



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

The Falcons Preparatory School, Richmond

January 2022

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School's Details

School	The Falcons Preparatory School, Richmond		
DfE number	318/6551		
Address	The Falcons Preparatory School, Richmond 41 Kew Foot Road London TW9 2SS		
Telephone number	020 8948 9490		
Email address	admin@falconsprep.co.uk		
Headteacher	Miss Olivia Buchanan		
Proprietor	Alpha Plus Group		
Age range	4 to 13		
Number of pupils on roll	89		
	EYFS	6	Middle School 54
	Upper School	29	
Inspection dates	19 to 21 January 2022		

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 The Falcons Preparatory School is an independent day school for male pupils. Originally founded in 1956 as Falkner House School, the school moved to its current location in a residential area of Richmond in 2008. In September 2017 it rebranded as a stand-alone preparatory school under new management. The school is a member of the Alpha Plus Group which provides governance and proprietorial responsibility. The school comprises three sections: lower school for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which opened in September 2021; middle school for pupils from Years 3 to 6; and upper school for pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021 all pupils other than vulnerable pupils or the children of key workers received remote learning provision at home.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.6 The school aims to ensure that pupils reach their potential and emerge as intelligent and resilient individuals who are capable of reflection. With the five *Falcon Habits* of curiosity, resilience, creativity, independence and reflection at the heart of learning, it strives to prepare pupils successfully for whatever opportunities lie ahead.

About the pupils

- 1.7 Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils in the school is above average. The school has 21 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom two have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Twenty-four pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). Data used by the school have identified five pupils as being more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for other pupils because of their potential, ability or talent across one or more subjects.

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 **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.

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](#).

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 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 lower and middle school and relationships and sex education in the upper school, 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'.

Key findings

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

- Pupils' excellent acquisition of knowledge is enabled by the innovative leadership and by competent teaching which plans a range of stimulating activities.
- Children in the newly formed EYFS class make rapid progress supported by an exciting programme of outdoor learning.
- Pupils read with eloquence and understanding and are noticeably articulate when performing to an audience.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning are stimulated and supported by the introduction of the five *Falcon Habits*, namely curiosity, resilience, creativity, independence and reflection.

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

- The ethos of the school embraces and positively promotes British standards and rules.
- Pupils have an excellent appreciation and understanding of cultural traditions and they value diversity.
- Pupils appreciate how to remain in good health mentally, supported by the strength of the school's pastoral systems.
- Children in the EYFS develop excellent resilience as a result of the encouragement of highly effective practitioners.

Recommendation

3.3 In the light of the excellent outcomes for pupils the school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Enable all pupils to develop their spiritual awareness through increased opportunities for debates and discussions about philosophical issues.

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 are most articulate and in discussions they demonstrate maturity and a wealth of knowledge across the curriculum. This is strongly supported by the innovative leadership which ensures that their experiences are exciting and varied. Pupils' excellent acquisition of knowledge is further enabled by competent teaching that plans a range of stimulating activities. From an early age, almost all pupils listen attentively in class and use their developing skills to investigate, solve problems and think

creatively both indoors and outdoors. Pupils demonstrate strong skills and understanding in science as a result of teaching which inspires them to learn. For example, younger pupils knew by the end of the lesson that reflection is when light bounces off a surface and refraction is when light travels through. Pupils in EYFS develop excellent skills, knowledge and understanding during art lessons. They exhibit proficient fine motor skills as they use scissors, hole punches and split pins dexterously to create life size puppets. Pupils exhibit excellent skills in drama as a result of the many productions staged by the school; one of the most memorable being *Lockdown Boys*, written and produced by the oldest boys in particularly demanding circumstances. In music technology older pupils develop excellent skills in recording and learn to control the environment to minimise background noise. Pupils' breadth of knowledge and many interests are celebrated in colourful displays around the school.

- 3.6 Pupils' excellent levels of attainment, as indicated by the evidence from lesson observations, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of their work, together with standardised measures of progress in mathematics and English, show that pupils make rapid progress over time. The school is most successful in meeting its aim to enable the pupils to achieve their potential. Excellent outcomes for pupils are ensured through the school's detailed and consistent use of tracking data to monitor levels of progress. Such monitoring enables teaching to implement effective and highly personalised interventions for individual pupils. Children in the EYFS class make excellent progress supported by their exciting programme of outdoor learning which is entirely based on developing their individual interests. One child was observed furiously digging for a reptile's egg, motivated by his passion for dinosaurs. Across the school, the achievement of pupils with SEND is excellent because those with specific requirements are identified quickly and receive high-quality support. Pupils with EAL make similarly rapid progress. The support that these two groups of pupils receive is well integrated into the pastoral and support systems so that individual needs are understood. More able pupils achieve their potential through consistent challenge which teaching provides in all lessons. Older pupils can also benefit from a scholarship path as an academic scholar or a subject specific scholar and are supported by extension activities in drama, music, art and physical education.
- 3.7 As pupils progress through the school, they become highly skilled in literacy. They progress rapidly with their reading, supported well by staff who are aware of their individual needs. Reception children demonstrate strong phonic knowledge and many are already reading simple stories and writing in short sentences. Older pupils use sophisticated language to express their ideas. They read with eloquence and understanding and are noticeably articulate when performing to an audience, as was evidenced in an assembly where the head prefects delivered the news of the week. They develop excellent writing skills and they are able to include their descriptive vocabulary in a range of genres. Older pupils produce persuasive and well-constructed articles for the weekly newspaper. All pupils develop extremely strong skills in poetry enthused by frequent visits from external speakers. They benefit from highly effective and consistent marking. Such assessment is constructive, with next steps clearly identified. Pupils use their excellent communication skills to achieve highly in other subjects. For example, those in upper school showed considerable skill and intelligence as they discussed healthy relationships in Life Skills lessons and in their rehearsal for their visual presentation of the Fire of London.
- 3.8 Pupils' mathematics competency develops rapidly as they progress through the school. They clearly enjoy these activities and feel well supported by the subject teaching. Children in the EYFS develop their woodland studies as they develop their measuring and counting skills through a range of practical activities. Pupils in their final year can use complex algebra successfully and derive methods based on their own understanding. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge in other subjects of the curriculum, such as art, science and geography. Using their effective understanding of ratio and proportion pupils developed their technical skills in art as they drew a human form and in geography, they were evidenced using map skills successfully to interpret map scales and grid references. Pupils' excellent understanding of mathematical processes is aided by the frequent opportunities to consolidate skills taught in previous lessons. Pupils retain prior learning most effectively as was shown

as they used their secure understanding of multiplication to solve complex word problems successfully. They develop their maths skills further through online platforms and through national competitions.

- 3.9 Pupils are highly skilled in using information and communication technology (ICT) as a result of successful teaching and because proprietors have supported investment in the provision of suitable computing equipment. Children in the EYFS develop an early familiarity with ICT as a result of having access to classroom tablet computers to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. As pupils move up the school, they develop efficient skills in handling data, number work, presentation software, coding, robotics, emailing and research. Pupils' rapid progress in acquiring their ICT skills is successfully supported by touch typing clubs where keyboards are covered to encourage them to use correct finger movements. In discussions they speak enthusiastically about how they can make good use of their highly developed skills in other subject areas. Pupils exhibit competence in photography and after school they were evidenced using tablet computers successfully to access the school's technology platform to complete their Latin and maths homework. Pupils develop their ICT competence further through musical technology where they can successfully record vocal interviews and digital audio tracks.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate strong study skills by being able to draw successfully on a range of resources such as the internet and a wide selection of non-fiction books. Pupils are challenged with a riddle of the week, which captures their imagination and often involves them in divergent thinking. They exhibit sophisticated research skills which are developed as a result of the regular tasks set for holiday homework. The oldest pupils use source materials confidently in history as was evidenced in their studies of King Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon as they successfully sequenced events to explain King Henry's break with Rome. Upper school pupils benefit from independent study skills lessons, where they are taught revision techniques, organisational skills and consider what type of learner they are.
- 3.11 Pupils' achievements are excellent both in and out of school as they are actively encouraged to participate in an extensive range of activities in a bid to find their strengths and passions. Both groups and individuals demonstrate strong achievement in the various sports offered by the school and through the extensive programme of inter-school matches which ensures that all pupils can be involved. Pupils speak highly of their many successes in sporting events such as in the U10s unbeaten record in inter-school football matches and of their win in the U11s Surrey Cup football tournament. Achievement in music is extremely high with many pupils using the good skills they have gained in instrumental tuition to form their own musical ensembles. They regularly achieve distinctions in speech and drama exams. Pupils are successful individually, achieving highly in tennis, baseball, golf, swimming, windsurfing, horse riding, chess and local theatre.
- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong and promote their excellent progress. From the EYFS, pupils thrive through a learning approach which encourages them to develop initiative and independence. At all ages pupils are enthusiastic about their studies and talk with gratitude of the support and encouragement they are given by the teaching. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a large majority of pupils report that teachers are supportive. Pupils reflect maturely on their achievements but also on how they can improve. Their learning is further stimulated and supported by the introduction of the Falcon Habits, namely curiosity, resilience, creativity, independence and reflection. These values are woven into all aspects of their learning. Older pupils exhibit excellent adventure and service skills such as through the school's *Falcon's Award* scheme. They are very positive about these activities and embrace them with enthusiasm.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils, including children in the EYFS, display a well-developed sense of right and wrong and they understand systems of rules and laws. This is because the ethos of the school embraces and positively promotes British standards and rules, which in turn translate into their understanding of respect. Pupils show complete engagement with the school's code of conduct. They treat each other with considerable kindness and respect and the quality of relationships between pupils and adults is excellent. In discussions pupils praised the school's approach to encouraging them to reflect on their behaviour. In the questionnaires an overwhelming majority of parents and all pupils reported that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Pupils demonstrate kindness and responsibility towards one another, as was shown in the caring way they spoke to one another in group discussions.
- 3.15 Pupils' excellent appreciation and understanding of cultural traditions different to their own is achieved through their work in Life Skills and religious studies lessons. They value diversity, as was evidenced in discussions as pupils reflected on school activities based around Black History Month. In order to celebrate the diversity within the school, older pupils have highlighted on a world map their places of birth, creating their own visual display. All members of the school community were able to increase their knowledge and understanding about Muslim customs and practices through an informative assembly delivered by a group of pupils who were participating in Ramadan. Pupils readily appreciate that each of them is unique and they have an understanding, which is advanced for their age, of the importance of treating each other with respect and empathy. In discussions, older pupils reported that of course everyone is different and that this is one of the great things about our school. In the questionnaires an overwhelming majority of parents who responded agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.
- 3.16 Pupils are confident to make sensible decisions throughout the school and they appreciate how these decisions can affect both themselves and other people. In discussion, pupils were keen to report that their voice is heard and valued and that changes often happen as a result. This view is supported by staff who, in their responses to the questionnaires, all stated that the school listens to pupils and takes any requisite actions. Younger pupils can readily make decisions as a result of the excellent opportunities provided by staff within the curriculum. Pupils show excellent self-knowledge such as deciding to use an online revision aid to consolidate learning in mathematics, or choosing where they will spend break time, playing games on the artificial grass surface, or reading quietly in one of the indoor areas.
- 3.17 Pupils understand how to stay safe. Governors and senior leaders place high priority on creating a school environment where pupils feel happy, safe and secure. Pupils have an excellent understanding of online safety, their knowledge in these areas having been recently strengthened by visiting speakers explaining the potential dangers of the internet and mobile technologies. Pupils know what constitutes a healthy lunch and they report that they are constantly reminded to keep hydrated by drinking water. Younger pupils learn about keeping fit through their Life Skills lessons and suggest that three top tips are to exercise regularly, meditate and get enough sunshine for vitamin D. Pupils are aware that regular exercise plays an important role in staying healthy, and the school provides them with many opportunities to take part in physical activities. Pupils appreciate how to remain in good health mentally, supported by the strength of the school's pastoral systems which includes close monitoring by form tutors. Pupils can reflect on how they are feeling by visiting the designated well-being space where they can spend quiet time with the school dog.
- 3.18 Pupils are socially aware and so are able to work extremely effectively with others, displaying strong negotiation skills. They collaborate freely across the age groups and older pupils gain responsibility through reading with the younger pupils and engaging with them at break times. Through an ever-expanding range of more alternative house competitions, from cup stacking to vegetable growing and photography, pupils work together collaboratively and successfully in vertically streamed groups.

Older pupils exhibited excellent social skills during lockdown as they introduced an initiative where they took total responsibility to set tasks for younger pupils such as baking, scavenger hunts and quizzes.

- 3.19 Pupils show an excellent awareness of the need to contribute to both the school and the wider community. This well-developed moral understanding is strengthened through the work of the school council and its members are forthcoming in suggesting changes they would like to see in the school. Pupils take a strong lead in environmental issues. They appreciate the damage litter can cause and have organised a beach cleaning event to address this problem. Pupils exhibit compassion through their contributions to the community by raising funds for local charities as well as providing invaluable contributions to community projects such as making face masks for precautions against COVID-19. Older pupils gain responsibility and learn to be considerate and caring through organising various initiatives to invite the local elderly community into the school, through hosting Bingo afternoons, Christmas afternoon tea and carol singing.
- 3.20 Pupils' strong spiritual understanding is developed through the assembly programme and the expertise of outside speakers where the focus is frequently on pupils' personal development. Children in the EYFS learn about spirituality as they enjoy observing winter fauna in their woodland learning environment, showing curiosity and amazement that fairies are living beneath the undergrowth. Older pupils seek tranquillity as they read out their poems in the woods or engage in yoga and meditation during curriculum focused days. Pupils think deeply of those who fought so bravely for their country as they read out poignant war poems in their remembrance garden surrounded by the colourful ceramic poppies which they had created in art. Pupils exhibited strong spiritual awareness as they were quiet and reflective at the start of assembly and sang the hymn joyfully. Older pupils enjoy current affairs and the ensuing debates on topical issues. In interview they report they have less opportunities for deeper discussions on philosophical issues.
- 3.21 Pupils demonstrate notable self-understanding and self-confidence as they talk frankly about the pressures experienced during recent periods of lockdown. They are very aware of how their resilience has developed and are positive about all that the school has done to encourage this. Pupils further build perseverance and self-discipline through the school's extensive programme of day and residential trips. They show strong self-understanding as they evaluate their experiences of their adventurous residential trip which took place at the start of the academic year. Children in the EYFS develop excellent resilience as a result of the encouragement of highly effective practitioners. For example, they exhibited extreme perseverance when painting their life size cut outs of themselves and declined help to make the process faster. In an assembly observed during the inspection pupils were encouraged by an outside speaker to take risks and do something out of their comfort zone. Following the assembly, the pupils reported in discussions that they had been inspired by his words. Pupils understand how to improve their own learning, assisted by marking feedback and their own observations. They are articulate and thoughtful in expressing how they can improve their learning and feel they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

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 proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, form meetings and an assembly in the local church. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support 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

Mrs Bridget Windley	Reporting inspector
Mr Christopher Wright	Compliance team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Ms Rachel Pairman	Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)