



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report
For Schools with Residential Provision**

Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School

March 2022

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School's Details

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| School | Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School | | | |
| DfE number | 909/6005 | | | |
| Registered charity number | 1080672 | | | |
| Address | Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School Casterton Kirkby Lonsdale Cumbria LA6 2SG | | | |
| Telephone number | 01524 279200 | | | |
| Email address | hmpa@sedberghprep.org | | | |
| Headteacher | Mr Will Newman | | | |
| Chair of governors | Mr Richard Gledhill | | | |
| Age range | 4 to 13 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 181 | | | |
| | Day pupils | 123 | Boarders | 58 |
| | EYFS | 11 | Juniors | 98 |
| | Seniors | 72 | | |
| Inspection dates | 08 to 11 March 2022 | | | |

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding school. It is located in the village of Casterton in the Lune Valley. The school opened in September 2013 following the merger of Sedbergh School and Casterton School and is now based in the original Casterton building. It is overseen by the whole school's governing body and has three boarding houses.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.
- 1.3 Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school sees its mission to develop happy, confident children with a 'can-do' attitude, independent yet always with a sense of team before self. Through careful and sensitive teaching, it aims to foster a spirit of adventure, both inside and outside the classroom. The core values of the Ways of the Wolf shape behaviour: ambition, collaboration, courage, creativity, kindness, and responsibility. A keen sense of community and heritage is shared throughout the school, both amongst boarders and day pupils. Pupils are well prepared for their next chapter of education.

About the pupils

- 1.5 The majority of pupils come from a range of professional, entrepreneurial, and farming backgrounds, mostly living within a 45 to 90-minute radius of the school (day and boarders respectively). Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is well above average. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist support. No pupils have an educational, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for four pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers, Form Tutors and an EAL specialist. Data used by the school have identified 18 pupils as being the most able in the school's population. The curriculum is modified for them to support their academic needs and a range of extra-curricular activities support their high ability.

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, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. 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, including the boarding NMS. 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](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#), [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, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in Years 7 and 8, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.7 The standards relating to spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are 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 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health, and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2–4, 6–12, 15 and 16 [and 20] are met.**

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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.13 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. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.15 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. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.16 The standards relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.17 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, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.19 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. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 The standards relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.**

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

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

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

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

Key findings

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

- Pupils of all ages have highly effective communication skills.
- Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils make the most of the very rich range of sport, music, drama, and outdoor opportunities.
- The local and national success of pupils in extra-curricular activities is exceptionally strong and all share pride in each other's achievements.

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

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives, demonstrating self-confidence, self-awareness, and resilience.
- Older pupils are excellent role models and enjoy taking on responsibilities in both day and boarding capacities.
- Pupils make mature judgements about their behaviour in line with the moral code that is fostered across the whole school.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to be physically and mentally healthy, in particular in terms of diet, exercise and a balanced lifestyle.

Recommendations

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

- To enable pre-prep pupils to have greater access to high-quality outdoor learning spaces to extend opportunities for outdoor imaginative play.
- To further develop pupils' study skills by allowing them more time in lessons to reflect on their own learning.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils achieve highly and make excellent progress across all ages. Data available including results of standardised tests in English, maths and science, scrutiny of books and lesson observations show attainment to be good in relation to age related expectations. This is corroborated by pupils commenting positively on their understanding of how they learn and how they are supported to make

progress. Pupil progress during a single lesson and over a period of lessons is visible for example, in Design Technology & Engineering (DT&E) where pupils rapidly progressed from using their research in order to design pen grips to the prototype stage of deciding on the best ergonomic design and creating it, and in French and Science where a unit of lessons builds on a theme to include an assessment. A few pupils, who responded to the questionnaires disagreed that the lessons are interesting. However inspectors found in class, pupils listen well, fully engage in the lesson and apply themselves in a conscientious manner. Small class sizes contribute to excellent pupil progress across all abilities with no evidence seen to show a significant difference for pupils with SEND or EAL. The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that the school's boarding experience has helped their child's progress.

- 3.6 Pupils display excellent communication skills and are confident, articulate speakers and listeners. Pupils of all ages are able to share their opinions and are keen to express their views as seen in a Year 5 personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lesson when discussing their healthy and unhealthy habits with passion. They listen attentively, read, and write with confidence and use these skills ably across the curriculum. For example, in a Year 8 assembly on International Day for Women, female pupils were able to speak to the whole school about their diverse choices of famous women including different cultures, ages and professions. Pupils make eloquent verbal contributions across the curriculum and use a wide range of vocabulary for their age. Pupils read confidently, encouraged by their desire to become word millionaires and by the accessible library both in the school and online. The school's ethos of valuing what pupils have to say, promotes open communication across the school and provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills which are a strength of the school. All pupils who were interviewed conversed with enthusiasm and confidence demonstrating their enjoyment of school life.
- 3.7 Pupils' attitudes towards learning are excellent. Pupil interviews and lesson observations evidence the appetite pupils have for learning and their respect of the '*ways of the wolf*', the school's well-established moral code, as guiding core values. Pupils who met with inspectors spoke about the enjoyment of working towards the *wolf awards* of the week. Classroom initiatives, for example a Bunsen burner licence, work being displayed on 'Wow' boards and the chance to work towards merit badges, inspire pupils to be their best selves across all areas of school life. Rewards and sanctions are used consistently in day and boarding environments, also contributing to the excellent attitudes pupils display.
- 3.8 Pupils have very strong study skills. Pupils' capacity for advanced thinking skills for their age, for example thinking logically, are most evident when pupils are given opportunities to apply these to new challenges. Pupils' planning and organisational skills are excellent as seen in Year 6 and 8 English lessons, and Year 8 geographical studies of the most effective ways to tackle climate change. Pupils in Pre-prep demonstrated thinking for themselves when choosing early morning learning activities. Boarders develop independence and responsibility for their own learning through planning music practice schedules, completion of homework, activity programmes and animal care. This is reinforced for all in PSHE and the '*Pick and Mix*' projects for Years 5 to 8 which allow for pupils to take some ownership and extend their learning in an age-appropriate way. Pupils can choose what they wish to complete and learn the key skill of self-management. The tasks and teaching methods employed in class encourage enthusiastic participation and a love of learning which is evidenced by pupils taking pride in their work and in their school. They enjoy opportunities to work together but also respond well when asked to work independently.
- 3.9 All pupils take full advantage of the numerous activities available at the school each day and weekend. In these they have considerable successes in local, regional, and national competitions. Pupils speak proudly of their scholarship preparation, of winning national cross-country events, and the UK Maths Challenge competition, equestrian, swimming and shooting events, LAMDA and music examinations. The vast majority of parent responses in the questionnaire indicated that the school provides a range of extra-curricular activities.

- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate high levels of knowledge, skill and understanding across the curriculum. Their skills are well developed relative to their age in linguistic, technological, musical, physical, and geographical understanding in particular because of well-resourced departments, time in the curriculum and opportunities to practise, for example in sport and music.
- 3.11 The majority of pupils at this school are confident mathematicians who show a good level of competency when measured against age related expectations. Year 6 higher ability mathematicians skilfully measured their classroom and calculated its volume. They have a secure grasp of mathematical skills which they apply confidently in problem-solving and other areas of the curriculum. In Year 1, pupils confidently practise number bonds whilst lining up. In Year 8 geography, pupils demonstrated high levels of numeracy when presenting data and applying formulaic thinking when conjugating verbs in French.
- 3.12 Pupils are extremely competent in their use of ICT and confidently and enthusiastically apply their skills when carrying out and recording their own research and completing prep tasks. Pupils use ICT to upload their digital work to their teachers to mark. Pre-prep pupils were seen independently using a device to do targeted reading tasks. Pupils talked confidently about their use of technology, coding, and the creation of robotics. Pupils' learning is supported by well-resourced facilities. Pupils feel safe in the school environment and know how to keep themselves safe online and how to respond to any worrying messages they might receive. Many parents commented on the progress of pupils during recent pandemic restrictions which the vast majority agreed was due to the school benefitting from strong governance, leadership, and management in pupils' use of technology.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Day and boarding pupils display high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem knowing that there is always someone to turn to for support if needed. Pupils show outstanding motivation for their age and want to do well. As a result, they are well prepared for senior school. They demonstrate resilience when facing challenging extracurricular activities and use perseverance to overcome them. The school achieves its mission to develop happy, confident children with a 'can-do' attitude through an atmosphere where pupils feel extremely well supported and demonstrate a sense of team before self. This is a result of strong leadership and caring staff who ensure that all pupils, day and boarding, are compassionate and confident individuals.
- 3.15 Pupils have an awareness of the needs of others and contribute to the local community. They responded to the plight of people in Ukraine by generously bringing requested supplies into school to be sent there. Regular fund-raising activities and pupils' own initiatives are celebrated with displays, in assemblies and in the school newsletter. These include raising awareness and funds for worthy causes such as the local sponsored fell runs, bun sales, food banks and nearby hospices. Both day and boarding pupils are encouraged to be buddies for new children and give support to all members of the community.
- 3.16 Pupils' behaviour is excellent across all age groups and in the boarding and day community. This is underpinned by a mature sense of right and wrong. Consistent messaging through the school's moral code endorses respectful behaviour and the school values of ambition, collaboration, courage, creativity, kindness, and responsibility. Pupils enjoy the chance to take on roles of responsibility. In younger years this might be as a form captain, representing the class on the school council, or captaining the sports team one week. The majority of parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire agree that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Pupils are polite and well-mannered in their interactions with each other and adults. Relationships between staff and pupils are exceptional, allowing pupils to feel confident to speak to all members of staff.
- 3.17 Pupils show a highly developed understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and stay safe especially online. Pupils know the importance of maintaining a healthy diet and were observed making

healthy choices at mealtimes. They all engage in sporting and leisure activities that contribute to their physical health, such as choosing to undertake pre-breakfast activities of running, playing netball or swimming. Negative comments on the questionnaires about the food choices proved to be unfounded in pupil discussions and observations of mealtimes. Pupils' ability to discuss their mental health is well-developed as seen in Year 5 pupil interviews and staff discussion of Year 8 well-being initiatives. All pupils have access to robust mental well-being provision, including an independent listener. Throughout the inspection, no pupils approached the inspectors with concerns.

- 3.18 Pupils understand that they are responsible for making the right decisions in relation to their work and behaviour. Boarders are offered many opportunities for decision-making, for example, planning ideas for various fundraising events. Pupil decision making was evidenced in pupil interviews, EYFS and pre-prep children settling and applying themselves quickly to their chosen activities, discussions about the need to plant more trees in the country in a Year 8 geography lesson and boarders holding a bun sale to support the charity supporting the *Freedom for Girls* charity. Pupils state that their views are heard, for example, in school council, girls successfully argued to play rugby as one of the extra-curricular activities in Friday Clubs. Year 8 pupils are given levels of responsibility and heads of house in the boarding houses lead meetings and decide what to feedback to house parents.
- 3.19 Pupils' respect for each other's differences is fundamental to the positive relationships between pupils of all ages. Pupils are bound together by the warm, friendly, and inclusive ethos of the community. Pupils have developed this understanding because leaders, governors and staff including boarding constantly promote the importance of kindness, positive mindsets and sharing worries. Parents support this positive picture with an overwhelming majority feeling that the school promotes values of democracy, respect, and tolerance of other people.
- 3.20 Pupils' aesthetic awareness of the non-material aspects of life is evident in the high standard of artwork displayed throughout the school. Assemblies and church services provide pupils with a sense of community which is valued by all. Pupils speak enthusiastically about learning in the local scenic surroundings where an appreciation of nature is fostered through the presence of goats, horses and chickens cared for by the boarders. Music is valued as a non-materialistic aspect of life, as seen in pre-prep where pupils were listening to calming music and musical participation in chapel.
- 3.21 Pupils' social awareness is particularly strong. They form positive relationships in the classroom, the boarding houses and on the games fields. Pupils cherish the opportunities to work together for example with the school council and the boarding house forums. Pupils are quick to recognise each other's successes and offer help and encouragement where needed. Pupils work collaboratively, as seen in Year 3 and 4 singing canons, in LAMDA lessons where pupils provide each other with praise and guidance for improvements, and in Year 5 maths where pupils were encouraged to share and improve upon word problems. Pupils demonstrate the ability to work effectively with others in a range of situations and to take responsibilities within the boarding house through applying for positions of heads of house.

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 chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, attended form meetings, chapel and assemblies and ate meals with the pupils. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the educational resources 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

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Mrs Daphne Cawthorne | Reporting inspector |
| Mr Ian Sterling | Compliance team inspector (Head, ISA school) |
| Mrs Cathy Braithwaite | Team inspector (Head, IAPS school) |
| Mrs Raj Samra | Team inspector for boarding (Senior deputy head, S of H school) |