

School inspection report

23 to 25 April 2024

The Yehudi Menuhin School

Stoke d'Abernon

Cobham

KT11 3QQ

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	5
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	10
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. Senior leaders and governors collaborate closely and evaluate the school's success in preparing pupils for careers in the music industry. They are equally diligent in promoting pupils' pastoral welfare and personal development in preparation for the next steps in their lives. Pupils thrive in an environment centred around their musical lives, where expert tuition is provided alongside robust pastoral systems. As a result, they become well-adjusted musicians who are team players.
2. The music and academic curriculum is highly personalised to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils make good progress in their academic studies. The large number of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make rapid progress once they have mastered the English language. Pupils particularly appreciate the impact that international performers/teachers have on their instrumental achievement. They perform at the highest level in international competitions in London and across Europe and are consistently successful in gaining places at their chosen institutions on leaving the school.
3. Leaders have established a music curriculum that provides pupils with a wealth of opportunities to develop their skills and talents in preparation for careers in the world of music. Pupils work at advanced levels in music theory, harmony, and composition and develop their organisational and collaborative skills through ensemble projects and performance planning. Pupils and leaders recognise that up-to-date computer technology and programmes will further develop pupils' composition and performance skills in readiness for future careers in the professional music world.
4. Pupils are aware of their talents and achievements, developing high levels of purpose, self-worth and discipline. They are highly motivated and manage their own time well to include instrumental practice alongside academic work and musical activities. Pupils engage in recreational activities that develop their skills and support their wellbeing through opportunities to relax with their peers. These contribute to their leadership skills and teach them about the importance of physical exercise and the need for a healthy, balanced diet.
5. Pupils demonstrate a high degree of mutual respect for each other, whether boarders or day pupils. They clearly understand right and wrong and know how to behave appropriately. Pupils respect Yehudi Menuhin and regularly visit his memorial for spiritual reflection.
6. Pupils take on roles of responsibility to support the school and their peers. The student programme committee contribute effectively to preparations for concerts and performances. Pupils' engagement in outreach programmes helps them develop into happy, well-adjusted and collaborative musicians.
7. Boarding accommodation meets the needs of pupils. Suitable staff supervision of boarders is in place, with duty rotas and responsibilities outlined, including overnight supervision and weekend activities. The school premises are maintained effectively with a view to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils.
8. Safeguarding is effective for pupils, including boarders. Pupils know who the key safeguarding staff are and feel able to share their concerns because they have confidence that they will be taken seriously and acted upon. Leaders understand the pressure young musicians face and take this into account when assessing risk.

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:

- enhance opportunities for pupils to learn about how technology can improve their performance and composition skills in preparation for the 21st-century music profession.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Senior leaders and governors work well together, sharing a strategic vision and high ambitions for pupils. Leaders at all levels have expertise within their areas of responsibility and fulfil them so that pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted. Staff are proud to work at the school, and undertake their roles with commitment and skill so that pupils are well prepared for further studies and careers in the music industry. Leaders of boarding are well-qualified and committed to regular reflection and evaluation of the boarding provision and its development.
10. Leaders undertake systematic and reflective self-evaluation of policy and practice in order to improve outcomes for pupils. This has resulted in the implementation of a strengthened pastoral system which involves instrumental teachers more closely in the reporting and addressing of pastoral concerns. A revised behaviour system has been introduced to reduce low-level disruption in lessons. This has been complemented by a new programme of staff development designed to promote excellence in teaching. These initiatives, although in early stages of implementation, have already begun to impact positively on pupils' wellbeing.
11. Senior leaders promote the school's aims by providing a learning environment where talented young musicians discover how to achieve their fullest potential. This includes employing professional composers and performers dedicated to developing pupils' broad range of musical skills. Teachers have the knowledge and skills to deliver engaging and appropriate lessons across the curriculum so that pupils make good progress.
12. Leaders have a secure understanding of risk assessment and employ a systematic and practical approach. They draw upon information and guidance from external agencies effectively. Leaders provide reports for governors to review and challenge where necessary. The risks associated with boarding are appropriately assessed and mitigated.
13. Pastoral staff have the knowledge and skills needed to support and nurture young musicians effectively. This includes meeting Equality Act requirements to protect pupils from discrimination or prejudice whilst learning or performing in school, locally or internationally. The accessibility plan outlines appropriately the modifications necessary for pupils' needs.
14. Appropriate information, documentation, and policies are made available to parents on the school website. This includes a statement of boarding principles and practice. Most parental complaints are resolved informally. The school manages formal complaints in line with its stated procedure. Suitable procedures are in place for boarders and their parents to make complaints.
15. Governors ensure that leaders at all levels are knowledgeable, capable, and highly skilled. They check that leaders promote pupil wellbeing and undertake their roles effectively. Governors are closely involved with the daily life of the school and have a detailed understanding of its performance through visits and meetings with leaders. Governors ask probing and challenging questions which develops the school further whilst providing valued support.

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. Pupils thrive and make rapid progress due to well-structured music tuition and through being immersed in a culture that embraces the Yehudi Menuhin philosophy of education. Leaders have recruited instrumental teachers of the highest levels of expertise who inspire their pupils whilst providing expert tuition and professional guidance. As a result, pupils are focused and challenged to constantly improve their technique and perform with confidence, maturity, and a deep understanding of the music they are playing. Pupils consistently win or are placed in the finals of internationally renowned music competitions and events. They tackle technically demanding repertoires and perform at the highest levels, securing scholarship places at internationally renowned conservatoires.
18. The curriculum is supported by schemes of work, and suitable programmes of activities during the school day and boarding hours. Personalised timetables of one-to-one music sessions with individualised practice sessions and academic subjects meet the needs of gifted musicians. Focused instrumental music lessons are appropriately accompanied by music theory and composition, with extensive dedicated time for aural and harmony lessons and ensemble practice. Pupils are therefore provided with a wide-ranging music curriculum which enables them to develop their broader musical skills to the highest levels. However, both pupils and leaders recognise that in order for their composition and performance skills to be fully developed in readiness for their future careers, pupils need to extend their skills to include the use of up-to-date computer technology and associated programs.
19. The broader curriculum covers the required areas of learning. It is implemented with reference to music wherever possible, and academic staff are equally passionate about ensuring that their pupils' career aspirations are fully realised. Teachers focus on English and mathematics skills, particularly for pupils who speak English as an additional language, prepares them well for their next stage in education. As a result, pupils are routinely offered places at their chosen conservatoire or university. In recent years, two-thirds of pupils have achieved the highest grades at GCSE and A level. Pupils achieve particularly well in music and mathematics.
20. Leaders have introduced a pupil 'passport' for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language. This provides clear, strategic guidance for teaching staff and helps them to effectively support pupils' progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress through a bespoke support pathway. Pupils who have SEND receive effective individualised support and perform well in musical composition and produce academic work that is above age-related expectations.
21. Leaders provide effective in-house training and guidance for teachers, promoting a consistent approach in lessons. As a result, lessons are well planned, and classroom resources are used effectively. Teachers use a range of methods and activities adapted to meet the needs of pupils so that pupils make good progress from their start points.
22. The emphasis on developing the individual's musical skills is recognised throughout the school. Teachers tailor their planning to pupils' individual needs, recognising that each young musician has a unique talent and path ahead of them. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are well communicated whether pupils are studying a Dvorak symphony, plotting mathematical equations or

interpreting extracts from Romeo and Juliet in English Literature. Pupils choosing science at A level engage in high level investigations and research topics.

23. Leaders track pupils' attainment and progress across the music and academic aspects of the school, providing parents with half-termly formal reports. Pupils display an astute sense of their own progress and are particularly appreciative of the impact of their instrumental teachers in guiding their musical skills and development and fostering their motivation. Teachers use assessment effectively to develop and refine pupils' performance skills. Consequently, pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work and how to achieve the target they are aiming for.
24. Pupils engage in various recreational activities which develop their skills and provide opportunities for them to socialise, relax and engage with their peers. These include participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award and sporting activities such as badminton, tennis, swimming, and yoga. All pupils study one hour of art every week to fulfil a vision of the school's founder for them to be involved in a creative and open art process. Pupils benefit from creating texture with their hands and working collaboratively on whole school projects. This provision is not part of an examined subject but pupils' work is celebrated and displayed to the broader community alongside music concerts, performances and events.

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. Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence when discussing their future careers in the music industry. Pupils speak articulately about their school experiences and are proud of the school. Pupils have a sense of purpose in their studies, showing self-discipline and ambition in their outlook.
27. Leaders have recently implemented a revised behaviour policy which has resulted in an improvement in behaviour in lessons. Pupils understand what the expected standards of behaviour are, including leaders' zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory language and behaviour. The anti-bullying strategy is implemented effectively so that pupils are confident that incidents of unkindness and bullying are addressed effectively.
28. The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion. There is a high degree of mutual respect amongst pupils who understand the importance of inclusion of all groups of people, including those who are different from themselves. A suitable relationships and sex education policy is implemented which supports pupils to understand how to maintain healthy relationships. Tutor sessions provide a wealth of opportunities for pupils to discuss, debate and learn about topical issues such as radicalisation, 'grooming' and the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse.
29. Leaders effectively support pupils to understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. For example, pupils participate in regular physical exercise and socialise with their peers and other age groups during mandatory sports sessions and through optional activities throughout the week and the weekend. Pupils swim for an hour every week, and suitable checks are in place to ensure that pupils have a balanced diet. Pupil members of the food committee meet regularly with the school chef to provide information about dietary preferences and to discuss healthy eating. Boarders' views about food and nutritious meals are communicated to the school caterers through the food committee.
30. Pastoral and boarding staff liaise closely so that the pastoral needs of pupils are identified and met consistently throughout the school day and during boarding hours. Leaders have identified individual music teachers as having a key role to play in pupils' wellbeing. They have implemented training for all staff in the use of the school's pastoral reporting system so that any concerns about pupils are swiftly reported and acted upon. As a result, pastoral leaders are able to mitigate against some of the pressures that young musicians are under in their current and future paths.
31. Older pupils appreciate opportunities to discuss philosophy, film and art history. These topics introduce them to different historical, cultural and spiritual beliefs from across the international community of pupils. Time is allocated at the end of boarding house and school council meetings for meditation, and many pupils practise yoga. Pupils show deep feelings of respect for Yehudi Menuhin before competitions or performances by visiting his stone memorial for spiritual reflection.
32. Boarding accommodation meets the needs of pupils. Pupils have access to suitable work areas and may personalise their own spaces. Suitable medical facilities are provided in the school and in boarding houses. Appropriate procedures and resources are in place, including first aid for those with medical conditions, injuries, or illnesses. Boarders can readily contact their friends and families.

33. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure the school premises are safe, including those relating to fire prevention. Outdoor areas and buildings are well maintained and suitably secured. Staff are appropriately trained and are aware of risks to pupil welfare and how to mitigate them. Admissions records and attendance records are correctly recorded, maintained and monitored. Leaders inform the local authority when a pupil joins or leaves the school at non-standard transition times. Suitable staff supervision of pupils is in place with duty rotas and responsibilities outlined, including overnight supervision and weekend staff deployment. New boarders undergo an effective induction process, involving a buddying programme and receiving comprehensive supporting written information.

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

34. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

35. Leaders have established a PSHE curriculum which is effectively delivered, allowing pupils to learn about human, social and economic aspects of education. The school's ethos is one of tolerance and acceptance, encouraged by a shared passion for music and its unifying language. This is evident in pupils' active interest in the experiences of their peers within the school's diverse international community. Pupils enjoy researching and analysing themes that explore cultural differences, and class discussions facilitate their understanding of different views and opinions.
36. Lessons across the curriculum and boarding house activities help pupils to understand British values and to learn about political matters in a balanced context. Pupils discuss the rule of law and compare political systems across different countries, understanding the democratic nature of British institutions. Leaders encourage respect between individuals, including those with disabilities or of a different sexual orientation from their own. Pupils behave appropriately, and act responsibly. They manage their time well and demonstrate mature self-motivation and self-discipline in their instrumental practice.
37. Pupils engage in an extensive outreach program which contributes to their development as happy, well-adjusted and collaborative musicians who aspire to positions of influence in the world of music and the arts. The school culture stresses the importance of contributing to society through activities such as mentoring young musicians and performing for the local community, particularly during the winter and summer festivals. Teachers encourage pupils of all ages to give back to their local community by sharing their gifts and talents through performance.
38. Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award scheme is popular with older pupils and helps them to develop leadership skills, teamwork, decision-making and the ability to 'think on their feet'. Pupils carry out service activities such as working in the school library, coaching their peers to learn piano and acting as stage crew.
39. Through a bespoke curriculum, pupils receive effective support to prepare for highly specialised entry auditions to music conservatoires and universities. This provision helps support pupils' choices of destinations and provides a broad range of opportunities beyond the school, in the UK and beyond. For example, several pupils applying to German or Austrian conservatoires are supported through a specialist German language course. Pupils participate in a wide range of internal and external concert opportunities, including solo performances, chamber music groups, orchestras and collaborations with other artistic organisations. As a result, they are exposed to a diverse range of careers within the music sector. Pupils develop a good range of music business skills and an in-depth understanding of the areas in which they aspire to work.
40. Pupils fulfil positions of responsibility on the school council and the food committee and relish the opportunity to represent their peers. The pupil programming committee develops pupil decision-making skills around the structure of concerts, including economic viability. Pupil audience surveys about cost-effectiveness, travel, and types of events are fed into discussions. Pupils contribute knowledgeably to decisions about which pieces of music will be involved and the best time of the year to perform them, as well as instructions for the pupil stage management crew.

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

41. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

42. Leaders implement appropriate policies and procedures to keep pupils safe in the school and in boarding. Leaders ensure the required checks are carried out before adults begin work in the school and suitable records are maintained. Staff are suitably trained, including in the prevention of radicalisation. As a result, staff understand the need to be vigilant, report concerns and take appropriate action.
43. Staff are well supported by leaders in responding to safeguarding incidents, including the management of children's mental wellbeing, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence. Safeguarding, pastoral, boarding and healthcare staff share information regularly and effectively so that pupils' needs are identified and met in a timely manner. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies, including with regard to pupils' mental health and the behaviour of adults working in the school.
44. Staff understand the principles underpinning the staff code of conduct and the procedures for making a referral, including the importance of low-level reporting. Leaders take appropriate action in response to any perceived breach of the staff code of conduct or an allegation received with regard to an adult who works with children.
45. Pupils discuss and appreciate the work that the school does to keep them safe. They confidently explain how they stay safe online and attribute this to frequent social media safety education lessons. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems are in place. Pupils know the key safeguarding staff and the warning signs to look out for if they or their friends are experiencing difficulty. They are confident that reporting issues will result in help and support. Boarders know the independent listener, school counsellor, nurse, and peer mentors to whom they can turn for help, as well as external contacts such as Childline.
46. Governors receive safeguarding training as required. They ensure that senior leaders responsible for safeguarding are suitably knowledgeable and appropriately trained, including for multi-agency working. Governors maintain an effective oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation in the main school and the boarding houses. In addition to continuous monitoring, a suitable annual review of safeguarding is undertaken alongside scrutiny of records and the single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	The Yehudi Menuhin School
Department for Education number	936/6539
Registered charity number	312010
Address	The Yehudi Menuhin School Stoke d'Abernon Cobham Surrey KT11 3QQ
Phone number	01932 864739
Email address	admin@menuhinschool.co.uk
Website	www.menuhinschool.co.uk
Proprietor	The Yehudi Menuhin School Limited
Chair	Mr David Buckley
Headteacher	Dr Robin Harskin
Age range	11 to 19
Number of pupils	87
Number of boarding pupils	78
Date of previous inspection	30 April to 2 May 2019

Information about the school

48. The Yehudi Menuhin School is an independent co-educational boarding and day school for musically gifted pupils. At least half of each pupil's day is devoted to musical studies. Some pupils spend an additional year at the school to support their entry to international conservatoires. The school was founded by the late Yehudi Menuhin in 1963 and relocated to its present site at Stoke d'Abernon in Surrey in 1964. It is a charitable company limited by guarantee, administered by governors who are directors of the company as well as trustees. The headteacher took up his position in March 2024.
49. There are two boarding houses, one for female pupils and one for male pupils.
50. The school has identified three pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
51. English is an additional language for 26 pupils.
52. The school states its aims are to cultivate the next generation of happy, well-adjusted musicians, who are team players, can express themselves articulately, and are equipped to support their artistic expression with intellectual understanding. It strives to support pupils on the path to becoming influential figures in the broad world of music and the arts.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 to 25 April 2024

53. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The on-site inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

54. 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
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

55. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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