

School inspection report

6 to 8 February 2024

Stroud School, King Edward VI Preparatory School

Highwood House

Highwood Lane

Romsey

Hampshire

SO51 9ZH

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'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and staff work together to promote the school's values and ethos. Pupils are respectful of each other and of adults. This contributes to a calm, purposeful environment in which pupils behave well. Staff take a consultative and restorative approach to behaviour management. This emphasises the need for pupils to understand how thoughtless actions can affect others. As a result, sanctions for poor behaviour are rarely necessary.
2. Designated governors engage actively in the life of the school, providing knowledgeable support and appropriate challenge to leaders.
3. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the school. Dedicated focus on this vision, along with ambitious expectations and effective communication, have resulted in high levels of mutual trust between leaders, staff, parents and pupils.
4. Arrangements for safeguarding in the school are effective, due to skilful and knowledgeable leadership. There is appropriate engagement with safeguarding partners and external agencies. All staff are well trained in safeguarding and are vigilantly alert to any concerns that might affect pupils' safety.
5. Pupils make good progress from the earliest ages, due to careful planning and skilful delivery of the curriculum. Regular assessments are rigorously analysed by leaders. Child-led enquiry and open questioning techniques are employed effectively in the early years to facilitate relevant and stimulating learning. These continue in the pre-prep and prep. However, the gradual change from child-led to teacher-led learning results in fewer opportunities for older pupils to develop their independent critical enquiry skills. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs diagnosed quickly. Academic leaders support teaching staff through training and the provision of resources to meet pupils' individual needs effectively.
6. Pupils' health, safety and wellbeing are actively promoted by leaders and staff. Systems are embedded throughout the school for swift evaluation of pupils' wellbeing and mental health, as are arrangements for listening to pupils and acting on their concerns.

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:

- increase opportunities for older pupils to develop their skills in independent critical enquiry.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Senior leaders set clear and high expectations that permeate all aspects of school life. The wellbeing and happiness of pupils is central to the work of the cohesive staff team, who nurture pupils to be intellectually curious, confident and resilient learners.
8. Governor representatives with specific training and responsibility maintain active engagement in the life of the school through regular on-site visits, meetings and personal contact with leaders, staff and pupils. They both challenge and support leaders and staff to fulfil their roles effectively, monitoring the creation, maintenance and implementation of required policy documents.
9. Leaders have facilitated and oversee a broad, balanced and varied curriculum that the pupils appreciate and enjoy.
10. Pupils who may have SEND have their needs identified swiftly by knowledgeable specialist staff. Teachers and leaders work together cohesively to implement appropriate strategies to meet these needs in relevant and personalised ways. This includes accessing external specialist advice, where necessary.
11. Teachers and staff in the early years are supported by leaders to plan and deliver an engaging and relevant curriculum so that pupils make good progress. Children learn in a caring and nurturing environment in which their wellbeing is central. Staff provide the time for children to embed their learning and develop their ideas through child-initiated activities supported by a wide range of stimulating resources both in classrooms and outdoors. Leaders keep parents well informed of their child's progress, so that they can support the children's learning and next steps.
12. Leaders and governors work together effectively so that arrangements for safeguarding, the management of risk, the implementation of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and for the handling of any complaints are suitably implemented.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

14. Implementation of the extensive curriculum means that pupils make good progress in all areas of study.
15. Children in the early years follow their interests and develop their creativity in a child-initiated environment. Older pupils, however, experience fewer opportunities for independent research and enquiry, due to a gradual evolution of emphasis from pupil-led to teacher-led learning tasks over time. An extensive programme of creative, sporting, environmental and intellectual co-curricular activities encourages pupils to broaden their horizons and thinking, so that they apply themselves with enthusiasm and are motivated to try new things.
16. Pupils learn how to be self-sufficient, curious learners, through engaging activities within a well-resourced, enabling environment that promotes effective learning. They apply effort and demonstrate resilience and perseverance to reach their goals when they encounter difficulties. In most lessons, pupils enjoy their learning because tasks are well matched to their needs, with suitable challenge that promotes learning and progress. Leaders and staff plan a range of opportunities, from the early years onwards, for pupils to develop as articulate communicators who are confident and clear in expressing their thoughts and opinions. Effective open-ended questioning techniques are used with the youngest children, so that they start to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills.
17. A suitable framework for assessing pupils' attainment and progress is in place, rigorously monitored by academic leaders. Pupils make at least expected and, in many cases, better than expected progress from their starting points due to careful planning of lessons which are skilfully delivered by knowledgeable staff.
18. Those pupils who have SEND also make good progress from their starting points. This is because communication between teaching staff and leaders ensures that their learning needs are met. Progress is therefore rapid and sustained. The same is true for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), many of whom attain above national expectations for English. Teaching does not undermine fundamental British values.
19. Pupils actively engage in their learning and are well supported by teachers who understand their learning needs well. Pupils make effective use of a reflective marking code to indicate their understanding. In turn, they receive frequent feedback on how to take impactful next steps to improve their work through the school's 'Wow and Now' system. Pupils value the feedback highlighted by teachers and act on this to extend their learning.

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

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

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

21. Pupils display high levels of self-control and respect in their behaviour towards others due to high expectations and a consultative and empathetic approach to behaviour management that is consistently applied by staff. This encourages everyone to think about how their actions affect others. It is highly valued by pupils, who recognise and welcome the school's approach to making school a safe and inclusive place. Regular opportunities and encouragement to shine mean that pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence grow throughout their time at the school.
22. Staff members actively promote physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing, acting as influential role models in demonstrating courtesy and warmth. Building on this, pupils develop camaraderie and friendship with each other that extends across year groups. An extensive clubs and activities programme allows pupils to choose from a range of options, from outdoor, adventurous activities, to spending time in the library, reading or playing chess.
23. There is a high degree of respect and understanding shown by pupils for each other. They appreciate and celebrate each other's individuality. Pupils understand how to cultivate high quality relationships and articulate clearly why it is important to empathise with what others are experiencing.
24. Pupils have a clear understanding of what bullying is and how to tackle it. They understand the importance of not being a bystander and of reporting any potential bullying immediately. Pupils are confident that they can contact a member of staff when needed, who will listen to them and help them to resolve their concerns.
25. Pupils receive prompt and timely care if they are injured or unwell. Admission and attendance records are kept as required and arrangements for appropriate supervision of pupils' health and safety are suitably implemented.
26. The school's embedded wellbeing programme supports pupils of all ages to cultivate a healthy lifestyle, which is further promoted through strong planning and delivery of the personal, social health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums. Throughout the school, pupils develop their emotional literacy and awareness of others. This is because of the empathetic and open culture fostered by leaders which encourages pupils to communicate their feelings, for example by using the 'colour monster' mood indicators in each classroom. The Wellbeing Centre is staffed by specialists in mental health and available to all pupils when they feel the need for support and reassurance.
27. Pupils make healthy choices at mealtimes, due to the high-quality menu and enthusiastic encouragement from catering staff. Pupils also influence the menu choices available to them through the pupil voice food committee.
28. Leaders and governors ensure that the school's premises and accommodation are well maintained and fit for purpose.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. Pupils of all ages have well-developed social skills because staff have high expectations and model this behaviour effectively. Pupils are empathetic and relate well both to each other and to adults. Through the embedded school values and culture, pupils develop their understanding of right from wrong. They take pride in their diverse, inclusive community, and this bolsters their social confidence.
31. Pupils are interested in and engage with life outside of school. They speak with knowledge, enthusiasm and interest about other cultures, historical contexts and other parts of the world. Children and pupils develop an understanding of their place in society through carefully planned activities and visits. They are well prepared for their next steps, whether these are to move up a school year or to a new school.
32. Part of the school culture is that failures are seen as developmental opportunities. This means that pupils are resilient learners, undaunted by failure and keen to do better. The half-termly "big question" posed by the headteacher promotes critical thinking skills, successfully challenging pupils of all ages to think, reflect, and share their responses. During the inspection, pupils engaged enthusiastically in the whole school 'Big Lunch', debating whether mistakes are still mistakes if we learn from them.
33. Cohesive planning means that pupils' economic knowledge, skills and understanding develop effectively from the early years, where children busy themselves organising stock and making items out of modelling clay for sale in their class shop. Older pupils lead the democratically elected pupil voice charity committee, ably coordinating fund-raising efforts in aid of local, national and global initiatives. Leaders have skilfully integrated the school's enterprise scheme with these initiatives so that the chosen charities also benefit from the profits derived from pupils' diverse business challenges. Pupils therefore develop their understanding both of the value of money and of altruism beyond the school environment.
34. Leaders and staff take care to make the school site accessible to all pupils, regardless of need. This includes areas such as the school's mini-farm and woodland learning areas.

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

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

Safeguarding

36. Arrangements for safeguarding in the school are suitable and robustly implemented. Pupils feel safe and secure at school. They are confident that their concerns will always be listened to and acted upon swiftly. They are knowledgeable about how to raise any concerns, understand how to stay safe online and know what to do if they or a peer experiences online abuse.
37. Safeguarding and child protection procedures for the early years are in line with the robust culture across the school. The wide range of curricular and co-curricular activities are supported by the implementation of thorough risk assessments and necessary control measures to promote the safety of the pupils during activities, visits and events.
38. Links with external agencies are actively cultivated and exercised. Staff are well trained and alert to any signs of abuse. Arrangements for listening to pupils are effective and enable swift action to be taken, when necessary, to protect children from harm.
39. Governors are knowledgeable about arrangements for safeguarding and child protection and oversee their effective implementation. Leaders proactively consider ways to enhance safeguarding in the school community and careful consideration is given to training, supervision and the mitigation of risk. There is frequent liaison between the designated safeguarding governor and the safeguarding team.
40. Routine health and safety checks, tests and drills are undertaken with deliberate changes to routine to stress-test the systems in place. Arrangements to check the suitability of those working at the school are robust and a single central record of appointments is kept as required.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Stroud School, Kind Edward VI Preparatory School
Department for Education number	850/6004
Address	Stroud School, Kind Edward VI Preparatory School Highwood House Highwood Lane Romsey Hampshire SO51 9ZH
Phone number	01794 513231
Email address	registrar@stroud-kes.org.uk
Website	www.stroud-kes.org.uk
Proprietor	King Edward VI School Trust
Chair	Mr Alan Morgan
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Smith
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	269
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 November 2019

Information about the school

42. Stroud School is an independent day school for pupils aged between 3 and 11 years. The original proprietorial school was founded in Surrey in 1926. It moved to Mere in Wiltshire in 1946, before relocating to its current location in 1953. The school was bought by King Edward VI School in 2012 and is administered by the full board of that school. Since the previous inspection, the school has restructured to cater for the primary age range with all pupils transitioning to senior school at the end of Year 6.
43. There are 46 pupils in the early years comprising two Nursery and two Reception classes.
44. The school has identified 49 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
45. English is an additional language for 22 pupils.
46. The school states that its aims are to nurture and support pupils, so that they flourish and exceed their expectations in their learning, interests, relationships and emotional development. The goal is for pupils to become intellectually curious, resilient, confident and ready for their next steps.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

6 to 8 February 2024

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

48. Inspection activities included:

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

49. 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.
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