

# School inspection report

03 October 2023 to 05 October 2023

## **St Catherine's School**

Station Road  
Bramley  
Guildford  
Surrey  
GU5 0DF

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
Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation .....	7
Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing .....	8
Section 4: Pupils’ social and economic education and contribution to society.....	10
Safeguarding.....	11
School details .....	12
Information about the school .....	13
Inspection details .....	13

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities have appropriate skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the requirements of relevant standards and statutory guidance are met consistently. Leaders' self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the school in meeting its aims is thorough and well developed. Leaders demonstrate a systematic and effective approach to risk management.
2. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a broad curriculum, including an effective and wide-ranging extra-curricular programme. As a result, pupils develop a love of learning. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress.
3. Pupils look forward to and enjoy an extensive range of opportunities to develop their confidence and a sense of belonging through an enriching extra-curricular programme. Leaders ensure that pupils can choose from a suitable balance of activities to meet a wide range of interests. Pupils find the distinctive extra-curricular offer supports their sense of wellbeing. This provision is a significant strength of the school.
4. Teachers are passionate about their subjects and demonstrate strong subject knowledge across all phases of the school. In most lessons, teachers use assessment data effectively to inform their planning so that they are able to support pupils across the ability range to make good progress. However, where planning is less effective, pupils do not make progress in line with the school's expectations.
5. Leaders successfully promote positive relationships among pupils which enhance their personal development. Leaders have ensured that the highly effective personal, social, health and economic education programme (PSHE) is fully embedded. Leaders' provision for boarding enables pupils to develop a strong sense of belonging and makes a significant positive contribution to pupils' personal development and wellbeing.
6. Premises and accommodation, including for boarding, are maintained to a high standard. There are effective systems in place for health and safety, fire risk management and first aid. Leaders support pupils to live a healthy lifestyle by ensuring that pupils have plentiful access to enjoyable, nutritious and well-balanced meals.
7. The school effectively promotes pupils' contributions to society through a range of pupil and staff initiatives in the school and wider community. Leaders have created a strong focus on social and economic wellbeing which provides pupils with opportunities to engage in enterprise and charitable endeavours.
8. Pupils are empowered to take responsibility for the next steps in their lives through the support of a comprehensive, inspiring and highly successful careers programme for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in the Prep School and throughout the senior school. Leaders have successfully created opportunities for girls to connect with a network of over 8,500 former and current parents, staff and alumnae. This network is a powerful tool that is actively utilised to benefit the current girls with access to 'Uni

Buddies' who provide extensive career connections, mentoring and guidance. This is a significant strength of the school.

9. Effective arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils across all phases of the school.

### **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**

1. Leaders should ensure that all teaching in the senior school adopts the most engaging aspects of the majority of lessons to ensure that pupils are consistently stretched and challenged.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

2. Leaders' self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's success in meeting its aims is thorough and well-developed. Alongside the governors' comprehensive five-year strategy plan, senior leaders regularly review areas of the school's provision and use the actions of the detailed development plan to inform next steps for all stakeholders.
3. Governors are well informed about the school through a thorough and rigorous system of committees, policy and practice reviews. Governors ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities have appropriate skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the requirements of relevant standards and statutory guidance are met consistently.
4. Senior leaders' vision, developed over a number of years, has enabled extensive opportunities to support pupils' learning and personal development across the curriculum. Leaders, including those in early years and boarding, support staff in ensuring that robust policies and schemes of work are implemented across the school. Leaders ensure that the school promotes principles of equality through an established ethos of respectful and fair treatment of all pupils.
5. Leaders and staff successfully encourage pupils to develop a love of learning and to develop the ability to think creatively and independently. Leaders successfully promote wellbeing through a range of pupil-led and staff-initiated activities. Staff are actively available to offer support across all areas of school life, including in boarding. Leadership of the well-organised boarding provision ensures that boarders are kept physically safe, and are encouraged to develop skills of independence, self-reliance and confidence, in line with the boarding aims and ethos.
6. Leaders adopt a systematic and effective approach to the management of risk. Risk assessments for all areas of the school, trips and activities are regularly reviewed and quality assured by the appropriate staff. This ensures considerations of risks to the safety and wellbeing of all pupils are prioritised with suitable provision in place to minimise risk.
7. Leaders support parents by ensuring that useful information is easily accessible from the school website or by request. The school publishes and implements an effective and suitable complaints procedure. Complaints are responded to in a timely manner, within published timescales.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

8. Leaders ensure that the well-planned and enriching curriculum is both appropriate and broad. Pupils develop a love of learning as a result of the supportive academic and pastoral care which includes a wide range of additional subjects and activities.
9. Children in the early years make a good start to Reception because of the detailed knowledge staff have about them on entry to the school. Staff build on this knowledge to support children in Reception to make good progress toward the early learning goals. Leaders have ensured that there are robust procedures in place to ensure that the children continue to make good progress as they move into Year 1. Clear and well-pitched teaching ensures that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop well from the Reception class and through the Prep School.
10. Subject-specialist teachers are passionate about their subjects and demonstrate strong subject knowledge across all areas including in the prep school. Teachers use assessment effectively to inform their planning and provide appropriate support to individual pupils. In the most effective lessons, teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of pupils who are stretched and challenged, enabling them to make rapid progress. However, in some lessons in the senior school, teaching is less effective and this limits pupil progress.
11. Pupils across the ability range and from all phases of the school are confident, focused and motivated to learn. As a result of careful and sensitive identification and intervention procedures through the academic mentoring programme, pupils receiving additional learning support consistently make progress in line with their peers.
12. Pupils make good progress in lessons and over time and perform well in external examinations. Pupils' attainment in standardised tests is above the average for pupils taking the same tests nationally, with a high percentage of pupils attaining the highest grades at GCSE and A level. These successes in public examinations lead to successful transitions to a wide range of higher education destinations where pupils study a broad range of subjects.
13. Pupils enjoy an extensive range of opportunities to develop skills beyond the classroom through an enriching extra-curricular programme that inspires in pupils an enthusiastic engagement in purposeful recreation. Music and drama performances are regular features of the school year. Sport is a strong aspect of pupils' lives, and they speak positively about the regular opportunities they have to engage in competitive fixtures, tournaments and festivals. In the sixth form, pupils opt for non-examined subsidiary subjects to enrich their experiences and this enables pupils to, for example, study additional languages, develop their culinary skills, or build a sports car from scratch.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

14. Leaders create a safe and healthy environment in which the wellbeing of pupils is paramount, enabling pupils to enjoy their education and to thrive personally. Senior leaders work together effectively to ensure that academic and pastoral provision including in boarding, supports pupils at all stages of their education. This has created a positive school community which enhances pupils' learning experiences and personal development.
15. Pupils respond positively to the innovative and well-embedded school's bespoke *Life Matters* programme which supports them to develop their understanding of appropriate sex and relationships education. As a result, pupils develop their self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem as well as strategies to protect their own physical and mental wellbeing. In the Prep School, a wellbeing pod and weekly recognition of *wellbeing wonders* further support pupils' development. Pupils throughout the school know who to turn to with problems and they speak highly of the support they receive from adults, including pastoral staff who are well supported by professional counsellors and psychologists. The role of the medical staff as an integral part of the wider pastoral care in the school further supports pupils' wellbeing.
16. Pupils' spiritual development is supported by opportunities within the curriculum which encourage them to think about areas beyond day-to-day activities. The Chaplain encourages pupils of all, some, or no faith to use the chapel for contemplation, mindfulness and reflection. This has helped to create an inclusive culture where pupils are respectful of each other, irrespective of differences in faith. Pupils' appreciation of other religions and traditions is expanded when they learn about Christianity and other world religions as part of their religious studies lessons.
17. Pupils participate in an extensive programme of physical education. The broad range of lessons, activities and sports fixtures on offer, ensures that participation levels are high. Use of outdoor spaces, availability of recreational activities and a promotion of fitness enable pupils to develop strong physical development within a healthy lifestyle.
18. Staff promote opportunities for collaborative working in the classroom. This contributes to a positive atmosphere of mutual respect among pupils and their peers which results in standards of behaviour around the school being consistently high. An effective anti-bullying strategy ensures that bullying is rare. Pupils feel that any instances of less positive behaviour toward others are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, and know what constitutes unacceptable behaviour, including online.
19. Leaders have ensured that the boarding experience enables pupils to develop a strong sense of belonging and pupils appreciate the support they receive both academically and pastorally. Senior boarders who are positive role models take on responsibilities to ensure younger boarders settle in well and subject mentors provide academic support for pupils in the boarding houses.
20. Inclusion is well-managed by leaders and staff, resulting in pupils across the school recognising and supporting school initiatives. For example, pupil leadership opportunities in school include equality, diversity and inclusion monitors in the prep school and inclusion focus groups in the senior school.



21. Pupils are suitably supervised across the site and clear protocols, which maintain their safety, are well-established and understood by all staff and pupils. There are effective systems for health and safety. The school complies with the fire regulations and suitable arrangements are in place for first aid and medical care.
22. Premises and accommodation across all phases of the school are maintained to a high standard. The boarding houses are well lit, clean and comfortable, resulting in boarders feeling safe and secure. Pupils enjoy plentiful, nutritious and well-balanced meals, which contribute to their positive wellbeing.
23. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Pastoral leaders monitor attendance effectively ensuring that they swiftly follow up any absences, thereby minimising the risk of children missing education. Pupils' rate of attendance is high.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

24. Leaders promote pupils' contributions to society through a range of pupil and staff initiatives in the school and wider community. For example, pupils develop their understanding of sustainability and leadership through planned engagement with their member of parliament. Pupils and staff are enthusiastic about the range of activities which give back to the community. For example, local litter picking, visiting care homes, sharing facilities, and supporting pupils with mathematics from local primary schools. All Year 12 pupils take on a prefect role and make an active, personal contribution to the wider school community. Shared experiences with other local schools, for example cross country and athletics, enable pupils to develop a wider view of the world.
25. Leaders have designed a curriculum where pupils have several opportunities to make connections between different aspects of the world in which they live. Themed cross-curricular days where pupils investigate and celebrate aspects of different cultures are an integral part of the curriculum. These result in pupils developing their global awareness and promote greater understanding of people from diverse backgrounds. Leaders have planned assemblies and a range of events which celebrate other cultures, including planned themed dinners celebrating the cuisine of different countries.
26. Leaders have created a strong focus on social and economic wellbeing which provides pupils with opportunities to engage in enterprise and charitable endeavours in the local and wider communities. For example, pupils apply their mathematical skills to explore issues relating to the environment and fundraising.
27. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of democracy. Pupils value the opportunities in school to exercise their rights, for example, through voting for house captains in the Prep School, and other positions of responsibility, participating in silent votes and acting as playground ambassadors. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme supports pupils' understanding of the law and public institutions as part of their preparation for life as British citizens. As a result, all pupils have a clear moral understanding of right and wrong and a developed acceptance of taking responsibility for their own behaviour.
28. Pupils are empowered to take responsibility for the next steps in their lives through the support of a comprehensive, stimulating and highly successful careers programme, which includes frequent and varied contributions from the alumnae body. The high-quality support provided for senior pupils applying to university is strong and includes a system where sixth-form pupils are buddied with former pupils currently studying at the pupils' first choice universities. The school follows the Gatsby benchmarks in its careers programme which enables leaders to structure and monitor the impact of careers provision from Year 5 to the sixth form.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

## Safeguarding

29. Safeguarding induction and training are thorough and regular, enabling staff to be confident to take appropriate action when necessary. Staff are aware of the expectations placed upon them as members of the school community. Staff know and understand the school's safeguarding policy and procedures and understand that they can make a direct referral to children's services if necessary.
30. Staff understand the school's staff code of conduct and whistleblowing policy and staff are confident to act to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils.
31. Leaders respond to safeguarding concerns effectively and ensure systems are in place to safeguard children at risk. Leaders have built an effective culture of safeguarding where early sharing of information and reporting of possible safeguarding concerns is encouraged. There is close liaison between those leaders in safeguarding, SEND and medical care which ensures that the wellbeing of individual pupils is triangulated, addressed and monitored.
32. The designated safeguarding leads take swift action when safeguarding issues arise and they liaise with the appropriate external agencies in line with statutory guidance. Training of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), safeguarding team and other staff is up to date and in line with local requirements.
33. Suitable arrangements for handling of allegations against staff or senior leaders and potential misconduct are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO).
34. Leaders ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment checks and records are conducted as required on a single central record of appointments. The designated governor with responsibility in this area has appropriate skills, experience and training and conducts a full annual audit of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place and their effectiveness is regularly reviewed. Governors, the leadership team and relevant staff have an awareness and understanding of the provisions in place and manage them effectively. They know how to escalate concerns when identified.
35. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The physical and mental health of all pupils involved in any incident is given a high priority. As a result, pupils report that they wholeheartedly feel safe in their school.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

## School details

<b>School</b>	St Catherine's School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	936/6004
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1070858
<b>Address</b>	Station Road Bramley Guildford Surrey GU5 0DF
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stcatherines.info">www.stcatherines.info</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Catherine's School, Bramley
<b>Chair</b>	Matthew P Lowe MBE MA RCDS
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Alice Phillips
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	849
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	173
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	02 October 2019

## Information about the school

36. St Catherine's School is an independent day and boarding school for pupils aged 4 to 18 years. It is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils. The prep school, for pupils from age 4 to 11, and the senior school, for pupils aged from 11 to 18, have their own heads, but the head of the senior school has overall responsibility. The school was founded in 1885 and is a charity governed by its trustees.
37. Pupils are able to board from age 11 in one of the four boarding houses.
38. There are 19 children in the early years part of the school which comprises two Reception classes.
39. The school has identified 94 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
40. English is an additional language for 113 pupils.
41. The school aims are to provide an exceptional all-round education which prepares its pupils for happy and fulfilling lives in a safe and healthy environment in which the wellbeing of its pupils is paramount and enables them to enjoy their education and to thrive personally.

## Inspection details

**Inspection dates**                      03 to 05 October 2023

42. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
- They held discussions with governors, the headteachers, senior leaders and other members of staff
  - They visited all areas of the school, including accommodation for boarders and the early years, and observed lessons, assemblies, registration sessions and extra-curricular activities
  - They scrutinised a range of policies, records, logs and other documentation
  - They viewed and discussed samples of pupils' work alongside pupils and staff
  - They held discussions with groups of pupils from a range of year groups
43. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

### How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

### Independent Schools Inspectorate 2023

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

For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://www.isi.net)