

# School inspection report

23 to 25 April 2024

## **St Dunstan's College**

Stanstead Road

Catford

London

SE6 4TY

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

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

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors and school leaders have a clear vision of what they want the school to be like. They maintain a consistent focus on the school's five core values of courage, creativity, confidence, compassion and curiosity, within an inclusive and challenging environment. Leaders work successfully to create a school community that works together well to promote the wellbeing of pupils.
2. Appropriate systems, policies and procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the organisation of the school. Those relating to educational provision assist the work of teachers and the wider staff within the school. The effective implementation of these initiatives meets the needs of pupils and ensures the successful development of their progress and attainment. Leaders and teachers of the different sections of the school do liaise to promote consistency. This approach to monitoring and review could be further enhanced so that pupils gain full benefit from the development of new ideas in teaching and learning.
3. In the early years setting, leaders have created an imaginative curriculum, which provides plenty of opportunities for the children to develop their creativity and critical thinking, making effective use of the classroom and outdoor layout. Staff encourage children to develop their independence by providing children with a range of resources that children can choose. This helps children develop their knowledge and skills across the early years curriculum.
4. Pupils across the school are highly motivated and keen to learn. They demonstrate confidence and curiosity in their learning and ask thoughtful questions to deepen their understanding and extend their knowledge. They value and make good use of the teachers' wholehearted commitment to supporting pupils' learning.
5. Leaders have put in place an ambitious, timetabled curriculum which provides extensive opportunities for pupils to acquire the broadest of learning experiences. Leaders have taken great care in the design of this multi-faceted programme which is included as part of the school day. There are four separate strands; together these provide the full range of curriculum subjects, an extensive offering of broader learning experiences, a programme of teaching skills for the future and one that focuses on building pupils' wellbeing and self-awareness. The breadth and relevance of this curriculum and leaders' decision that all pupils participate in these opportunities, is a significant strength.
6. The school is a calm and positive community. Pupils understand their responsibilities towards each other and act in a suitable manner. The governors and leaders support this by providing an environment in which everyone can focus confidently on their learning, both inside and outside the classroom.
7. The school's ethos supports leaders in creating a strong community where diversity is celebrated. This works through many facets of school life: through the curriculum, through the varied groups in school, led by pupils which celebrate diversity, and through producing events such as the annual St Dunstan's festival. All these promote respect and understanding among the pupils for everyone in their own school and in the wider local community. This is a significant strength of the school.

8. The school takes all necessary steps to safeguard the welfare of pupils. Staff are suitably trained in the appropriate procedures and understand their responsibilities. Pupils understand the importance of knowing how to stay safe and how to be healthy.

## 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

Leaders should:

- strengthen their procedures for monitoring and review, so that they can more effectively evaluate the impact of new initiatives on pupils across all areas of the school.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors have a clear and secure understanding of their role in ensuring that school leaders have the necessary knowledge and expertise to carry out their responsibilities fully and effectively. Governors have established suitable procedures for monitoring, reviewing and challenging the work of leaders so that pupils enjoy a positive educational experience.
10. The school has produced clear and comprehensive policies which fulfil the required standards and are implemented effectively. The school makes suitable use of professional advice and works in close liaison with external agencies, including for education, health and care (EHC) plans with the local authority. Leaders regularly review the educational provision and ensure that policies and procedures fully support the wellbeing and safety of all pupils.
11. An engaging and well-rounded curriculum in the early years setting, enhanced by an outside area which gives valuable provision for developing children's physical skills, supports the wellbeing of children. Staff have high expectations and are ambitious for the children's learning and achievement.
12. The procedures for assessing risk are robust. Governors show that they understand how to hold leaders to account for identifying and managing potential risks. Staff take responsibility for their particular area to ensure there are controls in place to make the school site and activities as safe as possible. Governors and leaders are well informed about the risks around the school's locality and context and put appropriate and proportionate measures in place so that pupils learn how keep themselves and others safe.
13. There is a clear policy on the handling of parental complaints, and this is implemented effectively. An appropriate record of complaints is maintained, allowing the identification of any trends or patterns. Leaders respond promptly to any concerns raised by parents.
14. The school provides extensive information on its website. Parents receive regular useful information on their children's progress over the course of the year, including pupils' academic attainment and their attitudes to learning.
15. The requirements of the Equality Act are met and a clear accessibility plan which covers both educational and physical needs with defined time frames is in place.
16. An experienced safeguarding team works effectively with the local authorities and other external organisations, to ensure that the welfare of pupils is monitored carefully, and concerns are reported appropriately.

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

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

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

18. The school's wide-ranging and imaginative curriculum offers a broad learning experience for all its pupils, developing their breadth of knowledge and understanding well. There are four identified strands to this timetabled curriculum that take place within the school day. One strand delivers the full spread of curricular subjects. A second strand offers a comprehensive range of opportunities to develop pupils' wider skills and match the five core values of the school, including physical activities, drama, music, art, outdoor pursuits, volunteering, philosophy and engineering. A third strand focuses on preparing pupils for life beyond school, teaching amongst other things, about relationships, financial management and leadership. The fourth strand of the curriculum programme promotes pupils' wellbeing, mental health and resilience, focusing on their unique individuality. Pupils develop their skills, self-understanding and aspiration. This approach prepares pupils very well for their future lives.
19. In the early years, there is a wide-ranging and ambitious programme of activities for children which extends beyond the key areas of learning. This is done through enquiry and play-based approaches to learning. Children are encouraged to be independent. They choose activities that are based on one of the seven areas of learning. They have opportunities to practise their letter formation and develop their writing skills. Children apply their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make when writing unfamiliar words. Children in the early years become proficient readers.
20. In the junior school, pupils experience a broad variety of programmes and activities within the timetabled day which provide opportunities for the pupils to develop their creativity and critical thinking. Teaching encourages pupils to take an active involvement in their learning. The curriculum and teaching are designed to take into account pupils' prior knowledge as well as their interests. Teachers demonstrate comprehensive subject knowledge and use resources well to facilitate effective learning. Effective feedback from teachers helps pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work and deepen their understanding. Pupils make good progress and achieve well as a result.
21. In the senior school, the teaching is also effective. Pupils work successfully and positively with their teachers. Teachers' deep subject knowledge enables greater challenges for pupils and the act of learning becomes a pleasurable and fulfilling experience. Lessons are engaging, purposefully paced, well-planned and adopt an effective range of teaching strategies, built on the teachers' deep understanding of their pupils and their individual needs. In turn pupils display independence in their work, intellectual curiosity, and an assured command of their subject material. Pupils demonstrate a desire to advance their knowledge and they possess effective learning skills. They are able to make links and consolidate previous learning, they are assiduous in their approach and are determined to succeed.
22. Academic leaders have established a thorough system of assessing pupils' progress and achievement. There is effective use of assessment data to ensure that lessons are appropriate to pupils' ages, aptitudes and prior knowledge. The school reports regularly to parents about their child's attainment and their attitudes to learning.
23. The school's academic leaders have high aspirations for pupils' learning and achievement and work successfully to promote the learning experience for pupils. Ideas are shared across the sections of

the school, but this is not fully embedded in all departments as a practice and so there is scope for enhancing the development of pupils' learning still further.

24. Teaching across the school shows a thorough understanding of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are well informed and plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils who have SEND. Staff receive regular training to develop the strategies they need to support pupils well through a combination of in-class and individual support.
25. Teachers support pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) effectively and help them through the use of visual aids, glossaries, buddy systems and subtle checks for understanding in lessons. Pupils are assessed when they arrive at the school and are supported from the start so that they are able to work effectively in the classroom, quickly acquiring greater fluency and understanding of spoken and written English.

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

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



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

27. The school has adopted a well-structured programme that ensures that pupils learn the value of a healthy and balanced diet. The Wellness centre, staffed by experienced, qualified and caring staff, caters effectively for the pupils' physical and emotional health. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the range of sports available to them and speak positively of the benefits that this physical activity brings them in terms of their overall fitness and readiness to work in the classroom.
28. Children in the early years and pupils throughout the junior school are respectful of each other, reflecting the respectful and thoughtful approach shown to them by the staff. They are comfortable demonstrating their individuality, develop positive relationships and are interested in each other's ideas. They have a clear understanding from a young age of the importance of including and respecting everyone. The wide range of activities available to them, beyond the classroom, further enhances their understanding of their own characters and supports them in developing social and communication skills.
29. Pupils in the senior school also show respect for each other. They learn and work in a collaborative way, listening to each other's views and thoughts, offering intelligent development of class discussions and learning. Where a pupil shares a view which is incorrect or out of context, teachers explain this and other pupils are mindful of all ideas shared, whether correct or incorrect.
30. Pupils are confident and engaging when talking to adults. The curriculum builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem through activities such as drama, music, and public speaking. Pupils are reflective individuals, both when thinking about their work and in the way they interact with each other.
31. The school promotes a clear culture of respecting diversity, one in which pupils are courteous and considerate to one another. When pupils make poor decisions, the school adopts a restorative approach which encourages pupils to re-establish relationships quickly and helps pupils to understand the impact of their actions upon each other. When misbehaviour does occur, incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively by staff.
32. Robust systems help leaders to identify risks and put appropriate controls in place. These are strengthened through external audits and the close monitoring of health and safety aspects of the school site. They ensure there are appropriately trained and experienced staff who identify and manage the risk of harm to the pupils' wellbeing, as well as ensuring the provision and maintenance of the premises and accommodation.
33. There is suitable provision for pupils' medical needs within the Wellness centre. Staff are on duty all through the school site and are supported by prefects. Pupils know how to seek help if needed. The systems used for attendance, absence and admissions, are thorough, easy to operate and are suitably monitored. Appropriate referrals are made to the local authority when a pupil joins or leaves the school outside the normal admission times.
34. The school places a great emphasis on developing pupils' sense of responsibility. This is apparent both in lessons and throughout the school day. Prefects play an important role in the daily life of the community, taking the lead in a wide variety of areas, such as the diversity programme and the

student parliament. Pupils are clearly very proud of their school and value the fact that they can contribute so directly to their school, developing strategies for improvement and development.

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

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

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

36. There is a whole-school ethos and culture of promoting respect, kindness and tolerance amongst its pupils and staff. The school's leaders have established an approach which focuses on race, sex and gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief and disability and ensures that appropriate representation and respect is allocated to all. This programme gives opportunities for pupils to champion and raise awareness of different characteristics, and promote respect for all in the community. The pupils' contribution is a crucial element of this programme. Pupils lead the way with their initiatives, such as their college parliament and the organisation of the annual festival that celebrates identity and achievement and involves the local community. The result is a thoughtful school community of genuine diversity, driven by a joint approach from staff and pupils.
37. Children in the early years show that they understand what factors make a society positive and supportive, alongside how they can make a meaningful contribution to the community in which they live. They devised rules for the imaginary scenario of dinosaurs visiting their classroom, so they could all get on with each other.
38. In the junior school, lessons give pupils the opportunity to acquire an appreciation of and respect for different cultures. These lessons also promote tolerance and respect between different cultural traditions. Pupils share their learning confidently and with pride.
39. The curriculum encourages pupils to develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. In the senior school pupils take responsibility for their behaviour, and this is apparent in the calm and ordered environment in which they learn. Pupils demonstrate that they understand the rules, expectations and moral code that underpins their community. They take responsibility for the various roles they play within the school, and they behave with compassion, understanding and respect towards their peers. When misbehaviour does occur, strategies used by staff often result in pupils recognising their mistakes and how to avoid repeating them.
40. A strategic intent of the school's leaders and governors is to demonstrate the importance of making a difference in society. This can be seen in the work undertaken with local schools, charities and other events such as the summer festival with its community emphasis. There is wide participation in both the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE).
41. Activities that are designed to develop pupils' understanding of economic education are planned throughout the school. For example, pupils in the junior school develop an understanding of the difference between wants and needs, alongside an awareness of the variety of different methods that can be used to purchase goods and services. Economic education in the senior school is primarily taught as part of the 'skills for the future' strand of the curriculum with topics such as personal finance and budgeting for university.
42. There is a thoughtful approach to preparing pupils for their futures, ensuring that they are provided with a range of opportunities to help them become informed of the decisions that need to be made at transition periods of their education. The support provided encompasses visiting speakers, higher education and careers conventions, visits to universities, online subject talks and regular meetings with parents and pupils to update the advice and guidance.

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

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

## Safeguarding

44. The school's safeguarding policy is detailed and comprehensive and meets the requirements of the statutory guidance. The curriculum provides clear guidance on how pupils should use information and communication technology and how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils understand that online safety is a priority, and the school offers support for parents, providing helpful information through their portal.
45. The governors monitor safeguarding procedures with one governor, experienced in this area, designated with this responsibility. This governor meets regularly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in the school and offers appropriate support and challenge. There is also a formal annual review of the arrangements for safeguarding undertaken by governors.
46. Liaison with external agencies such as the police and children's services is effective and contact is made with them promptly when required. The safeguarding team also make effective use of specialist, commercial advisory groups to provide support.
47. The members of the safeguarding team have appropriate, up to date training. The DSL keeps all the staff informed of changes in policy and practice. Staff have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding policy and procedures and understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe.
48. The school's governors monitor regularly the procedures for staff recruitment. They ensure that the required checks are completed in accordance with statutory guidance and are maintained accurately for all staff and volunteers.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	St Dunstan's College
<b>Department for Education number</b>	209/6032
<b>Registered charity number</b>	312747
<b>Address</b>	St Dunstan's College Stanstead Road Catford London SE6 4TY
<b>Phone number</b>	020 8516 7200
<b>Email address</b>	collegeoffice@stdunstans.org.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.stdunstans.org.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Dunstan's Trustee Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Paul Durgan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Nicholas Hewlett
<b>Age range</b>	3-18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1157
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	December 2021

## Information about the school

50. St Dunstan's College is an independent co-educational day school in Catford. Dating back to 1408, it moved to its current site in 1888, and it retains close links with the City of London. It is overseen by St Dunstan's Trustee Ltd, the directors of which are governors of the school.
51. The school is divided into four sections: Pre-Prep, which includes the EYFS and Year 1 and Year 2; Prep (from Year 3 to Year 6); Senior (Year 7 to Year 11); and a Sixth Form.
52. Children in the early years are part of the Pre-Prep section of the school.
53. The school has identified 303 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
54. English is an additional language for 30 pupils.
55. The school states its aims are to encourage its pupils to thrive as individuals by offering a broad, liberal, Renaissance education. It promotes values of courage, creativity, confidence, compassion and curiosity through an inclusive ethos which aims to engender an academically ambitious, progressive and happy community. The school's motto 'Albam Exorna', translating as 'Adorn the White', refers to the white shield as part of the school's crest, which leaves three quarters empty as a blank canvas onto which is emblazoned the as-yet-unwritten story of each St Dunstan's pupil.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

23-25 April 2024

56. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

57. 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 headteacher, 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.

58. 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)**.

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