

# School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

## **Ardingly College**

College Road

Ardingly

Haywards Heath

West Sussex

RH17 6SQ

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. Governors assure themselves that the Standards are met through routine scrutiny and monitoring of the school's practice and procedures. They carry out regular surveys to gain the views of the school community. They ensure that leaders and managers actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. The values of the school are successfully promoted which ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern British society.
2. There is high-quality support and appropriate provision for all pupils throughout the age range including at key transition points and in boarding. This ensures that pupils can achieve highly in a rich range of endeavours both within and outside the classroom.
3. Pupils experience a broad curriculum and achieve well due to the high-quality teaching they receive. Leaders in the early years ensure that activities take into account children's needs and interests. Leaders provide a large and diverse range of activities outside the classroom, including at the weekend which allows pupils to develop their skills.
4. Pupils make good progress in GCSE, A level and the International Baccalaureate (IB). Pupils' achievement in these examinations have improved further since the previous inspection. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make at least as good progress as that of their peers and frequently better. This is the same for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL).
5. There are coherent and comprehensive programmes in place to develop pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE). These, combined with pupils' experience of being educated in a community of pupils from many different backgrounds ensure that pupils understand the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion. They show tolerance and respect for each other. Behaviour is good and incidents of bullying are rare. When incidences do occur, leaders deal with these carefully and in a timely manner.
6. Boarding is a significant strength. Boarders feel secure and happy in their houses and they consequently develop notably high levels of self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-esteem. Because of their understanding of inclusion and respect for each other, boarders live together in successful, vibrant houses. Prefects play a prominent role which develops their leadership skills and prepares them well for life in British society. Policies, routines and procedures are well established. The requirements for boarding are comprehensively met.
7. Pupils experience careers' education through the life skills programme and other curricular opportunities. Pupils in the sixth form have a well-considered and taught programme which helps them to be successfully prepared when considering the next stage of education or employment and be 'World Ready'. The careers' provision in other year groups below the sixth form is less consistent and not as successful in helping pupils make decisions about their next steps.

## 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

Leaders should:

- develop a systematic and cohesive careers education programme below the sixth form so that pupils can make better and informed choices about their next steps.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders and managers have the required knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Governors check the quality of practice and procedures through carrying out surveys and receiving regular reports. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders. They ensure that the school is well resourced so that leaders' plans can be executed successfully.
9. In line with the school's aims, leaders ensure that everyone in the school community learns to be generous, adventurous, ingenious and curious. Leaders successfully foster the values of engagement, compassion, resilience and collaboration. These values are prominently and successfully promoted.
10. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and the areas for further development together with the impact that their actions have on pupils' wellbeing and academic success. Governors and leaders check that appropriate processes are in place. Short- and longer-term plans for improvement are then put into place. Although leaders have taken recent steps to develop careers education, the impact on the provision for pupils below the sixth form is less clearly implemented.
11. In the early years, leaders engage frequently with parents and ensure that all staff are well informed about children's needs and interests. This in turn informs the planning of teaching and the choosing of activities. Children's progress is closely monitored and reported to parents.
12. Boarding leaders ensure that roles are effectively defined and carried out. Established policies, procedures and routines are in place and staff understand their roles well. Boarding provision is properly resourced and very well staffed. Consequently, boarders are well cared for and are notably confident in taking part in a rich range of educational and extra-curricular endeavours.
13. Complaints are managed appropriately, and thorough records are kept. Complaints are dealt with within the timeframes stated in the school's policy.
14. Parents receive reports regularly about pupils' progress, attitudes and attainment. All other required information is made available to parents, largely through the school's informative website.
15. Leaders have a comprehensive and robust approach to risk management. They have an effective understanding of physical, welfare and safeguarding risks and respond with urgency and diligence to areas of risk. Leaders have developed a detailed accessibility plan that improves the movement for pupils around the building. Pupils' needs have been well considered and this has resulted in pupils having increased opportunity to access the curriculum and the school's facilities.

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

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

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

17. Pupils develop advanced linguistic skills. Year 4 pupils, for example, are confident to order a wide array of food in French and are happy speaking in front of an audience. Equally, in the senior school, pupils experience a rich speaking, listening and literacy curriculum, which allows them to develop their skills and apply their knowledge across a wide range of subjects, texts and genres, such as a detailed cultural study of Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* in Year 9. Pupils gain confidence in reading, writing and speaking through a well-designed curriculum.
18. Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Teachers regularly give pupils work to stretch and extend their understanding. Pupils make good progress and demonstrate a high level of ability. Teachers use data information to effectively plan and adapt learning so that pupils are working on different tasks simultaneously depending on their prior attainment.
19. There are many opportunities for pupils to learn about and be curious about the world around them. Children in the EYFS and pupils in the prep explore and seek answers to questions through their learning in a well-resourced environment. Staff provide exciting activities which engage and enthuse children so that learning is fun.
20. In science, pupils apply their knowledge to challenging problems and engage with scientific inquiry to confirm their understanding of key concepts. For example, pupils in Year 10 biology are adept at showing their practical skills when carrying out experiments about reaction time.
21. Technology is used well to help pupils acquire new knowledge and deepen their confidence and skills. The use of an online collaboration tool is used very effectively across the senior school. For example, in Year 12 history lessons, pupils ably use the tool to research and debate factors such as why Germany lost the Second World War.
22. There are abundant opportunities for pupils to be creative. Pupils develop confidence in their speaking and listening skills through drama lessons where they enjoy working together to rehearse for performances. Teachers give careful advice and support.
23. Pupils who have SEND are given the support they need. Pupils who have SEND make rapid progress, achieve to their potential and attain in line with their peers. Pupils who have education and health care plans are carefully planned for so that their needs are met.
24. Pupils who speak EAL make progress which is at least as good as and often better than that of their peers. Pupils are typically engaged by the lesson activities, provided with the support they need and are motivated in their learning.
25. Teachers are adept at planning learning and providing effective feedback. This allows pupils to successfully build on their previous learning. Teachers provide pupils with individualised and detailed feedback in line with the school's policy. Pupils understand the progress they are making and can identify areas for further improvement. They are proud of their achievements.
26. Pupils deepen and consolidate their learning through choosing and making effective use of resources. For example, in Year 11 chemistry there is often effective use of peer assessed quizzes to help pupils to prepare for their upcoming GCSE examinations.

27. Leaders have designed a clear assessment framework. Pupils' progress is closely checked and monitored, especially in core subjects. There have been recent changes made to the phonics scheme and younger pupils are now making swifter progress in learning to read. Data is used effectively at both department and whole-school levels to ensure that timely and effective support is offered so pupils can thrive.
28. GCSE, A-level and IB results compared with baseline data show that pupils make very good progress. Large numbers of pupils achieve high grades in these examinations. Some pupils also combine study in A levels with BTEC courses and perform well. These results show an increase in the school's academic performance since the previous inspection.
29. In Nursery, adults effectively model using simple sentences and new vocabulary. Children learn rhymes and songs during activities and at snack time. Adults ensure that preschool children are immersed in a language rich environment where developing children's communication skills are at the forefront. Effective interventions are in place to further help some children who need additional support, such as speech and language.
30. Boarding staff ensure that boarders have appropriate support for their studies in the evening. This is complemented by a wide-ranging activities programme which is often led and supported by older pupils.
31. Leaders provide a wide-ranging and high-quality activities programme throughout the school. The programme is well designed and provides a diverse and enjoyable experience for pupils. A very large proportion of pupils learn to play musical instruments, or participate in drama productions. Sporting opportunities form a core of the programme which are embraced by the vast majority of pupils. Many pupils achieve highly in a wide range of team and individual sports. The weekend activities programme is equally as varied and encourages pupils to develop their skills further.

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

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

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

33. Pupils respond positively to initiatives to support equality, diversity and inclusion. They recognise and value difference through open discussions about discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes. The pupils show respect for one another's culture, background and languages.
34. Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is developed through the school's faith ethos. There are regular chapel services where pupils have opportunities to reflect on spiritual themes and sing communal hymns. There is a strong sense of community and shared moral values. Pupils' appreciation of nature and non-material aspects of life is further enhanced in the expansive natural surroundings within which the school is based.
35. Pupils participate in the annual *Young Musician of the Year* competition. They learn to perform in front of their peers and to understand the basics of performance and listening as part of an audience. They are encouraged to comment on each other's performance which they do sensitively. Pupils build their self-confidence and self-esteem as a result.
36. Leaders balance competition at elite level in sport and their desire to maintain inclusivity which ensures that there is something for every pupil to enjoy and maintain their physical health and development. The school competes successfully at a high level against other schools. Some pupils represent the school at local and national level. Equally, many pupils have opportunity to explore other sports such as table tennis, badminton, golf, yoga, pilates and many more where they learn to work as a team or to improve their own level of fitness and enjoyment.
37. Leaders implement coherent and comprehensive PSHE and RSE programmes. Pupils welcome opportunities to talk openly about diversity and issues such as mental health and emotional wellbeing. There is a pastoral programme, with talks and workshops focussing on navigating social media, ensuring that pupils feel confident about staying safe online and also how to find help and support. Leaders continue to develop their RSE programme, so it helps pupils of all ages to talk openly and maturely about the sensitive issues which are covered.
38. Children behave exceptionally well in the early years classes. Staff are particularly perceptive to changes in children's emotions and provide effective support when it is needed. Children learn to co-operate well with each other and show sensitivity to others. They form strong relationships with adults and build strong friendships with each other.
39. Behaviour throughout is generally positive. However, there are times when there is some low-level disruption in class. This is when some adults' expectations of conduct is not as high as the norm. Pupils enjoy positive relations with their teachers and their peers. Instances of poor behaviour are systematically recorded, and leaders readily identify and address patterns. During free time, levels of supervision are appropriate and behaviour is well managed. Any low-level behavioural infringements are dealt with in a timely manner.
40. There is an effective anti-bullying strategy in place and pupils say that there is always someone to go to for support. Boarders understand the high expectations of their behaviour in the boarding house and comment on the consistent and fair manner with which they are treated by adults. They develop their understanding and confidence in living together.

41. The admission and attendance registers are kept well. Pupils are registered appropriately, and any absences are promptly investigated.
42. Health and Safety is the responsibility of all members of the school community. All compliance regulations are in place, such as fire evacuations. Leaders manage risks well, making suitable assessments for day and residential trips. All checks are in place. The buildings are fit for purpose with light, airy and well-designed learning spaces.
43. There is effective health and pastoral support including first aid. Pupils comment that the environment and staff are approachable and supportive. Leaders ensure that sufficient first aid training is offered to staff according to their role. This includes training in paediatric first aid for staff in the early years setting. Pupil wellbeing and positive mental health are prioritised and valued and there is extensive support available for all pupils, including an extensive counselling provision.
44. Boarders feel secure and happy in their houses. They benefit from accommodation, facilities and support that encourages their strong emotional and social development. There is a supportive and thoughtful programme of induction for new boarders. The privacy of boarders is respected. They develop high levels of self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-esteem. They interact with each other and the boarding staff with respect and confidence. Prefects play a prominent role in organising activities which develops their leadership skills and prepares them well for life in British society. Boarders' views are actively solicited and boarders' state that their views are valued in shaping their experience. The day houses mirror the structure of the boarding provision and so day pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence is similarly developed.
45. The school's medical and wellbeing centre is staffed by well-qualified professionals who are trained in safeguarding to an advanced level and in helping pupils' mental health. Along with a full-time lead for safeguarding and well-trained house staff, these adults ensure that pupils are supported well. Pupils speak warmly of the individualised care that they receive as well as the opportunity to develop friendships within their houses. There is a strong sense of community.

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

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

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

47. Leaders have thoughtfully designed a rich curriculum that highlights relevant social and cultural links. Frequently, pupils link their learning effectively to current events within the wider world. In lessons, such as economics, pupils in the sixth form debate the pros and cons of government interventions around smoking and vaping to improve public health.
48. In the *Life Skills* programme pupils learn about budgeting, mortgage information and how taxes work, including when to start paying them. This helps them to be better prepared for life in British society and modern living. In PSHE lessons pupils learn about the different and transferable skills they may need for employment and the world of work.
49. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on their career aspirations and explore future opportunities beyond school, including offering the opportunity to visit university and careers fairs. The sixth-form pupils are provided with effective guidance and university application support. They develop a strong sense of direction in relation to their life beyond school. Overall, the careers education programme follows the Gatsby Principles, taking pupils' views into account. However, there is some unevenness in the quality of provision in the careers' curriculum for Years 7 to 11. This means that pupils below the sixth form are provided with fewer opportunities to learn about potential careers and have a less secure grasp of using this understanding to make informed choices about their next steps. Some pupils in the lower school are unsure of how careers education is delivered to them and identify that it is not an important part of their time in school.
50. Pupils enjoy learning about people and different cultural backgrounds. They understand and respect British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. For example, pupils in Year 13 speak confidently and very positively about the diverse and inclusive nature of the school and the high levels of tolerance and mutual respect.
51. Leaders actively incorporate the school's ethos and aims into chapel services and assemblies and encourage pupils to reflect on their own thinking and actions. Equally, for the youngest children in the Nursery, children learn about the value of being generous to each other.
52. In the prep, pupils have opportunities to develop their human skills through the *Shaping My World* programme, based on the school values. This involves lessons on money management and cooking and nutrition. Similarly, the *World Ready* programme in the senior school provides pupils with a range of age-appropriate opportunities and activities to prepare themselves for life after school. An introduction to Japanese culture and sewing lessons and debating are some examples. External speakers contribute to the programme, with a recent example being a talk from a cancer survivor. Pupils say that the school goes a long way to preparing them for life. Pupils look forward with confidence to the next stage of their life and value not only the contribution they make currently but also how they will add to society in the future.
53. Leaders have thoughtfully designed opportunities for pupils to volunteer in the local community and also through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Voluntary placements are arranged for pupils to attend local schools and a children's centre. Pupils learn about the wider world and gain a sense of service. They have the opportunity to mentor and support those younger than themselves,

increasing their own self-esteem and communication skills. Pupils invite elderly members of the local community to the school cafe for refreshments and entertainment and through this demonstrate a strong sense of social responsibility.

54. Charity work is enjoyed by many pupils, such as the outreach experiences supporting severely disabled children through a local charity. Communal areas provide a chance for positive community-based interactions. During these times pupils show how to interact well and understand right from wrong.
55. Leaders offer pupils opportunities to represent the views of themselves and others, through the school council, food council and boarding council. Pupils are asked for their views, shape their school experience and advocate for the views of the pupils that they represent. Consequently, they show an understanding of the value of democracy.

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

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

## Safeguarding

57. Safeguarding procedures are well established. Leaders ensure there is a culture of openness and vigilance. The safeguarding policy follows current statutory guidance and is implemented effectively.
58. Governors conduct regular reviews of safeguarding practices. They discuss and thoroughly scrutinise safeguarding arrangements. Leaders implement any actions arising from their findings promptly. The decision to appoint a full-time lead for safeguarding since the previous inspection has greatly developed these arrangements.
59. Safeguarding induction and training for staff, including that for the safeguarding leaders, is thorough, regular and in line with requirements. Leaders keep up to date with changes to legislation, trends in child protection and radicalisation issues. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and procedures. They know how to escalate concerns when required including a firm understanding of whistleblowing procedures.
60. Safeguarding leaders' have built effective relationships with local children's services. The safeguarding team engage with social services, families and the police appropriately. They implement appropriate procedures in response to any concerns about child-on-child abuse or allegations against staff. When issues do arise, pupils are supported effectively. Safeguarding leaders maintain thorough records of concerns. They have a strong understanding and effectively mitigate the safeguarding risks associated with supervising pupils on the school site. Leaders carefully support and monitor pupils affected by safeguarding issues.
61. There are a number of ways for pupils to raise concerns. Pupils say they feel safe in school and can readily name a number of adults who they can go to should they wish to share any concerns. The physical and mental health of pupils are given a high priority and effective communication with parents is maintained appropriately.
62. All appropriate safer recruitment checks are made in a timely manner and accurately recorded. The nominated governor with responsibility for this area reviews the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, including recruitment checks.
63. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when using social media. Robust internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place and alerts are immediately reviewed by members of the safeguarding team who take action as required.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Ardingly College
<b>Department for Education number</b>	938/6200
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1076456
<b>Address</b>	Ardingly College College Road Ardingly Haywards Heath West Sussex RH17 6SQ
<b>Phone number</b>	01444 893000
<b>Email address</b>	office@ardingly.com
<b>Website</b>	www.ardingly.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	Ardingly College Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Robert Haynes Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ben Figgis
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1049
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	314
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 to 14 May 2021

## Information about the school

65. Ardingly College is an independent, co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between 2 and 18. The college consists of two sections: the senior school is a boarding and day school for pupils aged 11 to 18; the preparatory school is for pupils aged from 2 to 11. The schools share a 240-acre site near Haywards Heath in West Sussex. Since the previous inspection the school has restructured to incorporate Years 7 and 8 into the senior school.
66. There are seven boarding houses on site. Three of them provide accommodation for male pupils from age 13 to 17 and three are for female pupils aged 13 to 17. The other is a mixed boarding house for pupils between the ages of 11 and 13.
67. The school has identified 192 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Very few pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
68. English is an additional language for 125 pupils.
69. The school states its aims are to build a culture of care that supports every child, ensure that every student reaches their full academic potential, enable every child to find and develop a co-curricular passion, equip students with the employability and enterprise skills to succeed in a rapidly changing workplace, help students engage constructively to form their own perspectives on complex societal issues while always respecting other viewpoints, to broaden students' horizons through meaningful connections locally and globally and to fulfil the values of engagement, compassion, resilience and collaboration.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

30 April to 2 May 2024

70. A team of eleven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

71. 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 a group of governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- 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.

72. 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)