

# School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

## **Dunottar School**

27 High Trees Road

Reigate

Surrey

RH2 7EL

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. The leadership team are forward thinking, reflective and purposeful. Their focus from the outset has been on a holistic approach with wellbeing at the forefront of their planning. They have embedded their vision for the school with all staff and pupils. This has led to a whole school culture of care within the community.
2. Staff support the aims and work diligently to bring out the best in each pupil, enabling pupils to be the best they can be. As a result, pupils are comfortable to be themselves, grow in self-esteem and approach their learning with confidence.
3. The local governing body check on the effectiveness of school leaders in their work on behalf of the proprietor. They undertake a range of activity, including meeting regularly with leaders and talking with parents and staff. The subcommittees of the board oversee all aspects of the school's work. They challenge decision-making to ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities for pupils.
4. Leaders provide extensive opportunities through a curriculum that has breadth, depth and balance and include the values to set the tone for the school. Pupils enjoy a calm and harmonious atmosphere conducive to learning and their wellbeing. Pupils are inspired to discover and develop their talents and make the most of the opportunities before them.
5. Pastoral leaders work closely with subject leads so that individual progress is considered in the context of pupils' wellbeing and emotional needs. Leaders and staff know the pupils well. Relationships are positive and productive. Pupils flourish in their academic work from their individual starting points. Everyone looks out for each other in this caring and nurturing school.
6. New academic leaders have reviewed the academic provision and highlighted areas for focus. They have allocated sufficient time and resources to support teachers to develop and improve their practice. Teaching is effective because curriculum planning is rigorously linked to assessment, ensuring that individual pupils' needs are carefully considered. This has improved pupils' focus and engagement. Pupils' progress is good and improving. Pupils achieve well in GCSE and A-level examinations.
7. Pupils are actively encouraged to participate in the extensive co-curriculum and sports programme. Pupils develop their social, creative and physical skills across a wide range of activities, performing arts and enrichment sessions. Links with local sports associations have been highly productive in providing pupils with sporting opportunities. Pupils play football, cricket, rugby and netball, often to a high level. Pupils have achieved success in the performing arts and locally and nationally in sports. Sixth-form female pupils do not feel that the choice and opportunities in sports are as well developed for them.
8. The wellbeing programme is taught by staff with relevant expertise in the specific and sensitive topics being delivered. Pupils learn from a well-planned range of age-appropriate topics to support their wellbeing and safety, to manage relationships, to support their online safety and help guide them in their future plans.
9. Risk is well managed and mitigated. Risk assessments for all aspects of the school's work are detailed, monitored and updated as required including for managing pupils' wellbeing. All staff are

trained, understand risk and are aware of ensuring pupils' health and wellbeing are at the forefront of all they do.

10. The management of safeguarding is effective. Safeguarding leads are knowledgeable and suitably trained and work with relevant agencies when required. Safer recruitment procedures are followed carefully. Pupils say that they have a number of staff they may turn to if they have a concern and are confident in staff to care for them.

## 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 sports provision for sixth-form female pupils is developed to provide further choice so that it continues to enhance their physical development and wellbeing.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders are knowledgeable, skilled and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They prioritise pupils' holistic wellbeing and make decisions in the best interests of pupils. The ethos of care underpins all aspects of the school's work. Leaders invest in high-quality pastoral care to support pupils. Staff value and adhere to this ethos in their everyday interactions with pupils. Pupils say that they know they are surrounded by adults who have their interests at heart. Leaders work effectively with external agencies in a timely way to ensure support for pupils, if they require additional help.
12. Governors carry out effective quality assurance on behalf of the proprietor body. They are well informed about all aspect of the school's work and their statutory responsibilities. They meet regularly with leaders. They check on the effectiveness of the implementation of the school's policy and planning. Governors make sure that leaders are well trained, maintain the standards and provide effectively for pupils.
13. Pupils and staff are confident in the school values and what they mean. 'Unlock your inner warrior' encapsulates values such as tenacity, collaboration and independence that underpin pupils' learning. Leaders aim to ensure that everyone is enabled to 'add value' in their academic learning and development. Pupils are keen to do well, in all they do, including in their academic, co-curricular and sporting achievements. Pupils flourish in this nurturing environment and challenge themselves to be the best they can be.
14. The new academic leadership have reviewed curriculum planning. Departmental schemes of work are closely monitored by leaders to ensure that teaching closely follows the planning so that pupils progress well in their learning including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Academic leaders monitor and evaluate teaching effectively through a well-planned programme of lesson observations, appraisals and departmental meetings to maintain high-quality teaching and learning. Assessment data is used effectively to track progress and supports pupils with targets to maintain and improve progress.
15. Pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing is supported through their participation in an extensive co-curricular and sports programme, including a wide range of clubs, performing arts events and enrichment activities. Pupils take part in whole school musicals, choirs, orchestras and drama event. Leaders have created links with local sports associations so that pupils are enthused and play cricket, football, rugby and netball to a high level.
16. Leaders provide parents and others with relevant and up-to-date information, as required by the Standards. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010. A regularly updated accessibility plan supports pupils' educational needs and visitors access to the school. The school website, including a comprehensive range of policies, provides appropriate information and guidance for parents, and others. Parents receive detailed termly reports on their children's progress across all aspects of their learning and wellbeing.
17. Leaders identify, manage and mitigate risk effectively. They promote pupils' wellbeing through a whole school approach to risk management and assessment. Risk management is in place for site safety and security and educational trips and visits are appropriately risk assessed. Risk assessments are detailed, monitored and routinely reviewed to ensure the wellbeing of pupils is managed appropriately.

18. Leaders respond promptly to parents when any concerns are raised. Complaints are responded to and recorded appropriately. This is in line with the school's complaints policy.

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

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

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

20. The curriculum is carefully designed to encompass depth and balance in pupils' experiences. Well-structured curriculum planning provides pupils with wide opportunities to develop a range of skills across all required areas of learning. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They use an effective range of resources to deliver lessons and plan lessons carefully taking the needs of pupils into consideration. Pupils acquire knowledge and understanding and learn well.
21. Teachers monitor pupils' learning in lessons to check that they are understanding what they are being taught. They provide regular guidance to pupils about how to improve their understanding and their work. Teachers use a range of opportunities to help pupils to improve, including through opportunities for peer assessment. Teachers ensure that pupils understand success criteria. Pupils understand how to improve their work.
22. Teachers use termly assessment effectively to inform their planning. Pupils complete termly assessment tasks. Teachers monitor these outcomes for pupils. Those who are underachieving have individual support through interventions, enrichment sessions or in class support. Those achieving beyond expectations move onto a programme with further challenge which stimulates their interest and maintains their focus.
23. Pupils actively participate in lessons. Teachers encourage a 'have a go' attitude in pupils without fear of failing. This develops a resilience and curiosity in how pupils approach their learning. For example, discussing and debating techniques and skills in art, using mime, movement and improvisation in drama, working together as relatively new musicians to harmonise a piece of music, or collaborating to problem solve in science, curious to see if their hypothesis is accurate. Pupils encourage, listen and work well with their peers.
24. Pupils' additional needs are well supported by teachers. Pupils with SEND achieve well in their learning. They are supported in lessons, individually and in small group teaching by well trained staff who know how to help them. Teaching provides appropriate materials to help them access the curriculum. Teachers provide appropriate resources for prior learning of subject specific vocabulary for the small number of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) so that they effectively access the curriculum and make good progress in their learning.
25. Sixth-form pupils demonstrate a spirit of enquiry in their academic learning and go beyond the confines of their immediate learning to research for the extended essay project (EPQ), a presentation or to lead an enrichment session. As a result, pupils produce independent work of a high quality. A well-planned enrichment programme which covers an age-appropriate range of topics effectively supports sixth-form pupils in preparation for their next steps in higher education, apprenticeships or training.
26. Pupils thrive in this school environment where positive relationships prevail. Effective behaviour management ensures everyone is comfortable to be themselves. Leaders are patient with those who may misbehave on occasion and support them to see this as a learning opportunity. As such, behaviour is conducive to high-quality learning.
27. Results have continued to improve over the last three years. Pupil attainment in public examinations at GCSE and A level demonstrates consistently good progress in their learning. Pupils achieve well, many above expectations from their assessed grades and particularly well in recent GCSE



examinations in mathematics, computer science, drama and the humanities. In 2023 A-level examinations, pupils achieved particularly well in computer science, English, geography and physics.

28. Leaders provide an extensive and inclusive co-curricular and sports programme. Attendance at clubs is high. Pupils are amateur beekeepers, lead societies, support staff in enrichment activities and write for a range of school magazines. Pupils play a wide range of competitive sports and for enjoyment. Pupils play a range of sports including cricket, football, rugby and netball and enjoy dance, yoga and outdoor pursuits. The links with local sports associations provide pupils with facilities at professional grounds to play at a high level. Pupils have been successful in sports competitions both locally and nationally.
29. Taster sessions provide pupils with the opportunity to try a musical instrument. Many take up this offer with success. A beginners' orchestra with musical pieces prepared by staff suits those in the early stages of playing an instrument. Pupils who need additional support to access materials are provided with digital technology to support them, for example to help them learn their music or speech in preparation for rehearsals.

### **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. Leaders' approach to behaviour management is effective. Pupils behave well. The school is calm and purposeful. Pupils behave with decorum and consideration for one another. Pupils understand the relevance of collaboration and work well together. They are inclusive, accepting difference and encourage each other to be respectful. They are independent in their thinking, understanding right from wrong and prepared to learn from their mistakes. Pupils are confident and curious to ask questions, and willingly take part in discussions and activities.
32. Staff prioritise the emotional wellbeing of pupils. Pupils value this. Staff and pupils exhibit a mutual respect in their interactions with one another. Pupils report that there is little if any bullying. Pupils challenge unkindness on the rare occasions that they see it. There is a restorative approach to pastoral and behavioural issues, appreciated by both pupils and parents. Pastoral staff take time to work with individual pupils who require extra help. Leaders have the support of staff who prioritise pupils' mental health and wellbeing.
33. The wellbeing programme is well received by pupils. Staff deliver this programme adeptly. Pupils cover a range of age-appropriate topics such as discrimination and diversity, friendship and reconciliation, consent and the dangers of the internet and online safety. Pupils enjoy their lessons and say they are relevant and helpful. Regular feedback ensures staff know the areas pupils would like to explore more and respond accordingly. Planning is flexible and staff revisit a topic to ensure pupils are satisfied with answers to their questions.
34. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities for physical exercise. They develop a thorough understanding of the relationship between physical health and wellbeing. Pupils choose from a wide range of individual and team sports, developing their physical skills and contributing to their mental and physical wellbeing. Leaders monitor the programme to ensure all pupils participate and benefit from the experience. Sixth-form pupils have requested more choice in sport for female pupils for next year. Leaders are developing this to ensure the request is honoured.
35. Pupils are well supervised throughout the school day. Pupils say they are reassured that there is always a member of staff within easy reach. Pupils know the areas that are out of bounds and adhere to the rules. They enjoy the outdoor spaces for quiet reflection or to enjoy nature where there is always a member of staff on duty. The newly built woodland classroom, helped by pupils to create, is well used by pupils and staff.
36. Health and safety matters are well managed. The school has the appropriate procedures for fire safety and fire prevention. The premises are well maintained, and site safety is well managed. Suitable accommodation and processes are in place for pupils' medical needs and for the administration of first aid.
37. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with requirements. Leaders liaise appropriately with relevant agencies including relevant local authorities, for example when a pupil leaves or joins the school mid-year. Pupils' absence is followed up swiftly and appropriately.

## 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. Pupils say that leaders and staff listen to them and treat them with respect. Mutual respect is a hallmark of the school. Leaders provide pupils with lessons, especially in PSHE and tutor time, which focus on the development of age-appropriate understanding of respect and tolerance. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of diversity both in and out of school. They are keen to advocate the rights of people of different faiths, beliefs, and views. For example, at the request of pupils, the school undertook a series of activities to support Pride week.
40. Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance in their behaviour and attitudes. They understand the rule of law, individual liberty and democracy from their understanding of the need for rules in the classroom and in the school. Pupils vote for a number of roles in school such as form and year captains, house captains, wellbeing and forest ambassadors. Pupils voice their opinions and requests and say they are listened to by a supportive and caring staff, an example being the request for more choice in sport for sixth-form female pupils.
41. Pupils understand right from wrong and explore concepts such as justice through discussions of current issues facing young people today. Topics, such as those on faith and belief, on the Holocaust and current world affairs, climate and natural disasters help pupils to navigate the complexities of the world. A well-planned series of visits, such as those to London, support pupils' understanding of the role of significant British institutions; the Houses of Parliament, Globe theatre, art galleries and visits to exhibitions extend pupils' horizons beyond their immediate environment.
42. Pupils are pro-active in supporting the local community. They take part in Macmillan coffee mornings and collect for local foodbanks, organise bake sales and raise funds in school through house competitions and sixth-form charity weeks. Pupils decide together which charities to support, including pupils taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Pupils raise funds at Harvest and Christmas time and many take part in a Christmas concert for the local care home. Pupils volunteer as sports leaders and musicians to help in local primary schools, train as lifeguards and with St John's ambulance.
43. The planned curriculum for careers ensures pupils have access to appropriate guidance and support. Younger pupils take part in form discussions that focus on choice and awareness of their strengths, skills and preferences. From this they build up to focus on exploring career options, personality tests, GCSE and A-level choices. This continues with workshops with invited speakers including alumni, enterprise days, work experience, practice interviews, apprenticeship information and university open days so that they are well prepared for their next steps.
44. Throughout the career's guidance, pupils are encouraged to increasingly take responsibility and develop independence in the process. For example, pupils take notes and refer back to talks, discussions and undertake their own research about careers. Pupils say this has been supportive in their personal management. Pupils discuss finance and taxation, managing your own finances and online and personal safety. Older pupils, including those in Year 11 and the sixth form, appreciate the advice and guidance they receive and say that the school supports them well for preparation for life in Britain.

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

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

## Safeguarding

46. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of pupils are implemented effectively. The safeguarding policy is reviewed annually to include statutory guidance. Staff are well trained and understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They follow guidelines appropriately including from related policies such as the code of conduct and whistleblowing policy and record any concerns for pupils' welfare through the online system.
47. The safeguarding team are experienced and support the work of the school in managing the needs of pupils. The team meet regularly to assess pupils' needs. The pastoral and safeguarding team work closely to follow up any concerns identified by staff or pupils themselves. The designated safeguarding lead and deputies work with care and link with the relevant local agencies when required. They ensure that pupils have the appropriate support. Pupils know that there are a number of staff that are available to talk to them, should the need arise.
48. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies are suitably qualified and trained. They receive appropriate ongoing and regularly training to carry out their work. Leaders and governors are appropriately trained so that they are enabled to support and challenge the safeguarding team.
49. Staff receive detailed training when they join the school. Training is updated at regular intervals and in staff briefings. Staff understand the importance of safeguarding, including online safety and the risks to pupils of any radicalisation or extremism. They ensure that pupils are made aware of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including how to be safe online.
50. Pupils have regular lessons on safety, including on online safety so that they know how to be safe online and have an age-appropriate understanding of the dangers of the internet. Suitable monitoring and filtering processes are in place.
51. All required recruitment checks are completed for adults working with pupils. A record of all checks is kept appropriately. Minor administrative discrepancies in the record were corrected at the time of the inspection. The record is checked by leaders and governors regularly to ensure that all required checks are carried out appropriately.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Dunottar School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	936/6078
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1016538
<b>Address</b>	Dunottar School 36 High Trees Road Reigate Surrey RH2 7EL
<b>Phone number</b>	01737 761945
<b>Email address</b>	info@dunottarschool.com
<b>Website</b>	www.dunottarschool.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	United Learning
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andy Porteous
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Mark Tottman
<b>Age range</b>	11–18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	480
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 to 26 September 2019

## Information about the school

53. Dunottar School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 11 and 18 years old, located in Reigate, Surrey. The school is a registered charity and is owned and administered by United Learning, supported by a local governing body which meets five times a year.
54. The school originally opened in 1926 for female pupils only. It became co-educational as part of the United Learning group of schools in 2014. It combines a year-based pastoral system with vertical houses, the latter in place for activities and competitions.
55. The school has identified 137 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. English is an additional language for two pupils.
57. The school aims to provide an excellent education to male and female pupils through high-quality teaching and a high level of individual support, enabling pupils to achieve their full potential. The school values, the 'warrior learning' behaviours: creativity, curiosity, independence, aspiration, tenacity, collaboration and inclusivity are promoted to support pupils' self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness and overall wellbeing.



## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

30 April to 2 May 2024

58. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

59. 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 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.

60. 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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