their physical fitness and understand the importance of leading a healthy and active lifestyle. The physical education (PE) curriculum is taught well. It enhances pupils' physical skills, such as co-ordination, and provides opportunities to develop teamwork and resilience. The PE curriculum also helps pupils to develop strength, endurance and confidence, such as when swimming in Year 3. Pupils enjoy the competitive element of fixtures, including in house competitions.
30. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum successfully ensures pupils explore their strengths, weaknesses and interests, effectively developing pupils' self-knowledge. Teachers encourage self-reflection and provide regular positive feedback, with plenty of opportunities to celebrate individual accomplishments. This helps to create a supportive environment where pupils develop a secure sense of self and feel accepted for who they are.
31. The PSHE education programme includes relationships and sex education (RSE). The PSHE curriculum ensures key themes are covered and revisited, such as health, wellbeing, families and relationships. The RSE curriculum is reflective of Catholic values and its content is delivered well. It ensures pupils develop their understanding of a range of important issues such as consent, body changes and personal safety. Pupils reflect on their learning and respond using an online link, which helps inform future planning and keeps the curriculum meaningful and relevant.
32. Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour, emphasising mutual respect and tolerance. Staff communicate these expectations effectively, which is reflected in pupils' conduct. Pupils behave well throughout the school and are aware of how their actions affect others. Incidents of bullying are infrequent and are effectively managed when they do occur. Interventions to address inappropriate behaviour or resolve conflicts among friends are prompt and effective. The behaviour policy establishes high expectations for conduct and includes clear strategies for rewards and sanctions.
33. In the early years, children's physical development is fostered through PE lessons and activities designed to enhance their fine and gross motor skills. For instance, in PE, children learn to kick, catch and throw a ball and they engage in activities such as cutting and painting in the classroom. Children

are supported to develop an age-appropriate understanding of their emotions by, for example, using picture cues to express their feelings.

34. Admission and attendance registers are kept in accordance with regulations. Rates of attendance are high. Leaders monitor this carefully to ensure it is maintained. The school informs the local authority when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.
35. The school premises and outside spaces are appropriately maintained to provide a suitable physical environment where pupils can play and learn. Leaders ensure that relevant health and safety laws, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, are complied with to ensure the welfare of pupils. All necessary checks are undertaken.
36. First aid arrangements are suitable. Procedures are in place for the prompt and appropriate administration of first aid or medication by suitably trained staff when required. Pupils are well supervised by caring staff who are deployed effectively.

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

37. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

38. Pupils develop economic understanding through different aspects of the curriculum. For instance, pupils learn about money in mathematics and managing bank accounts in the economic wellbeing section of PSHE. This is further developed through an annual enterprise week where pupils work as a team to produce a product. This supports them effectively in developing an age-appropriate understanding of business and managing a budget, including concepts such as profit and loss. Learning about moral questions, such as recognising the difference between wants and needs, supports pupils' broader understanding of financial matters.
39. The carefully planned 'cultural capital' curriculum fosters pupils' social and cultural understanding and helps develop an appreciation of diversity. Through whole-school events, such as Black History Month and British Science Week, pupils look at issues of equality and the contributions people representing different cultures have made to art, literature and science. This approach enhances pupils' understanding of different cultures and heightens their awareness of the importance of global citizenship.
40. Staff in the early years foster children's social skills effectively. They communicate high expectations and encourage children to take turns and consider the feelings of others. As a result, children quickly learn to co-operate and resolve conflicts peacefully. Engaging in imaginative play, such as being a vet, provides children with experiences to help prepare them for later life by developing their awareness of various roles and relationships.
41. Leaders ensure pupils are well prepared for life in British society. The curriculum provides pupils with an understanding of national events, such as Remembrance Day, and trips to places of interest, such as the British Museum. This supports pupils' understanding of British values. The school ensures a balanced representation of views whenever political themes or subject matter are explored.
42. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for their next schools through a carefully planned programme, including practice for entry examinations. An annual careers fair enables pupils throughout the school to engage with a large group of visiting parents and local community members to explore potential careers.
43. Pupils' respect for the law, British institutions and democratic principles is effectively fostered through the curriculum and broader activities. Elections for school council members provide pupils with practical experience of the democratic process. In Year 5, pupils learn about how the democratic system and constitutional monarchy in the United Kingdom operate. Pupils' understanding is enhanced by school trips and visits, for example, to London to see places of interest such as the Houses of Parliament. Regular visits from the police to deliver assemblies and lead sessions with individual classes develop pupils' knowledge of the rule of law and their understanding of the role of police in society. This effectively supports pupils in distinguishing right from wrong, and respecting civil and criminal law in England.
44. Pupils engage with the community and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality and to society more widely. Pupils are enthusiastic about participating in the active school council and are empowered to choose the focus of charitable

activities. Pupils develop a mature understanding of how their actions can influence the lives of others.

45. Pupils engage in structured leadership opportunities that promote democracy, responsibility and inclusion. Roles include school council representatives, house captains and chaplaincy leaders. Pupils nominated as play leaders are appropriately trained and help others to play happily together during breaktimes.

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

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

Safeguarding

47. Leaders have established a robust safeguarding culture throughout the school. Procedures are implemented sensitively to promote pupils' wellbeing. They reflect current statutory guidance. However, at the start of the inspection, the published safeguarding policy contained some minor errors and did not fully reflect the school's practice and current guidance. This was rectified before the end of the on-site inspection.
48. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are appropriately trained and knowledgeable about their roles. Clear, well-established procedures for reporting concerns are in place and records are well maintained.
49. All staff receive comprehensive and suitable online and in-person safeguarding training, including at induction. This leads to staff who are well prepared to identify safeguarding issues, including the threats posed by radicalisation and extremism. Staff are confident in how to respond to any low-level concerns about adults or situations relating to child-on-child abuse. Staff report concerns without delay.
50. The safeguarding team consults with external safeguarding partners when necessary. They follow their advice and refer safeguarding concerns to them as appropriate.
51. Leaders adopt a proactive approach to keeping pupils safe, including online. For example, pupils are taught about the dangers of talking to strangers both in-person and online. Information is shared in assemblies when appropriate, for instance, during internet safety week. Pupils in the 'cyber warriors' team and the journal committee help to promote safety through displays and articles in the weekly pupil newspaper. Suitable filtering and monitoring systems are in place, which are tested and reviewed regularly by the safeguarding lead. Concerns are followed up promptly.
52. Pupils are clear about how to share any worries they may have. They trust the adults in school and know that their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon appropriately. Pupils can also raise concerns anonymously through their classroom's 'worry box'.
53. Those responsible for safer recruitment are attentive in their roles. They ensure that all necessary suitability checks are completed before staff, including volunteers and governors, begin work. These are accurately recorded in the single central record of appointments, which leaders monitor effectively.
54. Governors conduct regular reviews of safeguarding, providing diligent and effective oversight. During monitoring visits, they meet with leaders and scrutinise their reports to accurately understand issues, monitor trends and check the effectiveness of the school's actions.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	The Ursuline Preparatory School Ilford
Department for Education number	317/6062
Registered charity number	1130196
Address	The Ursuline Preparatory School Ilford 2–4 Coventry Road Ilford Essex IG1 4QR
Phone number	0208 5184050
Email address	urspi@urspi.org.uk
Website	www.urspsi.org.uk
Proprietor	Ilford Ursuline Preparatory School Ltd Company
Chair	Mr Simon Bird
Headteacher	Ms Natasha Boyce
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	68
Date of previous inspection	1 to 4 March 2022

Information about the school

56. The Ursuline Preparatory School is a Roman Catholic day school located in Ilford, Essex. The school opened on its present site in 1996. Originally for female pupils only, it became fully co-educational in 2011. The school is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The board of trustees assigns responsibility for the day-to-day oversight of the school to a board of governors. The headteacher took up her position in January 2024.
57. There are currently 14 children in the early years setting, comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
58. The school has identified three pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. The school has identified seven pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
60. The school states its aims are to provide a Christian community which is safe, secure and welcoming. It seeks to encourage pupils to become independent learners, and to provide a broad, balanced curriculum which promotes the full academic, personal, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development of the individual child. It looks to recognise each pupil's unique value and instil a sense of personal responsibility, self-discipline, respect and care for one another and the environment.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

11 to 13 February 2025

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

62. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of governors
- discussions with the headteacher, bursar 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.

63. 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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