

School inspection report

13 to 15 February 2024

Maidwell Hall School

Maidwell

Northampton

NN6 9JG

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, most of whom have only recently taken up their posts, work in close collaboration with trustees to nurture pupils' academic and pastoral wellbeing. Recent initiatives have had a positive and marked impact on improving pupils' achievements. Leaders foster a culture where a sense of responsibility towards others and an excitement for learning are the norm. They regularly review the quality of the provision and identify essential areas for improvement.
2. Leaders have taken action to improve teaching so that pupils have a better understanding of what they need to learn and how to improve. They have developed safeguarding procedures further, and there is a clearly established culture of awareness and readiness for staff to report concerns. Leaders model their expectations and provide targeted support and training for staff, which has resulted in rapid improvements in the education and care of the pupils.
3. Trustees and other leaders in the Uppingham group of schools play an important part in the life of the school. They make regular visits to confirm that the Standards are met and routinely support school leaders in identifying and implementing further actions to improve.
4. Leaders provide a wide range of curriculum subjects and activities during the school day and in boarding time so that pupils develop their talents and find new interests to pursue. Leaders seek ways in which to enhance teaching and learning and support teachers to improve their practice. As a result, pupils are engaged in their lessons and enjoy acquiring new skills and knowledge. They make good progress from their start points and routinely gain places at selective senior schools.
5. Teachers make good use of assessment information especially to help pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to succeed, and to provide additional challenge and activities for pupils who are preparing for scholarship examinations. Leaders have started to implement a systematic programme of assessment, but this is in its infancy and has not yet been used to assess pupils' progress over time.
6. Leaders provide a safe and well-maintained environment in which pupils can learn, and stay. There are close links between the boarding and academic staff which helps to promote and support pupils' wellbeing. Leaders have established a systematic means of reporting, recording and responding to pupils' concerns and pastoral needs which is closely monitored by pastoral leaders.
7. Adults know the pupils well and interactions between adults and pupils are positive and supportive. Pupils are enabled to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Leaders and staff promote positive relationships between pupils during the school day and in boarding time. In general, pupils learn the importance of respect for others and readily accommodate the interests and the needs of their peers. However, leaders have not implemented the relationship and sex education programme for older pupils sufficiently well to enable pupils to fully understand its wider content.
8. Leaders provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to play a part in the life of the school through prefect roles and pupil councils. Pupils are confident that their views are heard and acted upon so that their lives in school are improved.
9. Leaders ensure a strong and open culture of safeguarding. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and readily report any concerns they may have. Leaders manage concerns about

pupils sensitively and appropriately. Leaders work closely with the trustees and other safeguarding leads in the Uppingham group to share expertise and receive advice when appropriate.

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:

- extend the effective use of assessment data so that it enables teachers to assess the impact of teaching and identify strategies to improve pupils' progress over time
- ensure the effective implementation of the relationships and sex education programme so that pupils acquire a deeper understanding of its contents.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders promote the wellbeing of the pupils through the implementation of policies and procedures which are tailored to both pupils' needs and to statutory requirements. Since the assimilation of the school into the Uppingham group of schools in September 2022, leaders have instigated substantial changes which have impacted positively on pupils' wellbeing. The trustees, alongside leaders and staff of Uppingham School, have provided valuable support and challenge to the recently reformed leadership team. This support has enabled leaders to use and develop their skills and knowledge.
11. Leaders regularly check the school's success in achieving its aims. They carefully plan any actions that need to be taken to improve the quality of provision for pupils' education and physical wellbeing. Considerable progress has been made in leaders' recent focus on safeguarding, the quality of teaching and the school's premises and accommodation. There is increased rigour in ensuring pupils' progress and welfare is at the forefront of decision-making. Leaders actively seek the views of the wider school community when identifying the next steps for improvement.
12. Leaders promote a collaborative culture in which staff are integrally involved in new plans. A supportive programme of lesson observations, which includes leaders demonstrating key strategies to staff, has contributed to the successful implementation of teaching initiatives. Leaders have established close links between the pastoral and safeguarding teams so that concerns about pupils' welfare are considered and managed in a timely and sensitive manner.
13. Leaders of boarding maintain effective links between academic and house staff. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training on how to keep pupils safe around the school site, online and in their interactions with their peers and adults.
14. Leaders in the early years have the specific skills and knowledge they need to ensure that provision is effective. Staff working in the setting are suitably qualified, trained and supported in their work. There are sufficient adults allocated to supervise children during the school day, both on the school premises and when attending off-site activities. They collaborate seamlessly with leaders in other sections of the school in evaluating the success of the school and implementing new initiatives to improve provision.
15. The trustees maintain close and productive relationships with leaders and the wider school community. The experienced members of the Maidwell Hall subcommittee conduct regular visits which focus on specific areas of provision. They meet with leaders, staff and pupils to confirm that school policies are implemented and the Standards are met. Trustees provide support and challenge for leaders through regular discussions with members of the leadership team. This has facilitated the swift and effective implementation of new initiatives in teaching and safeguarding and the consequent benefits to pupils.
16. Leaders are keenly aware of the specific risks associated with the school's grounds. These are considered and managed systematically to mitigate potential risks. Leaders maintain suitable systems for both parents and staff to share concerns with leaders and trustees. Formal complaints and those relating to boarding and early years provision are managed appropriately in line with the school's procedures.
17. Leaders pay due regard to the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act; a suitable plan is in place to enhance access to the curriculum and buildings for pupils who have different needs.

18. Parents are provided with information about their children's progress and attainment in annual reports. Information about school and boarding policies and procedures is made available directly to parents or through the school's website. Leaders consult with external agencies when appropriate, including the reporting of early years profile results to the local authority.

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 and implemented a curriculum that enables pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in all subject areas. They allocate time to a wide range of subjects throughout the school so that pupils of all ages can develop their talents.
21. Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress from their starting points. Those pupils who have SEND achieve well and in line with their peers. This is due to teachers' attention to their individual needs in lessons and the provision of additional and appropriate support from strategically deployed staff.
22. Leaders have established a suitable programme to assess pupils' attainment. Teachers have started to use the information to good effect to inform their planning. Pupils are provided with the support and challenge they need to succeed. The assessment programme is the early stages of implementation and has not been used to monitor pupil progress and the impact of teaching strategies over time.
23. Leaders have identified key aspects of teaching to develop, such as the use of learning objectives and targeted feedback. Strategic training, monitoring and support for teachers has resulted in these improvements being put into practice quickly and effectively. As a result, pupils have a clearer understanding of what they need to do in each lesson. Teachers provide detailed feedback so pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Leaders ensure teachers have good subject knowledge so that the quality of teaching is accurate and helps pupils to make progress.
24. Pupils are successful in gaining places at selective senior schools, including regular scholarship awards. Leaders provide targeted activities for pupils who choose to apply for scholarships which is extended to others who wish to develop their depth of knowledge. This includes opportunities to engage in debate, which prepares pupils for interviews and increases their confidence.
25. Leaders in the early years and pre-prep implement a curriculum which enables children to learn and make progress across all areas of learning. Leaders reflect on the success of teaching, collaborating with teachers to modify planning in response to their assessments of pupils' achievements. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and provide individual support and challenge so that children can achieve well. They know the children in their care, and adapt planning and activities in response to their interests, thus increasing their enjoyment and engagement in their learning. Teachers identify the specific learning needs of children who have SEND and provide individual support and encouragement for them in lessons. They work closely with parents, communicating regular updates about their child's progress. As a result, children are confident learners, readily demonstrating their communication and physical skills as they explore the world around them.
26. Pupils of all ages enjoy their learning and are highly motivated to succeed. They take an active part in lessons, making good use of a range of resources which support learning. Pupils are confident communicators both orally and in their written work. Children in the early years establish early reading skills swiftly, and older pupils read and perform with expression and write with a mature use of language. Pupils have good mathematical understanding and use their well-developed ICT skills throughout the school day to undertake their own research and present their findings to others.
27. Pupils enjoy inventing and creating their design projects and show a lively enjoyment of science experiments. They engage wholeheartedly in the school's music programme, participating with skill

and enthusiasm in both singing and instrumental performances. Pupils tackle challenging discussion subjects in humanities and in theology, philosophy and religion lessons with confidence. They achieve particularly well in art, as demonstrated in the high-quality displays seen around the school. Equally, there are a wide range of activities on offer after the school day so pupils can explore interests and develop their skills further.

28. Pupils develop a mature ability to work independently because of teachers' high expectations and the provision of after school prep sessions for both day pupils and boarders. A wide range of activities is on offer during and after the school day, allowing pupils to develop their skills further and explore new interests.
29. Boarders enjoy and readily engage in the combination of school-based and external weekend activities, as well as the opportunity to relax in the boarding house. They have access to information about the outside world through age-appropriate newspapers, and have recently demonstrated their interest and engagement by requesting an increase in the range of materials available to them.

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 implement a personal, social, health and economic education programme, known within the school as Lifeskills, which fosters pupils' personal development. This is complemented by robust pastoral systems which enable pupils' individual needs to be known and understood. As a result, pupils develop a strong sense of self, they are confident and self-aware, understanding their own strengths and the challenges they may face in life.
32. Leaders in the early years provide sensitive encouragement so that children grow in confidence, learning to manage their emotional responses and persevere in the face of a challenge. Staff combine praise with support in overcoming difficulties so that children begin to understand that making mistakes is a positive part of their learning.
33. Pupils of all ages are supported in maintaining positive and kind relationships with others. Leaders respond swiftly to any incidences of poor behaviour and pupils are confident that bullying is rare. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and are confident to report injustices when they are identified.
34. Leaders of boarding provide opportunities for boarders to spend time together and support them in maintaining positive relationships. Staff are alert to any signs that all may not be well with a boarder. Staff take appropriate action should boarders report concerns about their relationships with others.
35. A suitable programme for the teaching of relationships and sex education has been drawn up and implemented so that pupils understand how to maintain healthy relationships. However, the programme is not currently taught with sufficient rigour to enable older pupils to benefit fully from the content included within it.
36. There are appropriate medical facilities and first aid care is provided from suitably qualified staff, including for children in the early years and during boarding hours. Children in the early years learn about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and staff support them in beginning to understand their own feelings as well as those of others. Older pupils have many opportunities to engage in physical education throughout the week. They understand the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and are supported in this by the healthy food options available to them at mealtimes.
37. Staff provide support and strategies to help pupils manage their mental health including when they are preparing for examinations. Leaders implement policies designed to reduce pressure on pupils, such as through limitations on their use of online devices. They provide opportunities for pupils to be quiet and reflective such as during morning prayers and through allocating more 'chill out' time for the boarders. Leaders are conscious of the busyness of the school week for pupils of all ages. They have begun to adapt the school day in response to this, particularly in the pre-prep section of the school and through allocating more boarding 'chill out' time. Boarders appreciate this action, both as recognition of their views and for the positive impact on their lives.
38. The premises have recently benefitted from some improvements to the fabric of the building. They are well maintained and kept in a safe condition. Leaders ensure that pupils' health and safety are considered, such as when managing any risk from fire.

39. There is sufficient supervision of pupils throughout the day and in boarding time. They act appropriately to allocate additional supervision during activities where additional risks have been identified, including within the school grounds. Leaders maintain suitable registers for attendance and admissions, communicating as required with schools and the local authority when pupils join or leave the school.
40. Boarders have confidence in and value the pastoral support they receive from the house parent team, school leaders and matrons. Their recently renovated accommodation is welcoming and comfortable. Boarders can keep their possessions safe and personalise their area of the dorm. They are provided with healthy meals and snacks throughout the day and before going to bed.
41. There are suitable arrangements to monitor the welfare of pupils who have educational guardians. Boarders can contact their families easily. Staff make clear and appropriate arrangements with parents and carers for boarders' travel to and from school.
42. Boarders are provided with helpful information when they begin boarding, and older pupils act as good role models in their positions as dorm prefects.

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

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

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

44. Pupils are prepared well to take their place as adults in the wider world, including through the teaching of the Lifeskills programme and a wide range of activities.
45. The school is characterised by a strong sense of community, where positive relationships between pupils are actively fostered through many mixed-age activities and in tutor groups. This is equally evident in interactions between pupils and staff, which are characterised by mutual respect and a common purpose in creating a happy and welcoming learning environment.
46. Leaders deliberately and successfully foster the sense of family through whole school initiatives and events. Staff encourage children to feel part of the wider community from their point of entry, when they join a whole school house. Leaders provide events for pupils to participate in alongside those who are older or younger than themselves, such as the annual pancake race and the May fair.
47. Boarders have a clear sense of belonging to both the boarding and wider school community. Leaders structure the school day so that all pupils in the prep school can stay until boarding time commences. Both boarding and day pupils attend activities after supper, which supports boarders in maintaining equally close relationships with day pupils.
48. Leaders in the early years and pre-prep maintain a secure learning environment where children learn to share resources, work and establish good friendships. Staff provide a range of activities which engage children's interest and help them to learn about the world around them.
49. Pupils develop economic awareness when applying their mathematical learning in real life situations, such as running shops in role play activities. Pupils in the prep have learnt about the concept of profit when paying for the apples they collect in the school orchard to be pressed into juice to sell. Pupils further develop their understanding of budgeting in events such as the May fair. On these occasions older pupils balance the price of raw materials against potential profits when making items to sell, whilst younger ones carefully decide how to spend their allotted money.
50. Pupils acquire a knowledge of public institutions such as the houses of parliament through the curriculum and the running of a 'mock' parliament by a local member of parliament. They are interested in the events of the wider world and debate and discuss these with enthusiasm in lessons and activities. Pupils understand that there are different points of view on a range of matters and recognise the need for a consistent lack of bias on the part of their teachers.
51. Pupils develop a strong appreciation of the importance of democracy including by voting for school councils. They are confident that these have a demonstrable impact on the lives of pupils throughout the school because leaders listen carefully to their views and take their requests seriously.
52. Pupils develop a knowledge of other cultures and faiths alongside a readiness to accept those who are different to themselves. Staff in the early years foster children's interest in the different people in their community and an acceptance of variations in people's cultures, faiths and characteristics. Older pupils value opportunities to learn about the different backgrounds of their peers and those in the wider world. They are sensitive to the needs and less visible differences of others, understanding

that they have a part to play in making everyone in their community feel welcome and secure by offering friendship, help and support to both established peers and newcomers to the school.

53. Pupils understand the importance of laws and rules and are ready to take responsibility for their own behaviour whilst accepting that this can be hard to do. Pupils take an interest in the lives of others and value opportunities to support charities both locally and closer to home, often of their own choosing. They show empathy for others and want to know more about how people are affected by their environments.
54. Leaders implement an appropriate programme to enable pupils to learn about the range of options and careers open to them for the next stage of their education and in their future lives.

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

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

Safeguarding

56. Leaders promote a shared culture of safeguarding, which has been enhanced by the recent restructuring of the experienced safeguarding team. The newly appointed safeguarding lead is readily available to pupils throughout the day. Leaders within the wider school group and the trustees provide expertise and experience, which are used effectively to support and monitor the suitability of the provision.
57. Staff and governors are appropriately trained and demonstrate a secure understanding of their responsibilities. Leaders deliver regular updates and in-house training for staff that is focused on the specific risks and any concerns identified.
58. Safeguarding processes and procedures are in line with statutory guidance. Pupils, including boarders, identify adults who they can speak to and are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously.
59. Leaders actively evaluate the risks to pupils. They take careful account of pupils' individual educational and pastoral needs when considering how to respond to concerns and provide support. Children in the early years are assigned a suitable key person to ensure their care is tailored to their needs. Those with responsibility for safeguarding consult closely with pastoral staff so that behavioural concerns are considered within the safeguarding context. Leaders maintain detailed records of concerns and liaise with external agencies when required.
60. Pupils understand how to stay safe online. Leaders maintain appropriate filtering and monitoring arrangements. They further promote pupils' online safety by limiting access to mobile devices to only a small number of overseas boarders when they need to contact their parents.
61. Leaders have appropriate processes for responding to concerns about adults. They provide suitable arrangements for staff and parents to raise concerns, including with trustees and external agencies. Staff understand their responsibilities in this regard and are confident to report their concerns.
62. Leaders conduct the required checks on adults before they start work. These are recorded appropriately on the single central record and suitable records are kept in staff personnel files.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Maidwell Hall School
Department for Education number	941/6005
Registered charity number	309917
Address	Maidwell Hall School Maidwell Northampton NN6 9JG
Phone number	01604 686234
Email address	thesecretary@maidwellhall.co.uk
Website	www.maidwellhall.co.uk
Proprietor	Trustees of Uppingham School
Chair	Mrs Barbara Matthews
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Rendall
Age range	4 to 13
Number of pupils	152
Number of boarding pupils	52
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2023

Information about the school

64. Maidwell Hall School is a co-educational independent day and boarding school for pupils aged between 4 and 13 years. It is in the Northamptonshire countryside, close to Market Harborough. Founded as a boarding school for boys in 1911, it has admitted girls since 2010. The pre-prep section of the school, for pupils aged four to seven years, opened in September 2020. The prep is for those aged seven to thirteen. The school is a member of the Uppingham Group of Schools, and has been governed by the trustees of Uppingham School since September 2022. The headteacher took up his post in September 2022.
65. Boarding accommodation is provided over two floors in the main school building for pupils aged seven to thirteen. One floor is for female pupils and the other is for male pupils. Pupils board full-time or for 2 or 3 nights a week.
66. There are nine children in the early years in a single Reception class.
67. The school has identified 47 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
68. No pupil speaks English as an additional language.
69. The school states its aims are to encourage its pupils to discover their talents and develop them to the full whilst enjoying their learning. It seeks to enable pupils to develop spiritual and moral values within a culture of personal responsibility, underpinned by the school's Christian foundation.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

13 to 15 February 2024

70. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

71. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other trustees
- 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.

72. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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