

# School inspection report

23 to 25 January 2024

## **Kirkham Grammar School**

Ribby Road

Kirkham

Lancashire

PR2 2BH

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 work effectively to ensure that pupils from early years onwards are engaged and supported in their learning through a broad and balanced educational programme. Leaders plan the curriculum considering pupils' needs. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, which enables them to achieve well in both their academic studies and extra-curricular activities.
2. Examination and assessment results across all age groups show that pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress because their needs are identified and met. Likewise, pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) receive appropriate specialist support to improve their English.
3. Governors effectively support and challenge school leaders about the effectiveness of their management of the school. Leaders use self-evaluation to inform their decision-making laid out in the school's development plans. Leaders' decision-making is well informed by pupils' views and appropriately responds to the needs of the pupils.
4. Pupils of all ages are mostly tolerant, caring and show sensitivity to those from different backgrounds and traditions. This derives from the values promoted by the school in a diverse community that enables pupils to recognise and develop their understanding of the difference in others. Pupils collaborate well with each other.
5. There are many opportunities for pupils of all ages to engage in extra-curricular activities, both as enrichment activities and clubs and in specialist areas such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) and Combined Cadet Force (CCF) groups. Such activities are well attended by pupils and promote their self-confidence and leadership skills.
6. Leaders effectively promote mutual trust and respect and their expectations of behaviour are well defined. Pupils are, for the most part, well behaved. However, in a small number of lessons in the senior school, low-level disruption in classes impacts on pupils' learning.
7. Boarding provision is effective and meets the pupils' needs. Leaders and pastoral staff effectively promote integration of boarding pupils, including those who have come from overseas, within the school community.
8. Leaders have created effective pastoral systems to ensure pupils' wellbeing. Staff know their pupils well and meet their pastoral needs effectively. The school sites and accommodation, including the boarding accommodation, are secure and well maintained.
9. School leaders have developed an effective personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum, which includes exploration of the concepts of equality, diversity and equal opportunity. A small number of pupils, in the senior school, do not fully respond to these concepts. This has a subsequent impact on an otherwise positive school culture.
10. Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and are efficiently managed. Staff are suitably trained, and concerns are addressed promptly. The safeguarding leads across both schools maintain secure and effective links with external agencies. Pupils say they feel safe and will readily approach staff with any concerns or worries.

## 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:

- strengthen pupils' understanding and appreciation of the values of respect, equality and diversity in the senior school
- address effectively the incidents of low-level disruption in some senior school lessons which negatively impact on the pupils' learning.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. School leaders and managers work together effectively to ensure that the mission, vision and ethos of the schools support the development of the pupils. Policies are effectively implemented by leaders and the provision and implementation is monitored by the governing board, in order to ensure that the required Standards and requirements are met.
12. Governors regularly visit the school and listen to the views of staff and pupils to inform their oversight of the school. However, some parents feel that governors are not well known by the parental body, or as visible and engaged with them as possible.
13. Leaders have a clear plan for the development of the junior and senior schools based on self-evaluation, consideration of pupils' views and analysis of the effectiveness of the provision in meeting the school's aims. This plan identifies actions designed to improve outcomes for pupils across all school sections, as seen in the recent development of the pastoral hub to better support pupils' wellbeing. There are effective links with external agencies, including the local authority, which supports the school's safeguarding regime.
14. Leaders in the early years ensure that children benefit from a well-planned curriculum and effective support from staff. A suitable range of activities is well matched to the children's interests, both in and outside the classroom. Leadership in both the early years and the junior school ensures that school values and aims are well embedded in the culture of the school.
15. The school complies with the relevant requirements of the Equality Act. An accessibility plan highlights where adjustments are made to appropriately support pupils' individual needs, ensuring effective access to both facilities and the curriculum.
16. Parents receive regular and detailed information and feedback on their children's academic progress, this also enables parents to be informed of any targeted support provided for individual pupils.
17. Leaders in both school sections, including in the early years, have an overview of potential hazards, which supports the management of risk. Suitable procedures are in place to assess and mitigate risks in areas such as health and safety, fire protection, educational trips and pupils' safeguarding.
18. A comprehensive complaints policy is in place, which is implemented effectively and efficiently. Individual heads of school's deal with complaints initially and they are centrally logged. Leaders manage complaints appropriately and in a timely fashion.

### 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 in all phases of the school successfully implement an effective and relevant curriculum that meets the needs of pupils at the school, including those pupils who have SEND. This is supported by regular assessment and appropriate support to further pupils' progress.
21. The focus on English literacy skills starts from an early age and carries forward into the senior school ensuring that pupils progress well in English. Several of the pupils in the junior school have become 'millionaire readers' (they have read a million words) since the start of the academic year. Pupils are proud of their instant recall of the times tables. This focus on basic skills ensures that most pupils in the junior school progress well in both English and mathematics. Likewise in the junior school concepts of shape, measurement and calculation promote the development of mathematical skills and this extends into the senior school with effectively sequenced mathematics lessons across all age groups.
22. Pupils have well-developed thinking and decision-making skills. These skills are promoted through probing questioning and appropriate tasks, as seen in design and technology (DT) and science. However, teaching does not always enable pupils to maintain their engagement or extend their learning as effectively as possible, especially when pupils are not encouraged to take the initiative in their learning.
23. In the early years there is an effective programme of age-related activities which develop children's spoken language and communication skills. For example, pupils use play bases to develop number skills and use woodwork benches to construct models increasing their physical skills. Well-judged interactions with their teachers support children to become increasingly confident in using a wide range of vocabulary and language structure. This is supported by quality resources which support children's learning.
24. Pupils of all ages make good progress from their starting points and as a result most perform well academically. Pupils successfully develop a broad range of knowledge, skills and understanding, including through participation in an extensive extracurricular program, including sports, dance, drama and academic enrichment clubs. Almost all senior pupils attain grades at GCSE and A level in line with or above expectations. Focused planning and informed teaching enable pupils of all ages to develop skills and knowledge.
25. Most pupils contribute effectively to lessons and they engage with the many aspects of their learning in an enthusiastic and creative manner, showing good communication skills, including when working in groups. Activities often include effective use of information and communication technology (ICT), which supports pupils' learning and encourages the development of research techniques. Teaching does not discriminate against any group of individuals, faiths or beliefs nor does it undermine the values of tolerance, democracy, or individual liberty.
26. In response to consultations with boarding pupils, some of which, are led by house prefects, boarding staff organise a range of weekend trips, supplemented by a mix of sporting, craft and quieter activities during the week. As a result, boarding staff enable most pupils to maintain an effective balance between organised activity and relaxation.
27. Most lessons are well planned and maintain a positive learning environment, enabling pupils to make good progress. The most effective lessons involve much positive interaction between the

pupils and their teachers, creating a vibrant learning environment. However, in a small proportion of lessons in the senior school, low-level disruption is not immediately dealt with and has a negative impact on pupils' learning.

### **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. Strategies to promote pupils' personal development are effective and have been enhanced with the provision of a pastoral hub in the senior school, which is a drop in point for pupils where they can access both mental health and wellbeing support from staff in the base. This is supported by an effective tutorial system in both the junior and senior schools that enables the pupils to belong to what they see is an extended family school.
30. Pupils' wellbeing is promoted and well supported by effective strategies operated by the medical and pastoral teams. Effective targeted support is put in place for individual pupils when required. This includes the recent addition of a therapy dog who is based in the pastoral hub, who provides a welcome calming influence on pupils with worries or anxieties. Pupils' wellbeing is further enhanced by the social, recreational and sporting opportunities and facilities for pupils. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is incorporated within the wide ranging and appropriate PSHE programme. The courses cover relationships, respect and sexual relations appropriately and meet the primary and secondary school curriculum requirements, including around issue of consent and forming appropriate relationships.
31. Pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence are well supported through the taught curriculum as well as extra-curricular activities, many of which challenge the pupils and occasionally take them out of their comfort zone. Pupils, throughout the school, including those in early years, speak with high levels of self-assurance about themselves, their feelings and experiences. Pupil behaviour across all age groups is mostly of a high standard, except in those cases where a small number of pupils lose focus in class.
32. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through the PSHE programme, assemblies, tutorials, and drama and music. The PSHE programme supports the school's ethos of empowering individuality and promoting inclusivity, by considering aspects of faith. Inclusivity and diversity in assemblies, tutor groups and through school focus groups.
33. Teachers encourage mutual respect for other people, and as a result the school is a relatively accepting community. However, a small minority of senior school pupils do not fully embrace the principles of respect, equality and diversity, which underpin the otherwise positive culture across all sections of the school. School leaders have several strategies in place to tackle this issue. Progress is being made in addressing this issue.
34. Pupils feel safe and secure on the school site and boarders are confident about the effective overnight security. Suitable medical facilities are in place in an appropriately equipped medical centre, and suitable first aid arrangements for sports activities and for external trips. Pupils' medical needs, should they arise, are swiftly and appropriately dealt with. Staff receive regular training on first aid and staff in early years are trained in paediatric first aid.
35. The school deals effectively with any bullying incidents that might occur. Bullying is rare and issues are dealt with promptly and effectively by the pastoral teams. Supervision is effective and well managed across both school sites and when pupils are in external recreational and sports areas. Appropriate supervision ratios are in place in the early years and in the boarding house, which includes effective supervision levels during the overnight periods and at weekends.



36. Effective health and safety measures are in place and implemented effectively. The facilities management ensures that health and safety issues raised by staff are acted on in a timely manner. Systematic checks are made on fire safety equipment and fire drills are carried out termly, including during silent hours in the boarding house. School staff are routinely trained on fire safety measures and health and safety risk reduction measures. The attendance and admission registers are appropriately maintained with any absences promptly followed up and leavers notified to the local authority as required. The outdoor spaces are well maintained and provide opportunities for pupils to play sport, relax and unwind.
37. Many pupils play a variety of sports including at local, county and national level, for example, in rugby, cricket, athletics and swimming. A number of pupils are highly successful at regional and county level. Leaders have created a programme that challenges and motivates pupils, developing new skills, confidence and resilience as demonstrated through pupils' participation in the (DofE) and CCF.

### **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. Through the PSHE programme, assemblies and tutorials, pupils learn about life beyond school in modern society and across the world. Pupils are well prepared for future life in British society and are inspired to contribute positively as global citizens, through the school's comprehensive PSHE programme as well as by taking part in focus days, celebrating different cultures and faiths.
40. Pupils' economic understanding is promoted through the personal development and citizenship programmes, the content of which is influenced by pupil councils. Pupils learn about social interaction by considering others through charitable giving, helping in foodbanks and by taking part in events such as sponsored walks. Older pupils consider economic matters through the PSHE programme considering banking, finance at university and working to a budget. Pupils from the early years onwards can successfully articulate their understanding of British values, such as those of the rule of law and respect for others, and point out relevant displays in their classrooms, which they have helped to produce.
41. Pupils can voice their opinions to school leaders through their contributions in three junior school and six senior school councils. This has enabled positive pupil input to uniform, recycling and boarding matters. Pupils readily use these opportunities to communicate with leaders and feel that their opinions are valued and listened to. Pupils understanding of democracy is promoted through their contribution to debates, through undertaking surveys and taking part in mock elections.
42. Leaders and staff emphasise the importance of good manners and consideration of others. Pupils appreciate that it is important to respect different views and opinions. Within the school community pupil-led focus groups have contributed to changes to school menus as well as prompting older pupils to mentor younger ones in both academics and sport. Pupils of all ages contribute widely to the local community through charitable fundraising, local food banks and by visiting local care homes as well as through local choir and church events.
43. The school values of responsibility and integrity are embedded in school life. Most pupils are inclusive and demonstrate an acceptance of those who are different from themselves, having a clear understanding of the differences between people. Leaders continue to address issues arising from a small number of senior school pupils, who in the past, did not fully embrace the concepts of equality, diversity and equal opportunity. In the boarding house, international pupils of different faiths and culture form a harmonious and inclusive community.
44. Pupils are well supported in making choices about their future careers and next steps in education. Younger pupils consider life choices in PSHE and tutorial groups. Older pupils follow a bespoke and effective programme of careers guidance. This includes specialist advice, careers events and work experience and, more recently, greater exposure to apprenticeships and non-university destinations. Pupils value the careers advice that they receive and are confident about their higher education and employment options. The majority of sixth-form leavers go on to study a range of courses, across the spectrum of higher education, some of which have highly competitive entry requirements.
45. Leaders in the early years encourage children to learn to work and play together from an early age which helps develop their social skills. Positive and warm interactions with their peers and teachers enable children to learn to interact with each other positively and work together collaboratively.

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

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

## Safeguarding

47. Safeguarding is effective and treated as a priority, including in boarding. Weekly meetings take place between the junior and senior pastoral teams to maintain an overview of any potential safeguarding matters and identify any required areas for action, including where necessary, appropriate contact with the external agencies.
48. Governors maintain a comprehensive overview of safeguarding arrangements and the nature of any concerns. Through governing board meetings, they provide consistent support and appropriate challenge to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and their implementation. Leaders and governors undertake effective and robust reviews of safeguarding, including an annual audit of arrangements, which lead to changes in practice whenever the need is identified.
49. Safeguarding leads and school staff are well trained and regularly briefed on safeguarding matters. They understand how to communicate any safeguarding concerns and to whom.
50. The school responds effectively to safeguarding concerns that arise, including through referrals, when appropriate, to external agencies, including the local authority, social services and the police. Appropriate consideration and support are provided to vulnerable pupils. The school has appropriate procedures to respond to any allegations against staff that might arise.
51. Pupils have a well-developed awareness of how to stay safe and not take unnecessary risks particularly with their online activities. They are well supported in this through their programme of PSHE and RSE lessons. Pupils are confident that the school keeps them safe and that safeguarding incidents are well managed. They are aware of how to report abuse, inappropriate behaviour and any concerns that might occur both within and outside the school.
52. Arrangements to safeguard and support pupils in the early years are effective. There is a named designated safeguarding lead for the early years.
53. All the required safer recruitment checks are completed for staff, including volunteers, boarding staff and governors. A suitable record of appointments is appropriately maintained which reflects the content of personnel files. Senior managers and several governors are trained appropriately in safer recruitment procedures. Governors and senior leaders undertake regular and appropriate checks of safer recruitment procedures and these are reported to the governing board in termly meetings.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Kirkham Grammar School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	888/6013
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1123869
<b>Address</b>	Kirkham Grammar School Ribby Road Kirkham Lancashire PR4 2BH
<b>Phone number</b>	01772 684264
<b>Email address</b>	info@kirkhamgrammar.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.kirkhamgrammar.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Kirkham Education Foundation
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lorraine Wareing
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Deborah Parkinson
<b>Age range</b>	3 to19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	809
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	68
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 to 13 February 2020

## Information about the school

55. The school is an independent co-educational day and boarding school located in Kirkham in Lancashire. It is a charitable trust with its own incorporated board of Governors. The junior school is located across the road from the senior school site and the boarding house is located on the senior school campus. An interim headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
56. The school has one boarding house with separate accommodation for male and female pupils aged 11 and older. Flexi and weekly boarding options are available.
57. The junior school includes an early years setting, which accommodates children from age two.
58. The school has identified 62 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for 17 pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to provide an excellent education that continues to develop the whole child, in a caring, secure, family base environment where the highest priority is given to the pursuit of academic excellence and to fulfilling the potential of each pupil.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

23 to 25 January 2024

61. A team of eight 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 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
- visits to the boarding house 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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