

School inspection report

12 to 14 March 2024

Sir William Perkins's School

Guildford Road

Chertsey

Surrey

KT16 9BN

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.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEP	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
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. Governors have a firm understanding of their duties and ensure that the school is actively promoting the pupils' wellbeing in line with the school's aims. They ensure that school leaders' decisions reflect the ethos and aims of the school to create a caring community in which pupils are encouraged to fulfil their potential. They have appointed leaders who have the skills and understanding to fulfil their responsibilities consistently. They have made sure that the pupils' educational and pastoral needs are properly resourced, and that staff are well trained.
2. Leaders have established a curriculum which is broad and well balanced. Teachers plan lessons well and manage lessons with sensitivity to the needs of pupils of all abilities. They use assessment processes thoughtfully to support their planning. The outcome is that pupils make consistently good progress across the curriculum and attain results in public examinations in line with or exceeding initial predictions.
3. The curriculum is successful in promoting pupils' understanding of the importance of mutual respect through a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). This successfully supports the pupils' personal development, their self-knowledge and self-confidence. The relationships and sex education (RSE) course is appropriate although leaders' monitoring of the usefulness of this for older pupils is less well developed.
4. Behaviour and anti-bullying policies are implemented correctly. There are appropriate levels of staff supervision and pupils' attendance is carefully monitored. Procedures for ensuring that health and safety measures are followed are rigorous so that the school environment is pleasant and conducive to learning.
5. The curriculum reflects the school's commitment to promoting academic excellence and social awareness. Pupils appreciate the diversity of their school community and are socially aware. They value the freedoms of personal belief, tolerance, and democracy in modern Britain. They are keen to take responsibility and to contribute to their school and to the wider world. A comprehensive careers programme prepares them well for the next stage of their lives.
6. The culture of safeguarding is embedded across the school. Leaders ensure that staff are alert to concerns and report them promptly. Swift action is taken as necessary to support pupils and to promote their wellbeing.

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 step

The Leaders should:

- ensure that they monitor the content and teaching of the RSE course rigorously so that older pupils are confident they have deepening understanding and knowledge.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Senior leaders and governors are united in their commitment to creating a school environment which is supportive and encourages academic ambition. Decisions are made with the pupils' wellbeing at the forefront of leaders' thinking. As a result, the school has a happy and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils enjoy school life and achieve well.
8. Governors have conducted a self-audit and some new governors have joined, extending the professional skill set of the board. Governors have actively sought training to ensure that they all fully understand their duties and responsibilities. There are nominated governors with oversight for specific areas so that the governing body can provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders. This enables governors to have confidence that leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities and that the Standards are being consistently met.
9. School leaders have robust processes to check that school policies are appropriate and are being correctly followed. Leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to ensure equal opportunities for all. They actively encourage staff and pupil discussions on matters of diversity and equality, promoting awareness of these important issues and of the provisions of the Equality Act in respect of protected characteristics.
10. New senior leadership has initiated a rigorous approach to self-evaluation. Leaders have been honest with themselves about the school's success and areas for development. Leaders' planned actions consistently reflect the school's aims, for example in promoting oracy, in order to grow pupils' self-confidence. Governors provide funding for continuous professional training for staff to support the school's drive for academic excellence. Subject leaders monitor and review the work of their departments, identifying further strategies to improve teaching and learning. Leadership at this level is ensuring consistency for pupils, with subject teachers sharing resources and effective practices.
11. Leadership at all levels is sensitive to actual and potential risk, such as those presented by the school's site and its geographical location. Risk assessments are thorough and access to the premises is secure. School leaders are aware of wider potential risks, such as those to pupils' wellbeing and mental health. For example, leaders have considered the possibility that vulnerable pupils might find that the focus on oracy increases their stress levels. Leaders make sure that staff are conscious of this and have strategies to manage this sensitively. Leaders are proactive in seeking pupils' views on how their decisions affect the pupils' satisfaction with their school life, through school council meetings and regular surveys.
12. All required information is easily accessible on the school's website or in printed format from the school. Any complaints have been managed in line with the policy. Leaders are vigilant on all matters of health and safety so that pupils are cared for properly.
13. Governors and school leaders are trained in and understand their responsibilities for safeguarding. Governors ensure that recruitment processes are thorough and that checks are correctly recorded. Leaders ensure that all staff are regularly trained and understand their roles in caring for pupils. They have established links with other agencies to support the pupils as needed. There is a well-understood and united approach to promoting pupils' wellbeing and this helps pupils to feel safe and supported in school.

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

14. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders' aim of developing pupils' curiosity and academic ambition underpins a broad and balanced curriculum that covers all the expected areas of learning. Leaders have increased resources for science and technology subjects while continuing to support a generous breadth of curricular opportunities. This ensures that the curriculum supports pupils' personal interests and career ambitions. Results in GCSE and A-level have been consistently strong over time and most pupils go on to university, a few others choosing to follow apprenticeships.
16. Leaders provide highly effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Individual learning plans for these pupils include the pupils' views on what sort of help they find most useful. These plans are shared with teachers and implemented in lessons. Pupils' progress is closely tracked, and further strategies put in place where pupils require additional support. The specialist learning support staff work closely with the wellbeing team so that there is holistic understanding of pupils' needs and progress. This level of support and monitoring enables pupils with SEND to learn and achieve well.
17. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are assessed for their fluency in English on joining the school. Currently, all such pupils are fluent in English and do not require additional support.
18. Teaching consistently offers appropriate challenge, including for those with high prior attainment. For example, pupils enter academic competitions such as reading in Greek and Latin, a chemistry challenge run by a university and the UK maths challenge up to Olympiad level. Teachers plan lessons well and set high expectations. They use sophisticated subject specific vocabulary and teach pupils to do the same. Teachers are swift to take advantage of pupils' questions to challenge and stimulate the pupils' curiosity, not afraid to make brief reference to matters beyond the syllabus.
19. Teachers know their pupils well and manage their lessons with the specific needs or sensitivities of individuals in mind. Teachers use assessment information to ensure that pupils are supported or challenged appropriately. Teachers utilise a range of strategies during lessons to check that pupils understand new material and see how it links with previous learning. Teachers' feedback to pupils on their work gives them precise and helpful advice. Pupils are appreciative of this guidance, using it to produce work which shows marked improvement.
20. Pupils are highly self-motivated and responsible in their attitude to their work. They listen attentively as their teachers speak and respond thoughtfully when questioned. Set to work, they immediately settle to the task without time wasting. Discussions are focused and productive, as in those of pupils in Year 9 on whether the joke played on Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* was 'going too far'. In a product design lesson, pupils spoke passionately about their projects and the potential of technology for solving social problems. Leaders have established a culture in which high expectations are the norm and pupils are keen to learn. As a result, pupils make consistently good progress. They reflect on their own learning, feeling satisfaction in developing a deeper understanding of their subjects. Their recognition that they are making progress further motivates them to work hard.
21. Leadership encourages pupils to take full advantage of the extensive range of opportunities beyond the classroom that the school offers. In these, pupils enjoy developing their own skills and interest.

Pupils were fascinated by what they learnt in a dissection club run by sixth-form pupils. They access the art room outside lessons, further developing their creativity and skills as is evident in the displays of their art work around the school. Involvement in activities also develops the pupils' organisational and leadership skills, for example in producing the school magazine.

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

22. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

23. The pupils' mental health is centrally important to leaders' decisions in all aspects of school life. This results in a culture which supports the pupils' growth in emotional intelligence, empathy and respect for others, regardless of differences. Pupils describe the school as inclusive and welcoming, a place where they are safe to be themselves.
24. The safeguarding team, personalised learning team and the staff of the wellbeing room work closely together to plan agreed responses to pupils' needs. They share sensitive information appropriately. This enables them to provide a coherent and consistent approach to help pupils manage their mental health.
25. The wellbeing room provides a calming, comfortable and well-used space for pupils who need a short time away from the classroom. The relaxing physical environment and the sensitive support of the wellbeing staff in the room encourage pupils to reflect quietly on strategies to manage pressure. As a result, they develop their self-knowledge and the self-confidence to cope with setbacks.
26. The curriculum and the co-curricular programme promote the pupils' physical health. There are numerous sporting options and clubs available. Pupils show determination in developing their physical skills to a high level; rowers, for example, train on most mornings. Pupils know the importance of exercise and balanced nutrition for their mental wellbeing as well as their physical health.
27. In line with leaders' drive to promote oracy, teachers call upon pupils in lessons at random to give their opinions, encouraging them to speak in front of their peers. Pupils provide thoughtful and reasoned responses to questions, knowing that monosyllabic answers will not be enough. This strategy, used across all departments, is building pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. This was evident in a lunchtime concert, where pupils in Year 8 were self-assured and mature as they introduced their pieces to an audience of peers and parents.
28. The PSHE programme ensures that pupils reflect upon their personal qualities and on building positive relationships. The friendly, respectful relationships between pupils and staff evidence the success of the RSE course in this respect. The content of the sex education provided is appropriate overall, especially for younger pupils. The course becomes repetitive for older pupils, with the same presentations for pupils from Year 10 to Year 13. The assessment of these pupils' knowledge following RSE sessions has not been sufficiently rigorous to provide leaders with real insight into the older pupils' understanding of and confidence in managing sensitive matters such as their sexual health.
29. School leaders set a clear expectation that self-disciplined and responsible behaviour should be the norm. Pupils' demeanour reflects this; they are attentive, responsive and polite. Staff members model the school's expectations appropriately, although there is some inconsistency in the dealing with minor misbehaviour. Careful records are kept of the few instances when behaviour warrants a serious sanction. These are applied proportionately, with mistakes being seen as learning points. Any use of inappropriate language with racial or religious overtones is handled swiftly and firmly. Bullying is rare and again managed effectively, with restorative conversations and suitable sanctions applied.

30. Staff duty rotas ensure that pupils are appropriately supervised. Admissions and attendance records are maintained correctly and the local authority informed should a pupil leave or join the school at a non-standard time. Should a pupil's attendance record cause concern, leaders work in a timely way with relevant external agencies.
31. The grounds and premises are well maintained. The corridors and classrooms are bright and clean, providing a pleasant, welcoming working environment. Checks of health and safety matters are carried out regularly, recorded and action taken as necessary. Appropriate numbers of staff are trained in first aid and policies are carefully followed.

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

32. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

33. The curriculum encourages the pupils to be curious about the world, in line with the school's vision. It prompts pupils to reflect on the impact of human decisions on the environment, for example in Year 8 discussions on deforestation in Costa Rica. Displays of pupils' work in the main corridor reflect the pupils' appreciation of the diverse beliefs and cultures within modern Britain. Pupils' comments on their recent trip to a local gurdwara showed their ability to reflect thoughtfully and respectfully on their own and others' faiths.
34. The curriculum also encourages pupils not to accept stereotypical ideas but to think critically about global matters, such as the impact on a society of a colonialist past. Respect for the equal worth of all, regardless of differences such as ability, gender or race, is a key value of the pupils. They understand how a democratic system works and experience this in their active involvement in the school pupil councils and voting for school prefects and heads of house.
35. The well-planned PSHE curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about and discuss British political and legal structures. This helps prepare them to become socially aware and responsible citizens of modern Britain. Pupils have a firm understanding of the difference between right and wrong and know the importance of respect for the law in a harmonious, respectful society.
36. Leaders encourage pupils to think about their futures from the start of their time in the school. There is a comprehensive careers programme, including annual careers and higher education fairs, to provide pupils with accurate and impartial careers advice. The life-skills programme in the sixth form has been reviewed this year. It includes sessions on employability skills and budgeting as well as individual guidance on university application so that pupils are well prepared for life beyond school.
37. The curriculum and enrichment programmes challenge pupils to develop astute economic awareness. In considering regional inequalities, pupils reflected analytically on complex political and economic decision-making. Younger pupils have been successful in a £10 challenge, starting small businesses and making considerable profits, some of which they donate to charity. Older pupils are currently at the top of the leader board in a national entrepreneurial competition sponsored by a prominent business figure.
38. School leaders encourage pupils to see generosity as a key value and the pupils respond positively. Each house raises money for the charity of its choice; these cover international, national and local charities. The school as a whole supports a charity providing education for pupils in Nepal. As well as raising money for this, a group of pupils has visited Nepal, widening their understanding of Nepalese culture and the problems faced by their sponsored charity. In the course of the visit, pupils made a physical contribution by building a new playground for a school.
39. Pupils give their time and skills generously, for example designing and building accessible furniture for a local museum. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is popular with pupils, who give hours of volunteering in school and locally as they work for their award. Pupils are keen to take responsibility within the school, volunteering to run clubs as well as to take on the post of heads of house or school prefects. Charity prefects and house captains organise fundraising activities, which last year generated several thousand pounds.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

41. Governors undertake an annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures as part of their commitment to promoting the pupils' wellbeing. They understand their responsibility for the monitoring and filtering of internet usage and receive regular reports on this. A designated governor meets regularly with the DSL and safeguarding is a standard item on the agenda for governors' meetings.
42. The designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) undertake regular training, including in the Prevent policy, to ensure that their knowledge is current. They lead annual formal training sessions of all staff and provide regular updates. Records of training are carefully maintained. Training enables staff to be secure in their knowledge of their safeguarding responsibilities and the procedures to follow. Staff are quick to contact the DSLs with any concerns, and DSLs are equally swift to make sure relevant staff are alerted to pupils' emerging needs. This means that there is a strong safety net in place to support pupils as needed.
43. Members of the DSL team meet weekly to review any current and emerging issues. The records of concerns and actions taken show their clear and compassionate understanding of their pupils and the speed of their actions in response to need. When there are issues, the DSLs strive to establish positive relationships with families and to work with them in supporting their children. DSLs have established solid relationships with the relevant agencies and consult them whenever needed. They respond sensitively to pupils' needs, for example by finding appropriate support for pupils who find school attendance difficult.
44. The PSHE programme includes teaching pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when working online. Discussions with pupils show their solid understanding of this. The DSLs have created webinars on e-safety which are posted on the school website, to support parents' understanding.
45. Those involved in the recruitment process have a confident understanding of the reasons for carrying out the necessary checks. This is completed meticulously in line with all relevant statutory guidance and the results are appropriately recorded on a single centre register.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

46. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Sir William Perkins's School
Department for Education number	936/6535
Registered charity number	1060597
Address	Sir William Perkins's School Guildford Road Chertsey Surrey KT16 9BN
Phone number	01932 574900
Email address	head@swps.org.uk
Website	www.swps.org.uk
Proprietor	Sir William Perkins Educational
Chair	Mrs Melanie Duke
Headteacher	Ms Debbie Picton
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	569
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2022

Information about the school

47. Sir William Perkin's School is an independent day school for female pupils aged between 11 and 18. It is a limited company and has charitable status. It is located in the Surrey town of Chertsey. The directors and trustees of the company and of the charitable foundation compose the school's governing body. The headteacher took up her post in September 2023.
48. The school has identified 122 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
49. English is an additional language for 72 pupils.
50. The school states its aims are to create a caring, innovative environment in which pupils can develop qualities of curiosity, academic ambition, and generosity. It aims to enable pupils to fulfil their individual potential and to grow in confidence so that they become well-qualified, unselfish members of society.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 March 2024

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

52. Inspection activities included:

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

53. 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

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