



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Maldon Court Preparatory School

October 2022

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School's Details

School	Maldon Court Preparatory School			
DfE number	881/6027			
Early Years registration number	EY554686			
Address	Maldon Court Preparatory School Silver Street Maldon Essex CM9 4QE			
Telephone number	01621 853529			
Email address	office@maldoncourtschool.org			
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Mason			
Proprietor	Mr Stephen Guest			
Age range	1 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	156			
	EYFS	58	Preparatory	98
Inspection dates	11 to 13 October 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Founded in 1956, Maldon Court Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school situated in Maldon, Essex. The current proprietor bought the school in 2004, and his daughter took over as headteacher in 2013. The proprietors are supported in the governance of the school by an advisory Board of Visitors.
- 1.2 The school comprises three sections: A registered nursery unit for children aged under two, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children aged from three to five years, and a Preparatory School for those in Years 1 to 6.
- 1.3 The school's registered Early Years setting was inspected by Ofsted at the same time.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aspires to foster a love of learning in which the talents of each pupil are recognised and valued, to provide a stimulating curriculum through which the pupils can flourish and become enthusiastic independent learners and to encourage them to reach their full potential. It seeks to promote the traditional values of kindness, respect and courtesy, to encourage social awareness and respect for others by involvement in the community, and to create confident, happy pupils who are well prepared for their next step in education.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from predominantly professional families in Maldon and the surrounding towns. Data provided by the school indicate the ability of pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified eight pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia and similar conditions, all of whom receive additional specialist help. There are no pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for two pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified a number of pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

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

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

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

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

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

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

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

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

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

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

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

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

Key findings

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

- Pupils' attainment and progress are excellent overall.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes toward their learning, showing notably high levels of focus and determination.
- Pupils display an outstanding ability to work collaboratively in their lessons.
- Pupils are particularly confident when speaking in public and benefit from many opportunities to develop this skill.

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

- Pupils have an outstanding understanding of the notion of wellbeing and actively seek opportunities to care for their own.
- Pupils' social development and co-operation across different year groups are outstanding.
- Pupils display an excellent moral understanding with very high standards of behaviour being the norm.
- Pupils make significant contributions to their school community by participating in committees and surveys to enhance the quality of school life.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Strengthen pupils' application of their higher-order thinking skills such as those of critical analysis.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 The overall attainment and progress of pupils are excellent. Assessment data provided by the school show that in standardised tests and the EYFS profile, attainment is above average compared to those sitting the same tests nationally. Pupils with SEND typically attain very well, and more able pupils achieve well above average. Progress for all groups of pupils is at least good and sometimes rapid in relation to those of similar ability, due to the careful monitoring by, and support of, their teachers. Across the school, any pupils who are not making their expected progress, as identified by test data analysis, receive targeted individual support so that they quickly catch up with their peers. Pupils

achieve strong success in senior school entrance exams with a significant proportion achieving scholarships and most passing 11+ entrance examinations to local grammar schools. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress. This view is borne out by inspection evidence.

- 3.6 Pupils display excellent attitudes towards their learning. They work with focus and determination. Their willingness to work collaboratively is notable. Children in the EYFS frequently work and play in pairs and groups, devising their own games and role play. They were seen to work with great independence to create a 'cake' in the mud kitchen. They exhibited very high levels of concentration for their age and worked highly effectively as a team to achieve their aim. Year 4 pupils showed a mature willingness to work in pairs and the quality of discussion with their partners was excellent. Pupils show an excellent understanding of the attitudes required to learn effectively. For example, in a Year 2 art lesson, pupils were focused and listening carefully to the instructions and guidance from the teacher. They readily asked pertinent questions to elicit further information to help them progress.
- 3.7 Pupils display excellent communication skills, fostered in an atmosphere of consistent positivity created by their teachers. Older pupils write very well. For example, Year 5 pupils used adventurous adjectives and adverbs along with devices such as alliteration and personification to describe characters and scenes for their audience. A love of stories takes root in the early years. For example, children in Reception showed excellent speaking skills whilst presenting a puppet show to their peers. They fluently and expressively narrated the story while others enacted the story with puppets. The rest of the group listened attentively. Excellent listening skills were evident across the age range during assemblies presented by the children. Pupils are highly confident readers. In a Year 3 science lesson, pupils fluently read challenging technical vocabulary such as 'archaeologist' and 'palaeontologist'. Year 1 children read their non-fiction book aloud with sophisticated fluency and expression. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to speak in public, including class presentations, readings in church and presenting in assemblies. A number of children enhance their skills by undertaking English Speaking Board (ESB) examinations.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate outstanding competence in numeracy. For example, Year 5 pupils showed an excellent grasp of place value. More able pupils were able to use their mathematical knowledge to solve challenging problems. For example, pupils were able to rationalise and justify why statements about large numbers were correct or incorrect. Those with SEND make similar progress to their peers due to the support from their teachers. Pupils use their mathematical skills highly effectively across the curriculum. For example, in science, when they were able to round the time it takes for planets to orbit the sun, to the nearest full Earth day. Other pupils were able to calculate the whole school contribution to RSPB Birdwatch. Here, children used tallies to count the birds in the school garden and then accurately represented their findings graphically using techniques appropriate to each age group.
- 3.9 Pupils exhibit an excellent competence in information and communication technology (ICT) and use their skills well across the curriculum. EYFS children selected tablets to run apps, getting them to spot and predict patterns. They showed high levels of confidence and competence in using the device and the game. Older pupils spoke enthusiastically about their experiences of coding and creating films using stop motion animation. Pupils made excellent use of collaborative software in English lessons where classmates could readily contribute vocabulary and ideas to improve the work of all those involved. Pupils with SEND make effective use of ICT to run programmes to boost their progress, such as those designed to help dyslexic pupils master key spelling patterns. The pupils appreciate leaders' and governors' provision of technology in the classrooms and the opportunities this brings to enhance their learning.
- 3.10 Pupils exhibit an excellent range of wider successes. In recent years individuals and groups have been ISA KS1 creative writing finalists, taken third place in an IAPS art competition and been finalists in the ISA poetry competition. Pupils have enjoyed success in the ESB examinations, with many achieving merits and distinctions. The school's athletics teams have recently won district track and field events and achieved success in the Essex schools' cross-country championships. The swim team won the

Essex primary schools swimming gala, and the rugby squads were finalists in the Maldon and Colchester district tournaments. The provision of such opportunities to represent the school is highly valued by the pupils.

- 3.11 Pupils show excellent study skills. In the questionnaire, all parents who responded agreed that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life. Pupils are confident to draw information from a range of sources including the internet, dictionaries and their own word banks offering key phrases to support their writing. In their history work, older pupils showed excellent skills of synthesis and deduction as they analysed primary sources from World War Two to establish what life was like for evacuees. In another activity, younger pupils showed excellent problem-solving skills whilst tackling a word puzzle. They used trial and error methods and readily exchanged hypotheses between themselves in order to achieve a solution. However, pupils' application of such skills is not universal. Pupils do not always strongly apply their higher order thinking skills, such as those of critical analysis. This is because some lessons do not provide pupils with the opportunity to do so.
- 3.12 Pupils exhibit a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum and the range of extra-curricular activities. For instance, Year 5 pupils demonstrated good attainment in French, paying careful attention to phonetics and pronunciation skills. Year 4 pupils demonstrate good skills in art, as shown in both their clay modelling to produce Saxon bowls, and their careful application of paint to produce a natural ageing effect. More able pupils showed excellent historical knowledge to describe how monks of the Saxon period produced illuminated lettering. Pupils' development in these areas is promoted by detailed planning by their teachers and by the ample provision of resources by the school's leadership. The school meets its aim to help pupils become enthusiastic learners reaching their potential through a stimulating, broad curriculum and variety of experiences beyond the curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils exhibit an excellent moral understanding and consistently make appropriate behaviour choices. They respond well to a climate of positive behaviour management, enjoying a range of awards and respecting the school rules and sanctions. Pupils demonstrate good manners, and these are modelled by older pupils to younger pupils and by the staff to all pupils. In discussion, older pupils frequently referred to the key school message that 'kindness counts'. In the questionnaire, all pupils agreed that pupils are kind and respect each other and that the school expects pupils to behave well. This was echoed by the vast majority of parents who agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour. The school meets its aspiration for its children to embrace the values of kindness, respect and courtesy.
- 3.15 Pupils demonstrate excellent social development and an outstanding capacity for working with others. Working as part of a team is promoted in early years. This was seen as groups of the youngest children worked highly effectively together to tidy up and wipe their tables in readiness for their snack. Pupils collaborate particularly well across age groups. Older pupils maturely lead activities such as paired reading or providing playground games for their younger friends as part of a popular 'buddy' system matching older and younger classes who work together each week. This teaches the older pupils responsibility and gives younger pupils a role model and someone to turn to for support. For example, after assembly, senior pupils gently and caringly led early years children back to class. The quality of relationships across the age groups is a particularly strong feature of the school.
- 3.16 The pupils decision-making skills are excellent. This is because they are given many opportunities to see that the decisions they make now, will have consequences for the future. EYFS children practise making decisions about which activity to choose or with whom to play. As pupils move through the school, they are given the chance to contribute to whole school surveys or to contribute ideas to the

school suggestion box. Recently, all pupils were invited to suggest a menu utilising local produce, and the healthy schools committee have arranged for winning entries to form the menu for a future week of school lunches. Many pupils represent their peers on the committees which make significant decisions affecting school life. For example, the eco committee established the 'book nook', an outside space for quiet reading. Such initiatives are facilitated by the supportive leadership team.

- 3.17 Pupils make an excellent contribution to others, the school and the community. In addition to their roles on the pupil-led school committees, a number of pupils fulfil other roles of responsibility. All pupils, from the Reception class upwards, can put their name forward to be a form captain. Senior pupils undertake roles such as head of school or sports or house captains. Others act as peer mentors and all such responsibilities are taken seriously and are highly valued by pupils and staff alike. Pupils initiate charity fundraising events for several national and local charities and have sung for residents of local care homes and at the local hospital. In discussion, the pupils were passionate about their school and the sense of community that is created by the staff and their peers.
- 3.18 Pupils' self-understanding is excellent. They display notable self-esteem and self-confidence. Children in the EYFS showed excellent self-awareness when explaining how they were feeling and saying why, encouraged by skilful questioning from staff. They understood emotions including love, anger, fear and happiness and articulated their reasons for choosing this emotion with confidence to the group, showing excellent self-control as they took turns. The eldest pupils exhibited very high levels of self-confidence when touring visitors around the school on open days and some have confidently interviewed prospective members of staff. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. In their questionnaire, the vast majority of the oldest cohort said that they felt well-prepared for senior school. The school thus meets its aim to produce confident, happy individuals who are well prepared for their next step in education.
- 3.19 Pupils show a highly-developed respect for diversity and cultural understanding. In interview, pupils were very aware of the features that make humans the same and different and were adamant that humans are all the same on the inside. They show a keen sense of fairness and argue that any comments to discriminate against any other pupil because of a protected characteristic would be wrong. This was exemplified in a physical education (PE) lesson where pupils of all faiths, cultures and beliefs, played together with high levels of mutual respect and harmony. In discussion, pupils repeatedly referred to the school ethos of kindness, manners and respect. This sentiment was echoed by all parents who completed the questionnaire, who agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. The school meets its aim for children to develop values including mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils show a strong awareness of other faiths through their discussions with friends of other backgrounds and the formal curriculum and assembly programme. This includes elements of the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum in units such as, 'What are some of the different lifestyles and beliefs people have?' Pupils also demonstrate a solid understanding of British cultural events. For example, a group of children laid a wreath at the local War Memorial and observed a period of silence on Remembrance Day.
- 3.20 Pupils demonstrate a highly developed spiritual understanding for their age. They respond positively to daily prayers and readily choose reflective activities such as well-being club or quiet reading in their free time. Pupils gain a detailed understanding of wider religions through their comprehensive religious education programme. They also build an active understanding of Christianity through assemblies and visiting the local church for events such as harvest festival and carol services. Pupils respond well to aesthetic pursuits. For example, in a Year 4 art lesson, pupils showed much appreciation of the difference that the addition of stencil overlays made to their pictures.
- 3.21 Pupils have a highly developed knowledge of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Younger pupils design their own classroom rules at the start of each year to establish a safe learning climate. Older pupils acquire new knowledge by following a wide-ranging PSHE curriculum which covers how to identify personal risks, road safety, first aid and how to stay safe online. Many pupils regularly choose

healthy options at lunchtime, demonstrating their comprehensive understanding of lessons on a healthy diet. Pupils enjoy and understand the need for exercise and look forward to their regular PE sessions. In interviews with inspectors, pupils repeatedly discussed the importance of personal well-being. They understand well the importance of seeking help in times of difficulty or stress, and value the school's wellbeing provision. This includes the ability to discreetly post concerns into a 'worry monster' and the provision of a wellbeing room and specialist staff to work within it. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that they understood how to keep themselves safe when online. In discussion with inspectors, pupils verified a strong understanding, being able to articulate a number of appropriate strategies. For example, not giving out personal details to strangers.

4. Inspection Evidence

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

Inspectors

Mr Robert Lilley	Reporting inspector
Miss Helen Newman	Compliance team inspector (Head of human resources, HMC school)
Mr Christian Pritchard	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)