

# School inspection report

19 to 21 March 2024

## **Old Vicarage School**

48 Richmond Hill

Richmond

Surrey

TW10 6QX

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 governors work together effectively to deliver education in line with the school's ethos of enabling pupils to be Curious, Ambitious, Resilient and Empathetic (CARE). Governors provide effective oversight, support, and challenge in accordance with the school's development plans. As a result, pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing are promoted and pupils enjoy their education.
2. Pupils benefit from access to a broad and inclusive curriculum. Teachers deploy resources effectively and pupils' creative skills are particularly well developed. The extensive enrichment programme and co-curricular activities enhance and extend pupils' learning and help them to develop self-confidence and self-esteem.
3. Staff have created a detailed tracking system through which they monitor pupils' academic and pastoral development. Individual needs are met with careful planning, monitoring, and well-adapted teaching. As a result, pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively and consistently, make progress and achieve well. However, for some pupils in the lower school, there is inconsistency in the teaching of phonics.
4. Since the last inspection, leaders have opened a Nursery and created a supportive learning environment where children have regular access to outdoor discovery, feel secure and grow in confidence. Children are well prepared for entry into Reception.
5. The comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships education (RSE) enable pupils to consider what is appropriate in relationships. Pupils' views are listened to, and leaders act upon suggestions made. Pupils behave well, are highly motivated and respect each other.
6. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority. The arrangements include a robust safer recruitment system and effective communication with local social services and external agencies as and when required.
7. Health and Safety are well managed across the two sites. Fire safety procedures are implemented effectively, and staff are well trained in health and safety and risk assessment.
8. A keen sense of community and belonging pervades the school. Pupils are respectful, understand diversity and look after each other. Pupils' charity work and engagement with the local community give them a knowledge of citizenship and the wider British society. Pupils are effectively prepared for the future and for entry to their senior school of choice.

## 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

- continue to review a more streamlined approach to the teaching of phonics.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors and senior leaders have a clear shared vision in line with the schools' aims and ethos. Governors know the school well through visiting the school regularly and meeting with pupils, staff and parents. Governors provide appropriate levels of challenge and receive the senior leadership team board reports termly which enable them to make decisions to support changes to the site and to pupil wellbeing.
10. Through a variety of committees, governors monitor the effective implementation of policies, so that Standards are met consistently. Risk assessments for all parts of the school, activities and trips identify appropriate actions to mitigate any risks.
11. Since the last inspection, the school has set up a Nursery where leaders ensure that staff have adequate resources, both inside and outside the setting, allowing children to follow the seven areas of learning and become confident learners. Leaders in the Nursery know their pupils well and plan teaching so that children make steady progress and lay suitable foundations for their next stage of education.
12. Leaders have developed a broad curriculum using their knowledge and skills to ensure pupils are ambitious in their expectations of themselves. There is a detailed tracking system through which staff can monitor pupils' academic needs and pastoral development. This, plus careful planning and monitoring by the senior leadership team, enables pupils to be supported effectively, make appropriate progress and achieve well. However, more work needs to be done on a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics.
13. Leaders and Governors understand their responsibilities in terms of health and safety and make all necessary adjustments to meet the standards. An effective accessibility plan, which takes account of the school context, is in place and reviewed regularly. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act. Comprehensive risk assessments, which are in place for all areas of the school and for off-site visits, are reviewed regularly.
14. Leaders collaborate closely with parents. Parents receive information about their child's progress at regular meetings and receive reports twice a year. Parents have access to all relevant information from the website. Complaints, both formal and informal, are dealt with appropriately and promptly in line with the school policy.
15. School leaders consult appropriately with external agencies and social services. They facilitate the training of many staff as practitioners in first aid, mental health and emotional wellbeing. As a result, each pupil is nurtured, and their wellbeing is actively promoted. Safeguarding is well understood by staff who have the necessary skills to fulfil their duties.

### 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 clear long-term plans in place to support coverage of the broad, balanced, and diverse curriculum. Pupils show a love of learning, are fully engaged, curious and ask interesting questions. For example, this was seen in one lesson where inference and deduction were used for playscript writing, in another where pupils developed their understanding of Edwardian morals in a novel and in a science lesson with collaboration on different homes for animals.
18. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND, make good progress from their varied starting points as witnessed in the data records. The comprehensive provision maps give details of listed interventions ensuring that pupils receive the support and scaffolding required to work towards achieving their potential. The teachers provide extension work and clear feedback about how pupils can improve their work. The *Best of Books* initiative gives pupils confidence when developing presentation skills through speaking about their favourite books in assemblies. However, in the Reception class, the use of three different phonics schemes, unconnected to the reading scheme, may limit some children's progress.
19. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make substantial progress. Pupils' fluency is improved through targeted questioning and specialist resources including individualised support from teaching assistants, and class interactive devices.
20. Leaders provide a wide variety of extracurricular activities and as a consequence, pupils are able to learn new skills, interact socially with others and develop self-esteem, resilience and self-confidence. Parents and pupils appreciate the choices of activities available in sport, music, and drama, where pupils develop teamwork, and all have the opportunity to represent the school and enjoy success in local and national fixtures and competitions.
21. From an early age, well planned lessons enable pupils to develop confidence in their linguistic skills. In a French lesson, pupils vied for the opportunity to share their French speaking skills in front of their class. In the early years, teachers provide children with opportunities to improve independence and confidence during visits to the Forest school and the local gardens. Pupils shared their planting knowledge showing visitors how they were growing cress in potatoes.
22. Competency in mathematics is seen throughout the school and pupils apply their learning to real life situations, gaining confidence in problem-solving. This is a result of an in-house daily maths programme exemplified in a mathematics lesson where pupils used string to solve fractional practical problems and, in Year 2, when pupils could arrange notes and coins in order to solve a problem.
23. Through the physical education curriculum, pupils benefit from opportunities to take part in activities, and appreciate the physical and mental benefits of exercise. Staff ensure there are opportunities for pupils to develop skills and knowledge in information and communication technology with specialist taught lessons and a range of resources. Older pupils share their coded games with younger ones and thus develop their own skills and confidence as well as those of the younger pupils. Pupils are highly creative and use a variety of media confidently. Pupils' high attainment in music and enjoyment of drama permeates through the school from the Nursery upwards and leads to pupils achieving high grades in external exams.

24. Pupils attain well as seen when pupils in Year 6 gain entry to their school of choice with many of them achieving scholarships. This is because they are well prepared for entrance assessments academically and personally.

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

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

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

26. Leaders promote effective pastoral care throughout the school. Staff prioritise pupils' emotional wellbeing, in terms of feeling successful and confident with initiatives such as the buddy system and the *girls-on-board* programme and through positive praise and affirmation of the pupils' suggestions. Staff work together to ensure that the core values of being curious, ambitious, resilient and empathetic are followed through the whole school.
27. Despite the restricted sporting facilities on-site, extensive use is made of the excellent facilities in the borough. Pupils' physical health is promoted with a range of sporting and other physical activities, as well as the PSHE healthy living curriculum. For example, in Nursery, where pupils maintain their oral hygiene with a dental role play area following a visit from a dentist.
28. Teachers know the pupils well and strong relationships and respect are evident throughout the school. From the early years, pupils are encouraged to be kind to each other, to build positive friendships and be respectful of each other. Behaviour is good because pupils understand what is expected. Pupils were witnessed sharing, turn-taking and offering friendship to a pupil who was sitting on their own. Pupils are confident that when there are incidences of unkindness, staff deal with them in a timely manner and assemblies are held to outline expectations. In conversation, pupils highlighted the school's visual behaviour chart and a recent poster competition about unkindness run by Year 6 pupils.
29. Leaders provide suitable guidance and resources in philosophy and beliefs lessons, PSHE and RSE sessions. Through these lessons and assemblies, pupils demonstrate an understanding of equality, diversity, and value the inclusiveness of the school community. Pupils talked about having respect for those of different faiths and backgrounds to themselves and of the recent International Day when they came to school dressed in national costumes.
30. Leaders and staff help pupils with emotional self-regulation. This includes calm-time in the afternoon for pupils to gather their books and have a moment of quiet before afternoon lessons begin. Pupils are confident about who they can go to and how they can develop strategies to help deal with different emotions. Posters in classrooms and information in planners signpost pupils to sources of support and provide tips on how to maintain a healthy sense of wellbeing.
31. Leaders, supported by governors, demonstrate an appropriate awareness of health and safety on the school site and effective systems are in place. Risk assessments, including those for fire, are reviewed regularly. The premises are effectively maintained, and fire evacuation drills are conducted on a termly basis. Children in the EYFS have access to secure outside environments. All pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the day on the secure site with an all-weather canopy above the playground which enables play whatever the weather.
32. A system for monitoring all first aid and medications given is well established and effectively implemented. Pupils know what to do and where to go if an accident occurs; for example, one pupil with a minor bump was taken by another pupil to the office which also serves as a medical room, for treatment.



33. Leaders monitor attendance carefully and follow up any unexplained absences diligently. The admissions register contains the required information and provides details of all joiners and leavers.
34. The cohesive team of leaders and staff work together to ensure that the core values of being curious, ambitious, resilient and empathetic are followed through the whole school.

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

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

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

36. Leaders support pupils' knowledge and understanding of social and cultural matters. As a result of carefully planned PSHE and RSE programmes, pupils have an understanding of the protected characteristics and a mutual respect and trust for all. Pupils are given opportunities to vote for their peers to posts such as school councillors, house prefects and subject or wellbeing ambassadors. Older pupils meet a local magistrate and visit the Houses of Parliament to increase their understanding of the governing process in the UK.
37. Pupils take initiative and contribute to the school community. All Year 6 pupils hold posts of responsibility, and the school council has an active voice. Leaders listen to the suggestions from the school council and as a result the pupils were instrumental in creating a salad bar for the older pupils. A buddy system enables younger pupils to have role models and the older ones to develop greater dependability.
38. Pupils have opportunities to develop their social understanding throughout the school, gaining self-esteem and confidence for the future. Pupils explore challenging global and social issues as seen in a cross-school debate which looked at keeping or banning animal testing. During rehearsals for the summer term musical production, pupils gain confidence by serving teas and singing to the residents of a nearby nursing home and inviting a local school to their dress rehearsal. Each year the houses select a charity with house prefects presenting nominations, and all staff and pupils voting for their choice.
39. Pupils begin to develop an effective understanding of economics. Upper school pupils take part in a six-week entrepreneurial challenge in which they are tasked with making a range of different items to sell, and then reinvest the money to make more items and sell them at the summer fair for the school charity. There are other opportunities for pupils to take part in charitable work such as the chicken walk to raise money to help farmers in India to start businesses.
40. Leaders check that learning about British values is embedded into the curriculum. They review the curriculum and medium-term planning, conduct learning walks around the school and hold discussions with pupils. Local faith principals help to enhance the faith and philosophy curriculum and empower pupils to respect each other's differences while living together harmoniously.
41. Pupils are well prepared for the move to senior school and are supported effectively in their preparation for the 11+ examinations. Self-defence classes, lessons on keeping safe on the internet, in the streets and on public transport all equip pupils for some of the challenges of life in the future. Year 6 attend a safety course run by the police on stranger danger; Transport for London on how to be safe on the underground and buses; and the NHS on keeping healthy. Careers education starts in the Nursery with visits from dentists, doctors and others for the topic of 'people who help us'. In later years, careers lessons were evidenced in topic books, where pupils research the career to which they aspire.

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

#### 42. All the relevant Standards are met.

## Safeguarding

43. Governors ensure that there is a positive safeguarding culture with practice which is implemented in line with statutory guidance. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the safeguarding governor are suitably trained and in regular contact with each other. They monitor the updates to the policy, the training of staff, ongoing cases and the annual review. Safeguarding is an item at all governors' meetings. As a result, governors have comprehensive oversight of procedures.
44. Safeguarding is part of all staff inductions with regular updates which reflect the latest guidance. The school consults with the local external agencies and social care support teams when necessary. Records are maintained appropriately, and pupils are well supported.
45. The school conducts all safer recruitment checks efficiently. The accurate single central record of appointments for staff, governors and volunteers is regularly scrutinised by the safeguarding governor.
46. Pupils are encouraged to keep themselves safe including when online. The school offers the pupils the opportunity to take part in activities that challenge what they read and see and ask questions about what they are exposed to on the internet, social media and on the television. Leaders ensure effective filtering and monitoring systems are in place.
47. Children in the early years have access to a secure outside learning environment, with appropriate adult supervision, to support the learning needs of the children.
48. Pupils are confident about reporting any concerns they have to adults in the school. They know they have a variety of people to whom they can turn and receive supportive and prompt responses when they express concerns.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	The Old Vicarage School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	318/6005
<b>Registered charity number</b>	312671
<b>Address</b>	The Old Vicarage School 48 Richmond Hill Richmond Surrey TW10 6QX
<b>Phone number</b>	0208 940 0922
<b>Email address</b>	office@oldvicarageschool.com
<b>Website</b>	www.oldvicarageschool.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Old Vicarage School Trust Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Christian Heidl
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Clare Strickland
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	208
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 June 2019

## Information about the school

50. The Old Vicarage School is an independent day preparatory school registered as a single sex school for female pupils. It was founded in 1930 and moved to its current location, formerly Ellerker College, in 1931. The school is a charitable trust, administered by a board of governors.
51. There are 43 children in the early years, 13 in Nursery and 30 in Reception.
52. The school has identified 30 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
53. English is an additional language for 14 pupils of whom 4 need extra support.
54. The school states its aims are to educate girls to their highest level of academic achievement, providing them with new opportunities so they can embrace challenges with confidence; prepare them to become responsible and compassionate global citizens who are creative and ambitious in their outlook; and embody the school values of curiosity, ambition, resilience and empathy

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

19 to 21 March 2024

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

56. 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.

57. 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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