

School inspection report

7 November 2023 to 9 November 2023

Babington House School

Grange Drive
Chislehurst
BR7 5ES

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. Governors provide effective oversight and offer appropriate challenge and support to school leaders. Governors ensure that leaders have the appropriate skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and consistently. Leaders ensure that the requirements of the Standards and statutory guidance, including those of the Equality Act 2010, are met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
2. Leaders identify and adapt existing strategies where necessary to effectively manage risk and their decision-making is guided by accurate self-evaluation. Leaders recognise that positive feedback from a majority of pupils may not represent the views or concerns of some pupils, so leaders provide a variety of opportunities for listening to pupils' views. However, improved processes to hear voices from all pupils are not yet fully embedded.
3. Pupils across all phases of the school make good progress and attain well. Leaders carefully monitor, track pupils' progress and implement effective intervention when pupils need additional support. Consequently, pupils make good progress across all phases of the school, with progress and attainment at GCSE and A level exceeding national norms.
4. Leaders provide high-quality training to staff so that teaching in the classroom is effective and meets the needs of pupils. Specialist teachers provide additional support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). As a result of effective support and targeted intervention, identified groups of pupils with particular needs also make good progress.
5. Teaching is generally carefully planned and lessons are well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils value opportunities to extend their learning by working together and are respectful and supportive of each other's views and opinions. However, pupils do not always make expected progress in lessons when temporary teachers' knowledge of pupils' ability is limited and planning is less effective.
6. Staff in the early years classes successfully deliver an appropriate curriculum that fully considers individual children's needs. As a result, the children develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills.
7. Leaders promote good behaviour across all phases of the school through the effective implementation of the school's code of conduct, and pupils generally respond by behaving well. Staff implement a restorative justice approach effectively aligned to the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Leaders carefully consider the mental health needs of pupils and put effective support for pupils into place when necessary.
8. Leaders actively encourage respect for all people. Leaders have taken appropriate action in response to some pupils who use discriminatory language. However, although the strategies have some impact, they are not yet embedded.
9. Leaders ensure that the premises are safe and well maintained. Leaders implement suitable fire prevention practices and effective risk assessments are in place which decrease the likelihood of harmful incidents occurring.

10. Pupils are well-prepared for life beyond school. Leaders ensure that careers advice is impartial, accurate and supports pupils well for their next steps in education or to access higher education destinations of their choice.
11. Leaders actively promote fundamental British values. Pupils develop their understanding of their place in society through school-led opportunities to help others. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to engage with the wider community.
12. Pupils have access to an appropriate range of physical activities within the timetabled curriculum. Pupils also take part in a wide variety of well-planned co-curricular activities which take into account the ages and needs of pupils.
13. Arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils, including the safe recruitment of staff. The school engages with other relevant local safeguarding partners, and if a potential risk is identified, leaders act promptly and effectively. Pupils understand how to stay safe online, and arrangements for the monitoring and filtering of online technology are effective and reviewed regularly.

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 that:

- planned systems are fully embedded for hearing the voices of all pupils
- systems to actively promote and encourage respect for all groups of people are embedded
- temporary teachers receive appropriate induction and support, so that they plan and teach lessons which take into account the needs of all pupils
- pupils experience further opportunities to contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality, and to society more widely.

Material change request

14. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include an increase in capacity from 460 to 534. The school has appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. The appointment of a non-teaching designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has increased the capacity of the safeguarding team. The school complies with relevant health and safety and fire safety legislation, and the systems of overview are sufficiently robust to support an increase in pupil numbers. The supervision of pupils is appropriate and there is a suitable risk assessment policy in place. When risks are identified, leaders take swift action. The procedures for ensuring the suitability of staff, supply staff, and governors are robust. The premises are likely to be sufficient for the proposed increase in numbers because the proposal intends to fill spaces in existing classes. The senior leadership team has expanded and includes a director of studies which gives leaders additional capacity to manage the increase in pupil numbers. Therefore, it is likely the standards will continue to be met.

It is recommended the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

15. Governors oversee leaders' actions and reflect on a range of evidence to quality assure the impact of decisions made by leaders. Governors take effective action to provide additional staff capacity to support leaders, for example, in the appointment of a non-teaching designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) leader. Governors are keen to understand the views of all pupils and do this through regular school visits and analysis of pupil survey data.
16. Leaders of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) have a clear vision for the development of the setting as a result of their regular self-evaluation. Leaders carry out supervision activities and access high-quality training to enable staff to develop their professional knowledge. For example, initiatives to promote children's independent learning skills have been successfully implemented in the classroom.
17. Leaders ensure that school policies meet the requirements of relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010, and are in line with the school's published aims. All relevant policies, from the early years, senior and sixth-form phases of the school are easily accessible by parents from the comprehensive website or from the school office by request. Parents feel that the school is led and managed well.
18. Leaders identify and plan appropriate provision to manage risks of harm to the wellbeing of pupils. They adapt existing strategies where necessary, including when risk is linked to the school context, such as the location and size of the site. Leaders make appropriate links with other agencies when necessary, in line with school policy.
19. Leaders' accurate self-evaluation incorporates feedback from various stakeholders, including pupils, staff and parents. Leaders regularly analyse school data and use this information appropriately to guide decision-making and for development planning.
20. Leaders actively encourage and listen to pupil voice which is expressed through various forums including the pupil parliament, tutor time, debating club and from informal conversations. Leaders recognise that some pupils' voices may remain unheard, so leaders have implemented additional channels for pupils to communicate their views, such as open access to the school counsellor and the wellbeing lead. Leaders additionally plan to launch an online system to enable pupils to report concerns easily. However, some pathways to hear pupil voice are not embedded and some pupils' voices remain unheard.
21. Leaders publish a suitable complaints policy and implement it in a timely and effective manner. Formal complaints are infrequent, as leaders strive to address any concerns promptly at an informal level.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders ensure that staff in the early years are suitably qualified and have an effective understanding of how children learn at this stage of their lives. Staff plan carefully and skilfully to implement an appropriate curriculum which meets individual pupils' needs. Consequently, children in the early years develop effective emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills in line with the early learning goals.
23. Leaders implement an effective assessment framework and regularly monitor and track pupils' progress. Teachers use data effectively to help them to plan appropriately and to support individual pupils' needs. Pupils respond well to praise and feedback, and feel that their teachers' feedback motivates them to improve their work. Pupils who attend learning support and revision clinics make good progress. As a result of the comprehensive support provided by leaders, pupils' progress and attainment exceed national averages at GCSE and A level.
24. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is inclusive and provides pupils with an opportunity to study a wide range of subjects. Teachers teach well-planned lessons in a range of subjects, which enable pupils across all phases of the school to make good progress. Heads of department, teachers and the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) support team regularly meet and collaborate effectively to identify helpful teaching strategies and to ensure that work is well planned and matched to meet the needs of pupils who have SEND.
25. Teachers plan effectively, use appropriate resources and provide targeted support for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). As a result, pupils who speak English as an additional language quickly become confident and proficient in English, so that they are able to fully access the curriculum and make good progress.
26. Teachers model the skills pupils need to carry out tasks and ask thoughtful questions that consolidate and extend knowledge. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and they work hard in their lessons, are motivated to learn and are reflective. Pupils collaborate well with their peers and enjoy learning together. However, in some lessons, leaders do not provide sufficient support to temporary teachers in the absence of the regular class teacher. As a result, pupils' learning in these lessons is not as effective.
27. Leaders offer opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of co-curricular activities, which are appropriate to meet pupils' ages and needs. These opportunities are extensive in the prep school and promote pupils' physical, creative, aesthetic and technological development. Following feedback from parents and pupils, leaders have increased the range of opportunities available for older pupils, although these remain relatively limited.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

34. In the early years, adults have high expectations of how the children interact with each other, encouraging them to show courtesy and good manners and to respect each other's views. The effective key person system in the early years, supplemented by other staff who know the children well, ensure that the children feel happy and secure when in the setting. The foundations laid for the youngest pupils continue to be built upon as they progress through the year groups. Pupils develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence as a result of the positive start they make to their school life.
35. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. However, sometimes some pupils' behaviour did not meet the standard expected by staff and leaders, for example, when tasks were not well matched to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils respond well to the school's restorative justice approach to resolving issues. Skilled staff support pupils effectively and help pupils to develop a sense of responsibility for their actions. Pupils understand the impact of their actions and develop their understanding of right and wrong through the school's approach.
36. Staff are trained to recognise bullying and promote positive behaviours in line with the up-to-date behaviour and anti-bullying policy. As a result, staff promptly act to address any cases of bullying and follow up appropriately, in line with the school policy. Staff apply appropriate and consistent sanctions, including those for serious incidents. The wellbeing lead and counsellor help pupils to overcome any emotional impact by providing additional specialist support.
37. Staff supervise pupils effectively, and leaders make suitable adjustments to supervision to offer additional support to pupils when necessary. Leaders maintain the school's admission and attendance registers appropriately and follow up any absences in line with current regulations.
38. An appropriate range of sports available in timetabled lessons ensures good opportunities for pupils to meet their needs for physical education. Leaders encourage pupils, including those in the early years, to be physically active. Pupils have suitable access to outside play areas and the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to engage in a variety of sports activities.
39. The personal, health, and social education (PHSE) programme includes age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE), in line with statutory guidance. Pupils understand the importance of PHSE and RSE, and appreciate the skilful and tactful way that staff teach sensitive subjects. Although the necessary topics are covered in the curriculum, some older pupils feel that PHSE and RSE could be adapted to further meet their needs.
40. Governors work closely with leaders to quality assure health and safety provision in the school so that the Standards are consistently met. Governors and senior leaders review risk at every meeting and all staff are appropriately trained to identify and manage risk. As a result, good practice in considering and managing risk is embedded. For example, the climbing wall is clearly demarcated and can only be used when pupils are supervised. Leaders appoint external health and safety experts to conduct regular audits and leaders act on recommendations appropriately.
41. Leaders ensure that the premises and accommodation provide a safe physical environment which meet pupils' medical needs. Trained staff, including those who have a specialism in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Forest school, administer first aid in a timely and competent manner. The well-qualified school nurse is trained in mental health, first aid and attends weekly meetings with

the inclusion committee and all health and safety meetings. This triangulation of support enables leaders to support pupils effectively.

42. Leaders ensure that staff and pupils have been appropriately trained in safe evacuation and the requirements of the Fire Safety Order 2005 are met appropriately. Staff flag any site issues needing attention using the school dedicated helpdesk system and repairs are efficiently implemented, which helps to keep the school site well maintained.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

43. Leaders implement an enhanced and well-resourced career guidance programme based on nationally agreed benchmarks. Teachers provide individual support to help senior pupils to make informed decisions about GCSE and A-level options. Pupils receive impartial and appropriate careers guidance which allow them to access helpful information across a range of career paths. Pupils attend a diverse range of work experience placements which help to prepare them well for entry to post-18 further education and for life beyond school in British society.
44. Leaders encourage mutual respect of others, regardless of difference in line with the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act. Pupils welcome those from other cultures and reflect sensitively on the challenges of integrating into a new society.
45. Leaders' self-evaluation identified that some pupils use discriminatory language and took action to address this. Leaders implement a range of strategies such as educating pupils about the impact of discriminatory language in PSHE and effective staff training led by a dedicated equality and diversity leader. Staff use rewards and sanctions effectively to support pupils to behave well on a daily basis. Leaders' monitoring shows that the strategies they employ have impact because there has been a significant reduction in incidents of discriminatory behaviour in the school. Leaders are committed to making further progress in reducing these incidents which continue in some areas of the senior school. Therefore, leaders now implement additional strategies such as 'show racism the red card' and the 'UNICEF rights respecting school' programme. However, these strategies are not yet fully embedded.
46. Pupils in the school from the early years onwards, have allocated responsibilities that support them to develop a sense of community and an understanding of the importance of contributing to society. Pupils are enthusiastic about their roles, particularly those that positively contribute to school life, such as supporting the youngest pupils at play, and supporting local initiatives through being travel ambassadors. Older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils in clubs such as climbing as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. However, few pupils engage in support of the wider community or initiate charitable endeavours which have not been organised by the school.
47. Pupils understand and respect democratic institutions through the planned curriculum and actively participate in the democratic process through taking part in electing the school parliament. Pupils recognise the changes in school initiated as a result of their engagement in the election process. Leaders successfully promote opportunities for pupils to hear balanced political views in the curriculum.
48. Skilled staff support children in the early years to experience a wide-ranging programme of activities, which are well-matched and appropriate to their educational needs. As a result, children in the early years make good progress in relation to their early learning goals. For example, children readily collaborate and share resources, taking turns in learning activities and being respectful of each other and staff.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. Leaders establish an effective school ethos which safeguards and promotes the welfare of pupils. The safeguarding policy is implemented appropriately and adheres to the Standards, Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and other current statutory guidance. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) uses their experience to maintain an effective relationship with local safeguarding children partnerships. Leaders understand the school context well and manage potential and reported safeguarding issues in a timely manner. Pupils know which trusted adults to turn to if they need to voice concerns.
50. The training of the DSL, safeguarding team and all other staff is up to date and staff understand the importance of following school procedures in line with the school policy in order to maintain the culture of safeguarding. Governors are suitably trained to carry out their role in overseeing safeguarding. Governors use a variety of methods as part of their own quality assurance of school effectiveness. This includes analysis of pupil surveys and visiting the school to observe practice and to listen to pupils' views. Leaders keep detailed records of any safeguarding concerns and the DSL regularly reports on trends and action the schools has taken to governors. This report includes overviews and actions taken to support pupil mental health.
51. Pupils understand how to stay safe online, and arrangements for the monitoring and filtering of online technology work well to safeguard members of the school community. Leaders provide effective support for pupils to stay safe online during the school day, as they require all pupils, except those in the sixth form, to hand their mobile phones in at the start of each day. Sixth-form pupils' online use is subject to monitoring by the effective school system of filtering and monitoring of online technology. Adults in the early years classroom do not use mobile phones in school in line with school policy.
52. Leaders handle any allegations against staff, including low level concerns, effectively. This process involves seeking immediate advice from the appropriate safeguarding partners when necessary.
53. Leaders follow suitable recruitment procedures for staff with diligence. Leaders take appropriate action if pre-employment checks are not returned within the required timeframes or in cases where leaders require further detail. The safeguarding governor carries out checks of records to maintain an effective overview of the school's safer recruitment procedures.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Babington House School
Department for Education number	305/6000
Registered charity number	307914
Address	Grange Drive Chislehurst BR7 5ES
Website	www.babingtonhouse.com
Proprietor	Babington House School Ltd
Chair	Mr Christopher Turner
Headteacher	Mr Tim Lello
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	470
Date of previous inspection	September 2019, followed by a progress monitoring visit in January 2020

Information about the school

54. Babington House School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged 3 to 18. Founded in 1887, the school operates as an educational trust, and a board of governors is responsible for governance. The school comprises an early years foundation stage (EYFS) for children aged 3 to 5, a prep school for pupils aged 5 to 11, and a senior school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years.
55. The school has identified 96 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. English is an additional language for 70 pupils.
57. The school states that its aims are: To provide a first-class education where students can genuinely enjoy their school experience; to foster confidence, maturity, and meaningful connections among pupils through a tailored curriculum; to cultivate wisdom and daring in pupils, supporting them in the exploration of their individuality and pursuit of their personal best.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 7 November 2023 to 9 November 2023

58. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
59. Inspection activities included:
- lesson and co-curricular activity observations
 - discussions with pupils
 - discussions with staff, senior leaders and governors
 - scrutiny of pupils' work
 - scrutiny of records and achievement data
 - attendance at registration and assembly
 - scrutiny of health and safety records
 - review of the site.
60. 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

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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