

School inspection report

5 to 7 March 2024

Crosfields School

Shinfield Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG2 9BL

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 and leaders are strategic in their overview of the school. They are committed to providing opportunities for pupils to fulfil the school's values of kindness, commitment, ambition, growth, and integrity. These values are promoted throughout the school and are well understood by the whole community.
2. The introduction of pupils into Year 10 in September 2022 is now well established and leaders have planned effectively for the first cohort of pupils to undertake external examinations in summer 2024. This has included the introduction of timely assessments to measure progress in addition to developing a quality assurance framework to monitor learning and teaching. The school has invested in new facilities and redesigned existing buildings to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers. Further improvement is planned to the outside facilities for older pupils.
3. Self-evaluation and a critical review of the strategic plan by the new headteacher and the governors have redefined the school as one school, from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through to Year 11. This whole-school approach to all aspects of school life builds a sense of community with a shared understanding and respect between pupils of different ages.
4. Governors and leaders regularly review the school policies, and the governor subcommittees are active in their roles, holding leaders to account. More recently a separate safeguarding subcommittee was established to ensure that all aspects of safeguarding could be reviewed and analysed effectively to ensure that the welfare of pupils remains the school priority. Policies are implemented effectively and the school works closely with external agencies when necessary.
5. Behaviour management is effective. Staff know the pupils well and the school maintains appropriate records of instances of bullying. Pupils are confident that issues are dealt with in a timely and effective manner. Supervision across the school is effective and the strong relationships and shared understanding of the school's behaviour policy promote positive relationships; this was seen during break times when staff actively engage with pupils.
6. As part of a strategic review, leaders identified assessment and marking as an area of improvement and a revised policy was implemented in December 2023. In some departments it is used to good effect in supporting pupils to make progress. This is particularly the case in English where written feedback allows pupils to correct their work and make improvements; however, there are some inconsistencies across the departments.
7. Leaders are continuing to develop the careers programme to meet the changing nature of the school. Leaders are cognisant of the fact that the programme in Year 10 and Year 11 needs some revision to ensure that all pupils are aware of what their next steps may be.
8. Pupils make good progress. The curriculum is carefully planned, well-resourced and engages learners. Teachers plan effective lessons, including for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). SEND pupils perform broadly in line with their peers.
9. There are many pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and they are very well supported by staff through careful planning of lessons and activities. Where necessary pupils receive additional support which means that their overall progress is in line with their peers.

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:

- ensure that all teachers apply the assessment policy so that feedback is of a consistently high quality across the school
- strengthen the careers programme to meet the needs of pupils in the seniors.

Material change request

10. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to an increase in capacity by 60 pupils.
11. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and should continue to be so with the increased capacity. Health and safety policies and practices are robust and leaders have considered the requirements needed for an increased capacity. Leaders have also considered the required levels of supervision needed for the increased capacity alongside considering mitigating against risk. The school ensures that it carries out all the necessary checks on staff working within the school and records these appropriately. Governors and leaders have planned the necessary accommodation required for the increase in capacity including the curriculum needs of the pupils. Governors and Leaders have planned effectively for the increase in capacity.
12. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties. Leaders actively promote the wellbeing of pupils and as part of a full strategic review have increased capacity within the school to support pupils' wellbeing. More recently they have introduced a full-time mental health practitioner. The wellbeing of pupils, including those in the early years, is actively promoted through carefully planned and resourced lessons, both inside and outside the classroom. The Forest school provision is widely used across the whole school and pupils enjoy the outside lessons provided for them. Leaders have fostered an inclusive educational environment where pupil welfare is paramount. Pupils respond positively to this provision and appear happy and confident.
14. Leaders across the school manage change effectively, including the recent introduction of Year 10 and Year 11 pupils. They have a continuous cycle of quality assurance which is managed through discussions, observations, subcommittee reports and surveys. The governing body holds leaders to account for their areas of responsibility and challenges appropriately. These checks result in leaders taking actions to improve aspects of school life, such as their rigorous approach to safeguarding.
15. Leaders complete frequent lesson observations to quality assure the teaching throughout the school. The impact of these observations ensures that training for specific teachers and within subjects can be implemented when necessary. Leaders have a clear overview of the teaching strengths and areas for development as a result of their quality assurance framework.
16. Policies are effectively implemented and reviewed annually. Governors question, challenge, and then ratify policies at governors' meetings. Staff have a very clear understanding of policies because of frequent training delivered by leaders, such as weekly staff quizzes. As a result, staff are able to articulate and carry out their responsibilities effectively. Staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in terms of safeguarding the welfare of the pupils.
17. The management of risk is robust. In the early years, there is careful oversight by a cohesive leadership team. Senior leaders on the teaching and support teams have training in risk assessment and regularly audit the potential risks of the school site to ensure it is a safe environment for pupils, staff and visitors. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and during the inspection the school shared evidence of reviewing a recent educational visit to a lake. The school maintains effective links with outside agencies, for example the local authority. Leaders understand the need to refer when necessary. Outside agencies are welcomed into the early years setting as needed, and leaders ensure they are inclusive of pupils with a range of additional needs.
18. Concerns and complaints raised by parents, staff and pupils are handled in a timely manner. Communication between these groups is strong, with a mutual trust and understanding developed through an open and positive dialogue. Detailed records of any complaints and actions taken in response are maintained.
19. The school fulfils its role in meeting the Equality Act requirements.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Governors and leaders have developed a curriculum which effectively supports the learning and acquisition of knowledge for pupils of all ages and abilities. Pupils learn across a broad range of subject areas and use technology to support their learning. Baseline data is used to determine pupils' starting points, and ongoing assessment ensures that pupil progress is closely tracked. Teachers are supportive in lessons and make provision for more able learners and those with SEND requirements. Teaching enables pupils to make good progress.
22. The introduction of Year 10 and Year 11 has allowed leaders to broaden the curriculum to meet the changing needs of the cohort. For example, GCSE Psychology has been recently introduced. The teaching staff have undertaken training in the delivery and assessment of specifications and as such are well prepared for the delivery of the curriculum. Where required specialist teachers have been employed to support the programmes of study such as modern foreign languages.
23. Pupils in the pre-prep have a broad curriculum that is underpinned by a carefully chosen phonics scheme that is appropriate for their age and abilities. In every class, there are tools for learning that help children to access the broad curriculum. This includes zones of regulation, sensory boxes and 'now and next' boards that are sensitively used so that those who need extra support can more readily access the curriculum. Pupils speak confidently about challenges that are set when they complete their initial tasks and additional mathematics activities are embedded and enjoyed by the pupils who are excelling in this area.
24. Leaders promote effective links between the early years, juniors and seniors. Specialist teaching in the juniors in subjects such as physical education has a positive impact on pupils' acquisition of skills and knowledge. Teachers and support staff meet regularly to discuss individual pupils and the progress of cohorts to ensure that progress between transition stages is smooth.
25. In the juniors and seniors, both formative and summative assessments identify pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders and teachers review data regularly and make timely interventions, providing additional support or further challenge as needed. The juniors and seniors data shows that a large majority of pupils are making good progress and attaining highly. Baseline data is collected in Year 7 and again in Year 10 to measure progress and predict target grades. This is then benchmarked against internal assessments to show the levels of progress pupils are making. Those with SEND make good progress in line with their peers.
26. Leaders have developed a new assessment and marking policy in the seniors, and this provides pupils with clear feedback on what they need to do to improve. In English, pupils respond to their written and verbal feedback to improve their work and make progress. As yet, this is not fully embedded across all departments and some feedback lacks the useful formative comments and requirement for students to respond which is seen in the school's best practice. Leaders are aware that this is an area for further development.
27. Lessons are well planned and engaging. Pupils are keen to participate and are active learners in the classroom, answering questions, debating, and taking part in role plays to enhance their understanding. In a Spanish lesson, pupils were encouraged to use the target language whilst running a Spanish café serving tapas. This enhances their confidence and flexibility in the spontaneous use of language.
28. A variety of opportunities are provided for pupils to learn beyond the curriculum. For example, in English a sizeable number of pupils participate in the Young writers' competition and in mathematics, pupils take part in 'Maths week England'.
29. Teachers draw upon a range of resources to meet the needs of different pupils. For example, in the early years teachers organise structured speaking and listening activities and use additional adults to tailor these activities to support specific children's needs. In nursery, pupils enjoy playing games together where they roll dice, make numbers on their fingers, and cut the correct piece of hair off the head of a paper figure. Progress is tracked well by the leadership team, with provision plans and actions to support individual pupils. The

assessment framework allows teachers to see the impact of additional support, and the outcomes of the additional support are scrutinised by leaders in regular meetings to measure the impact on each pupil.

30. The school encourages open communication with parents through frequent dialogue, newsletters, parents' evenings, and invitations to drop into school informally. Parents receive regular and detailed information and feedback on their child's academic progress. Pupils with SEND are provided with frequent, timely feedback and support to ensure progress.
31. The school provides a wide range of activities for pupils to pursue during their leisure time. Pupils can choose from activities which enhance their learning, such as chess, strategy board game club, drama, music and debating, or sports clubs including swimming and racket games. Across the school participation levels are high and most pupils are actively engaged with clubs and activities.

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. The school has a diverse community and pupils respect people from all backgrounds. Pupils' positive and empathetic interactions between one another exemplify their acceptance of individual differences. The pupils benefit from being part of a diverse community and appreciate the opportunity to learn about each other's beliefs and culture. Throughout the school, pupils hold thoughtful and respectful discussions about different religions, languages and traditions.
34. A broad and inclusive approach to physical education, such as allowing for non-competitive sport, allows participation at every level and pupils can play in competitive teams or follow a multi-activity approach. In early years, children participate in physical activity and outdoor play, including the extensive use of forest school where pupils in the older years assist those in EYFS with imaginative play.
35. A well-established PSHE programme deepens pupils' self-knowledge and understanding. The PSHE curriculum for Year 10 and Year 11 follows the statutory requirements and pupils appreciate the need to address changing relationships as they get older. Academic and pastoral leaders work together, and pupils are carefully monitored, understood, and known by staff. This approach supports the development of pupils' self-esteem and emotional wellbeing.
36. The relationship education programme (RSE) contains appropriate and useful content. Pupils learn the differences between people in an age-appropriate way. Relationships are discussed and pupils gain an understanding of potential risks. In Year 10 and Year 11 the importance of consent is explored.
37. Leaders have high expectations of pupils in relation to their behaviour in the classroom and around school. These expectations are understood and reinforced by staff. Pupils have a deep understanding of right and wrong and take responsibility for their actions. For example when discussing bullying, pupils were able to discuss why bullying should not happen and what bullying meant to them in terms of types and the consequences for the victim. The systems in place allow for rewards to motivate pupils and sanctions that show pupils that certain behaviour choices have consequences.
38. The structure, routine and consistency across the early years allow the children to feel safe and confident in taking risks and making mistakes. Children speak confidently about what to do if they are upset or if something goes wrong whilst they are in school. The thoughtful and respectful behaviour of the children in the early years is reinforced by the staff, who encourage them to take care of each other and their classroom.
39. The school premises are well maintained with careful consideration given to both the learning spaces and the outside leisure spaces. This includes the provision of equipment to support pupils' physical and mental health, such as the newly introduced pickle ball courts and table tennis equipment. A programme of regular maintenance checks is in place to ensure the site is safe. There is a robust approach to health and safety and record-keeping, with staff able to access risk assessments with ease.
40. The strong relationships between staff and pupils facilitate many positive aspects of school life. Pupils are confident when seeking first aid, addressing any negative behaviour, and speaking up for themselves; they know that they are always closely supervised and can find an adult to talk to. The house system fosters a sense of belonging for pupils throughout the school. Pupils take part in a range of inter-house competitions, such as a debating activity where pupils discuss whether school should be single-sex or co-educational. Leaders and teachers encourage pupils to share their feelings; for example, in tutor time or within the house system. The strong relationships and mutual understanding between the pupils and staff promote openness. Pupils value this supportive approach.

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. Leaders have created a culture which takes pride in the development of positive relationships across a diverse school community and encourages mutual respect. The PSHE and RSE curriculums play an important role in delivering the school's aim of providing 'an atmosphere in which respect for other people and the world is cultivated'. Teachers skilfully manage pupil discussions around tolerance, immigration and political propaganda.
43. Pupils' economic understanding is developed through the PSHE programme and wider curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to make money through a £10 challenge and through this develop an appreciation of risk linked to spending and saving. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 explore the role of entrepreneurship, an understanding of how to save money and the impact of interest rates on saving and spending.
44. Leaders are in the process of refining the careers programme to continue to support pupils in making informed decisions about their future choices. Pupils in Year 11 move on to other educational establishments and are provided with timely support with these choices. In Year 9 pupils are well informed when selecting examination subjects and, more recently, parents have been invited in to give careers talks. These activities have broadened the careers experience for pupils in the seniors. In nursery, the children consider their role in society, with children creating a 'helpful heroes' display in their classroom and choosing to add police helicopters and fire engines to the community they created. During medieval day, Year 1 considered the pros and cons of different roles and submitted their job applications which included a watchman, jester and Queen.
45. Leaders have created opportunities for pupils to express their views and opinions and contribute to decision-making. Whole school debates on topical issues ensure that pupils learn to listen carefully and respectfully to viewpoints which may differ from their own. These democratic systems promote fundamental British values and encourage mutual respect by allowing pupils to propose and defend their ideas, whilst remaining open to the counterarguments of others.
46. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility, including being elected for student council and/or being a school prefect. Pupils enjoy these roles and appreciate the responsibility of these positions. Prefects are articulate in their presentations of the differences they have made across the school with regard to food choices and play spaces. The leaders of the school facilitate an extensive programme of sustainability projects that pupils lead and support, for example the highly effective Eco council.
47. Pupils from the early years are given classroom responsibilities and understand that they are an important part of their school community. They know the difference between right and wrong, with a firm grasp of the school rules and why they are in place. Helping to keep their classroom tidy, listening to each other and being gentle, all feature in discussion about their views of what the rules should include, and this is seen throughout the setting.
48. Pupils are enthusiastic in their support for both local and international charities and are encouraged to be involved in a wide range of volunteering roles. Recently, pupils held a quiz night to raise funds for a local charity and frequently hold school events to support those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are very keen to support others and contribute to the wider world.

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

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

50. Leaders have appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and to manage risk effectively. Leaders work with external agencies, making referrals in a timely manner and seeking relevant advice and support when necessary. The school is thorough and precautionary in sharing information with the local authority designated officer. Leaders are reflective and clear on areas for development and are proactive in ensuring the wellbeing of pupils since the introduction of Year 10 and Year 11; this has included the monitoring of additional safeguarding categories and concerns.
51. Training for all staff, including governors, is comprehensive and frequent. This includes weekly quizzes and questionnaires for staff working on site. Staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and know how and when to refer to external agencies. Staff are aware of how to raise a concern and who to speak to, including low-level concerns. All staff have a clear understanding with regards to their 'Prevent' duty. There is a suitable induction and training for new staff.
52. Pupils know how to stay safe online through the PSHE and information and communication technology (ICT) programmes of study. When online concerns are raised pupils have a clear understanding of who they can talk to in school, and they have opportunities to speak confidentially when needed. Those staff with safeguarding responsibilities, fulfil their duties effectively. Pupils understand the importance of contacting a trusted adult if they have any concerns. The school uses an online filtering system to monitor pupils' use of the internet meaning staff can intervene as necessary if pupils are attempting to access anything of concern.
53. Detailed safeguarding records are kept, and pupils' attendance is carefully monitored. Governors ensure that leaders provide them with frequent safeguarding reports at the newly created safeguarding committee meetings. This ensures that actions can be taken to promote the wellbeing of pupils and ensures that patterns can be highlighted and addressed.
54. Leaders ensure that safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers, and governors. A single central record of appointments is kept which confirms all pre-employment checks before staff begin work at the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Crosfields School
Department for Education number	872/6008
Registered charity number	309108
Address	Crosfields School Shinfield Road Reading RG2 9BL
Phone number	01189 871810
Email address	office@crosfields.com
Website	www.crosfields.com
Proprietor	Crosfields School Trust LTD
Chair	Mr Chas Bradfield
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Townshend
Age range	3 to 16
Number of pupils	776
Date of previous inspection	17 to 19 September 2019

Information about the school

56. Crosfields School is an independent day school. The school was founded in 1957 as a school for male pupils and became co-educational in 2007. It is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors who are the school's trustees. Since the previous inspection the school has introduced pupils into KS4. New facilities include an additional science laboratory, senior creative suite and design technology workshop, senior art studio, a strength and conditioning suite, a junior medical room, a new food technology room, five senior classrooms, a senior computing suite, a junior library, and an additional Year 4 classroom.
57. There are 83 children in the early years comprising a nursery and two reception classes.
58. The school has identified 133 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for 442 pupils.
60. The school aims to provide an environment in which the pupils are happy and confident, combined with exceptional pastoral care. It seeks to provide opportunities of considerable breadth and depth to help pupils discover their talents and to provide an atmosphere in which respect for other people and the world is cultivated. The school endeavours to encourage effort, resilience, and rigour for pupils to have critically enquiring minds so that when they leave, they are prepared for life beyond the school gates. The school values are commitment, integrity, ambition, kindness, and growth.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 March 2024

61. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection had two shadow inspectors.
62. Inspection activities included:
- observations of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
 - observations of registration periods and assemblies
 - observations 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 facilities for physical education
 - scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
 - scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.
63. 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**.

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