

School inspection report

23 to 25 January 2024

Oakham School

Chapel Close

Oakham

Rutland

LE15 6DT

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. Governors maintain an informed overview of leaders' decision-making and its impact on the school's provision. They ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities have the knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and that the Standards are met.
2. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing through school improvement planning that is informed by an analysis of the needs of the pupils, how well the school meets its aims and promotes its values of care, courage, contribution and connection. This process has identified areas for development that are acted on effectively, as seen in the implementation of a curriculum that connects pupils' learning in academic, personal and co-curricular areas. The effects of this on pupils' communication and organisational skills in lessons and their confident self-management in the boarding houses, demonstrate a positive impact of leaders' decision-making on the wellbeing of pupils.
3. Leaders provide an age-appropriate curriculum for each section of the school which is augmented by an expansive co-curricular activities programme that contributes positively to pupils' wellbeing. The range of activities generates opportunities for pupils to develop new interests as well as building on existing skills and talents.
4. Pupils achieve well at all stages of their education and typically make good progress in relation to their starting points at the school. Most pupils attain GCSE, IGCSE, A-Level, BTEC and IB Diploma results in line with, or above, those predicted from their starting points. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) typically exceed their predictions due to the tailored support provided for them. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress in developing their fluency in English.
5. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and mostly plan and teach their lessons effectively so that pupils are attentive and develop their skills and understanding. Typically, pupils learn to critically challenge their own ideas, as well as others, which informs their understanding of the content being taught. However, some teaching does not challenge pupils sufficiently. This is when teaching is not matched effectively to the pupils' abilities.
6. Boarding enables pupils to develop a sense of belonging. Pupils, including boarders, speak positively about how happy they are at the school due to the emphasis that the school places on their wellbeing.
7. Equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted effectively by leaders and advocated by pupils, as seen in the daily life of the school and mutually respectful relationships between pupils.
8. Leaders promote a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying supported by adherence to the system of rewards and sanctions.
9. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the lives of others through pupil-led initiatives and activities that deepen the pupils' commitment to social responsibility. Pupils volunteer and fundraise for local, national and international causes.
10. Premises and accommodation, including the boarding houses, are maintained to a high standard. There is effective management of health and safety, fire prevention and first aid. Appropriate measures are taken by leaders throughout the school to manage risk successfully.

11. The safeguarding policy and procedures are implemented effectively. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and receive safeguarding training as part of their induction which is augmented by regular updates. Governors maintain efficient oversight of the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

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 all teaching is matched to pupils' abilities so that older pupils make consistently good progress across all subjects.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders demonstrate good skills and abilities and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Policies and procedures are informed by a thorough understanding of statutory requirements so that the Standards are met.
13. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school's development and performance through detailed reports, visits to the school and meetings with leaders and pupils. They assess the efficacy of actions that are designed to improve the school, such as initiatives to raise attainment using an in-house digital tracking application for tracking pupils' progress, and a curriculum that connects pupils' learning experiences with the school's values that deepen pupils' understanding of self-care and application of knowledge and skills interwoven through the academic and pastoral curriculum, and co-curriculum programme.
14. There is effective leadership and management of the boarding provision with clear links in place between academic and house staff. Boarders' wellbeing is a high priority and promoted in line with the school's boarding principles.
15. Risk assessments are wide ranging, thorough, and monitored by leaders. The risk register and policy cover operational procedures, assessments of buildings, trips, events and individual pupils' wellbeing in relation to their physical and mental health. The school sites and buildings are kept secure with access codes to buildings and suitable CCTV coverage.
16. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act. Leaders regularly review the accessibility plan to ensure its suitability. Leaders promote the principles of equality and have implemented a diversity and inclusion strategy, effectively ensuring that the school does not discriminate.
17. All required information is provided to parents, including much through the school's website. Parents receive regular and informative reports about their child's achievements. The school consulted with parents appropriately about the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum and associated resources are shared with the school community.
18. Leaders implement a suitable complaints procedure with complaints logged and responded to appropriately within published timescales.
19. Regular safeguarding reports and audits by both leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding is effective. Leaders maintain effective links with a range of external agencies.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The broad curriculum and co-curricular programme are supported by detailed schemes of work and subject specific success criteria for all areas of the curriculum. Leaders have focused on the progression of skills and knowledge acquisition in their development of the curriculum, for example, by connecting the International Middle Years Programme (IB MYP), GCSE, International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP), A-level and BTEC courses with a pastoral curriculum. Through this interconnectedness of learning, the pupils have improved their understanding of the connections between the subjects they study.
22. Pupils' attainment in standardised tests is above average. Attainment at GCSE, IGCSE, A level and the International Baccalaureate (IB) is in line with or above internal predictions, above the national average at GCSE and A Level, and above worldwide norms for IGCSE and IBDP. Pupils are successful at obtaining offers from universities, including for courses with competitive entry requirements.
23. Teaching in most subjects provides appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities and enables them to make good progress. The most effective teaching and learning matches pupils' needs and abilities, takes account of the prior learning of individual pupils and provides helpful and clear guidance about what pupils need to do to improve their work. However, some teaching in Years 12 and 13 is not matched to pupils' abilities and does not challenge the pupils sufficiently to enable them to consistently make the good progress typical across the school.
24. Most pupils listen attentively and can work collaboratively. Pupils understand the connection between effort and success and, in most lessons, behaviour is managed effectively.
25. The suitable assessment and evaluation framework identifies variations in the performance of different groups of pupils. Leaders utilise this information to identify gaps in learning and provide support for pupils in order to close these gaps.
26. Those pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are typically supported well in lessons by their teachers and by the learning support staff through implementation of suitable individual educational plans and tailored study skills sessions.
27. Pupils who have EAL and specific language needs achieve well due to the implementation of tailored strategies for individual pupils, for example, providing additional explanation of subject specific concepts and clarification of technical vocabulary in lessons.
28. There is a wide-ranging programme of sports and co-curricular activities, including for boarders such as sailing, Fives, lifesaving, cookery and debating providing choice for pupils to develop their interests and skills, as well as providing a suitable balance of free time, recreation and work for boarders. The inclusion of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme within the breadth of outdoor activities promotes the development of pupils' leadership skills.
29. Pupils participate in a wide range of performing arts and music events and achieve high standards in examinations in these disciplines with successes in national academic, sport, music, art and drama competitions.

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. The carefully considered pastoral curriculum of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is appropriate to the needs of pupils. The pastoral curriculum and relationships and sex education (RSE) schemes of work, complemented by the house and tutorial programme, aid pupils' personal development and moral understanding by exploring a range of pertinent topics. For example, topics include anti-bullying, online safety, respectful relationships and what constitutes informed consent and is responsive to current topical issues such as vaping. Pupils speak positively of the helpfulness of presentations from external speakers and of the impact the resultant discussions have on their knowledge of how to manage risk.
32. Leaders and staff promote respect for all people, regardless of background. This is evident in the relationships between pupils throughout the school, including in the boarding houses where an ethos of mutual respect pervades. The school promotes inclusive values throughout the curriculum, for example, through tutorial discussions on gender equality in society, celebration of LGBTQ+ history month and lessons about prejudice and discrimination. Positive values, such as respect for those of diverse religions and faiths, are also promoted in regular chapel services and throughout the pastoral care provision, including in boarding.
33. Leaders and staff respond to cases of poor behaviour quickly and appropriately and apply rewards and sanctions consistently across the school. Incidents of bullying are rare and are effectively dealt with through a 'zero tolerance' approach managed by the pastoral team. There is regular feedback through school and house surveys which are considered by staff with care and contribute to appropriate support and actions for pupils who have particular emotional needs.
34. Leaders, teachers, and pastoral staff effectively promote integration of pupils within and across day and boarding houses. Boarders feel safe and well provided for by the boarding team. Boarding accommodation is comfortable and provides a warm and inclusive environment.
35. Pupils take an active part in sports and understand that exercise and healthy eating underpins physical and mental health. The catering department ensures that meals are nutritionally balanced and consider pupils' dietary requirements.
36. First aid is administered by trained medical and house staff with close attention to pupils' individual needs. Leaders also provide safe spaces such as the medical and pastoral centre where pupils can talk to trained mental health practitioners including a clinical psychologist. Suitable arrangements are in place for first aid provision for when pupils are away from school on trips.
37. There is a robust approach to the health and safety of pupils with leaders and governors having a systematic process for assessing and monitoring health and safety at the school. Pupils are suitably supervised across the site and protocols for travelling to and from school buildings are well established, understood and adhered to by pupils and staff.
38. Fire drills are conducted regularly, including during boarding time, and they are efficiency evaluated. Staff receive appropriate training in fire safety. Regular fire risk assessments are completed with recommended actions undertaken. All boarding houses and school buildings have security in place including coded-access, alarms and CCTV in appropriate locations.

39. Admissions recordkeeping is effective and an accurate record of the destinations of pupils is maintained. Attendance registers are appropriately maintained, including in the boarding houses. Prefects, who at times take the register of pupil attendance, are always supervised by adults while carrying out this role.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

41. The curriculum ensures that pupils are knowledgeable about institutions such as the British Parliament and its role in British society, the rule of law and the democratic process. Pupils engage thoughtfully with moral questions as they study themes such as the Holocaust and slavery in Latin. Pupils explore diverse cultures as part of their study of modern foreign languages (MFL) and participate regularly in Model United Nations (MUN) events, taking on the role of ambassadors where they learn about issues such as the rights of refugees and migration.
42. Pupils develop a sense of right and wrong through a programme of talks and debates on themes such as unconscious bias, with pupils developing positive attitudes towards issues such as equality and fair treatment.
43. School council initiatives have led to an awareness of the impact pupils can have on their own school community, such as by influencing the introduction of an additional school social space incorporating a school café.
44. Respect between pupils is actively promoted and supported by the school's values of care and connection. Through the activities of the school council, house time in boarding houses, chapel services, tutorials, the teaching of the pastoral curriculum and a global outlook, pupils, including boarders, develop their spiritual and moral understanding and have an appreciation of cultures different to their own.
45. With the active involvement of leaders, pupils support the wider community by, for example, donating to the local food bank, planting trees in support of national projects and hosting coffee mornings for residents of care homes. Pupils also help in local primary schools, run activities for disabled young people and engage in larger projects, such as volunteering in a school in Kenya. Such activities develop pupils' commitment to charitable causes and social responsibility.
46. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next steps in work or education. Pupils are supported in making choices for GCSE, A level, BTEC and the IB Diploma programme and receive effective careers advice in line with Gatsby Benchmarks. This includes the exploration of pupils' personal qualities and strengths to help identify possible future career routes, up-to-date guidance and networking opportunities with contributions from former pupils. This helps those pupils who wish to proceed to university or apprenticeships to submit successful applications.
47. Leaders have implemented a bespoke scheme of work that supplements the school's economics courses, business studies curriculum and work experience opportunities to support pupils' preparation for employment and for life. Pupils appreciate that as well as developing a range of enterprising skills, such as teamwork and innovation, the economic education aspects of the scheme which incorporates projects involving product development, challenges them to write business plans and review statements of profit and loss.
48. Pupils take on increasing responsibility for others as they move up through the school, such as acting as house and school prefects. School Prefects lead initiatives for the school such as LGBTQ+ and social events for younger pupils. House prefects have the responsibility to communicate the views of the house to the house staff and they encourage house involvement in charity events.

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

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

- 50. Safeguarding is effective. The school's policy and procedures are in line with the requirements of current statutory guidance.
- 51. Leaders liaise effectively with relevant external agencies, such as the designated officer (LADO) and multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). Leaders ask for and follow advice and make referrals when appropriate.
- 52. Appropriate safe recruitment checks are undertaken for all staff, volunteers and governors, and a suitable record of appointments is kept. Governors maintain a rigorous oversight of safeguarding and safer recruitment through regular audits of the schools' safeguarding arrangements.
- 53. Training of the designated safeguarding lead, governors and the safeguarding team is up to date and in line with local requirements. Regular training for all staff, including at induction, enables them to have a thorough understanding of safeguarding procedures, including how to escalate any concerns, and different types of abuse, including child-on-child abuse.
- 54. Staff show appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct and are confident to use the whistleblowing policy should it become necessary. The school has appropriate procedures to respond to any allegations against staff.
- 55. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils learn about the dangers of online gaming, and safe use of digital technology. They explore specific topics, such as child-on-child abuse, county lines, radicalisation, extremism and the risks associated with social media. There is an appropriate internet filtering system in place which is monitored effectively.
- 56. Pupils know how to report concerns and how to get help, including through the school's online pathway for anonymous reporting of concerns to staff.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Oakham School
Department for Education number	857/6000
Registered charity number	1131425
Address	Oakham School Chapel Close Oakham Rutland LE15 6DT
Phone number	01572 758500
Email address	reception@oakham.rutland.sch.uk
Website	oakham.rutland.sch.uk
Chair of governors	Professor Neil Gorman
Headmaster	Mr Henry Price
Age range	10 to 18
Number of pupils	973
Number of boarding pupils	461
Date of previous inspection	6 May 2022

Information about the school

58. Oakham School is a co-educational day and boarding school located in Oakham, Rutland. It is a Christian Foundation and is a registered charity whose trustees provide the governance of the school.
59. The nine boarding houses and ten day houses accommodate pupils from Year 6 upwards in single-sex houses separated by age for Years 6 to 8, Years 9 to 12 and Year 13. All houses are located near the teaching accommodation in the centre of Oakham.
60. The school has identified 212 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. English is an additional language for 121 pupils.
62. The school states that its aims are to teach pupils to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values to flourish and confidently contribute at Oakham School and beyond, and to encourage its pupils to articulate and embody the school's core values of care, courage, contribution and connection. It seeks to provide an exceptional, contemporary co-education with a global outlook, offering experiences to live and learn in a caring and inspiring boarding and day community.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 to 25 January 2024

63. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. 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 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.

65. 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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