

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Westbrook Hay Prep School

October 2021

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School's Details

School	Westbrook Hay Preparatory School
DfE number	919/6021
Registered charity number	292537
Address	Westbrook Hay Prep School
	London Road,
	Hemel Hempstead,
	Hertfordshire
	HP1 2RF
Telephone number	01442 256143
Email address	westbrookhay@westbrookhay.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Mark Brain
Chair of governors	Mr Andrew Newland
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils on roll	362
	Pre-Prep 142 Prep 220
Inspection dates	19 to 22 October 2021

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1. Background Information

About the school

1.1 Westbrook Hay Prep School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from 2 to 13 years located in a rural setting outside Hemel Hempstead. Founded in 1892, the school became a charitable trust in 1983, and is administered by a board of governors. The school occupies a neo-Georgian mansion, adapted to school use with a number of modern buildings, including purpose-built facilities for the pre-prep and prep schools.

- 1.2 The school is organised into two sections: pre-prep provides for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Years 1 and 2; prep provides for those in Years 3 to 8. Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a new headmaster, built a new EYFS outdoor classroom, installed a large adventure playground and refurbished four classrooms.
- 1.3 During the period March to August 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers. During this period of closure the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.4 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.5 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils received remote learning provision at home.

What the school seeks to do

1.7 The school aims to develop happy, confident and successful children who are well prepared for their future.

About the pupils

1.8 Pupils come from families with predominantly business and professional backgrounds in Hertfordshire and the surrounding counties. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 17 of whom 8 have additional support. They require support with dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 12 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) and receive additional support for this aspect of their learning. Pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented have additional curricular opportunities to enable stretch and challenge.

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 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 <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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.

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: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> Regulations 2014, <u>Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework</u>.

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

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 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 Year 6 and below 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.
- 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 make excellent progress during their time at the school, as seen in their high attainment in senior school examinations.
 - Pupils secure excellent achievement in their academic and extra-curricular activities through robust collaborative skills and perseverance.
 - Pupils develop and demonstrate the high-level key skills and knowledge that enable successful transition to the next stages of their learning.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - Pupils have excellent relationships with peers and adults and exhibit a strong sense of community through the school's ethos of 'happiness, confidence and success'.
 - Pupils of all ages show excellent levels of self-confidence, self-discipline, and moral
 understanding; they are highly appreciative of diversity and show a mature respect for religious
 and cultural difference.
 - Pupils demonstrate a profound appreciation of the non-material aspects of school life and spiritual awareness through the school's ethos and values.

Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:
 - Strengthen pupils' independence and personal leadership in their learning through a more consistent approach to providing opportunities for them to develop these skills.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Westbrook Hay pupils demonstrate a markedly high level of attainment in accordance with the school's aim to develop happy, confident and successful children who are well prepared for their future. This results from the commitment of the leadership to achieving high standards in all aspects of school life. Pupils gain excellent levels of understanding and knowledge in all subject areas and demonstrate excellent levels of performance and creativity in extra-curricular activities. This is further reflected in their high performances in standardised tests, school entrance examinations and their achievement of academic, performing arts and sporting scholarships.

- 3.6 Children in the EYFS develop excellent skills in literacy and numeracy, preparing them for a smooth transition to the pre-prep. This successful development is maintained throughout the school, with pupils benefiting greatly from a well-established assessment and tracking programme, enabling them to make informed decisions to improve their attainment. Pupils are highly successful in 11+ and senior school entrance examinations, enabling an overwhelming majority to succeed in gaining admission to their first choice of school, with a significant number gaining scholarships for academic, music and sporting achievements. Pupils make rapid progress as a result of high teacher expectations, the provision of challenge and independent learning and the utilisation and application of technology resources in lessons. Pupils with SEND or EAL make very good progress and are enabled to achieve standards that are in line with those of their peers, benefiting from enriched support from specialist staff through one-to-one and small group support sessions when preparing for senior school entrance examinations. More able pupils make excellent progress and successfully respond to challenging work, such as in a mathematics lesson when pupils excitedly discussed their success with solving algebraic problems and calculations in 13+ entrance examinations. Pupils interviewed said they enjoyed remote learning immensely and continued to make very good progress throughout lockdown due to the school's provision of academic, pastoral and physical activities.
- 3.7 Pupils use sophisticated language confidently, as observed in Year 3, when pupils were challenged to use scientific vocabulary learnt in previous lessons to describe an experiment that used chemical reactions to simulate a volcanic eruption. Pupils were exceptionally confident and articulate when speaking joyfully about their families and showed excellent awareness of the differences between Victorian and modern families through the creation of family trees, including facts about family members. Older pupils used excellent imaginative language to confidently self-assess and peer-assess their use of synonyms and alliteration in poetry, resulting in significant improvement during the course of an observed lesson. In interviews, they expressed enthusiasm for being able to discuss and debate ideas freely in and out of class on a wide range of subjects such as how to be eco-friendly and Black Lives Matter. Literacy is very strong; pupils are avid readers, fully utilising the library provision which is well stocked with a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils are encouraged to read 'Golden Books' that increase their awareness of authors from different cultural backgrounds and increase their knowledge of diversity, benefiting from the commitment shown by the governors to resource the school and provide suitable learning opportunities for the benefit of all pupils. Pupils express appreciation for opportunities for quiet reading and independent research and they enjoy participating in the class assemblies and drama lessons which enable them to learn to speak confidently and act in public, working collaboratively with their peers.
- 3.8 Pupils have very good numeracy skills and apply them successfully in a wide range of subjects, such as in science, where Year 5 pupils have effectively used formulae and calculation, to explore speed, time and distance. During a mathematics lesson, pupils enthusiastically and successfully tackled algebraic angle problems, discussing their findings confidently with the teacher. Pupils make effective use of tablet computers when provided with the opportunity to do so, such as when identifying trees and flowers in EYFS woodland activities or engaging in subjects such as science, computing and design technology in the prep school. Pupils have competent skills in coding and programming, well above those expected for their age. Skills in information and communication technology enable pupils to actively enhance their education by the use of technology such as in the application of spreadsheets to solve mathematical problems, obtaining data in science experiments, researching and writing in history and geography, and finding suitable illustrations to enhance English creative writing texts.
- 3.9 Pupils are enthusiastic and determined learners in all settings, willingly prepared to take risks, enjoy the opportunities of different styles of teaching and to rise to challenging opportunities when these are offered. In the EYFS, child-initiated activities support independent learning; however, pupils' skills of independent working are not always developed to the highest level in all subjects as opportunities for them to take the lead in their learning are limited in some lessons. Younger children are inquisitive learners, such as observed in a woodland activity where a group of children enthusiastically observed and successfully identified trees, whilst others used different techniques to climb and descend piles

of rocks. Older pupils demonstrate a resolute sense of purpose, moving calmly to their lessons. They quickly settle in class and display an eagerness to learn and to be involved in discussion and questioning. Pupils respond willingly to guidance in lessons and are further empowered to make progress and self-reflect on their work through meaningful and engaging marking throughout the school. This is supported by a very large majority of pupil questionnaire responses and views expressed in interviews, where pupils felt that marking helps them to improve and make progress. Pupils express their enjoyment of independent research projects for homework and during lockdown and willingly respond to open-ended questioning in class, such as in a science discussion on cleaning dirty water. Pupils demonstrate high order language, analysis and critical thinking regarding situations that might arise from this; for example, in discussion about the need to take COVID tests and the effect it will have on school community, they displayed an impressive ability to debate rationally and in a considered, thoughtful way.

3.10 Pupils become very confident public performers through their participation in performing arts. They avidly engage and effectively demonstrate their musical talents through active involvement in the orchestra, choirs, and other musical ensembles. The chamber choir took part in the Scratch Messiah at The Royal Albert Hall, and pupils talk enthusiastically about their participation in the recent productions of Porridge and The Lion King. A significant proportion of pupils have recently gained awards in national examinations in music and performing arts, and they also gain positive experiences and achieve success backstage, in stage lighting, costume design and making props for productions. Many pupils find pleasure and achieve personal and academic success in creative work and are encouraged to develop their interest and talent in drawing, painting and pottery. Pupils enjoy the challenge of competitive sport and show support for each other in team and individual events, participating actively and skilfully in rugby, netball, hockey, football, futsal and cricket. Success is also achieved by individuals in athletics, swimming and gymnastics. Pupils enthusiastically explained some of their class and extra-curricular achievements displayed on poster boards throughout the school and the extensive collection of trophies and certificates on display which demonstrate work that includes scratch coding, eco concerns, world religions, creative writing in English and the performing arts. A very large majority of parents and pupils agreed in the questionnaires that the wide variety of extracurricular activities greatly enhance experience and enrichment.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.11 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.12 Pupils of all ages demonstrate extremely high levels of self-confidence and an excellent understanding of how to progress, taking a personal pride in the quality of their work and their ability to enjoy and experience tasks inside and outside the classroom. Throughout the school pupils are not afraid of being wrong and consider a failure as a learning opportunity. Pupils react positively to challenges and occasional setbacks, and thus develop strong resilience and self-confidence which enables them to respond successfully to choices appropriate to their age and stage of development. Pupils who have recently joined the school report that the welcoming and supportive community atmosphere has enabled them to make a very confident start to their school life. Pupils in interview and an overwhelming majority of parents, agree that the school helps to develop self-confidence. Pupils display a strong appreciation of community service and togetherness, reflecting the commitment of the leadership to creating an aspirational and supportive ethos, to which the pupils readily respond.
- 3.13 Pupils are well prepared to face the challenges of living in modern Britain due to the strong provision of Safety, Caring, Achievement, Resilience and Friendship (SCARF) and provision for SEND and well-being in the Willows, the school's well-being centre. Pupils demonstrate genuine understanding of the consequences of making their own decisions for individual success and well-being and to further benefit others. They feel fully confident that they are encouraged to make decisions and take risks. Pre-Prep children display high levels of awareness of school rules and ethos, sitting quietly, respecting adults and each other, which then manifests itself later in school life when children are respectful in

whole school assemblies and other large group activities. Across the school pupils employ sensible and productive use of their free time, with the support of their form teachers and the pastoral system, making informed decisions regarding their extra-curricular activities. Pupils in Year 6 and Year 8 confidently stated that they greatly value the help they are given to make informed choices regarding their senior school and are responsive to guidance from teachers and senior staff. They appreciate and respond positively to the individual examination support they receive, understanding that participating in additional supportive study empowers them to progress and achieve success in their examinations and scholarships.

- 3.14 Pupils have a strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life as reflected in their strong and enthusiastic participation in art, music, sport and drama throughout the school. They show excellent and genuine appreciation of how kindness makes for a better family-based community through the SCARF curriculum which offers pupils the opportunity for reflection and discussion, and confidently articulated who to talk to when or if needed following an assembly on appropriate issues associated with 'Everyone's Invited'. Pupils express great appreciation of the celebration of their successes in the weekly assemblies that celebrate community family spirit through awards for individual achievement, both academic and social. Year 4 pupils relish being given responsibility for looking after the school's guinea pigs and other animals, responding by carefully caring for the animals and making sure they are correctly fed and put back in their cages at the end of the break times.
- 3.15 Pupils exhibit very high levels of respect for school rules and the class rules that they have discussed and written, and they understand that individuals carry the responsibility for their own actions. They actively support each other and help monitor behaviour. Pupils are highly confident in articulating their acceptance of responsibility for their own behaviour and understanding the importance of treating others how you would wish to be treated yourself. Pupils display great kindness and empathy, showing thoughtful consideration for one another and an eagerness to help and support their peers. Pupils instinctively assisted class companions to put on their shoes in pre-prep and showed a strong awareness of respect and rules following the reading of *The Tiger who Came to Tea*, evidenced through creating a personalised list of how to behave when visiting someone else's house.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding that individual success is not the only factor in their development and that co-operation can result in better outcomes, adopting strong skills in working together as members of the school community. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 6 drama lesson, where groups of pupils avidly work together to produce alternative nasty characters and tableaus in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Pupils were extremely proud of their achievements during a bushcraft residential trip, and spoke animatedly about supporting one another and working together successfully as a team. Pupils demonstrated high levels of empathy for members of the group who had struggled being away from home and spoke warmly about how they had helped those who had felt unsure. An overwhelming majority of pupils, parents and staff indicated in the questionnaire that the school helps to develop strong teamwork and social skills. Throughout the school, pupils eagerly and successfully participate in carefully planned group tasks and 'talk partner' activities in their lessons. In the majority of lessons and in their sports pupils engage actively and work together to successfully develop their understanding and skills. They understand the democratic process and can explain the impact of their forms and the school council on creating codes of conduct, menu choices for lunch, increasing the provision of activities and the choice of charities and manner of fund raising. Pupils value the opportunities they are given to vote, including for school council representatives in their classes and when deciding the sponsorship of charities. Pupils value the role of the school council and the Eco-Warriors who worked as a team to investigate how to save energy around school. They then suggested choosing and planting trees for each class in school and increasing the number of shuttle buses to reduce traffic around the school.
- 3.17 Pupils throughout the school relish the opportunities afforded for leadership as monitors and take lead roles such as librarians, tech and sports leaders, form monitors and representatives on committees and councils. Roles as heads of school and houses prefects, and sporting team captains

- are available and the EYFS children take on roles as classroom leaders, and helpers. Pupils enjoy acting as peer mentors and buddies for younger pupils in the school. Pupils enthusiastically participate in and raise money for many local, national and international groups through service and charity sponsorship. Some pupils, pre-lockdown, visited a local elderly care home, playing their musical instruments and singing to the residents. They care for the environment by their active and enthusiastic interest in recycling through the Eco-Warriors which encourages re-cycling and have recently been involved in planting an orchard and developing a vegetable garden.
- 3.18 The pupils demonstrate excellent levels of empathy and tolerance towards others, respecting and valuing diversity. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of the wide range of cultures within the school. They celebrate other cultures and faith celebrations such as Hanukkah, Eid and Diwali, and experience enrichment through the visits by parents who share their culture and traditions. Pupils also noted that the opportunities to visit places of worship such as a Muslim temple further deepen their experiences and understanding of other faiths. The pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the key values that characterise modern Britain. Throughout the school pupils exhibit spirit and unity, rather than difference, and believe this is the key to tolerance. They successfully acquire greater understanding of these characteristics in academic lessons, SCARF, evensong and active participation in assemblies and educational visits.
- 3.19 Pupils articulate a strong understanding regarding their physical and mental well-being. They appreciate a balanced approach to life, demonstrated in their willing participation in physical education and sports. In discussion, pupils stated that their well-being is supported by form teachers and pastoral staff in the Willows, enabling them to stay safe and physically and mentally healthy. In lockdown the school offered a full timetable, including extra events that brought the whole school together, such as assemblies. Sport continued and physical challenges motivated pupils to proactively manage their health and well-being which included 'climbing K2' using the stairs to count steps and height and crossing the United States of America west to east coast, the 'Hoyte Challenge', by walking, running and cycling. Pupils receive relationships education in Year 6 and below and relationships and sex education in Years 7 and 8 and noted in interview that they find this a constructive and informative part of SCARF. They further confirmed that they understand how to keep safe on-line. Pupils fully realise the benefit of a good diet and suitable levels of exercise, and they actively pursue these from their earliest years in the EYFS where children are provided with healthy break-time snacks and have opportunities for outdoor play and woodland activities. In discussion, pupils agreed that they are able to make informed choices from the school lunch menu, enjoying the selection of hot main meals or salad options that are freshly prepared and served to their great satisfaction. Recognising and understanding that they need physical exercise, pupils actively and enthusiastically participate in the wide range of individual and team sports and physical extra-curricular activities. An overwhelmingly number of parents and pupils in the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages a healthy lifestyle.

Inspection Evidence 13

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews 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. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Alistair Telfer Reporting inspector

Mr Kit Perona-Wright Compliance team inspector (Director of Compliance and Outreach, IAPS school)

Mrs Katy Joiner Team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)