

School inspection report

13 to 15 February 2024

The Old School Henstead

Toad Row

Henstead

Beccles

NR34 7LG

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

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

Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors ensure that leaders have the skills and knowledge to promote the wellbeing of the pupils in the school. They provide effective oversight through their weekly meetings with the headteacher, and by auditing the implementation of policies and safeguarding procedures.
2. Leaders effectively articulate the school's aims and ethos, which include cultivating kindness, tolerance, and teamwork. These values are understood by pupils and ingrained into daily practices, fostering a positive school culture where pupils feel valued and supported.
3. A broad and balanced curriculum caters to pupils' needs. It promotes curiosity and engagement and covers all the required areas of learning. Leaders have developed an assessment process to monitor pupil progress and attainment. The use of this data to support teachers in tracking and evaluating pupil progress is limited.
4. The range of extracurricular activities currently limits opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and skills further; nevertheless, the school is addressing this within the context of available resources.
5. Staff and pupils uphold high standards of behaviour fostered by mutual respect, well-established pupil-teacher relationships, and clear moral guidance. Through consistent modelling of values by adults, pupils exhibit respectful and kind behaviour, contributing to a nurturing environment where they feel safe and supported.
6. Pupils are provided opportunities to support their local community, embracing these events maturely and responsibly. Consequently, pupils understand the importance of positively contributing to their locality and broader society.
7. Staff understand safeguarding procedures and know when and how to use them. By following the health and safety policy and appropriately assessing risk, staff keep pupils safe and promote their wellbeing.

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 teachers make more effective use of data to track and evaluate pupil progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors with specialist knowledge of education and safeguarding regularly visit the school to provide oversight. They ensure that leaders have the skills and knowledge to promote the wellbeing of the pupils by monitoring essential training, examining safeguarding records and evaluating progress against the agreed objectives set at their regular committee meetings and development plan.
9. Leaders effectively articulate the school's aims and ethos, which include cultivating kindness, tolerance and teamwork. These values are understood by pupils and ingrained into daily practices, fostering a positive school culture where students feel valued and supported.
10. Effective self-evaluation mechanisms are in place to assess the delivery of the school's ethos and aims, focusing on actively promoting pupil wellbeing. The school implements continuous improvement strategies where necessary to ensure it meets the Standards and remains responsive to the evolving needs of its pupils.
11. Leaders consistently implement the policies required to ensure pupils receive an engaging curriculum delivered in a safe and nurturing environment. They evaluate current guidance and train staff accordingly to maintain effective oversight of provision. However, leaders' oversight does not ensure the effective use of data to track and evaluate pupil progress.
12. Leaders have designed and delivered a suitable accessibility plan and fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring equal access and opportunities for all pupils. This commitment to inclusivity fosters a supportive environment where pupils feel valued and respected.
13. The school provides the required information to parents and staff. Clear communication channels ensure parents and prospective parents are well informed about school policies, procedures and initiatives related to pupil wellbeing.
14. Leaders collaborate with external agencies to support the medical and safeguarding needs of the pupils in their care. Records are kept securely and provide a comprehensive account of all actions taken.
15. Staff are trained to identify, evaluate and mitigate risk. This includes risks associated with buildings, outside areas, and pupils' off-site excursions. The headteacher is responsible for signing off on all risk assessments, including the detailed risk evaluations of pupils with particular medical conditions.
16. In the early years, leaders effectively promote the wellbeing of the children. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed in the setting and that all staff are appropriately trained. Children are suitably supervised, and appropriate staffing ratios are followed.
17. Leaders respond promptly to parents' concerns and understand the importance of clear communication within an agreed timescale. All concerns are suitably recorded, any required actions are undertaken, and lessons learned are evaluated.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. A broad and balanced curriculum caters to pupils' needs and the curriculum plans implemented enable pupils to make good progress. Teachers possess good subject knowledge, use resources effectively, including assistants, and maintain a warm and encouraging working atmosphere. Pupils make good progress from their starting points.
20. Pupils are generally enthusiastic, self-motivated and willing to challenge themselves. For example, in a Year 4 English lesson, pupils used drama to communicate various emotions, using expressive language, including similes and metaphors, to describe the final freeze frame position. Year 5 pupils confidently and skilfully participated in their music session, enjoying the songs, listening carefully to instructions about syncopated rhythm, and performing a four-part round, "The Duchess Came to Tea", with great aplomb.
21. Pupils enjoy the extracurricular activities provided by the school. Although these are limited in variety, the school is addressing pupils' desire to develop their interests and skills further.
22. In the early years, children engage in activities that support their development across all areas of learning, in particular their communication, language and physical development. This enables most children to meet their early learning goals by the end of Reception. Teachers use a wide variety of techniques and resources to promote effective learning. A stimulating indoor and outdoor environment provides for the development of their fine and gross motor skills, for example, creating colourful Valentine's cards for their parents, building dens and using balancing equipment.
23. Teachers use technology to introduce new concepts and provide multi-sensory enhancements in lessons. Pupils are confident technology users and have developed knowledge of how to use technology safely. Pupils' access to touch typing lessons has improved their speed in accessing and recording digital information.
24. The school has an assessment process to monitor pupils' progress and attainment. This is well embedded in early years but less so in the junior school. Staff do not always use their tracking data to evaluate pupil progress more effectively and plan their next steps in learning.
25. Leaders have created a learning environment where pupils are not discriminated against. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported so that they make good progress in line with their abilities. Leaders provide effective support both within lessons and through specialist teaching on an individual basis, including for pupils with complex needs through their education, health and care (EHC) plans. The curriculum is suitably adapted to meet the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). As a result, they become more fluent in their use of English.
26. Leaders supplement pupils' learning by inviting visiting speakers to share their expertise or to lead a liturgical assembly. All visitors are appropriately researched and briefed to ensure pupils receive a balanced view supporting British values.
27. Leaders work closely with parents to choose the pupils' next school, and most are successful in their applications.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. The curriculum experienced by pupils reflects the school's core values of adventure, teamwork and resilience and is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos. Consequently, attitudes to learning are positive, behaviour is consistently good, and pupils collaborate effectively. Staff-pupil relationships to be based on a detailed understanding of individual needs, and any behavioural issues are dealt with promptly. Subsequently, pupils feel safe in their school and trust their teachers to resolve incidents calmly and fairly.
30. Leaders use a well-established rewards and sanctions system to promote the school's core values of confidence and excellence. Pupils are praised at their weekly assemblies as their 'Golds' for positive behaviour and 'A1s' for exceptional acts of kindness and courtesy. Consequently, pupils feel self-confident, are proud to see their house perform well and value receiving a commendation from the head. The graduated sanctions focus on one-to-one interventions to help pupils to resolve any conflicts.
31. Pupils consistently show respect for their peers and adults. They listen to each other, accept each other's differences, and are kind to each other. For example, they praise each other's work, use supportive language such as 'That's really good, I like what you've drawn,' and explain the importance of being able to use sign language to include everyone in their class. Pupils' spiritual development is developed through the school's Christian ethos, which is lived out in their daily prayers and weekly reflection, often supported by clergy from the local church.
32. Leaders actively promote the pupils' mental and emotional wellbeing. Pupils learn about resilience and lead discussions on 'How have I been resilient this week/term?' and 'What do I do when things go wrong?' Pupils are supported by the mental health and wellbeing lead and benefit from targeted interventions. Consequently, pupils have self-knowledge, understand their responsibilities and those of pupils around them, knowing when to seek help from trusted adults.
33. Children in early years are confident in initiating play and when engaged by staff. Their fine motor skills when cutting and sticking reflect the carefully planned physical development activities offered to them. Staff model good behaviour, and children seek to copy this in their interactions with each other.
34. An appropriate relationship education programme forms part of the personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) provision. An effective anti-bullying strategy is in place. Staff are trained to recognise and respond to bullying and carefully record all incidents. Therefore, leaders can identify any emerging trends in behaviour and implement appropriate interventions. Staff use their weekly 'radar' sessions to raise awareness of concerns and share the agreed strategies.
35. Leaders prioritise the health and safety of pupils and adults by appropriately identifying and mitigating risk, ensuring the building and grounds are suitably maintained, and supervising pupils in line with agreed policies, overseen by governors. Admissions and attendance are recorded appropriately, and all necessary reports are made to the local authority. Staff are trained to identify the risk of children missing from education.

36. First aid is provided appropriately. Displays around the school identify those staff with first aid training so that staff and pupils know who to contact.

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

37. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

38. Pupils embrace their opportunities to take on responsibilities as they progress through the school. House captains devise and deliver competitions, and prefects carry out their duties respectfully and caringly. The dining room tidy-up routine is a clear example of the pupils' communal responsibility as the designated rota team restored their refectory to a teaching space, without prompting, wearing a smile on their faces, communicating, and collaborating effectively.
39. Leaders ensure pupils develop their sense of responsibility as British citizens as they grow through the school. For example, children in Reception, through their experience of visiting public servants, understand that the police and fire brigade play an important role in their community as they help to keep them safe from harm. The school council introduces pupils to the democratic voting process, and they value being a voice for change in their school. Pupils take ownership of their classroom rules and, therefore, feel responsible for following what they have collectively agreed upon.
40. Pupils learn to respect others, regardless of their diversity and differences, through the planned curriculum in religious education and PSHE. Visiting speakers enhance their assemblies, for example, explaining the complex needs of a pupil and enabling pupils to ask questions and gain insight into the challenges others face.
41. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop their economic wellbeing. This is delivered through the PHSE 'Skills for Life' programme where, for example, pupils learn about personal banking and reading an electricity meter. There is a focus on applying their mathematical skills. In a year 4 maths lesson, pupils explained the commercial value of knowing people's shopping habits and income and how to compare prices online to get the best value for money.
42. Pupils engage with their local community through their support for the local food bank and the school choir performances at the care home near their school. Having welcomed pupils from Ukraine into school, they have continued to support their language development and raised money to help Ukrainian families suffering from the devastation of war.
43. Leaders plan dedicated sessions for older pupils to help with their transition to senior schools, including creating their own 'transition handbook'. Alongside the opportunities to take on responsibilities, the PHSE programme challenges pupils to develop strategies for taking on new challenges evaluating their mindset, understanding timetables and homework deadlines, wayfinding around a new environment and discussing the characteristics of healthy friendships. Consequently, pupils state that the school prepares them academically and socially for their new school, and they feel confident in their own abilities to take the next steps.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Governors have the necessary knowledge to supervise the school's safeguarding procedures, and they work closely with school leaders to ensure the safeguarding policy is updated annually in accordance with statutory guidance.
46. Leaders maintain appropriate communication channels with external agencies, including the local authority designated officer (LADO). They understand the threshold for making referrals and ensure that these are initiated promptly. The school keeps accurate and detailed records stored securely to maintain confidentiality.
47. Staff and governors undergo annual safeguarding training, supplemented by regular updates to reflect the latest guidelines and best practices.
48. A detailed induction programme is in place for new staff and volunteers, providing them with the necessary knowledge of safeguarding procedures from the outset.
49. Staff possess the skills and knowledge to identify and report safeguarding concerns, including issues such as radicalisation, child-on-child abuse, online safety, and the absence of children from education.
50. The school's safeguarding team receives ongoing training and keeps governors updated on relevant developments, ensuring a cohesive and informed approach to safeguarding across the school.
51. The staff is familiar with whistleblowing and low-level concerns policies, which enables them to report any issues promptly and appropriately.
52. The school adheres to safer recruitment protocols, ensuring thorough checks on all staff, volunteers, and governors before they commence their roles. They maintain a detailed central record of appointments, which the safeguarding governor regularly checks.
53. Pupils know whom to approach if they have worries or concerns, fostering an environment where pupils feel supported and empowered to seek help when needed.
54. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of online risks and possess age-appropriate knowledge of how to stay safe online. The school has implemented appropriate filtering and monitoring procedures to mitigate online risks effectively.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	The Old School Henstead
Department for Education number	935/6050
Registered charity number	279265
Address	The Old School Toad Row Henstead Suffolk NR34 7LG
Phone number	01502 741150
Email address	office@theoldschoolhenstead.co.uk
Website	www.theoldschoolhenstead.co.uk
Proprietor	Old School Henstead Educational Trust Ltd
Chair	Mr Nick Kingsley
Headteacher	Miss Melissa Clifton
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	69
Date of previous inspection	15 to 17 October 2019

Information about the school

56. The Old School is a co-educational independent day school for pupils aged 2 to 11 in the village of Henstead, Suffolk. The school comprises two sections: The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for children aged 2 to 5 years in Nursery and Reception classes, and the junior school for pupils aged 5 to 11 years. The school is an educational trust and registered charity overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in January 2023.
57. There are 24 children in the early years.
58. The school has identified 14 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for two pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to realise the potential of their pupils by providing a challenging academic curriculum and opportunities for adventure, personal development, and investigative experiences in the school's rural environment.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

13 to 15 February 2024

61. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. 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 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 and discussed these with staff and pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

63. 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**.

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