

# School inspection report

19 to 21 March 2024

## **Royal High School Bath**

Lansdown Road

Bath

Somerset

BA1 5SZ

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders benefit from the guidance and challenge provided by the knowledgeable and well-informed proprietorial body, as well as experienced local governors. The expertise of these groups is highly valued by school leaders and managers. School leaders are well supported by the proprietor and governors in their work to achieve the school aims.
2. Leaders' decisions are well informed through a comprehensive programme of audits and surveys. The impact of any actions on pupils' wellbeing is carefully considered using all available information. Leaders and managers know pupils and their families well. Leaders monitor pupils' progress effectively and identify where support is required. However, progress reports for parents of pupils in Years 7 to 9 lack clarity.
3. Leaders and managers are forward-looking. They develop the school's offer in line with pupils' changing needs. Since the previous inspection, a new role has been created to support international students. Additional facilities include the new music school and more resources are allocated to support pupils' mental health.
4. Staff and pupils are proud to belong to the school. They share a strong belief in its aims and ethos. The school seeks to prepare pupils for their future careers by developing key personal and academic skills in all years. These qualities shape the school's provision and support pupils' personal character development as well as their academic achievement.
5. Teaching is adapted effectively to meet pupils' different needs, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Lesson planning is effective and teaching activities are well selected to enable pupils to increase their understanding and develop their skills.
6. The curriculum is varied and engaging. Pupils explore learning across a number of different subject areas. The school's offer is designed to build a range of skills, to develop pupils' character and to make them globally aware.
7. Careful planning ensures that common themes, such as learner qualities, are well integrated between prep and seniors and revisited regularly. The provision for relationships and sex education is well thought through and adapted as required so that pupils' needs are well met. Pupils' preparation for their future lives and careers permeates the school community, as well as the curriculum.
8. The boarding accommodation provides a welcoming environment in which pupils feel safe and cared for. Pupils benefit from living in the boarding community with their peers from around the world. There is a high level of respect for, and appreciation of different cultures, reinforced by a curriculum that celebrates each pupil as an individual.
9. Safeguarding procedures are thoroughly audited and regularly reported on to the proprietor and governors. Effective measures are taken to manage risk and to protect pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe in school.

## 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 step

Leaders should ensure that:

- work continues to improve clarity in reporting systems to parents about pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The proprietor, together with the support of the local governing body, ensures that school leaders have well-developed skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities and to promote pupil wellbeing effectively. The decisions of leaders are appropriately challenged to assess their impact on pupil wellbeing through a rigorous system of audits. The expertise of the proprietor and governors is greatly valued by school leaders and supports well-informed decision-making.
11. Leaders use data well to plan ahead and to deploy resources over time to ensure that the school's provision meets pupils' changing needs. For example, the provision to support pupils' social and emotional wellbeing and mental health has increased. A leadership role has been created to enhance the support provided for international students. The music school and a new media and ICT studio create well-resourced learning environments to support pupils' advanced creative and technical skills.
12. Leaders provide an education that prepares pupils effectively for their future. Pupils are supported to develop the character and confidence that they need to succeed. They are provided with the knowledge and skills they need to live successful lives. Leaders' aims for pupils to secure these qualities is integral to planning and the school's offer. For example, the recent introduction of a problem-based learning course in Year 7 provides further opportunities for pupils to develop important creative, technical, communication and team-building skills. Pupils enjoy applying these skills to real-world projects. They value the strong focus on these important qualities, which are widely promoted and celebrated in school life, including through the rewards system. Pupils often nominate each other for merits linked to the relevant learner qualities.
13. Leaders at all levels of the school are reflective in their approach to planning. Improvement plans are assessed, systematically and thoroughly, with a focus on improvements and further actions needed. In making changes, leaders take account of pupils' views across the school. For example, pupils' feedback influences the content of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and informs aspects of the boarding provision. Leaders involve pupils in determining their personal and academic goals. For example, Year 11 and Year 13 set their own academic plans and targets at parents' evenings.
14. The school has close and well-established relationships with external agencies that provide support on safeguarding issues. Leaders seek guidance promptly when needed and make good use of safeguarding training to ensure their skills and understanding are up to date and well developed.
15. Leaders identify and manage any risks to pupils' safety effectively. This includes developing pupils' own knowledge and skills to make safe choices. Pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing is well promoted through provision such as the PSHE programme, tutor time and assemblies.
16. School policies are written clearly so that they are readily understood and are implemented consistently and effectively. Leaders produce a detailed and broad accessibility plan as part of their commitment to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and developing a culture of inclusion at the school. Relevant information is provided in line with statutory requirements including details to parents about pupils' academic performance. However, information to parents in Years 7 to 9 reports is not clear enough about pupil progress.
17. The school's complaints process is followed appropriately and is well documented.

## 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. The curriculum in the senior school provides all pupils with a range of opportunities to learn and develop their knowledge and skills. The curriculum offers flexibility, so is readily adapted to pupils' age, aptitudes and needs very effectively. For example, in the sixth form, pupils can choose to study the International Baccalaureate (IB) or A levels. A-level pupils have the option to study an additional subject at AS level or IB standard level and an extended project qualification.
20. The curriculum is regularly reviewed so that it meets pupils' needs. For example, A level music technology and IB sports, exercise and health science have recently been added as option choices. Pupils value the options open to them.
21. The themed curriculum and child-led approach to learning throughout the early years and in the preparatory school is highly effective in enabling pupils to make strong connections between subjects. This enables pupils to transfer skills learned in one subject to another. For example, pupils use digital map software to locate buildings in the city which were damaged in World War 2.
22. Teaching is thoughtfully planned and teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use questioning effectively to deepen pupils' understanding and learning. Teaching activities generate an enthusiasm for learning. For example, younger pupils in the senior school were motivated by a creative group task which involved writing a podcast script to interview King Charles 1 on the day before his execution.
23. Teachers give pupils clear instructions and teaching activities help pupils to remember the content previously taught. Pupils are encouraged to "be brave" by trying out their own approaches to problems. Teachers are encouraging and readily praise pupils' efforts. This motivates pupils to take measured risks and pupils are not afraid to make mistakes. When a particular approach does not work, pupils are quick to seek alternatives. Pupils are articulate and readily ask questions to clarify their understanding.
24. Pupils use devices such as laptops effectively as a resource in lessons. Pupils' confidence in using digital skills can be seen in a variety of uses across the curriculum, for example, in editing images or in designing posters.
25. Pupils' needs are carefully monitored and appropriately met. This means that targeted support plans are put in place when required. Teachers are skilled in tailoring their teaching to match their pupils' individual needs in lessons.
26. Classroom teaching is adapted well for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In addition, some pupils who have SEND receive one-to-one, or small class support. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are effectively identified and catered for in lessons. Leaders provide many opportunities for more able pupils to develop their academic interests, to conduct independent research and to develop their intellectual curiosity.
27. Thorough and effective assessment arrangements are in place in all year groups. Pupils receive detailed and constructive feedback, which helps them to continue to improve their work. Pupils' development of their understanding is helped by lively dialogue and their progress is supported well by positive reinforcement from teachers. Pupils regularly reflect on their learning. For example, in Year 9 history pupils keep a reflection journal noting their learning from each lesson.

28. Pupils make better than expected progress from their starting points at GCSE and A level. Pupils' achievements in the IB are consistently higher than national results. Pupils in the preparatory stage generally make progress in line with expectations. The progress of pupils who have SEND and those pupils who speak EAL is in line with their peers.
29. Children in the early years make good progress. Teachers know the children well and create a happy environment where meaningful play and exploration of learning take place. Children have opportunities to develop their language, numeracy, understanding of the world, as well as physical and expressive art and design skills, through imaginative and well-selected activities.

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

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



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

31. Pupils participate in a wide range of co-curricular activities which builds their sense of belonging and cohesion, as well as enabling them to learn new skills. The careful planning of the offer enables each pupil to find something that fits their interests and aptitudes. Leaders monitor pupils' participation closely. They make adaptations as needed to support pupils' health and emotional wellbeing.
32. Pupils understand the benefits of good personal health and healthy lifestyles. PE and sports play a significant part in school life and pupils embrace the activities wholeheartedly. Children in the preparatory school benefit from outdoor learning opportunities as well as having specialist PE teaching. This supports pupils to develop their physical skills from an early age.
33. The relationships and sex education curriculum is well planned across the school. Teaching is adapted in response to feedback from parents and pupils and takes into account current issues in society. Well-planned assessments check pupils' understanding and progress effectively.
34. The school's behaviour policy is well understood. It is implemented fairly and effectively; good behaviour is readily recognised and celebrated. Staff are kind and so are pupils; for example, new boarders feel very welcomed when they join the boarding community. Pupils readily mutually support each other. For example, in PSHE lessons in the senior school, pupils thoughtfully encourage each other to acknowledge more of their own strengths.
35. Pupils have numerous suitable opportunities to take on responsibility and leadership at the school. For example, in their roles as pupil sustainability and wellbeing prefects. In addition, many older pupils mentor younger ones as 'big sisters'. These roles provide pupils with the opportunity to represent and support pupils across the school and pupils undertake them with enthusiasm and pride.
36. Leaders are proactive in their approach to anti-bullying. For example, there are pupil anti-bullying ambassadors and staff wellbeing 'angels'. Leaders are vigilant in monitoring pupils' behaviour, responding quickly, and appropriately, when issues occur. Any instances of disagreement or bullying behaviour are dealt with fairly. Where issues arise in friendships, pupils feel comfortable talking to staff and in raising their concerns about themselves or their friends.
37. Pupils have high levels of self-knowledge and awareness. For example, Year 7 pupils write letters to younger pupils to reflect how they felt at that time in their school life. Staff encouragement and praise builds pupils' confidence as individuals.
38. Boarding is well managed. Consequently, the provision for boarders meets their needs successfully. Boarders feel safe and are comfortable in the boarding environment. Pupils can contact staff and parents easily and have access to a range of suitable recreational opportunities. Boarding accommodation has a warm, welcoming feel that is much appreciated by the pupils. Boarding provision is annually audited by the proprietors, and governors visit at least termly to check that pupils' needs are met.

39. First Aid is effectively delivered by the medical team through well-resourced facilities. Staff receive regular training in first aid, including paediatric training in the early years.
40. Admission and attendance arrangements operate in line with school policy and statutory guidance. Health and Safety, including fire safety and site maintenance, is managed effectively and pupils are appropriately supervised across the school.

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

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

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

42. Pupils have a well-developed understanding and respect for other cultures. The school is a welcoming community that is greatly enriched by the diversity of pupils' backgrounds. Within the curriculum and the wider activities available, there are many opportunities to celebrate differences.
43. School leaders and teachers actively promote global awareness. Academic departments review diversity in the curriculum and adapt this as appropriate. For example, drama in the preparatory school includes international fairy tales, and art has broadened the range of artists' work researched from across the world. Diversity and inclusion are celebrated routinely from the early years upwards. Teaching supports the development of mutually respectful attitudes, so pupils have a mature understanding and appreciation of all groups of pupils.
44. There are regular and frequent opportunities to consider the non-material and spiritual aspects of life, including the qualities and values that underpin a civil and harmonious society. These are explored in tutor time, assemblies and PSHE.
45. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. They appreciate the benefits of contributing actively to their own community and to wider society. For example, pupils raise money to support those affected by conflict in the world. In addition, there is a strong tradition of fundraising by pupils for local, national and international charities, including a sister school in Kenya. Pupils have a deep appreciation of the needs of others.
46. In the preparatory school, pupils are actively involved in contributing positively to the community through the school's 'Together We Can' programme. As part of the popular Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE), pupils volunteer at local nursing homes.
47. British values are well promoted through the curriculum and many aspects of school life. Examples include the election of members of parliament for the school Parliament, participation in Model United Nations, and the competitive head girl elections. Consequently, pupils understand democratic processes well. Leaders audit the school's provision to ensure that British Values are explored thoughtfully within the curriculum. For example, in history, pupils consider the question of whether 'the pill was more important to women's equality than the vote'. Pupils' positive behaviour across the school reflects important values such as tolerance and respect.
48. Pupils' economic understanding and financial literacy is well advanced for their age. From the preparatory school upwards, a range of activities such as entrepreneurship and pupil-led fundraising events are provided to develop pupils' economic understanding and skills. Leaders focus on making learning relevant and meaningful. For example, pupils have a good understanding of the gender pay gap and employment law.
49. Pupils are well prepared from an early age for the next stage of their education and careers. Older pupils are prepared for a wide range of careers and university destinations, including highly competitive courses. Pupils greatly value the support they get from the careers and the higher education leaders who help pupils to make informed decisions regarding their futures. Staff offer further support by developing pupils' personal as well as academic skills. For example, pupils develop networking and presentation skills within the taught curriculum.

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

**50. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

51. Arrangements to promote the welfare of children at the school, including boarders and children in the early years, are effective. Safeguarding processes are led with thought, care and commitment by well-informed leaders.
52. Staff knowledge and understanding of safeguarding matters is effective and benefits from advice from the proprietor, the well-engaged governing body and external agencies. Regular and effective training is in place for all staff and volunteers.
53. Leaders take appropriate action to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors. Staff know they need to be alert to possible safeguarding worries and are confident about how to report any concerns.
54. Information is gathered from a range of sources to provide an overview of pupils' overall wellbeing. This information is analysed and reviewed systematically to highlight and inform any improvement actions that need to be taken. The school reflects on any patterns of incidents and adapts its provision accordingly. Record-keeping is thorough and decisions are well considered. Actions taken are completed in line with school policy and delivered with care and sensitivity.
55. Pupils feel safe at the school and understand how to keep safe online. The school has suitable measures in place to ensure online access by pupils is appropriately filtered, monitored and reviewed.
56. Appropriate actions are taken in order to reduce risks that are identified through risk assessment. The welfare of pupils is safeguarded and actively promoted through well considered and effectively implemented actions in line with the risk assessment policy.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Royal High School Bath
<b>Department for Education number</b>	800/6002
<b>Registered charity number</b>	306983
<b>Address</b>	Royal High School Bath Lansdown Road Bath Somerset BA1 5SZ
<b>Phone number</b>	01225 313877
<b>Email address</b>	royalhigh@rhsb.gdst.net
<b>Website</b>	www.royalhighbath.gdst.net
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs Vicky Tuck
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Richard Hall
<b>Acting Headteacher</b>	Mr Hadrian Briggs
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	581
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	75
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 to 14 November 2019

## Information about the school

58. Royal High School Bath is an independent day and boarding school for pupils aged between 3 and 18 years. It is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils. The school is owned and governed by The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) and supported by a local governing body. It was formed in 1998 from the merger of two schools that were founded in the nineteenth century. The school is located on two sites in Bath, Somerset, with one accommodating the preparatory school incorporating the nursery, and the other housing the senior school.
59. Boarders aged between 10 and 16 years are accommodated in School House, within the main school building, and sixth-form boarders occupy the purpose-built Gloucester House within the grounds of the senior school.
60. The early years are housed in the Orangery of Cranwell House and the Reception classroom is on the lower floor of Cranwell house. The nursery takes children from the term in which they turn 3 and the Reception class caters for girls who will turn 5 during the academic year.
61. The school has identified 169 pupils with SEND. Of these 87 are receiving Group or Individual Support. There are a total of 7 pupils in the school with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language for 84 pupils.
63. The school states its aims are to provide an outstanding day and boarding education, specifically tailored to the needs of its pupils in the twenty-first century. It aims to sustain high performance. The school seeks to develop learners who are brave, reflective, inquisitive, collaborative, kind and 'sparky'.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

19 to 21 March 2024

64. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

65. Inspection activities included:

- 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 governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and PE facilities
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. 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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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)