

School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

Ipswich High School

Woolverstone Hall

Ipswich

Suffolk

IP9 1AZ

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

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders communicate their vision for the school with clarity and purpose. Consultation with pupils has been central to the development of the school's new aims. Leaders listen and act on pupils' suggestions when making strategic decisions with the aim of enabling them to be inspired, happy and successful.
2. Leaders' evaluation of behaviour in the school has brought about a new behaviour policy and system of values, which have been received favourably by pupils and staff. Leaders track and address behavioural issues diligently. They identify appropriate and personalised responses to concerns that arise, working in close collaboration with pupils and their families to ensure these meet their needs. A small number of pupils do not consistently adhere to the school's expectations, resulting in some feeling less confident to report negative behaviour or to challenge it when they are bystanders.
3. Leaders aspire for the pupils to utilise their talents to improve the lives of others and through doing so, have a positive impact in the wider world. Pupils contribute positively to the school community and charities. There are opportunities for pupils to engage with the local community, although these are currently limited in scope.
4. Leaders' understanding and management of risk is dynamic, taking into consideration avoidable harms. They use a robust and detailed pastoral system to identify and mitigate risks relating to individual pupils. Pupils learn to assess risk in their daily lives. As a result, they develop the skills and knowledge needed to assess risks, both now and those needed for the wider world.
5. Leaders promote a highly effective safeguarding culture. Staff, including leaders and governors, are suitably trained, including through an in-depth induction programme for all new staff. A wide variety of training and resource platforms are available to staff to ensure appropriate knowledge and understanding.
6. Leaders of teaching and learning collaborate across the school to identify ways of improving pupil progress and attainment. They provide numerous ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their practice. Leaders produce a termly teaching and learning magazine which identifies ways in which teachers can improve their practice and provides guidance as to how this can be achieved. Recent areas of focus have centred around the provision of challenge as well as support for pupils with SEND and ensuring all needs are met from the early years through to the sixth form. These initiatives have had a demonstrable impact on pupils' achievement and progress.

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:

- provide pupils with an increased range of opportunities to engage with the local community
- ensure pupils are confident to report all incidences of inappropriate behaviour.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. A newly established leadership team successfully promote the delivery of the school's aims and ethos through a comprehensive programme of quality assurance. Leaders actively promote the wellbeing of pupils through the school values, which centre around the school's comprehensive levels of pastoral and academic support.
8. Leaders reinforce the school's principles at regular points including tutor times and assemblies. School values of caring by showing kindness are promoted in assemblies where input from pupils is sought and shared to reinforce the school's aims to promote pupils' wellbeing.
9. Governors have a detailed understanding of leaders' management of boarding, safeguarding, and teaching and learning. Governors ensure policies are appropriate and implemented in practice. The safeguarding policy is reviewed at termly governor and safeguarding meetings.
10. Leaders take staff and pupils' views seriously and include them in the review of school policy and practice. The 'books and biscuits' group enables prep school pupils to have relaxed conversations regarding their experience of school, helping to ensure their concerns are addressed. Older pupils' opinions are sought using electronic feedback forms and focus groups. Pupils and staff value the opportunities to be involved in school improvements which result in the implementation of new initiatives with consequent benefits to pupils' academic and pastoral wellbeing.
11. Leaders allocate suitable numbers of appropriately qualified staff to work with children in the early years. They receive suitable training in the school's policies and procedures and regular support and guidance from leaders in the setting.
12. Governors ensure leaders fulfil their responsibilities regarding health and safety legislation. Risk mitigation is embedded within the school culture. Individual risk assessments are in place for boarders and day pupils and updates are shared weekly with staff. Leaders have drawn up and implemented a suitable plan to improve access to the school premises and curriculum in line with the requirements of the Equalities Act.
13. Leaders provide information about the school's policies and procedures on the school website. Parents, carers and staff are made aware of boarding principles and practices through published policies and documentation. Parents receive annual reports about their children's progress and achievements. Parents of children in the early years and prep school are regularly informed about their children's progress through personal and online updates. Leaders report the early years profile results to the local authority. They liaise effectively with external agencies, including in relation to safeguarding concerns and the reporting of pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard points.
14. Leaders implement suitable procedures for the management of parents' concerns and complaints. A clear timeline is documented for each stage. Complaints relating to early years provision or boarding are identified as such and managed appropriately. Governors maintain an overview of the detailed records kept, which correlate with policy timelines and guidance.

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

15. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Leaders maintain high expectations of pupils' academic efforts and achievements. Leaders from all sections of the school have collaborated to create a new school curriculum to promote continuity and progression across all year groups. Staff have drawn up and implemented revised schemes of work with a shared focus on perseverance, challenge and vocabulary. Teachers make ambitious curriculum choices so that pupils aim for high levels of achievement. Staff share clear curriculum maps which identify key aspects of their learning with pupils and parents. As a result, pupils are engaged in their learning and make good progress in all curriculum areas. Leaders monitor teaching systematically, ensuring the curriculum is taught effectively and that it reinforces Fundamental British Values.
17. Staff identify clear learning objectives and provide continual opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge in the early years. Leaders' use of a variety of assessments, including drawings and observations, when tracking pupils' progress against the elements of the early years framework and from their assessment on entering the Reception class. Staff use these to tailor activities to children's aptitudes and ages so that they make good progress from their starting points.
18. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding and communicate effectively so that pupils are interested in their learning. They use a range of strategies and resources so that pupils understand new concepts and make progress, such as when learning about the structure of the heart in biology. Lessons are well planned and linked to prior learning. Teachers use effective questioning techniques to enable pupils to think about arguments and counter arguments when discussing complex issues in humanities. Behaviour in lessons is conducive to learning; pupils are self-motivated and encouraged to arrive at answers independently.
19. Leaders implement a rigorous system of assessment of pupils' attitudes to learning and progress in relation to target grades. Teachers use assessment information to provide targeted support for pupils within the prep school. Individual assessments, produced in collaboration with pupils, identify the support needed for older pupils who have SEND to prepare for public examinations. The progress of these pupils is furthered by the effective use of the specialist accommodation designed to meet their needs.
20. Pupils review their own work successfully, benefiting from teachers' effective use of modelling and personalised strategies. Pupils feel they are provided with appropriate support. They make good use of a combination of class and personalised feedback, enabling them to engage positively when reviewing their work so that they make progress. As a result, they are successful at GCSE level and achieve particularly well at A level.
21. Children in the early years listen with focus to stories and take turns to confidently answer questions in class discussions. They develop their skills quickly through daily opportunities to develop their vocabulary and communicate with peers and adults, individually and in small groups.
22. Children develop a good understanding of number in the early years through varied opportunities to learn about new concepts with concrete mathematical resources. Pupils in KS2 have their progress in their mental maths knowledge tracked from a baseline of the two times table to knowledge of tables up to twelve times and beyond.

23. Leaders provide an extensive programme of curriculum and boarding enrichment activities, which enables pupils to consolidate prior learning, or to extend their knowledge. Pupils value the inclusion of these within the school day, which enables them to engage productively with the many choices available. Pupils participate in competitions and performances in creative subjects, achieving high levels of success.

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

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. Leaders promote a culture of respect, which is reinforced through the effective delivery of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Pupils develop knowledge of themselves as individuals and the values of working collaboratively. They are confident and self-assured and talk with insight about the importance of respect towards all members of the community. They demonstrate spiritual awareness through their appreciation of non-material aspects of life such as the benefits offered in the school's outdoor environment.
26. Children in the early years thrive in a learning environment characterised by nurturing relationships. They learn to manage their emotions and to persevere from the start due to effective communication between different phases which ensures staff understand their needs when they enter the setting.
27. Leaders implement a relationships and sex education (RSE) programme which is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, pupils understand the importance of healthy relationships and how to maintain these.
28. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour towards others, which are modelled effectively by staff. As a result, pupils demonstrate a good moral understanding from the prep school onwards, where staff focus on identifying and praising behaviour which is in line with the school's expectations.
29. A small number of older pupils do not consistently adhere to the school's expectations in this regard, and some pupils are not confident to challenge negative behaviour. The school has responded to these concerns through the new behaviour and anti-bullying policy which is in its infancy. Pupils have played a meaningful part in devising the new strategies.
30. Children in the early years develop their physical skills through active engagement with a wide range of resources. Older pupils develop their skills well through the physical education curriculum and the wide range of opportunities for them to engage in physical activities within the enrichment programme. Pupils understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and are supported in this by the range of healthy options provided at meal times. The weekly menu is varied and healthy, enabling them to make good choices.
31. Pupils understand the importance of maintaining good mental health through the PSHE and RSE curriculum. They value opportunities to support their mental wellbeing through activities, such as walking within the school grounds, offered through the daily enrichment programme. Leaders manage concerns about pupils' mental wellbeing through an effective system of identifying different levels of need. Senior school pupils are able to self-refer to the in-house counsellors. In the prep school referrals are made collaboratively by staff and parents. Staff use risk assessments and systems which help pupils to describe feelings and emotions to support pupils when appropriate.
32. Robust systems are in place to provide first aid and medical care in boarding and school hours within suitable accommodation. Leaders ensure the availability of highly qualified trained staff to support pupils and to provide an annual health check for all boarders.

33. Leaders implement suitable arrangements in relation to pupils' health and safety and the management of risks from fire. Pupils are alert to their surroundings and keep themselves safe on the roads and pathways. Sufficient numbers of staff are allocated to supervise pupils throughout the school day and in boarding time. Boarders understand the systems in place for them to contact members of staff at night. Leaders implement systematic arrangements for the recording and monitoring of admissions and attendance.
34. Boarding provision is well managed. An effective induction programme and handbook communicate rules and expectations, which pupils understand and believe are fair. Pupils feel listened to and appreciate the changes which have come about in boarding provision in response to their requests. Boarders' work and recreation time is well balanced. They engage in a wide range of activities and off-site visits which help to integrate new pupils and promote a strong sense of cohesion and shared responsibility within the community.
35. Boarding accommodation is recently refurbished and well maintained. Boarders have a wide range of pastorally trained members of staff and educational guardians to support their wellbeing. They demonstrate independence and maturity, readily taking responsibility for their own routines and when going into town at weekends.

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

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

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

37. Leaders provide an extensive array of opportunities which enable pupils to develop their social awareness and understand the value of working collaboratively.
38. Children in the mixed Nursery and Reception class develop patience, kindness and respect as modelled by a professional staff. They carry out their morning routines independently, take turns, actively listen to each other in discussions, and are kind towards their peers. Children assist each other with putting on aprons, sharing computers, and discussing their thoughts on mathematics problems during group work.
39. The curriculum and enrichment programme in the prep school offers children opportunities to learn about life in British society. Children in the early years are introduced to public services through visits from the police, a dental hygienist, a nurse, and a GP, as well as key members of the school support team. Older pupils learn about the importance of laws by taking responsibility for their own actions.
40. Older pupils lead the younger pupils and share their expertise in a range of activities, such as when working together to produce props for school performances. Pupils of all ages are active in raising funds for charities, including those which they select themselves through their houses. They participate in raising money to help communities overseas. Many pupils engage in the DofE programme which has recently involved supporting local soup kitchens. However, opportunities for pupils to engage with and support the local community are currently limited in scope.
41. Leaders enable pupils to understand the democratic process through first-hand experience. Pupils in the prep school elect their peers to roles of responsibility and senior school pupils are selected to be council representatives. Pupils understand how to raise motions through a clear democratic process. They consider topical issues in current affairs discussions where teachers make effective use of age-appropriate newspapers and voting resources. Leaders ensure that political issues are discussed in a balanced way in these sessions and in lessons.
42. Pupils demonstrate respect across the whole school. Leaders celebrate the different heritage of pupils in school and the wider world with special events and through the religious studies curriculum. As a result, pupils develop an awareness and appreciation of other cultures and faiths. Boarders feel valued and feel able to be themselves within the House with full acceptance. Pupils who have SEND and those from different faiths and cultures speak of feeling accepted within the school and boarding communities. Leaders address stereotypes and diversity is celebrated by staff and pupils alike in assemblies and the LGBTQ+ club. Pupils readily share their thoughts on such matters, such as when female pupils spoke of a desire to take part in more football and rugby.
43. Pupils benefit from age-appropriate advice and information regarding careers and subject choices. Teachers link subject discussions to the world of work in preparation for GCSE choices made in Year 8. Pupils identify their next steps through completing individual pupil profiles in Year 10, sixth form fayres, and taster days. They benefit from personalised advice from internal and external professionals around tailored employment routes, including degree options, apprenticeships, and vocational services. Mentor meetings take place with practising artists, alongside workshops with professional dancers, to prepare pupils for careers in the creative arts.

44. The business enterprise club guides pupils through the development and production of a product with profits being donated to charity. Early years children become familiar with using money, experiencing finding the right coins to buy items from a classroom shop.

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. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding provision through regular visits and checks of documentation. Leaders undertake the necessary checks on adults before they start working in the school and record them as required.
47. The safeguarding team includes pastoral leaders from across the school. They share information so that pupils' needs are understood and supported in school and boarding time. Leaders work with pupils through the school council to identify additional areas of potential concern. They work closely with staff in order to support pupils with specific vulnerabilities.
48. Leaders record and monitor concerns and associated actions effectively through an online reporting system. The school is mindful of all involved in child-on-child incidents, supporting both victims and alleged perpetrators. Suitable arrangements are in place to respond to incidents of discrimination should they arise.
49. Pupils are confident that they have someone to speak to when they need to share concerns and they appreciate the support they receive. Boarders can identify adults who are independent of the school with whom they can discuss personal issues and concerns. Children in the EYFS provision have a key person from whom they can gain support as needed.
50. A well-planned PSHE curriculum and age-appropriate library resources help pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe, including online. Suitable arrangements for the filtering and monitoring of online use by pupils are in place.
51. Leaders adopt a systematic and effective approach to the identification and delivery of support to pupils, including counselling from external agencies. They report allegations to external services in order to seek professional guidance and provide the appropriate support for pupils. Leaders work closely with external agencies and share findings, trends and current issues with staff when appropriate.
52. Staff, governors and those with safeguarding responsibilities are suitably trained. Staff understand the expectations related to professional conduct and behaviour, and the requirement to report concerns about adults working in the school. Leaders manage and record such concerns appropriately, informing and consulting with external agencies when required.
53. Leaders take appropriate measures to ensure educational guardians promote boarders' welfare. A suitable safeguarding policy is made available on the school website, supported by further related documentation.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Ipswich High School
Department for Education number	935/6055
Address	Ipswich High School Woolverstone Hall Ipswich Suffolk IP9 1AZ
Phone number	01473780201
Email address	receptionist@ipswichhighschool.co.uk
Website	www.ipswichhighschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Ipswich Education Limited
Chair	Mr Jamie Smith
Headteacher	Mr Dan Browning
Age range	3-19
Number of pupils	531
Number of boarding pupils	38
Date of previous inspection	4 to 5 March 2020

Information about the school

55. Ipswich High School is a co-educational day and boarding school located outside Ipswich. Founded as a day school for female pupils in 1878, it first admitted male pupils and boarders in 2019. The school consists of the prep school and the senior school, which are accommodated in separate buildings on the same site. It is owned by a limited company which exercises oversight through an executive board, assisted and advised by a local governing board. The head teacher took up his post in January 2023. The chair of governors was appointed to his role in November 2022.
56. The school has 38 boarders who are accommodated in two purpose-built houses within the school grounds.
57. There are 23 children in the early years, in a Nursery class and a Reception class.
58. The school has identified 144 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for 35 pupils.
60. The school states its vision is to prepare pupils to thrive in the 21st century. It aims to inspire pupils to become the best version of themselves whilst making meaningful contributions to their local and global communities. The school seeks to enable pupils to be happy with who they are and feel ready for the world they are about to enter, having achieved results beyond their previous expectations.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 April to 2 May 2024

61. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

62. 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 safeguarding governor
- 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.

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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For more information, please visit isi.net