

School inspection report

18 to 20 June 2024

Orley Farm School

South Hill Avenue

Harrow

Middlesex

HA1 3NU

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

Contents

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

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and governors are successful in promoting the wellbeing of pupils. They have established a creative, balanced and progress-focused curriculum, which equips pupils effectively for their lives beyond Orley Farm School.
2. Since the previous inspection, leaders, staff and pupils have re-designed the school values. These values are widely understood and often referred to in all aspects of school life. Pupils enjoy their learning and work hard to achieve their best. They have well-developed speaking and listening skills. Pupils are kind and helpful. They are successful at working together during lessons and extra-curricular events. Pupils share their ideas readily with members of staff and with their peers. Pupils treat each other well.
3. Pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities and achieve well throughout the school. Pupils receive regular individual feedback about their work, which helps them know what to do to improve. Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively. Their individual provision maps and pupil passports set out important information for teaching staff to give pupils the right support. Likewise, any additional needs for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are identified early. They make swift progress in their language skills because teachers model vocabulary and encourage pupils to speak during lessons.
4. Leaders provide a well-designed creative curriculum through which pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils apply 'The Orley Farm Way' thinking skills to help them learn. Pupils build on their learning through the 'Edge programme' which gives them relevant skills for life. Pupils are willing to 'have a go' and overcome challenges in their learning, which is reflected in their written work. Teachers encourage pupils to take risks and make mistakes, seeing this as a part of their future success.
5. Children thrive in early years through the inspiring and appealing curriculum and effective leadership. Staff continually encourage children to make choices and express their ideas. Children in early years are happy, confident and articulate. They make progress in all areas of the curriculum and are well-prepared for the transition to Year 1.
6. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available to them. These opportunities develop pupils' skills in drama, music and art, as well as in sport and technology. Pupils' achievements across these subjects can be seen in the displays around the school. Pupils develop their research skills and ability to learn independently because teachers provide opportunities for pupils to pursue and study their individual interests.
7. There are comprehensive and ambitious curriculum plans in place; however, teachers do not always plan lessons with sufficient challenge to engage pupils from the start. When teaching is stronger, pupils settle quickly and work assiduously, making swift progress. Pupils apply themselves to often complex ideas and appreciate teaching that supports them to deepen their understanding.
8. Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. There are effective support systems in place, including the 'who to talk to on a rainy day' concept which is well understood by pupils of all ages. Pupils know that there are a number of adults to talk to if they need help. Pupils value the supportive relationships they have with staff and school leaders.

9. Careers education and preparation for senior school is thorough and there is an embedded 'future schools programme'. This supports pupils to make a positive transition to senior school at 11+ or 13+. Pupils are successful at gaining places at the schools of their choice.
10. There are robust systems in place throughout the school to promote a culture of safeguarding, to minimise the risk of harm and to deal effectively with any pastoral concerns. Pupils and staff understand these systems well.

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 teaching consistently challenges pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding so that this maximises pupils' learning during lessons.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Governors and leaders carry out their responsibilities effectively. All the required checks are made and these are monitored and reviewed systematically. Recordkeeping is robust and thorough. The school has a proportionate approach to risk management, for example in considering the appropriate physical boundaries of the school's extensive site. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place, which are reviewed regularly.
12. Governors work closely with leaders to act as critical friends and to promote the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders welcome their support and challenge. Governors' oversight is informed by their frequent visits to school, the regular time they spend with pupils and their attendance at various events.
13. Leaders are successful in enabling the school to fulfil its aims expressed in the 'three pillars' of 'pastoral life, academic life and life beyond'. Pupils are cared for in school and know that there are adults to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils make clear academic progress and pupils of all abilities achieve well. Pupils grow in confidence and are well prepared for their future lives.
14. Leaders have a robust system in place to monitor pupils' academic progress. Data is analysed closely so that pupils' needs are identified. Pupils are generally given the appropriate challenge and help to make good progress. Pupils who have SEND have support plans in place that set out the additional resources and help that they need. This enables pupils who have SEND to make progress in line with their peers.
15. Leaders have designed a balanced curriculum which is well matched to pupils' abilities and aspirations. Pupils in the pre-prep and middle school develop their knowledge and skills through a creative curriculum that includes an emphasis on practical and collaborative work. In lessons pupils apply the thinking skills they learn through 'The Orley Farm Way' to complete their work. Pupils' speaking and listening skills develop rapidly because they are given many opportunities to 'find their voice'.
16. In early years, children benefit from strong leadership which ensures that staff are trained and confident to plan and teach the curriculum. Policies and practice are jointly created by the staff team and implemented consistently so that children are safe and nurtured.
17. The ethos of collaboration and openness permeates the school at all levels. Leaders and staff work closely together. Leaders provide the right training and guidance so that staff improve their practice and gain new skills. Leaders are reflective and they encourage staff to be the same. Staff think about how they teach and how this could improve. They are willing to take on new ideas. This results in well-considered planning and lessons which typically enable pupils to make good progress.
18. Parents receive a detailed annual report about their children's achievements alongside the opportunity to discuss their children's progress with teachers. Leaders are readily available and encourage parents to attend various information meetings and school events. Parents respond positively to these opportunities.
19. Information is provided annually to the local authority for any pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), to inform the pupils' annual review. Most parents of pupils who have SEND consider that they receive helpful communication about how the school supports their children because of regular communication with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Parents

appreciate that their views are sought when the SENCo develops their children's support plans. Leaders monitor the admissions register and notify the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times.

20. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Teaching does not discriminate against individuals or groups. There is an appropriate and carefully considered accessibility plan in place so that adjustments can be made for any pupils with disabilities. The plan identifies priorities and leaders review the physical environment and the school's educational provision. Leaders take a robust and thorough approach to all matters of health and safety and site security. They ensure that pupils' health and wellbeing needs are met.
21. The complaints procedure is clear and easy to follow. Communication with parents is effective and as a result, there are very few formal complaints. If any do arise, these are handled in line with the policy, and are recorded appropriately.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. The wide-ranging curriculum develops pupils' knowledge and independence, enabling pupils to gain places at the senior schools of their choice. Pupils develop their understanding across a broad range of subjects and apply their problem-solving skills successfully. In the pre-prep and middle school the creative curriculum provides an integrated approach to learning through which pupils of all abilities develop their numeracy, literacy, science, art and performance skills well. In the upper school, pupils apply themselves purposefully to academic work. They develop effective study habits and face challenging work with optimism.
24. Pupils are motivated and keen to do well. Pupils build on their independent learning skills because they are encouraged to take part in research projects including 'Quest' in Year 6, which they present to their peers and parents. Pupils develop life skills through their participation in the 'Edge' programme. This programme equips pupils with an understanding of the world, workplace skills, and practical skills like how to repair a bicycle. Pupils understand the importance of these opportunities alongside their academic work.
25. Children in Reception make rapid progress because the curriculum is broad and very well matched to their interests. Curriculum plans include all areas of learning. Staff use careful observations of children learning alongside ongoing assessments to ensure teaching and children's next steps are purposeful and engaging. Children's knowledge and understanding of phonics and mathematics is secure. Their speaking and listening skills are very well developed for their age.
26. Across the rest of the school, pupils are highly articulate and use language precisely to communicate their point. In English lessons, Year 7 pupils express a nuanced and mature interpretation of poetry text and Shakespeare. Pupils use complex vocabulary accurately to discuss and present their work.
27. Nationally standardised scores show that pupils are generally working above average attainment grades. This includes EAL pupils and those pupils who have SEND. Pupils achieve success in entrance examinations for senior schools often receiving multiple offers, including with scholarships, from a wide range of selective schools.
28. In most lessons teaching is dynamic and responsive, and pupils are given challenging questions to think about. Teaching often enables pupils' good progress, with plans, resources and pace well matched to pupils' abilities. In these lessons, pupils engage their thinking skills and apply their prior learning from the start. Pupils of all abilities are challenged and they make swift progress. There are some occasions when the pace of lessons and activities are less engaging and not so well matched to pupils' abilities. When this happens, the rate of pupils' progress slows and they do not achieve as well as they should.
29. Pupils apply effort in lessons and pupils of all abilities, including those who have SEND, respond conscientiously to feedback. Pupils are keen to improve their work. Written work and creative pieces in art, technology, music and drama are thoughtful and detailed. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their achievements across the curriculum.
30. Pupils benefit from their break times during the school day. They enjoy the large outside space available to them. Many pupils take part in the extensive extra-curricular programme. This supports pupils to develop their sporting, musical, technological and creative skills well. Events such as

'expeditions week' and residential trips enrich pupils' educational experience by providing opportunities to learn new skills and rise to challenges outside of the classroom.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other. There is a strong sense of inclusivity and mutual respect throughout the school because leaders and staff successfully support pupils' wellbeing and promote the school values. Pupils are kind and forgiving. They try to be their best selves.
33. Pupils know and reflect on their own strengths. They identify the areas in which they are confident and their targets to get better. Pupils are supported by pastoral staff and talk with enthusiasm about their lives in school. They persevere when their learning is trickier and this helps them to grow in confidence. Pupils describe how they are willing to take risks and 'have a go' even if they make a mistake because leaders encourage them not to fear failure.
34. In the upper school pupils apply themselves diligently to their work and take pride in their learning. They are keen to make progress, overcome challenges and to respond to feedback from teachers and their peers. Older pupils are highly articulate, with assured presentation skills, because they are given opportunities to research topics independently and then explain their learning to others.
35. Pupils feel safe in school and readily identify the many adults they can talk to, including the school counsellor, wellbeing lead and senior leaders. Throughout the school pupils understand the significance of the 'who to turn to on a rainy day' umbrella, and they readily talk to others when they face difficulties. Leaders listen and respond to pupils' concerns, for example the possible impact of exams on pupils' emotional wellbeing.
36. The anti-bullying strategy is understood well by staff and pupils. Incidents of bullying are rare because pupils raise friendship and behaviour concerns at an early stage. Pastoral leaders listen and provide strategies to support pupils to resolve friendship difficulties. Pupils are supervised effectively at breaks and lunchtimes by members of staff who know them well and encourage collaborative play.
37. There is clear and appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education in place, including relationships and sex education (RSE). The programme is enhanced with regular visits from outside speakers and experts. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of RSE topics. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to talk about the challenges of growing up and preparing for their future lives.
38. In early years and pre-prep, pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing develops well. Pupils are happy and settled. They are supported by the range of opportunities for physical activities as part of the creative curriculum, through 'meadow lessons' and physical education. Pupils enjoy learning outside in the natural world.
39. Older pupils also enjoy the school grounds and the opportunities they have for outdoor learning and physical education. Pupils actively participate in sports and extra-curricular activities, as well as sporting fixtures and competitions. Pupils value the 'hobbies' run by teachers which they can pursue, including art, robotics, music and drama.
40. Pupils behave very well. They are considerate to their peers and to the adults in school because they understand leaders' high expectations. Pupils are self-reflective and consider the impact of their

behaviour on others. Instances of poor behaviour are rare. When they do occur leaders and staff are quick to support pupils to reflect on their actions and make the right choices.

41. Pupils are safe in school because health and safety procedures are comprehensive, monitored carefully and recorded accurately. Pupils are cared for appropriately. Pupils are given medical support by appropriately qualified staff when they need it in the well-equipped medical room. Clear and accurate records are kept, including for the administration of medication. Routines for registration are followed consistently across the school. Leaders are quick to follow up any pupil absences.

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

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

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

43. Pupils are very keen to contribute to school life. They participate enthusiastically in research projects on relevant topics such as engineering, space travel and how to improve their wellbeing. Through these activities pupils consider and develop their views on current issues; for example, how the arts can contribute to mental health and wellbeing, and how technology can enhance the creative arts. Pupils engage with maturity in the election process for house captains, preparing speeches and presenting these with aplomb to their peers.
44. Pupils develop a good understanding of their roles in society. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and are empowered to bring any issues to school leaders, who listen to them. Pupils learn strategies to help them forge appropriate relationships and to navigate friendship difficulties. They value the new 'consent curriculum' which has been introduced by leaders to promote healthy relationships and equip pupils to understand how to be a good friend. Pupils have a thorough understanding of mutual respect and responsibility helped by the school's vertical mentoring groups and inspiring assemblies on issues including neurodiversity and Pride week. These contribute positively to pupils' understanding and appreciation of difference.
45. Older pupils access a well-embedded careers programme. They learn about possible career pathways with opportunities to ask experts about different options for their future lives. Pupils are well supported to make choices about their future.
46. Pupils develop their economic understanding through the PSHE programme and through lessons on personal finance. Pupils are keen to participate in the '£20 challenge'. They bid for funds for an entrepreneurial project in a cross-community initiative with other local schools.
47. Pupils are well aware of the fundamental British values and how these are applied within the school community and in the world beyond. Pupils feel they have a voice, not only through formal systems like the school council, but also because they consider all staff to be approachable and supportive.
48. Pupils enjoy the variety of options on offer in the co-curricular programme, which include overseas trips, performing and creative arts, and sports and technology events. During these experiences, pupils benefit from building relationships with their peers from other year groups.
49. Pupils are well connected with their locality and participate in a number of local events and partnerships, including with a specialist school for pupils who have SEND and with a nearby sixth-form college. The school's many links, for example with a football club and local charities, foster pupils' social development. Pupils develop an understanding of fundraising and can reflect on the positive impact charities have on people's lives.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Governors ensure that there is a robust safeguarding culture in the school and that safeguarding guidance is implemented effectively.
52. Governors and leaders have specific expertise and training in safeguarding and wellbeing. This enables them to carry out their roles successfully. Governors, leaders and staff have regular contact with each other to discuss the school's systems and the latest guidance. Safeguarding is seen as everybody's responsibility. Governors keep pace with any updates and training. They ensure that these are put into practice. Leaders maintain a thorough oversight of the use of the internet through a robust filtering system. They also require pupils to hand in mobile phones at the start of the day. Governors organise an annual safeguarding review and they ensure that any potential weaknesses are raised and addressed. Safeguarding is a standing item for committee and board meetings.
53. Leaders are accessible to staff and they encourage an open culture in which concerns can and should be shared easily. There is regular training for staff both online and in person including on whistleblowing and reporting low-level concerns. Leaders check that staff understand their training through opportunities to consider different scenarios and contextual challenges.
54. Leaders have a well established and effective relationship with safeguarding partners, including the local authority. Leaders understand the importance of swift action and early intervention, so they contact local safeguarding partners in a timely manner if the need arises.
55. Staff are confident about what to do if they have a concern and the school's reporting system is used effectively. Recordkeeping is robust and accurate; regular team meetings ensure that any trends are identified early and next steps communicated on a need-to-know basis. Staff know and follow the clear code of conduct, including the appropriate use of mobile phones. Early years staff have regular supervision meetings where they can raise any safeguarding concerns with leaders.
56. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when online, through their PSHE lessons and visiting speakers. The close links between the pastoral, mental health and safeguarding teams provide effective support for pupils.
57. Safer recruitment checks are completed appropriately for all members of staff, governors and volunteers. These are recorded accurately on the register of staff appointments, which is monitored regularly by the safeguarding governor.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

58. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Orley Farm School
Department for Education number	310/6003
Registered charity number	312637
Address	Orley Farm School South Hill Avenue Harrow Middlesex HA1 3NU
Phone number	0208 869 7600
Email address	pa@orleyfarm.harrow.sch.uk
Website	www.orleyfarm.harrow.sch.uk
Proprietor	Orley Farm School Trust
Chair	Dr Mary Short
Headteacher	Mr Tim Calvey
Age range	4 to 13
Number of pupils	505
Date of previous inspection	3 to 5 March 2020

Information about the school

59. Orley Farm School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 4 and 13 years. It is located in Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex. The school was founded in 1850 as a boys' preparatory school and the pre-preparatory department was opened in 1995. It is divided into three sections: pre-prep for Reception, Years 1 and 2; the middle school for Years 3 and 4 and the upper school for Years 5 to 8.
60. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection there have been changes to the board including a new chair of governors and two new governors, one of whom has governance responsibility for safeguarding.
61. There are 52 children in early years.
62. The school has identified 46 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
63. English is an additional language for 15 pupils.
64. The school states its aims, created by pupils, focus on three core pillars: pastoral life, academic life, and life beyond. Pastorally, the school seeks to help pupils grow socially, emotionally, locally and globally, fostering reflection, responsibility and self-awareness. Academically, the school seeks to provide a creative, balanced curriculum that encourages skills and knowledge in a safe, progress-orientated environment that values success and failure. Beyond the classroom, the school aims to develop individual and collaborative interests, fuelling enthusiasm for learning and offering future life choices.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

18 to 20 June 2024

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

66. 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 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

67. 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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