

School inspection report

20 to 22 February 2024

Farlington School

Strood Park

Horsham

West Sussex

RH12 3PN

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS.....	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. The new leadership team has worked purposefully and successfully to develop teaching and learning and this has led to improved outcomes for pupils. Leaders know what is working well at Farlington, and where they need to focus their efforts in the future.
2. Children settle happily into the Reception class and are quickly ready to learn. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year is above that found nationally.
3. Curriculum leaders are innovative and diligent in their approach to promote pupil learning. Subject leaders place a great emphasis on helping pupils to become confident learners, often by considering an individual child's academic progress in the context of pastoral and emotional needs. This leads to pupils of all abilities making good progress.
4. Teaching is effective because it is tailored to individual pupils' needs, including those with special educational needs (SEND). Assessment is in place to support pupils to make good progress. Information about pupils' prior learning is used well to plan their next steps. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress due to the support provided with this aspect of their learning.
5. Leaders and managers provide extensive opportunities through a broad and well-balanced curriculum for pupils to discover and develop their interests and talents. Teaching staff know the pupils well and develop productive and positive relationships.
6. Pupils are actively encouraged to participate in a wide range of clubs and sports fixtures. These opportunities develop pupils' intellectual, social, creative and physical skills through the accessible and stimulating programme which enhance pupils' wellbeing. They have achieved significant successes locally and nationally in drama, music, sport and the arts.
7. The school council is involved in many key decisions in the school from the election of school student leaders to the effective use of school funding for activities, events and fundraising activities. The council enables pupils to express their views, concerns and ideas and promotes a sense of community and unity.
8. Pupils enjoy the range of lessons and activities provided in the life skills programme. This prepares them for the challenges they face during teenage years and for life beyond school. Although it covers the required areas, pupils do not fully understand how the careers programme develops their knowledge and understanding about life after school and how this will help them to realise their full potential.
9. Everyone looks out for one another in this small, caring school. Pupils take time to consider each other's feelings, values and experiences. Living in the boarding house environment helps pupils develop independence and responsibility. The international school population enriches pupils' experiences as they share their understanding of their own culture and those of other pupils.

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 the guidance about careers and further education is consistently understood by pupils so they appreciate the support available to them.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The new school leadership team are knowledgeable and forward-thinking. They promote effective teaching and learning through careful planning, consistently implemented policies and assessment processes. Leaders are successful in their mission that each pupil, including the boarders, make good progress in their learning in line with the aims and ethos of the school. Effective use of data enables teachers to plan their lessons with care, so they are matched to the needs of pupils.
11. Leaders in early years work closely with pre-school settings and this helps to ensure that transition into Reception is smooth and easy. They identify each child's level of development when they join and use this information to plan pupils' learning journey. Staff monitor the pupils progress effectively and adapt their planning promptly to maximise children's development.
12. Self-evaluation is accurate and rigorous. Senior leaders have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas that can be further improved. The proprietors are able to monitor leaders' evaluations of the school through their analysis of performance information, meetings with key staff and the challenging questions that they ask. Subject and phase leaders understand the whole-school improvement priorities and contribute successfully to the strategic development of the school. Plans are updated regularly throughout the year in order to meet the needs of pupils and to support their wellbeing.
13. Leaders successfully share their vision for the school as they oversee their different areas of responsibility. This leads to a culture which encourages staff to take collective responsibility for improving the school. Staff are prepared to adapt to new ways of working and evaluate the results of their actions. Consequently, leaders focus on the right areas for improvement so that Standards are met and they fulfil their responsibilities. This includes increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education, facilities and services provided through the implementation of an appropriate accessibility plan.
14. Leaders have implemented a school wide initiative to enable all pupils to understand the success criteria for topics in each subject. This aids pupils to understand their achievements as well as the progress they make in each subject.
15. Leaders identify, manage and mitigate risk effectively. They are knowledgeable and skilful in discharging their responsibility to promote wellbeing through a strategic approach to risk assessment. This is because centralised risk management systems enhance site safety and security. A comprehensive system is in place to risk assess educational trips and visits.
16. Robust pastoral systems and processes inform leaders about other risks of harm to pupils' wellbeing. Leaders link effectively with external agencies to promote and benefit the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders.
17. Leaders appropriately provide statutorily required information for parents on the school website including required policies. They follow an appropriate policy on complaints through records and responses from parents in a timely manner. They inform parents about the number of complaints made in the previous school year.
18. The proprietors have a thorough understanding of the school's performance. They are frequent visitors to the school and work effectively alongside leaders in the school. As a result, they are well

informed about all aspects of the school and carry out their statutory duties effectively. Proprietors rigorously hold leaders to account and have very high aspirations for the school. They undertake annual monitoring visits in the autumn term with the expectation that leaders produce evaluation reports and take action where necessary. Consequently, they are able to support and challenge school leaders to evaluate and plan strategically.

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. Leaders have designed an education programme and activities that meet the needs of pupils. Phase and subject leaders implement age-related plans and schemes of work effectively. Well-structured provision develops a wide range of educational skills across all required areas of learning, including in the early years. From Reception to Year 13 pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and a range of cross-curricular skills.
21. Leaders demonstrate an effective understanding of the early years curriculum and regularly check that indoor and outdoor learning tasks are appropriate to the needs of the children. Activities are planned around the interests of the children. Staff plan carefully, based on children's prior learning and identified next steps. Almost all children reach a good level of development across all areas of learning by the end of their Reception year.
22. The lower school provides well planned opportunities for the development of knowledge and core skills. In the results of standardised tests, the proportion of pupils who meet and exceed the standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of their time in lower school is above that found nationally. Curriculum development for older pupils is focused on preparing them for national examinations and entry to their next stage of education. Staff support each other well, work as a team and are keen to share effective teaching and learning strategies. These include new technologies and the use of resources which challenge pupils.
23. Pupil attainment in public examinations at GCSE and A level is above the national average for all pupils. This is due to the effective identification of specific needs and the encouraging and inclusive nature of the school. Leaders promote good progress for individual pupils through well-timed and supportive interventions for pupils experiencing difficulty in specific subject areas. These strategies take into account the pastoral needs of the pupils as well as predicted academic outcomes.
24. Pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points to achieve success in line with their peers because of the direct help provided by learning support staff. Pupils with EAL make rapid progress from their starting points due to targeted support, improving their fluency in English.
25. Leaders at all levels ensure that pupils learn and make good progress through the effective use of assessment data that informs their planning. They use an effective framework to track and evaluate pupils' work and performance. This monitors pupil performance against 'challenge grades'. These are based on prior attainment in standardised tests and create aspirational targets for each pupil. Regular discussion with pupils about how to meet their targets in each subject support pupils' progress. Pupils understand how to improve their work because of the considered and effective advice, guidance and support they receive from their teachers.
26. Encouraging and positive relationships with staff prevail. In the majority of lessons, effective behaviour management creates an environment where pupils can thrive. Behaviour is conducive to high-quality learning and pupils are engaged actively in the learning process because they know the criteria for success. Pupils appreciate being able to formulate ideas and hypotheses without the fear of failure.
27. Leaders provide a broad range of facilities and recently changed the structure of the school day to enhance the co-curricular and recreation opportunities available to pupils, including boarders. This

encourages them to engage in an active lifestyle and pursue their interests and talents, which supports their overall wellbeing. Leaders effectively promote pupil participation and engagement.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. The school's life skills programme incorporates the requirement for personal, social and health education (PSHE), and relationships and sex education (RSE) across all age groups. The programme enables pupils to understand healthy lifestyles, relationships and appropriate boundaries for their actions. Pupils enjoy the weekly programme of interesting and relevant discussion topics, which ensure that staff know what each pupil learns and understands as well as knowing each child as an individual.
30. Children in the early years develop their social, physical and communication skills well through frequent opportunities to talk to each other as they play and learn. Children manage their own personal needs and play happily with one another. They respond positively to their key workers and other adults. Children understand the routines of the day and what is expected of them. They concentrate, persevere with activities and tidy up afterwards.
31. Pupils contribute confidently in lessons and form tutor time to life skills discussions and enthusiastically debate topics with each other. This develops their knowledge of contemporary issues and enables them to share their own understanding. This approach has a positive influence on pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing in a supportive environment. Pupils gain their own sense of personal worth and self-esteem.
32. A rigorous fire safety and prevention policy is in place to protect the school community. This is consistent with leaders' robust approach to managing health and safety matters. Accommodation meets all applicable standards including appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs and the administration of first aid.
33. Supervision of pupils takes place through daily rotas for identified areas of the school such as corridors and open spaces. Regular monitoring by senior leaders ensures that these procedures are effective. Weekend supervision rotas are effective for boarders.
34. Leaders ensure pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy, exploring topics including mental health, radicalisation and healthy lifestyles. They are encouraged to be aware of their emotional and mental wellbeing. Pupils are resilient to the pressures that young people face because they are taught effectively about how to deal with stress. Pupils are confident that they could talk to adults at the school about any problems they face. Secure and respectful interactions enable the pupils to feel safe and to flourish.
35. Leaders' recent enhancements to the games and exercise programme have been welcomed by pupils. This has led to increased participation for those who wish to represent the school in competitive fixtures or take part in other activities. For example, pupils of all age groups enjoy after-school dance activities.
36. Boarders are well supported. They feel safe in the boarding house and welcome the recent rolling programme to refurbish their accommodation. There is appropriate sleeping and living accommodation, and provision to keep their possessions secure. Leaders take boarders' views into account. Boarders have the opportunity to influence the meals offered on a four weekly menu cycle provided for them and for the whole school. Boarding house staff are appropriately trained and

maintain the required boarding standards effectively. The warm interactions between boarders and day pupils highlights a sense of community and a positive culture.

37. In lessons and activities, pupils know what is acceptable in terms of behaviour and the need to respect the views or needs of others. This helps them to behave well and take responsibility for their own behaviour. Older pupils apply to become prefects in the school and willingly take on their role of responsibility, gaining confidence and leadership skills.
38. Pupils welcome a school culture that accentuates the positive and takes a restorative approach to pastoral and behavioural issues. These are supportive of their emotional wellbeing and ensures that the needs of individual pupils are taken into account. The recent introduction of a new wellbeing centre has been a welcome addition. Consequently, pupils are able to develop into rounded and well informed young people.
39. Records show that there are few incidents of bullying or relationship issues. This is because of the atmosphere for respect and difference that enables positive mental health to be supported. Pupils are confident in leaders' approach to prevent and tackle bullying and discrimination. Staff deal robustly with any incident that occurs.
40. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with requirements. Leaders inform the local authority when they remove or add a pupil's name to the admission register.

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. The proprietors are mindful of ensuring that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They check that leaders have implemented a curriculum which provides a wide range of relevant learning and enrichment experiences for pupils that prepares them for life beyond the school. The school's life skills programme provides age-appropriate opportunities to reflect on the importance of respecting individual difference. As a result, the pupil community is supportive of those with diverse characteristics.
43. Pupil representatives of all ages participate in the school council. It is a key forum providing experience of democracy and engagement with issues of concern to pupils. The council produces job descriptions for student leader positions and organises democratic votes for head and assistant head students and other leadership roles in clubs and societies. These roles develop decision-making skills and teamwork. The school council has been proactive in utilising funds provided by the parent teacher association to make decisions and organise school fair activities and charity-based initiatives. Student leaders also consider the economic reality that exists for local and international initiatives through activities such as Horsham food bank and global water aid fundraising.
44. British values and the role of public institutions are promoted in PSHE lessons and through events such as the platinum jubilee garden party, the annual Remembrance service for the fallen, writing to the prime minister about local issues and inviting the local minister of parliament to the school. As a result, pupils articulate the importance of fundamental British values and respect for others. They understand the rule of law and the importance of justice in life through discussion and exploration of current issues facing young people.
45. Pupils know right from wrong. They understand important behavioural and ethical matters, as well as aspects of civil and criminal law. They discuss and debate important national and international issues raised by the Holocaust Memorial Day and movements such as Black Lives Matter. The debating club and Model United Nations meetings further enhance pupils understanding of opposing views. These activities contribute effectively to their knowledge and understanding of current events and the messages that they convey.
46. Leaders enable pupils to engage effectively in the local community through drama, music and sports events and The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to provide their ideas and to have their voice heard, which school leaders consider and act upon appropriately.
47. Leaders ensure that pupils leave with qualifications, skills and personal qualities well suited to their needs as they move on to further education or training. The planned careers guidance includes presentations such as working for the NHS and varied careers talks for older pupils, including one on preparation for university for sixth-form pupils. Pupils are provided with adequate individual support and guidance. However, the delivery of the careers programme is such that pupils do not always realise how the various elements fit together, and they lack confidence in how they are prepared for the next stage of their lives beyond school.
48. Leaders make sure that pupils know how to tackle stereotypes and value diversity. They emphasise tolerance and respect at the beginning of each term. Differences are celebrated and pupils value

each other equally. The international cohort of pupils provide cultural information about traditions, values and customs to their classmates. This contributes to the positive respect pupils have for each other and respect for cultural difference.

49. House competitions enable pupils to respect others' skills and provide a deeper understanding of other pupils' cultures. Examples are music where individual music skills can be respected, and the house display competition about the Year of the Dragon as part of Chinese New Year. The proprietorial group offers the chance for substantive links with partnership schools abroad, such as Switzerland, so that pupils can engage with school communities beyond England.

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. Proprietors make sure that robust and appropriate systems are in place to safeguard pupils. A secure culture of safeguarding exists within the school. The designated safeguarding team of six staff identify concerns promptly and work well with external organisations. Safeguarding records are kept meticulously and timely action is taken when concerns arise. Leaders take suitable action and prompt referrals are made to external agencies as required.
52. Steps are securely in place to make sure that adults working unsupervised in school are suitably recruited and vetted to ensure that pupils are safe from harm. Leaders ensure that all recruitment and other checks required by statutory guidance are undertaken and they maintain a suitable central record of these checks.
53. Staff and proprietors are well trained in their child protection responsibilities so that pupils are properly safeguarded. Staff receive regular updates on safeguarding from senior leaders that reflect current government guidance. This includes training on low-level concerns, child-on-child abuse and how to support pupils who are vulnerable to extremism or radicalisation. Staff understand the referral arrangements if they have a safeguarding concern or worry. Pastoral staff are committed to an open and accessible culture. They have implemented effective support measures that arise from information gained through form tutors and phase leaders, alongside the robust database system that tracks all safeguarding matters.
54. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a wide variety of situations. They receive regular and useful information about how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet and other social media. Leaders monitoring and filtering of technology is effective.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Farlington School
Department for Education number	938/6144
Address	Farlington School Strood Park Horsham West Sussex RH12 3PN
Phone number	01403 254967
Email address	office@farlingtonschool.com
Website	www.farlingtonschool.com
Proprietor	Farlington School Limited
Chair	Mr Mark Malley
Headteacher	Mr James Passam
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	397
Number of boarding pupils	36
Date of previous inspection	29 to 30 January 2020

Information about the school

56. Farlington School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between 4 and 18 years. The school is based in and around a former mansion house which occupies a rural site near the town of Horsham in West Sussex. It was founded as a girls' school in 1896 and has occupied its present site since 1956. Since September 2019, it has been owned and governed by Bellevue International and become a co-educational school. The chief executive officer acts as the chair of proprietors. Since the previous inspection, the school appointed a new headmaster and subsequently a new leadership team in September 2021.
57. The main building provides administrative, educational and boarding accommodation. The school comprises three sections: lower school including early years for pupils aged 4 to 9 years; middle school for pupils aged 9 to 13; and a senior school including a sixth form for pupils aged 13 to 18 years.
58. The school has identified 66 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for 49 pupils.
60. The school states that it aims to inspire a long-lasting love of learning through stretching the most able and supporting the least confident pupils, in fostering individuality and celebrating academic and extra-curricular achievement and enabling them to fulfil their individual academic potential in order to become the best version of themselves. It seeks to provide a creative, inclusive and purposeful environment where opportunities abound. The objective is to educate well-rounded, confident, enterprising citizens, capable of making a difference in the world.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

20 to 22 February 2024

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

62. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of form time and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with a representative of the proprietorial group
- 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
- discussion of their work with different groups of pupils
- 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.

64. This inspection did not include the registered setting for children under two, which is currently inspected by Ofsted.

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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