

# School inspection report

13 to 15 January 2026

## **Hale Preparatory School**

Broomfield Lane

Hale

Cheshire

WA15 9AS

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietors and leaders maintain effective oversight of the school to ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently. They create a caring and nurturing environment that supports effective learning and underpins the school's values. Leaders place pupils' wellbeing at the centre of their work, offering a broad curriculum and a range of enrichment opportunities. Pupils are supported by a pastoral system that fosters kindness, confidence and resilience. This enables pupils to thrive academically, personally and socially.
2. Leaders implement a suitable complaints policy that provides parents with appropriate timescales and a three-stage complaints procedure. Leaders initiate dialogue with parents and follow up concerns quickly in line with the complaints policy. They maintain appropriate records of the actions they take. However, records do not consistently identify which stage of the formal complaints procedure has been reached or the outcomes. These oversights were addressed during the inspection.
3. Leaders are highly engaged, open to new ideas and ambitious for the school. They seek to improve the curriculum and listen carefully to advice, which has led to enhanced provision in computing, drama and sport. There has been consistent progress in teachers' use of technology across the curriculum, including the use of software to enhance the delivery of mathematics and English.
4. Pupils across the school learn and achieve well in their academic and creative work. They are supported well to acquire new knowledge, skills and concepts. Teachers provide positive guidance and feedback to pupils about their work and achievements. However, this feedback does not consistently help pupils to understand the steps they need to take in order to make further progress.
5. Leaders ensure that pupils' physical, mental and emotional health are well supported. Leaders set high behavioural expectations that reinforce a respectful and tolerant culture among pupils. Comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships education programmes equip pupils with the self-knowledge to make informed personal choices. Leaders provide pupils with well-planned opportunities to develop their spirituality and moral awareness. A broad co-curricular and physical education (PE) programme helps pupils to acquire independence and confidence.
6. Leaders regularly assess, review and mitigate potential risks. They implement effective safeguarding and health and safety measures to promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders maintain appropriate staffing ratios so that pupils, including children in the early years, are well supervised around the school site. Pupils' attendance is monitored effectively, and any absence is followed up in a timely manner. Fire safety measures, first aid and medical provision are suitable and help to promote a secure environment for pupils.
7. Pupils are well supported to develop an age-appropriate understanding of British values and institutions. They are encouraged to participate in school council elections and decision-making, which helps them to learn about democracy. Pupils gain a broad cultural awareness through educational visits and are encouraged to participate actively in support of their local community. Visiting speakers broaden pupils' understanding of wider topical and ethical issues, deepening their awareness of conflict and their understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are supported to make informed decisions about their future options and are prepared well for the next stage in their

educational journey. Many take on active roles in the school and understand the importance of providing service to the community.

8. Proprietors and staff are vigilant in their safeguarding and work collectively to manage the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders work closely with external specialist agencies so that appropriate and timely action is taken to support pupils' needs. Proprietors and leaders ensure that required safer recruitment checks are carried out on adults before they begin work at the school. These checks are recorded accurately on the single central record of appointments (SCR). However, leaders do not always undertake prohibition from management checks for staff who are promoted to leadership positions. This oversight was rectified during the inspection.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

### Recommended next steps

The proprietor should:

- ensure that prohibition from management checks are always conducted when staff are promoted to leadership positions
- strengthen the recording of complaints so they are clear regarding the stages and outcomes reached
- ensure that teachers' guidance to pupils, including through marking and feedback, consistently informs pupils about the steps they should take to make further progress.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The proprietors work closely with leaders to provide support and appropriate challenge. The proprietors meet regularly with staff and leaders to discuss matters relating to safeguarding, health and safety, and school development. They are diligent in providing staff with effective training and seek advice from external consultants, when required. As a result, leaders demonstrate competent skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities so that the Standards are met consistently.
10. Proprietors and leaders review potential risks and mitigate them by taking effective actions. Comprehensive risk assessments are written and adapted as necessary so that they continue to be suitable. For example, leaders ensure that areas in the playground are clearly demarcated to reduce the risk of accidents and to increase a sense of order. They have enhanced security measures around the school site, such as staggering pupil collection times at the end of the school day. Leaders act on the recommendations of external advisors. For example, doors with window panes have been installed to improve the visibility of pupils in the basement rooms.
11. Leaders are reflective and take effective actions to improve the school's systems and processes to promote pupils' wellbeing. For example, the school has expanded the pastoral team to further support pupils' mental health, introduced lessons in mindfulness, and created a 'peaceful pod' wellbeing area, which provides a quiet and reflective space for pupils. Leaders maintain and monitor clear and detailed wellbeing records so that pupils continue to receive individual and consistent support.
12. Leaders maintain effective oversight of the curriculum and teaching and learning through learning walks and departmental reviews. Lesson observations and analysis of data enable academic and subject leaders to identify areas of the curriculum that are performing well and to implement measures so that the curriculum continues to develop. For example, leaders have expanded the range of books available in the library to broaden pupils' reading opportunities.
13. In the early years, leaders maintain an effective oversight of the curriculum and of children's progress. Leaders meet regularly with teaching staff to identify areas that require further development. For example, children's writing has been enhanced by staff training and the introduction of new resources. Leaders provide a stimulating curriculum that covers the core areas. They maintain regular dialogue with parents to share information relating to their child's progress. For instance, teachers set children suitable weekly homework in phonics, mathematics and reading to consolidate their learning. Children in the early years make good progress and reach the expected level of development by the end of Reception.
14. Leaders provide clear information for parents, staff and pupils, mainly through the school's website. Policies are detailed, reviewed regularly and reflect current statutory guidance. The school's reporting structure provides parents with a regular schedule of communications, including termly parents' meetings and written reports. Leaders proactively consult with parents about their child's progress, pastoral wellbeing and personal development.
15. Leaders liaise closely with relevant external agencies to support pupils' wellbeing. They consult with local safeguarding partners in a timely manner and share with the staff the safeguarding information that they provide. Leaders invite external speakers to present topics to parents, for example about online safety and how to monitor their child's use of the internet effectively. Leaders inform local

authorities about pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points, in line with current statutory guidance.

16. The school's accessibility plan fulfils leaders' duties under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders ensure that development plans are inclusive and support pupils' individual needs. For example, leaders have introduced a visual timetable to help children adjust to the school routine and length of the day. The school provides pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with a range of resources such as reader pens and coloured paper, when required.
17. Leaders take prompt action to follow up any complaints submitted by parents. These are recorded thoroughly and include details on the nature of the concern and the actions taken so that matters are resolved in a satisfactory way. However, leaders do not always ensure that the recording of complaints identifies the stages and outcomes clearly. This was addressed during the inspection.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance**

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders implement a well-planned curriculum that supports pupils' academic progress and is matched carefully to the ages and abilities of pupils. Leaders provide imaginative opportunities for pupils to develop digital skills, such as when they use educational software to plan and design a new airport. Pupils develop communication skills and self-assurance through effective drama provision. The wide-ranging and ambitious co-curricular programme helps pupils to develop resilience, interpersonal skills and confidence.
20. Pupils are highly articulate, apply consistent effort to their work, collaborate respectfully and respond well to creative and academic challenge. For example, they write and perform sketches in drama, take turns to lead compositional activities in music, experiment with scribble drawing in art and create their own number rhymes in French.
21. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which they use to plan effective lessons so that pupils build a secure foundation of knowledge and understanding in each subject. Teachers know the pupils well and understand their interests and needs. For example, in Year 4 mathematics, teaching supports pupils to structure their thinking and to use a mnemonic to reinforce concepts of multiplication, division and subtraction. In Year 1 science, effective teaching utilises blindfolds and 'secret bags' alongside vocabulary boards to focus pupils on tactile sensations. This approach motivates pupils to use scientific terminology accurately when describing textures. Pupils feel valued and are confident to share ideas and opinions and to request help, when required. They become successful learners who achieve well and make good progress. Year 6 leavers typically gain places at their chosen senior schools.
22. In the early years, teachers provide a structured and stimulating environment that supports children's development in the core areas of reading, writing and numeracy. Staff use phonics to help children read and learn new vocabulary to use in their work and conversations. For example, in humanities, children draw and label different types of shops, such as a bakery. Children collaborate well when working on simple sums or making an imaginary 'Grandma's house' together. They respond positively to books and stories, for example when listening attentively to the story of *The Lonely Beast*. They answer the teacher's questions confidently and connect the story to their own lives. Experiences such as these help children to develop an effective use of language.
23. Leaders implement a thorough assessment framework which informs teachers so that pupils' individual needs are supported effectively. In English, for example, staff analyse assessment outcomes in comprehension and writing and move pupils with higher prior attainment onto an accelerated reading programme. In mathematics, pupils make good progress from their baseline scores. In many lessons, staff provide guidance, often through individual feedback and marking, so that pupils understand the work they do well. However, pupils do not consistently receive clear information about the steps they should take to further improve their work.
24. Leaders provide effective support for pupils who have SEND. They share education, health and care plans (EHC plans) with teachers so that pupils receive individual support. For instance, pupils are provided with digital software, writing frames, word banks and phrases to begin sentences, when appropriate. Teachers implement additional sessions to help pupils improve their handwriting and ensure that the library includes a range of suitable books to support pupils' reading development. Pupils who have SEND make good progress during their time at the school.

25. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are provided with appropriate help. Regular assessment and use of word banks help pupils who speak EAL to develop a confident and competent use of English.
26. The school provides pupils with a well-planned and wide range of co-curricular activities, which supports them to develop their talents and skills. They acquire new knowledge in sport, music, the creative arts and public speaking. For example, pupils who participate in the school brass band improve their instrumental skills and rehearse new repertoire. In the multi-sports club, pupils learn and practise basketball drills. Co-curricular activities such as these contribute positively to pupils' confidence and overall personal development.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

- 27. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

28. Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health and emotional and physical wellbeing. They provide effective pastoral systems and promote an inclusive and supportive environment. For instance, the school provides pupils with a wellbeing room, known as the 'peaceful pod', which offers them a space to quietly pause and reflect. Puppets with different facial expressions such as sadness, happiness and tiredness help pupils to identify their feelings from an early age, which supports their emotional development. Senior pupils, acting as wellbeing ambassadors, support younger pupils during breaktimes. Staff know the pupils well and support their individual needs carefully and effectively.
29. Leaders provide a well-planned and broad PE curriculum that promotes pupils' physical wellbeing, communication skills and positive mental health. For example, in the early years, children develop basic skills, starting with locomotion and stability and progressing to racket and ball skills. Older pupils participate in a range of team sports including football, tag rugby, tennis and hockey. Leaders provide pupils with many opportunities to play in local and regional matches and competitions to build their skills and confidence.
30. The school supports pupils' personal development, confidence and self-esteem effectively. For example, pupils develop their skills and talents by undertaking leadership roles, such as captaining sports teams and representing other pupils at school council meetings. Junior musicians regularly perform when pupils arrive at assembly. Pupils throughout the school take part in drama performances and plays, including during the school's annual Shakespeare festival.
31. Pupils are taught a thorough and well-considered PSHE programme that includes a suitable relationship component. Pupils learn about mental health and mindfulness and set themselves realistic personal goals. They explore consent and learn about healthy relationships. Leaders teach pupils, at an age-appropriate level, about the onset of puberty and how their bodies will change as they approach adolescence. The PSHE curriculum enables pupils to manage their emotions and make informed and responsible decisions.
32. Children in the early years are taught to show empathy and kindness to each other. In PSHE lessons, they learn about the importance of promoting their own health. For instance, they participate in lessons about exercise, nutrition and eating a balanced diet. Teachers encourage children to develop independence and confidence through activities such as hanging up their own coat and organising book bags.
33. Leaders set high behavioural expectations which are implemented consistently throughout the school. Pupils behave well and treat others with kindness and respect. Pupils are rewarded for responsible behaviour. For example, children in Reception receive a gold award for tidying away neatly. The school's anti-bullying strategy is effective. Pupils explore and understand the consequences of unkind and discriminatory behaviour. Leaders maintain clear behaviour and bullying records, analyse these closely to identify any patterns or trends, and take suitable actions in response.
34. The school provides pupils with opportunities to develop spirituality and an understanding of moral responsibility through assemblies and the wider curriculum. Staff share moral stories in assemblies, such as an Israeli tale that teaches pupils the importance of showing gratitude to others. Pupils in

ethics lessons learn about world religions, such as Islam and Buddhism. This deepens their understanding of shared moral values and cultural diversity. Leaders help pupils to foster a sense of 'awe and wonder'. For example, children in Reception observe and look after newly hatched chicks. Pupils in Year 5 develop a sense of reverence when they learn about butterflies emerging from a chrysalis.

35. Across the school, pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of safety routines and know how to access help. Leaders ensure that the required supervision ratios are maintained, including in the early years. Staff are suitably trained to administer first aid, including paediatric first aid. First aid kits are strategically positioned so that staff are able to provide prompt help. Leaders consult with parents so that pupils' individual needs are supported effectively. Consequently, supervision, first aid and medical care are managed competently throughout the school.
36. Leaders maintain appropriate admission and attendance registers. Pupils' attendance levels are monitored carefully. Staff keep accurate records that reflect current statutory guidance, follow up absences promptly and work with parents when attendance patterns require attention and support.
37. Leaders implement thorough health and safety procedures. The school's premises, accommodation and equipment are well maintained, secure and suitable for pupils. Leaders systematically undertake required safety checks. Pupils practise fire drills regularly and know how to respond appropriately in case of an emergency. Leaders manage any reported health and safety concerns effectively and in a timely manner. As a result of such measures, pupils' wellbeing is promoted consistently well.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

38. All the relevant Standards are met.

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

39. The school provides a range of suitable opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of social responsibility and to demonstrate kindness to others. This is underpinned by the PSHE curriculum and reinforced through a well-planned community action programme. Pupils in each form collaborate and help to plan appropriate activities that support their local community and charities. For example, pupils in Year 4 donate food and toiletry items to a local foodbank. Pupils in Year 6 visit elderly people in a local residential home and share in activities such as working with them to construct bird cages.
40. Pupils explore and learn about the values of respect, inclusion and tolerance in effective ethics and PSHE lessons and through the wider curriculum. Pupils deepen their understanding of different cultures and faiths by sharing personal insights into religious festivals such as Rosh Hashanah and by visiting diverse places of worship, including the local synagogue. The curriculum includes diverse modern foreign language provision that fosters pupils' awareness of language patterns and different cultures. For example, pupils learn about European Christmas traditions such as 'La Befana' in Italian lessons. As a result of such opportunities, pupils are prepared well for life in British and global society.
41. Pupils are keen to assume leadership roles within the school and hold positions such as team captains or lead musicians. For example, team captains act responsibly and show pride in their school when showing visitors around. Pupils are encouraged to contribute and share their ideas about the school's provision. Leaders listen to, and discuss, pupils' suggestions carefully during school council meetings. The school council has made its own school council suggestion box so that pupils can easily submit their ideas. Pupils lead assemblies to explore how class activities and equipment during wet playtimes could be improved. Pupils have successfully canvassed senior leaders to re-instate the drinking water fountain and to enhance food and menu options. Pupils develop a sense of personal responsibility, gain leadership skills and learn the importance of consulting with others and listening to alternative viewpoints respectfully.
42. Pupils learn about fairness, rights and responsibilities, and the rule of law in PSHE. For example, they learn about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Pupils explore the British courts system and how it works to protect children. Pupils learn about harmful practices such as piracy and malware in computing and discuss how the law protects individuals from harm. Children in Reception learn about police officers, firefighters and nurses and the work they do to keep people safe. Pupils are supported to become responsible citizens. For instance, they learn how to distinguish right from wrong and the consequences of their actions.
43. Leaders in the early years act as positive role models so that children learn to treat others kindly and in a supportive manner. Teachers embed social responsibility and independence through structured classroom routines. Children, for example, are encouraged to hand out fruit and drinks at snack times. They patiently wait for their turn and share equipment sensibly when working collaboratively or playing. Children develop a positive attitude and show consideration for others. For instance, they help others in their local community by litter picking and helping to maintain the cenotaph.
44. As pupils progress through school, they develop critical thinking and political awareness through the 'what's happening in the world' module in PSHE. Pupils explore and analyse global events such as

conflict, war zones and asylum seeking, and respect alternative opinions and viewpoints. Pupils learn about democracy, and the importance of using their vote and voice wisely, when voting in council elections.

45. The school supports pupils to make informed choices about the next stage of their journey as they learn about future careers in PSHE. Pupils in Year 6 participate in a programme involving interactive workshops delivered by the local council and the police. Consequently, pupils are supported well in their transition to senior schools.
46. Pupils are prepared to understand financial and monetary matters effectively. For example, pupils in Year 2 mathematics lessons learn about the value of coins and bank notes. Pupils in Year 6 design their own leavers' hoodies and learn about cost control and budgeting. Senior pupils undertake a leavers' programme that supports their understanding of entrepreneurship and the hospitality industry. For instance, they manage a fictional 'Leyland family' budget in computing lessons and explore some of the considerations associated with establishing a veterinarian club.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society.**

- 47. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

48. The proprietors provide thorough and systematic oversight of the school's robust safeguarding procedures, including through regular visits to the school, discussions with pupils and staff and scrutiny of documentation. They receive detailed safeguarding reports, which they discuss and analyse. The proprietors ensure that the safeguarding policy is in line with current statutory requirements and available on the school's website.
49. Leaders ensure that staff are effectively trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures. Training includes the latest updates to the 'Prevent' duty and how to respond to alleged incidents of child-on-child abuse. Teachers develop their understanding of safeguarding practices through reading local authority newsletters and receiving regular updates in staff briefings. Staff know how to respond to and report low-level concerns. Leaders implement a robust staff code of conduct, which includes a clear whistleblowing policy, so that staff know how to refer any serious allegations about adults working at the school. Staff use the school systems effectively to record any safeguarding concerns, which are followed up promptly by the safeguarding team.
50. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding receive advanced child protection and safer recruitment training. They promote an informed and thorough safeguarding culture at the school. Leaders are aware of any potential contextual risks and take appropriate actions to mitigate against them. For example, they provide parents with newsletters and arrange presentations from external consultants to help them manage parental controls for popular children's gaming apps. The safeguarding team works closely with local safeguarding partners and refers concerns to them, when required. The school implements an effective lanyards policy for all adults who work at or visit the school and checks the suitability of external speakers. As a result of such measures, pupils' wellbeing is promoted consistently and thoroughly.
51. In the early years, leaders proactively foster a deeply embedded culture of safeguarding. For example, they complete daily health and safety checklists to ensure the environment remains secure and suitable for children. Teachers monitor children during mealtimes and are alert to the dangers of choking.
52. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. In PSHE and computing lessons, pupils learn about the hidden dangers of potentially playing with an adult stranger on online gaming platforms. They are taught to report any suspicious online activities to a trusted adult. Leaders implement an effective internet filtering and monitoring system of all online activity at the school, which is tested regularly and overseen by senior staff. Leaders promptly follow up any concerns pupils may have and ensure they continue to receive the help and support they need.
53. Leaders carry out all required safer recruitment checks before adults start working at the school. These checks are recorded accurately on a suitable SCR. However, leaders do not consistently undertake prohibition from management checks on staff who are promoted to leadership roles. This oversight was rectified during the inspection.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

54. All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

<b>School</b>	Hale Preparatory School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	358/6006
<b>Address</b>	Hale Preparatory School Broomfield Lane Hale Cheshire WA15 9AS
<b>Phone number</b>	0161 928 2386
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<b>Website</b>	www.haleprepschool.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	Hale Preparatory School Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Kathryn Busby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kathryn Busby
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	206
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 to 9 February 2023

## Information about the school

55. Hale Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils, situated in Greater Manchester. The school is a limited company and is overseen by a board of directors. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2025.
56. There are 29 children in the early years who are taught in two Reception classes.
57. The school has identified 23 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
58. The school has identified that a very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
59. The school states its aims are to provide a well-rounded education in a relaxed and secure environment where pupils feel happy and achieve their full academic potential. The school endeavours to develop pupils' awareness of, and respect for, the beliefs and values of others.

## Inspection details

**Inspection dates**

13 to 15 January 2026

60. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

61. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other proprietors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

62. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

### **How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net).

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