

School inspection report

20 to 22 February 2024

The Hawthorns School

Pendell Court

Bletchingley

Surrey

RH1 4QJ

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, including governors, provide robust implementation and oversight of policies and procedures to ensure the wellbeing of pupils.
2. Pupils are very proud of their school and this is reflected in the warmth and good manners with which they treat each other and visitors to their school.
3. High levels of pupil engagement in their lessons are a result of knowledgeable teaching that is well planned and which captures their interest. A comprehensive approach to assessment, which includes meticulous tracking of assessment data and regular liaison with relevant staff, helps leaders to ensure that action is taken to put in place pupil-centred decisions about their next steps for learning.
4. Pupils acquire knowledge and skills which they successfully apply across the curriculum, often through topic work. For example, art applies scientific knowledge of the human body to consider how architects use this when developing high-quality pieces of artwork.
5. Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are successfully developed from a young age. Leaders have recently strengthened pupils' access to technology and this has had a positive impact on pupil outcomes in this area.
6. Pupils' behaviour is extremely positive. Highly effective communication and collaboration between staff, and between staff and pupils, enable potential friendship and behavioural difficulties to be identified early and appropriately addressed when they occur. Bullying incidents are rare and they are dealt with swiftly when they are reported. Pupils understand the importance of the rewards and sanctions procedures that are in place and feel that they are administered fairly.
7. From a young age, pupils embrace the many opportunities to take on duties and responsibilities within the school. This strengthens their sense of social responsibility. School council is one of the mechanisms for the pupil voice to be heard and has been effective in creating change. For example, construction and textile clubs are now in place because of requests by the school council.
8. Pupils respond positively when they are provided with opportunities to support the local and international communities. For instance, in their house family they have a street market where they bring in old toys to raise money for children in other countries and a 'Wear Own Clothes Day' raises money for a local homeless charity. Pupils have less opportunity to take part in events in the wider community to develop their understanding of social responsibility and life outside of the school.
9. Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are secure. There is a positive safeguarding culture and pupils feel safe. Leaders have a strategic approach to the management of risk which reflects all areas of school life, including management of the school site and the safer recruitment of staff.
10. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and they are confident in how the school's reporting arrangements work. Safeguarding leads are aware of their responsibilities and carry out their roles with focus and drive, liaising effectively with local safeguarding partners when required.

11. Governors have effective oversight of the safeguarding arrangements and those with specific responsibilities in this area work seamlessly with in-school leads.

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 and managers should ensure that:

- pupils' understanding of social responsibility is strengthened through more direct involvement with the local community to benefit their preparedness for life beyond the school.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders' long-term strategic vision for the whole school facilitates the delivery of their aims and ethos in a clear and focused manner. Leaders ensure this vision is shared with their key stakeholders. Leaders manage change most effectively. For example, bringing the pre-prep together with the rest of the school to create a cohesive 'whole school' has resulted in curriculum continuity which maximises the impact for the pupils in their care.
12. Robust oversight from governors and leaders is effective in ensuring that the required level of skills and knowledge appropriate to roles are in place. Leaders are effective in the way in which they work together with staff to ensure that the curriculum is broad and provides challenge so that pupils can develop their creative, artistic, sporting and musical skills and knowledge. Leaders ensure that accommodation and resources support all areas of the curriculum. This includes the development of a well-designed, purpose-built Nursery, access to a dedicated outdoor learning environment and specifically trained teachers so children's opportunities to play and explore are maximised.
13. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act and has a plan in place to review access to the curriculum and the school site for all groups of pupils. Education and healthcare (EHC) plans are in place for a very small minority of pupils. This is funded by the local authority and is reviewed annually. The school provides the local authority with a statement of how the public money is spent.
14. Leaders provide staff with the opportunity to have appropriate training because they understand the need for effective staff development across the school. Teaching staff are professionally challenged through academic review meetings and share best practice with colleagues to provide pupils with the most effective lessons where learning is maximised.
15. There are robust processes for the evaluation and monitoring of policies in place across the school. For example, record-keeping of health and safety, attendance and admissions files are well organised, and a systematic cycle of reporting ensures records are evaluated and checked regularly.
16. Leaders work together to ensure that the wellbeing of all pupils is actively promoted. This is seen in the school's robust approach to the implementation of policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils and in its commitment to creating an environment in which pupils can speak to staff about any concerns they might have.
17. Leaders promote a culture of kindness that permeates through the school and results in a positive environment in which pupils thrive. Staff know the pupils well and take time to greet them and ask pertinent questions. The mutual respect shown amongst all groups of pupils and between pupils and staff is promoted by leaders. The standard of pupil behaviour is positive and visitors are welcomed with enthusiasm.
18. Leaders have an effective and committed approach to health and safety. Risk is well managed through thorough risk assessments and a strategic approach to the management of a large site to ensure that pupils are safe.
19. Leaders ensure there is extensive provision of information for parents on the school website.
20. There is a suitable policy for the handling of complaints and a suitable system is in place to record these. Any complaints are handled effectively within the policy's set timescales.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum so they acquire a wide range of new knowledge and skills. The curriculum throughout the school is cohesive due to close collaboration amongst staff which means that pupils benefit from well thought through cross-curricular opportunities. There is clear progression as pupils move through the school.
22. Teachers use a range of effective teaching and learning methods, including modelling tasks, to enable pupils to make good progress and to support their individual needs. For example, pupils in Year 4 respond positively when teachers model writing during English lessons, enabling pupils to acquire new skills with ease. Skilled questioning by teachers enables pupils to reflect and then share their considered views. Pupils show mature listening skills and carefully consider the views and opinions of their peers. Lessons teach pupils about British values and pupils are not subject to the promotion of partisan views.
23. The harmonious relationships between staff and pupils mean that behaviour is good as pupils do not wish to disrupt these positive bonds. Appropriate levels of fun and humour in lessons help to create a learning environment where pupils feel able to be themselves. This secure base, in turn, gives them the self-confidence to try out new skills and so gain new knowledge. For example, pupils apply newly acquired techniques well, as seen in Year 7 design and technology when pupils confidently use new software to design a three-dimensional net of a shape for packaging soap.
24. Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points. A key contributory factor to this is the stimulating learning environment coupled with staff expertise. Teachers know the children well and create a warm and happy environment where meaningful play, exploration and learning take place. Children have opportunities to develop their language, numeracy, understanding of the world, physical and expressive art and design skills through imaginative activities. For example, children develop their skills of balance independently following impactful teaching. Children benefit from working with specialist staff, for example in the woodland learning environment. The purpose-built facilities and extensive outdoor areas enhance the children's learning and enable them to explore and learn in a safe environment.
25. Pupils' progress is enhanced by the effective support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Provision is made for pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) and different languages are celebrated through the 'language lunch' events. Opportunities for challenge for those who need this are in place so that pupils' needs are met.
26. There is a detailed assessment framework which feeds into the teaching and learning programme to maximise the learning potential of pupils. Staff effectively use assessment data to monitor pupils' progress and plan appropriate next steps in the learning process.
27. Pupils attain well and this is reflected in their success in gaining entry to a wide variety of secondary schools at the end of Years 6 and 8.

28. A rich and varied selection of extracurricular activities provides a breadth of experience for the pupils. This includes activities such as judo and chamber choir which strengthen pupils' physical, creative and aesthetic skills and knowledge. Pupils display high levels of commitment to the clubs and activities on offer.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. The school's core values of respect, honesty, kindness, courage and resilience resonate throughout the school. Pupils are happy and their emotional needs are met effectively. They enjoy positive relationships with their peers and adults and they are confident and respectful.
31. A well-established physical education curriculum ensures that all pupils have access to a wealth of sporting activities. The high quality of coaching and ratio of specialised sports staff enable pupils to develop strong skills and a positive attitude. The school promotes equal participation in sports for boys and girls ensuring equality and fairness for all.
32. Pupil wellbeing is given high priority by staff and the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes support the development of their positive mental health and wellbeing. Pupils say it is helpful to talk about how to reduce stress and anxiety and to have opportunities to listen to calming music in school. Pupils readily share their concerns with staff because of the positive relationship which exist between them.
33. The RSE curriculum is shared with parents who are consulted regarding the policy and its implementation. Pupils in Years 6 to 8 benefit from sessions with external specialists about the requirement for consent and regarding the dangers of sharing any images online. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 research independent projects on matters relating to discrimination and gender equality. Pupils have the courage to make independent choices about these topics which impacts positively on both their self-confidence and knowledge acquisition.
34. The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is noteworthy. The positive culture of trust and respect between pupils enables them to share their ideas with honesty and without fear of failure or ridicule. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions that are in place; the family feel of the houses motivates them to do well as they feel responsibility to do their best for others in their houses. Pupils accept responsibility for their actions and feel that any sanctions, when applied, are done so fairly.
35. The school has a suitable policy and procedures for managing bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and carefully kept logs support this. Pupils state that they would not tolerate bullying and feel confident to speak out if they see it. Pupils are confident to speak to an adult about bullying and know it will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly.
36. Pupils are well supervised by adults and say they feel safe in all areas of the school. They look forward to coming to school as they feel it is an extension of their family life.
37. Children in the early years participate in carefully planned and meaningful activities to promote their personal, social, emotional and physical development. For example, children play cooperatively with a toy garage showing well-developed social skills whilst others returned a toy bird to the spring 'nest' they had made so that it was safe. Children benefit from the outdoor spaces and develop their fine and gross motor skills to a high level through access to a wide range of easily accessible

resources. Their emotional development is enhanced by the well-managed key worker arrangements. Children take on and understand the importance of responsibility from an early age by taking on roles such as the line leader or back stop.

38. The school's first aid accommodation for pupils is well maintained and easily accessible. All medication, including for children in the early years, is administered appropriately.
39. There is a rigorous approach to fire safety. Logs of fire alarm testing are accurate and kept up to date. Clear actions take place following fire risk assessment reports and fire drills are carried out termly.
40. Leaders ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are in place to ensure the wellbeing of pupils and these systems are supported by comprehensive record-keeping. Premises are well maintained to ensure the safety of the school community.
41. The registers of attendance and admissions are suitably maintained and effective systems ensure that due attention is paid to children who may be missing from education.

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

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

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

43. The curriculum and ethos of the school community promotes and encourages mutual respect and understanding. There is a strong culture of pupils being valued and listened to through, for example, the highly effective school council. Pupils understand fundamental British values along with respect for the law and the public institutions of England. For example, Year 5 pupils discuss crime and punishment and show an awareness of issues such as minority groups being treated unfairly. Pupils demonstrate a strong moral compass from an early age and are resilient about accepting the consequences for any poor decisions they make.
44. Pupils understand the importance of equality. They speak honestly about when and where discrimination might occur and how they would always endeavour to ensure this does not happen. Pupils believe they are treated respectfully and with equality and that this approach models the behaviour they should display, which was evident during the inspection.
45. The curriculum develops pupils' social and cultural understanding. For example, Year 6 pupils show empathy and understanding of historic cultural injustices relating to the Windrush generation. Pupils in Year 5 articulate their views about the social impact of irresponsible use of social media. Pupils discuss issues in a thoughtful and sensitive manner and their responses are reflective, inciteful and mature.
46. The well-equipped library includes a diverse range of genres and writers which enables pupils to develop respect for other cultures and institutions. This, alongside assemblies, the PSHE, history and English programmes of study, strengthens pupils understanding of the wider society.
47. Pupils have a voice; the house system with its vertical groupings led by Year 8 house captains and the school council are examples of how they can make change happen in a democratic manner. Pupils can send suggestions to the school council, and events such as pizza day are a result of such suggestions. There are other roles where pupils make a positive impact, such as membership of the eco team which is looking at ways of reducing food waste.
48. From a young age, pupils embrace the numerous opportunities to take on duties and responsibilities. They are eager to help each other and to assume the roles of, for example, monitors, buddies and house captains. Older pupils embrace the opportunity to hear younger pupils read which enables them to understand the value of supporting younger pupils. Year 8 pupils requested to be more involved with the children in the nursery which led to daily visits to the Nursery. The Nursery children benefit from the Year 8 role models, in terms of their behaviour as well as the enjoyment of learning alongside older pupils.
49. When pupils leave the school at the end of Years 6 or 8, they are generally well prepared for the next stages of their education. They are supported in this process through a range of experiences such as a careers fair in their final year which offers advice and shared experiences from a variety of sources. Leaders promote equality by ensuring that certain jobs and educational opportunities are

not gender specific to avoid potential stereotyping. In Year 5 PSHE, pupils discuss future careers and the impact poor social media use could have on their future employment opportunities. However, pupils have limited opportunities to participate in the local community to extend their understanding of how they can contribute as a local citizen and so help them to be prepared for life in the wider world.

50. By the time they leave the school, pupils have an economic understanding gained through, for example, running a tuck shop where money changes hands and ordering stock is their responsibility. There is a summer street market where pupils raise funds for charity which helps them to understand the role they can play as responsible citizens.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are secure. There is a positive safeguarding culture around the school which culminates in pupils feeling safe and happy. They speak confidently about having someone to talk to should the need arise. Pupils feel that any concerns will be dealt with fairly and swiftly, citing a wide range of teachers and support staff as people with whom they feel comfortable to discuss any matter.
52. The teaching and non-teaching staff are well trained in safeguarding matters. Staff are aware that they have a key role to play in ensuring that pupils are safe, both in and out of school. They participate in training at the beginning of the school year which is followed by a quiz designed by the safeguarding leaders. The results are assessed and any misconceptions addressed with the staff member. In addition, regular updates called 'safeguarding blasts' take place in staff meetings. These ensure that staff awareness and expertise remain heightened.
53. Staff are confident in how the school's reporting arrangements work. They are confident about reporting any low-level concerns relating to any staff behaviours with which they may feel uncomfortable. There is a culture which emphasises that keeping pupils safe is the most important aspect of their roles.
54. Safeguarding leads are suitably trained and are aware of their responsibilities, and carry out their roles with focus and drive, liaising effectively with local safeguarding partners when required. The Members of the team liaise with each other regularly and there is a clear system of communication so that matters are not overlooked. Suitable records are kept of any safeguarding concerns.
55. Governors have effective oversight of the safeguarding arrangements and those with specific responsibilities in this area work seamlessly with in-school leads. All are aware of any contextual safeguarding matters associated with the school's location. The management of any risks relating to safeguarding is robust and checked closely by governors.
56. Pupils know how to stay safe online. Lessons and discussions cover the practical aspects of online safety as well as the challenges of using social media and other platforms which may pose harm to pupils.
57. A robust and well-maintained record of appointments shows leaders' commitment to ensuring the suitability of all staff to work with children. Recruitment procedures are secure with detailed policies that are implemented effectively. The process is supported by thorough record-keeping.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	The Hawthorns School
Department for Education number	936/6076
Registered charity number	312067
Address	The Hawthorns School Pendell Court Betchingley Surrey RH1 4QJ
Phone number	01883 743048
Email address	office@hawthorns.com
Website	www.hawthorns.com
Proprietor	The Hawthorns Educational Trust
Chair	Mr Brad Dyer
Headteacher	Mr Adrian Floyd
Age range	6 months to 13
Number of pupils	514
Date of previous inspection	20 to 21 November 2019

Information about the school

59. The Hawthorns is a co-educational day school set in the Jacobean manor of Pendell Court and includes historic and contemporary buildings. Founded in 1926 as a boys' prep school, it became fully co-educational in 1992. A Nursery, for children under the age of two years, was opened in a new building in December 2023. This provision is registered with Ofsted and currently subject to Ofsted inspections and therefore the provision was not evaluated as part of this inspection.
60. The Hawthorns School is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors.
61. There are 95 pupils in the early years.
62. The school has identified 57 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils in the school has an education, health and care plan.
63. English is an additional language for 18 pupils.
64. The school states its aims are to enable pupils to reach their potential through four core pillars: academic achievement, a breadth of opportunity, pastoral care and social responsibility. These are embodied in the school's core values of respect, kindness, courage, resilience and honesty.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

20 to 22 February 2024

63. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

64. 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 of governors and one other governor
- 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.

65. 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 early years 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**.

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