

# School inspection report

23 to 25 April 2024

## **St Neot's Preparatory School**

St Neot's Road

Eversley

Hook

Hampshire

RG27 0PN

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>4</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....	4
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>5</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 .....	14
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>17</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders are experienced and knowledgeable. They are effective in their roles because they understand their responsibilities and take action to promote pupil wellbeing. Leaders listen to feedback from members of the school community, and act in response. They evaluate the school's provision on an ongoing basis, refining and improving pupils' experience both in and out of the classroom.
2. The school values of happiness, kindness, self-belief, honesty and respect are understood and appreciated by all members of the community. These values are effectively translated into a culture which encourages positive relationships, with pupil wellbeing at the centre of all that the school does. As a result, pupils say they feel happy and safe at school.
3. The high standards of behaviour of the pupils, which are a consequence of this culture and the school values, are a significant strength of the school. Positive behaviour in the classroom results in pupils, including children in the early years, making good progress in their learning. They work effectively and sensibly in collaboration with one another. Pupils enjoy their recreational time because there are few disagreements or incidents. Pupils appreciate each other's company over lunch at mixed age tables, engendering a family atmosphere in which pupils of all ages are valued equally. Unkindness and bullying are very rare but, when incidents do occur, leaders manage and resolve them swiftly and appropriately.
4. Leaders have curated a broad and appropriate curriculum for children and pupils of all ages, which includes outdoor learning, making use of the school's grounds. Pupils make good progress in their education because many teachers are effective in meeting the individual needs of their pupils. Teachers do this by careful planning and by reflecting on how the pupils learn and respond. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs met effectively through the teaching and support they receive both in the classroom and from dedicated and skilled learning support teachers. However, some lessons limit the opportunity for pupils to explore and extend their learning further.
5. Leaders and governors understand their responsibilities to record and monitor relevant information relating to safeguarding, behaviour, complaints and recruitment of staff. In the main these are carried out effectively, but a few data entry errors in the single central record of appointments indicate that the checking processes in place are not as rigorous as they need to be.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

### Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that all lessons consistently provide suitable levels of challenge for all pupils
- ensure that any errors or omissions to the single central record of appointments are corrected in a timely manner.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders have introduced a set of school values which are shared with and understood by all members of the community. This in turn fosters a positive culture of co-operation in which pupils are well supported and looked after in their education and wellbeing, and the high levels of positive behaviour among the pupils are attributable to this culture. As a result, pupils and their parents feel very positively about their school experience and are highly supportive of the leadership team, as are staff at the school.
7. Leaders use their knowledge and experience to develop the curriculum and to deploy teachers and other staff effectively to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) provide a suitable plan of teaching and learning opportunities so that the children's individual needs are appropriately met.
8. Leaders effectively monitor teaching and learning and consider how to improve the school further. In their self-evaluation, leaders listen intently to the views of staff, parents and pupils themselves so that everyone feels they have a part to play in making the school better. An example of this in practice has been the focus on outdoor learning and skill development, which staff and parents appreciate is a positive part of the pupils' curriculum.
9. Leaders communicate clearly with parents and provide them with the necessary information about their children's progress, including written reports and frequent grade cards. There are few formal complaints because leaders resolve any concerns effectively at the initial stage. Nevertheless, where concerns are escalated, they are handled appropriately according to the school's policy.
10. Leaders ensure that accurate records are kept with regard to safeguarding, behaviour and bullying, including any communication with external agencies. If any pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, leaders share the necessary information with the local authority.
11. Leaders ensure that robust systems are in place for the recruitment of appropriately skilled and experienced staff, with all the required checks taking place before an appointment is made.
12. Leaders have an appropriate appreciation of risk and how to manage it. For example, a late morning registration point has been introduced, not in response to any incident but because of an awareness of potential risk. Assessments of risky areas or activities in the school, as well as those for trips away from school, are appropriately thorough.
13. Governors play an important role in monitoring the work of leaders, as well as helping to shape the strategy to improve the school further. Governors receive reports on various aspects of school life, meet with and question leaders, and directly observe school activities, speaking to pupils and staff. As a result, they are able to assure themselves that leaders have the necessary skills to carry out their duties effectively and are doing so. Governors ensure that they have among them a range of skills and experiences, including in education, so that corporately they have the knowledge to carry out their duties effectively.
14. Governors also monitor records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and bullying. Governors check that the single central record of appointments is up to date and accurate. However, these checks have not always been as rigorous as they should be and, as a result, errors have not been noticed and corrected.

15. Leaders meet their responsibilities under the Equality Act and take active steps through an appropriate plan to make the school more accessible to pupils and potential pupils with additional needs. The school has also proactively considered the needs of parents, for example in their accessibility to their children's classrooms where this is appropriate.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

17. Leaders have devised and developed a broad curriculum which meets the needs of children and pupils of all ages and abilities. Pupils develop linguistic, mathematical and scientific skills as well as learning in humanities, French, physical education and creative subjects. The curriculum is further enhanced by activities such as outdoor learning, which encompasses pursuits as diverse as bushcraft and mountain biking whilst encouraging the development of learning skills such as teamwork and resilience. Older pupils follow the framework of the pre-senior baccalaureate (PSB) although leaders adapt the programme to suit the needs of the pupils at the school.
18. Pupils make good progress from their starting points because of the care and dedication the teachers provide resulting in attention being given to each pupil's individual needs. The high standards of pupil behaviour in the classroom support all pupils to learn effectively. Parents overwhelmingly agree that the school helps their children to advance their learning.
19. Many teachers deliver effective lessons with enthusiasm and thorough subject knowledge and pupils respond with energy and enthusiasm. For example, in Year 6 English pupils consider stories embedded within a primary narrative and eagerly scan the text to find suitable quotations. In Year 5 history, pupils consider, discuss and prioritise the various contributory factors which led to World War II. Projects such as the Viking day in Year 4 inspire pupils to enjoy their learning.
20. However, sometimes the pace of the lesson and the nature of the tasks do not always provide stretch and challenge to all pupils, including the most able. As a result, they make less swift progress than they are capable of. In many lessons teachers are clear in the goals they set for pupils, which helps the pupils to reach the target. However, on occasions these limit the opportunity for pupils to be extended, or to extend themselves, beyond the objective set.
21. The range and quality of teaching methods in the early years excite and engage the children. As a result, they make good progress in their linguistic and mathematical learning, in their artistic pursuits and in their developing understanding of the world. Children display a steadily growing vocabulary and express themselves confidently.
22. Children in the early years and older pupils in the school benefit from the environment that has been created for them in the woodland area. Teachers assess risk and monitor carefully but do not intervene unnecessarily. As a result, children and pupils take carefully considered risks and demonstrate resilience in their activities. They demonstrate creativity, for example Year 2 pupils sell imaginary 'healthy salads' to one another, creating cutlery and utensils out of sticks.
23. Pupils who have SEND also make good progress because their individual needs are successfully met as a result of detailed planning and careful teaching in the classroom. For some pupils this is reinforced by additional input from the learning support team, who also provide guidance for teachers. Because of this, teachers know when pupils might need movement breaks or sensory aids, or a clear explanation in the morning of the day ahead, to help them focus on their learning.
24. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. Their proficiency in English is high and no additional support is required, but policies and procedures are in place were this to be necessary.

25. Leaders implement systems and processes for capturing and evaluating data relating to pupils' progress and teachers generally use this information effectively to inform future planning to meet the individual needs of pupils. The progress and development of children in the early years is also monitored effectively.
26. Teachers implement an effective whole school marking policy which provides detailed guidance to and dialogue with pupils. Because of the focus on 'what went well' and 'even better if', pupils appreciate that this feedback will help them to make further progress whilst having confidence in their achievements.
27. Pupils are encouraged to develop independence in their learning, for example in Year 3 where activities in a computing lesson are suitably planned for pupils to extend their coding skills, or in Year 5 design technology where the teacher reminds pupils that they are in control of both the design and building processes of their WW2 Andersen shelters. Teachers encourage pupils to find answers for themselves where it is felt they are capable of doing so, for example in Year 4 English where pupils are challenged to look up spellings in a dictionary or find a synonym in a thesaurus. Teachers also encourage pupils to learn from mistakes, for example in French where Year 7 pupils identify errors in a set of sentences. As a result of these activities pupils understand how to answer questions for themselves and to become inquisitive, thoughtful learners. The development of these skills is evident in the essay writing undertaken by older pupils in which they analyse sources, explore different views and draw conclusions.
28. Teachers give older pupils and their parents guidance in order to make sensible and aspirational choices for future school applications, and teachers provide appropriate support to help pupils achieve their objectives. As a result, all pupils are able to progress to their chosen senior schools and a number win scholarships either for their academic ability or in sporting or creative disciplines.
29. Leaders curate an extensive array of extra-curricular activities and frequently change aspects of the programme to introduce new opportunities for the pupils such as knitting, ultimate frisbee and model aeroplane flying, alongside perennial clubs such as in sport, music and drama. Pupils enjoy the additional experiences of residential trips, year group dramatic productions and, for the Year 8 pupils, their leavers' programme.

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

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



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

31. Pupils develop and display high levels of self-confidence coupled with a sense of humility. This is because of the well-understood school values, a well-defined system of praise and reward for modelling those values, including the selection of 'values ambassadors', and because teachers relentlessly encourage and support pupils to do so.
32. The curriculum, including outdoor learning and the framework of the PSB, gives pupils a clear roadmap to develop skills such as resilience, adaptability and decision-making. This includes the youngest children in the early years, who respond positively to the guidance of their teachers to take an active role in developing their learning and environment. For example, children help to improve their 'mud kitchen' and help to build their ride-on cars. Older pupils demonstrate perseverance and teamwork skills when completing a logic challenge in their outdoor learning lesson.
33. Pupils who have SEND demonstrate confidence. This is in part because leaders and teachers have been clear to articulate the message that additional needs can also be seen as 'learning superpowers', but also because the school community is supportive and non-judgmental of those who have any form of difference.
34. Pupils are very clear in their understanding of protected characteristics. Pupils and children in the early years demonstrate this understanding in their behaviour, and in their respect for and tolerance of one another. Older pupils demonstrate advanced understanding of topics such as unconscious bias and stereotypes.
35. As a result of their personal and social education, assemblies, discussions and many displays around the school, pupils learn about their wellbeing and demonstrate a growing understanding of how to take responsibility for their own self-care, as well as being cared for both at home and at school. For example, the idea for a wellbeing garden emanated from the school council and is well used by those pupils who want a calm environment in which to enjoy their recreational time. Leaders put appropriate measures in place to support pupils who may feel pressure, for example because of external assessments.
36. The physical education curriculum also supports the wellbeing of pupils as it is appropriately planned and executed across all ages and across a wide variety of sporting disciplines. Pupils participate enthusiastically in their training and games and take part in matches against other schools as well as between competitive houses. Pupils make progress in their athletic and co-ordination skills, with the most able participating in the highest echelons of competitive sport regionally and nationally.
37. Teachers plan and deliver lessons about relationships and about how the human body develops and changes. These lessons are age-appropriate and support pupils in their personal and social development. Parents are appropriately consulted regarding the content of this curriculum. Pupils appreciate these lessons for the knowledge they develop, for the preparation for their future lives and for the opportunity to raise questions and discuss topics which are important to them. Teachers adapt the curriculum as appropriate to meet the needs of particular groups of pupils, which helps to support those pupils in their relationships and behaviour.

38. Pupils demonstrate very positive levels of behaviour at school, whether in the classroom, moving around the school or in their recreational pursuits. Pupils, including children in the early years, understand and appreciate how co-operating with each other and responding to their teachers creates a more enjoyable environment for everyone. They develop a growing sense of self-regulation. Pupils feel that any sanctions applied are fair and consistent. Leaders carefully record and monitor those few behavioural issues which do occur and communicate swiftly with parents when this is necessary.
39. Appropriate behaviour is supported by the positive relationships which are encouraged and developed between pupils of all ages. Seating arrangements at lunch encourage pupils from different year groups to converse and get to know one another. Younger pupils respect older pupils and look up to them as role models but also see them as friendly and approachable.
40. Leaders manage any incidents of bullying, which are rare, effectively and swiftly. Pupils have a variety of ways in which they can share any concerns they have and are confident that adults will listen to them and act. Victims, perpetrators and their families are all supported appropriately, and sanctions prioritise reflection over punishment. Leaders maintain detailed records and look for any trends or patterns which might require further guidance to be given to groups of pupils.
41. Classrooms are bright, comfortable and enhanced by displays and decorations which make spaces appealing to learners. Facilities for specialist subjects for example science, design technology, art, music and sport are well resourced and maintained.
42. Pupils are appropriately supervised at school both within the buildings and in the grounds. Staff are deployed to monitor the wooded areas during break times as well as those ensuring that pupils play safely on the lawns and artificial grass area. Children in the early years are also looked after effectively with close supervision when groups leave the safety of their fenced play area.
43. The attendance of pupils is formally recorded three times a day with any absences swiftly followed up. Although levels of attendance are high, leaders nevertheless monitor and track attendance to spot any patterns. The school notifies the local authority of any pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard transition points, and appropriately maintains records of pupils and their parents.
44. Pupils are well looked after if they are ill or injured. Leaders and those responsible for medical care put specific plans in place for those pupils and children with particular medical requirements to ensure that their needs are met. Records are kept and parents informed as appropriate of any incidents requiring significant attention.
45. Those responsible for health and safety maintain records assiduously and put plans in place to minimise the risk of harm to staff or pupils, for example in the storage of chemicals in the science area or cutting tools in design technology. Action is taken in response to both internal and external audits to further mitigate risk. Fire safety is considered a priority, with regular evacuation drills so that pupils know what to do in an emergency and appropriate training given to fire marshals and other staff responsible for co-ordinating a response to any incident.

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

#### **46. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

47. Leaders have adopted and adapted a curriculum of social education which teaches pupils effectively about the world around them and how they begin to understand wider society. Teachers encourage pupils to consider, discuss and debate issues and topics which affect their lives and the lives of others now and in the future.
48. Parents and other members of the community regularly speak to the pupils about their own faiths and festivals which helps pupils to understand the diversity of beliefs and practices within their own community. Within the curriculum, opportunities are planned by teachers to challenge pupils to broaden their understanding and they respond with sensitivity. In English for example, Year 6 pupils show an understanding of the experience of children during World War II through their study of fiction and Year 7 pupils demonstrate empathy when studying poetry associated with migration. As a result, pupils develop an awareness and a growing appreciation of different cultures around the world and, in their daily lives, demonstrate that they understand equality, celebrate diversity and behave in an inclusive manner.
49. Pupils develop their economic understanding through a range of formal and informal learning opportunities. In addition to planned learning, children in the early years engage in enthusiastic roleplay buying and selling goods in their mud kitchen and wooden shop, whilst older pre-prep pupils use pinecones as currency in their transactions. Money is used in arithmetic exercises, for example in Year 3 when pupils are challenged to use certain currency denominations to reach a precise total, which they are able to achieve at various levels of complexity. Older pupils gain a deeper insight into finance through activities such as an enterprise project in which pupils pitch their business ideas to a panel, or by learning about the concept of inflation when studying percentages in mathematics.
50. Pupils receive age-relevant careers guidance and greatly value this support as they begin to consider their options. This guidance starts with teachers raising the pupils' awareness of different types of employment, which includes welcoming visitors with various professional backgrounds to the school. Support becomes more crystalised for older pupils who attend careers fairs and learn in greater depth the academic pathways towards particular disciplines. Pupils feel confident that they have an appropriate understanding of their options in the future because of their careers education at school.
51. As a result of the values which are clearly articulated by leaders and consistently instilled and encouraged by teachers, pupils of all ages have a thorough understanding of right and wrong. Children in the early years learn to share and take turns without incident, because adults sensitively and patiently explain to them how to work through their disagreements. Older pupils take responsibility for their actions and naturally understand when an apology would be appropriate. On the few occasions when pupils transgress, they are able to reflect on their choices and understand the impact of their behaviour on others.
52. Leaders also effectively embed an understanding of democratic participation. Pupils take the opportunity to stand for and vote in elections to the school council with maturity. This group provides an opportunity for pupils to express their views on the school in an appropriate forum and

leaders listen to their ideas carefully. For example, the wellbeing 'fairy garden' was constructed and resourced as a result of these discussions.

53. Pupils participate in a number of charitable activities during the course of the year, some of which have been organised by leaders and some which older pupils participate in running, for example cake and book sales, a disco and an initiative in support of a local food bank. Pupils also learn about the wider community, for example through links with a local care home. At Christmas, pupils make cards for those residents who might not receive many, and the choir visits to sing carols. As a result, pupils develop a growing appreciation of the part they can play in wider society.
54. Pupils approaching their final year apply for various responsibilities and everyone is appointed to a position. These roles give them the opportunity to contribute to the life of the school community and to have a positive influence on the younger pupils in the school with support and guidance from their teachers, for example sports captains run activities for younger pupils. Pupil leaders speak and help to give out certificates at assemblies. They contribute to the smooth running of the lunch service and prepare and read a short prayer at the conclusion of the meal. All Year 8 pupils read to their Year 2 counterparts on a weekly basis, and enthusiastically become teachers for one day working with children in the early years. As a result, pupils develop positive relationships between year groups.
55. Leaders ensure that any political issues, including geopolitical current affairs, are presented in a balanced and neutral manner, and that any visiting speakers do likewise.

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

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

## Safeguarding

57. Those leaders and governors with specific responsibilities relating to safeguarding ensure that all adults who work at the school understand their individual and collective responsibility to promote the safety and wellbeing of the pupils. This is successfully achieved through periodic training, monitoring, regular meetings and updates, as well as the many visual reminders around the school about how to share concerns. As a result, all members of the school community subscribe to an active culture of safeguarding.
58. Those responsible for safeguarding have time given to them to carry out their duties effectively and receive appropriate training and support. They hold appropriately senior positions within the school in order to lead safeguarding practice with appropriate strategic oversight.
59. As well as updating the school's own policies and procedures, safeguarding leads also ensure that staff and governors are aware of statutory guidance in their most up-to-date forms, for example Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE). Leaders check that this guidance is understood by all staff but, in particular, those new to the school for whom learning about safeguarding procedures is a central aspect of their induction.
60. Staff know to look out for signs that a pupil's wellbeing or safety is at risk. They know how to use the school's electronic systems for recording their concerns and they do so appropriately and swiftly. Leaders act upon these concerns without delay and ensure that ongoing situations are monitored appropriately. Leaders track and monitor cohorts and particular types of concerns, as well as individual pupils, to look for any patterns or trends. They involve outside agencies where their advice or intervention is necessary.
61. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that they have a number of trusted adults with whom they can share any concerns.
62. Aspects of safeguarding specific to children in the early years are understood by all staff and appropriate procedures are in place which conform with statutory guidance, for example regarding the use of mobile phones or wearable smart devices in the setting. Staff know what to do to keep children from harm.
63. Leaders consider the physical safety of the pupils both on and off the school site. Adults supervise children in the early years appropriately and undertake frequent head counts when moving around the school. Older pupils have the freedom to explore and enjoy the grounds in the knowledge that teachers are nearby should the need for help arise. Leaders ensure that the safety of pupils is paramount to the organisation, staffing and delivery of activities and trips away from school.
64. Pupils learn about online safety in their lessons and are confident in their knowledge about how to stay safe when interacting with others in the digital world. Appropriate filtering and monitoring arrangements are in place for all connected devices in use at school, including the individual computers used by the oldest pupils.
65. Leaders and those responsible for the process of recruiting new staff have an appropriate understanding of the regulations which inform their processes. Consequently, all the necessary checks are carried out, including checks with overseas agencies where this is required. The information is stored, as required by the regulations, on a single central record of appointments.

This record is accurate in the vast majority of records but, in a few instances, an error has been made when entering data. These errors were corrected during the course of the inspection.

66. Governors monitor and support leaders through regular meetings, receiving reports, overseeing the updating of policies and procedures, and by undertaking checks of records.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	St Neot's Preparatory School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	850/6019
<b>Registered charity number</b>	307324
<b>Address</b>	St Neot's Preparatory School St Neot's Road Eversley Hook Hampshire RG27 0PN
<b>Phone number</b>	0118 973 2118
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<b>Website</b>	www.stneotsprep.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Neots (Eversley) Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Hertzell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jonathan Slot
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 13
<b>Number of pupils</b>	317
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 to 19 September 2019

## Information about the school

68. St Neot's Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of trustees. Since the last inspection a new head and new chair of governors have been appointed, and the school has entered into a strategic partnership with Lord Wandsworth College.
69. There are 74 children in the early years, comprising two Nursery classes and two Reception classes.
70. The school has identified 66 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
71. English is an additional language for six pupils.
72. The school states its aims are to promote a culture around community, family values, a love of the outdoors and a commitment to having fun; to ensure every child comes into school feeling safe and valued, and to make sure that a first class, personalised, rigorous academic journey is matched by an enriching, broad and challenging co-curricular programme; where character, contribution and service is as valued as academic success and where the children's physical wellbeing is surpassed by their mental wellbeing.



## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

23 to 25 April 2024

73. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

74. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

75. 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)