



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Edge Grove School

February 2023

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School's Details

School	Edge Grove School			
DfE number	919/6002			
Registered charity number	311054			
Address	Edge Grove School High Cross Watford Hertfordshire WD25 8NL			
Telephone number	01923 855724			
Email address	office@edgegrove.com			
Head	Mr Edward Balfour			
Chair of governors	Mr Howard Clayden			
Proprietor	Edge Grove Educational Trust Ltd			
Age range	3 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	436			
	Pre-Prep	196	Lower Prep	202
	Upper prep	38		
Inspection dates	21 to 23 February 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Edge Grove School is a co-educational day preparatory school situated 15 miles from central London in Aldenham, Hertfordshire. The school was founded in 1935 as a preparatory school for boys and became co-educational in 1999. The school comprises three sections: pre-prep for pupils aged 3 to 7 years; lower school prep for pupils aged 7 to 11 years and upper school prep for pupils aged 11 to 13 years. The school is a registered charitable trust, administered by a board of governors, supported by sub-committees who all meet at least once a term. A new head was appointed in January 2023.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school provides a warm, welcoming educational community in which pupils with a broad diversity of backgrounds develop a genuine sense of belonging and pride. Through the breadth and depth of its academic, co-curricular and pastoral opportunities, pupils develop personal integrity, confidence and independence to develop the ten core skills defined by the World Economic Forum in preparation for a lifetime of success and fulfilment.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from families with a range of professional backgrounds and most live close to the school. Data provided by the school shows the ability of the pupils on entry is above average compared to others taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 52 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 10 of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for 165 pupils. All are supported by their classroom teachers and 29 receive additional individual support. Data used by the school has identified 40 pupils across all subjects as being the most able in the school's population. Their needs are met by curricular and extra-challenge through the Ignite Fellowship programme and external competitions.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

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

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the prep school, 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 pre-prep and lower prep school and relationships and sex education in the upper prep 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 wellbeing 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Pre-prep	Nursery, Reception, Years 1 and 2
Lower prep	Years 3 to 6
Upper school	Years 7 and 8

Key findings

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

- Pupils' communication skills are excellent. They speak articulately, listen attentively and write effectively.
- Pupils demonstrate extremely positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are highly developed in all areas of learning.
- Pupils apply their excellent study skills to great effect in lessons and written work.

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

- Pupils develop very high levels of confidence, independence and skills for the future.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and a respect for others' views.
- Social development of pupils is excellent.
- Pupils value each other's difference because they are interested and respectful of the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of classmates.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Ensure that pupils across the school implement the personal and purposeful values recently developed by older pupils.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have remained very high since the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy excellent levels of achievement, particularly in entrance examinations and scholarship to selective senior schools. The vast majority of pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their teachers know their subject well. A very large majority of parents agreed that teaching, including any online provision, enables their child to make progress. The school leadership team has created a positive climate where excellent constructive relationships and a calm, purposeful environment promote strong academic achievement. The board of trustees know the school well, making frequent checks on the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve pupils' outcomes. All pupils have appropriate provision to help them make rapid progress. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language. Although the school has identified nearly one third of its pupils as having EAL, the language competence of this group is on a par with native speakers and invalidates identification of their progress in lessons. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make progress in line with that of other pupils as a consequence of the highly effective support for their learning. More able pupils make outstanding progress alongside their classmates. For example, able pupils in Year 2 develop paragraphing abilities, which is a skill that is typically mastered in later years.
- 3.6 Pupils are highly effective communicators, developing their skills rapidly from the earliest age. They speak eloquently and listen attentively to their teachers and classmates. They put their excellent listening skills to good use across the curriculum and for a wide range of purposes. For example, learning the days of the week in Spanish and relating these to the names of planets. In the Nursery children demonstrated excellent use of language such as 'smoothing' during mark making, sharing ideas about moving construction blocks and talking confidently about a tractor when digging. Year 1 pupils listened to a story attentively and then used the conjunction 'and' as well as punctuating correctly when they joined sentences. In a Year 3 wellbeing lesson, pupils explored their safe place and emotions linking these to behaviour. Year 5 geography pupils explain confidently to others why Ordnance Survey symbols are needed. Younger children make excellent progress with their early reading because of a systematic and rigorous knowledge of the sounds letters make when they decode words. As a result, pupils of all ages love reading. Year 5 read expressively from *Alice in Wonderland* scripts. The same year group demonstrated a secure use of French to describe characteristics using *être*, and *avoir*. Older pupils read with excellent fluency and mature comprehension. They demonstrate very capably how to skim and scan a text, as well as read a wide genre of books. Year 8 pupils shared with great feeling and clarity extracts from dystopian novels.
- 3.7 Pupils are inspired to make the most of their particular strengths and interests. Nursery and Reception children put on their coats and zipped them up independently. Those who were seen struggling were offered help, but it was rejected as they wanted to 'keep trying.' Pupils quickly become self-assured and confident learners taking responsibility for their own learning and progress. In a Year 1 English lesson pupils listened both enthusiastically and intently to the story of *Mr Big*. Pupils learn how to edit and improve their own work, taking genuine pride in its presentation and quality. Pupils show excellent levels of initiative and independence as well as a self-evident willingness to work collaboratively. In Year 5 geography pupils considered just what they wanted to learn demonstrating real ownership of their learning. Older pupils use peer assessment very powerfully, sensitively and respectfully to assess and improve each other's work. For example, pupils were seen improving their partner's spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- 3.8 Pupils successfully develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across different areas of learning through research projects and being given opportunities to work with others. High-quality displays around the school celebrate the rich and varied learning of the pupils' experience. They demonstrate excellent knowledge, skills and understanding in the core subjects. In Year 2 English, sentences were created using a range of sophisticated adjectives. In Year 6 mathematics, high level calculations are

used and pupils show an excellent knowledge and understanding of the scientific approach. Year 6 pupils confidently identify the core skills of athletics in physical education (PE). They could successfully explain the disciplines that related to each skill. In humanities, pupils make rapid progress through the activities that are carefully designed to deepen their historical and geographical competencies. For example, Year 4 geography pupils successfully explained the processes of plate tectonics and were able to describe the differences between divergent, transform and convergent plate boundaries. Pupils demonstrate advanced knowledge and understanding in the arts, linking industry with art to demonstrate that sculptures can be made from any media.

- 3.9 Pupils develop highly effective study skills. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson pupils confidently and accurately made predictions about the perimeter of different shapes before testing these against real measurements. Pupils hypothesise and predict with confidence and consideration. In Year 6 science they discussed their next steps and progression in their learning. In art they make links to the everyday world they have researched. Year 7 pupils made useful analyses of speeches for their purpose and effectiveness. Older pupils apply their research and study skills in a variety of ways throughout the curriculum, especially in science where pupils develop highly effective investigative and analytical skills.
- 3.10 Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent numeracy skills. Children in Nursery confidently match numbers to different quantities of objects. In Reception they created their own number line 0-10 using the mixed up numbers on display. Those who were able were challenged to continue this number line to 20. Year 1 demonstrated successfully how to use coins and notes to calculate different values for costed items. Older pupils solve 'word problems' which require considerable reflection and deepen their mathematical understanding. Pupils confidently justify their approaches to different types of calculation they use. They discuss confidently their personal methods with their classmates enabling them to learn from each other. This demonstrates that they are well versed in mathematical language. Pupils display high levels of competency when applying numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum. Children in Nursery used ratios to make playdoh. Year 4 confidently use bar charts to display their science results on the strength of different magnets. Pupils of all abilities successfully develop a wide range of mathematics skills and knowledge by the time they reach Year 8. There is a strong record in age-appropriate national mathematics competitions.
- 3.11 Information communication skills are very well developed. Children in Nursery use language to inform adults about car games they play on school identified websites. Reception used an interactive game to successfully create a story. Older pupils showed good ability in researching projects and creating logos, as illustrated in the work they did in wellbeing for Children's Mental Health Week. Across the school pupils are adept users of ICT in many different subject areas. For example, Year 6 PE pupils videoed their team's relay race before using the footage to identify techniques they could refine in order to improve their overall speed. Year 7 confidently used microscopes to help them identify the different features of plant cells. Year 8 pupils very adeptly used a storyboarding programme to complete a history revision task. Pupil digital leaders, across all age groups, provided exactly the right level of support and instruction to enable classmates to move a cursor and drag images or text across the screen.
- 3.12 Pupils are very successful beyond the classroom. They excel in a wide variety of sports and other extra-curricular clubs. Music and performing arts are significant strengths of the school. Whole school performances enable pupils to excel, such as the recent production of *Peter Pan*. Many pupils are successful in external drama examinations. Many pupils perform in ensembles such as strings, chamber choir and a rock band group. Pupils are given the confidence to compete in sport against other schools. As a result, there have been many outstanding team and individual successes in sports as diverse as table-tennis, swimming and archery.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils show a very high level of self-understanding. They gain high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem through the support and nurturing of staff who know them well. Nursery and Reception children successfully develop their independence, for example in choosing and clearing their lunch. Throughout the school pupils talk about emotions and share thoughts. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to be confident, independent and develop strong teamwork skills. Pupils display a mature understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and readily acknowledge the successes and talents of their classmates. Pupils demonstrate an openness and understanding about sharing thoughts and ideas. This was seen when Year 8 agreed new personal and purposeful values for the school. All pupils voted to accept these during the inspection at the school celebration assembly. However, pupils other than Year 8 are yet to experience these as part of their daily and weekly education in the school. Pupils leave school confident, articulate and very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 3.15 Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and are aware that actions create consequences. In Nursery and Reception children learn about the importance of taking turns, understand about mistakes and how to say sorry if they do. Years 1 and 2 know how to behave appropriately whilst completing activities in the after-school craft club. Around school, pupils are polite and well-mannered. They smile at each other in the corridor and are very happy to engage in conversation with adults. On the playground, pupils look out for each other and play very well together. A small minority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire did not agree that pupils are kind and respect each other or that the school treats pupils fairly. In discussion pupils said they were kind to each other, but the questionnaires do not support this view. They said that most of this was low level disagreement rather than anybody being deliberately unkind, and if things did happen then they were quickly forgotten. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Any potentially poor behaviour is tackled straight away, frequently by pupils themselves, who explain to their classmates why it is wrong.
- 3.16 Pupils form excellent positive relationships with each other. They enjoy working together to solve common problems. Nursery and Reception children worked together to move a bucket of water round an obstacle without spillage. In Year 4 English pupils located together features of a non-chronological report from a variety of information sources. Year 6 pupils showed excellent collaboration when they analysed an extract from an autobiography for figurative language. In Year 8 PSHE pupils helped each other solve word, flag, and country puzzles. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school's relationships and sex education programme prepares their child/children effectively for life in modern society. Older pupils read to younger pupils, ask them to make comments about the story, and note these in the younger pupils' reading records.
- 3.17 All pupils showed, not only a genuine respect for and understanding of different cultures, but also valued the diversity this brings to their school. They display an unquestioning acceptance for others, whatever their backgrounds or traditions. Pupils form very tolerant and understanding relationships with each other. In a Year 1 English lesson pupils said that 'everyone is the same' during a discussion about fundamental British values. An overwhelming majority of parents who completed the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Pupils across all ages present assemblies on topics such as black history month, heritage week, holocaust memorial day and LBGTQ+ groups. Year 8 pupils spoke to inspectors passionately about how different cultures in their school all mixed together and that you wouldn't find just one specific group on their own. In this way the school successfully fulfils its aim of providing a warm, welcoming educational community in which pupils with a broad diversity of backgrounds develop a genuine sense of belonging and pride.

- 3.18 Pupils from a young age have an excellent understanding that the decisions they make are important determinants of their own success and wellbeing. Pupils across the school make their own decisions about books they choose to read and the learning resources they select to complete tasks. They value the daily opportunities they receive to decide which level of difficulty to work at in mathematics lessons and talk appreciatively of their teachers' guidance. This ensures they continue to challenge themselves through more difficult 'hot tasks' or when learning spellings. In a Year 5 drama lesson, pupils decided how to best portray Alice or the Cheshire cat from *Alice in Wonderland*. Year 7 choose which history topic to study or which sport in which to participate. Older pupils accurately assess for themselves what they need to do to get the most out of lessons. They confidently evaluate and improve their work. Year 8 pupils who spoke to inspectors talked confidently about how they used the pupil council to procure more breaktime games for the playground and they have helped develop the new personal and purposeful values of the school.
- 3.19 Pupils develop a strong spiritual understanding and appreciation of non-material aspects of life. This is encouraged from a young age. For example, pupils in Year 1 took time to lie on their backs, look at the clouds and describe what they could see. Across years 3 to 6, pupils demonstrate an appreciation of nature, friends and family. They confidently state why these are important when relating friends and family to wellbeing and on how the impact of nature assists them with their mindfulness. Older pupils have a very balanced view of their own beliefs and those of others through wellbeing sessions and debates about current and/or controversial issues. Year 8 pupils talked enthusiastically to inspectors about how the people around you are all you need to make you happy.
- 3.20 The importance of being a good, caring member of the school community is evident through the way that pupils engage and cooperate with each other. They freely and willingly support their classmates in their learning and help each other to succeed. Year 8 pupils, who spoke to inspectors, identified the importance their local community plays in their lives as well the important roles needed to make a community successful. An excellent example of their sense of community was seen when the older pupils organised and ran "Edge Grove's Got Talent" giving pupils of all ages a chance to perform in front of the school and parents. Pupils organised business enterprise activities at this event and others such as the Christmas fair, to raise money for good causes. During the inspection pupils showed genuine appreciation for the efforts and achievements of their classmates, in the celebration assembly, for the standards of work displayed as well as scholarships to senior schools. Older pupils deal maturely when contributing to others in the school and take positions of responsibility seriously, such as prefect, digital leaders or "Ignite fellow". Year 8 pupils organise a basketball club and other games for younger pupils looking to improve their skills.
- 3.21 All pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of staying safe and healthy. All of the parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that the school provides a safe environment to learn and almost all pupils agreed that school is a safe place to be. Pupils display an excellent awareness of how to stay safe online as a result of e-safety lessons. They understand the risks of inappropriate use of social media. Pupils know how to maintain a healthy way of life through regular exercise, sensible food choices and the support of the school's wellbeing centre. At lunchtimes pupils choose sensibly from a range of dietary options. They enjoy being active, even during the winter months, because of a wide range of activities organised by specialist sports staff with well-equipped resources. Pupils deal maturely with their mental health. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of mental wellbeing. Pupils respond positively to the calm space and relaxing ambience of the school's wellbeing centre.

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 and designated safeguarding governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Desmond Dunne	Reporting inspector
Mrs Lisa Boulton	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, ISA school)
Mr Chris Calvey	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Adrian Downie	Team inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)
Mrs Joanne Speight	Team inspector (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school)