

School inspection report

4 to 6 February 2025

Bancroft's School

611 to 627 High Road

Woodford Green

Essex

IG8 ORF

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 at all levels prioritise pupils' wellbeing and have a commitment to continuous improvement. They use self-evaluation effectively to ensure that the provision meets pupils' needs, supported by active oversight by governors. Comprehensive policies and procedures, including robust risk assessments ensure a suitable learning environment in which pupils are supported to succeed.
2. The school provides a broad and ambitious curriculum that prioritises both academic achievement and pupils' wellbeing. Pupils attain highly in public examinations
3. Teachers typically use effective methods that encourage pupils to think carefully, work together, and share their thoughts on how they learn. However, some teaching does not consistently challenge pupils sufficiently to enable them to deepen their understanding as much as possible.
4. Leaders make sure that the pastoral needs of pupils are met. including through effective behaviour management and support for pupils' physical health and mental wellbeing. Leaders consult pupils about the school's provision to help ensure that it meets their needs.
5. Bancroft's School is a diverse and inclusive community, with a clear commitment to promoting respect and tolerance through chapel assemblies, pupil leadership initiatives, and events like the 'Being Bancroft's' festival. Pupils show respect in their dealings with each other.
6. The school provides comprehensive careers advice, economic education, and a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop social responsibility and support the school and wider community.
7. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities have secure knowledge of local and national arrangements and work effectively with relevant external agencies. Safeguarding arrangements, including those relating to online safety, are robust and effective. Staff receive regular safeguarding training which is adapted to reflect any local contextual risks and school needs. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

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 teaching consistently challenges pupils to deepen their understanding by thinking for themselves.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors maintain an active oversight of the school's policies, provision and procedures to ensure that all Standards are met. The governing body actively engages in school life to support its monitoring, including through regular visits to school to speak to leaders and pupils and check implementation of policies. Governors receive relevant training from school leaders and external providers, supporting their ability to challenge leaders. Leaders possess the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively fulfil their responsibilities. Leaders at all levels are effective in promoting pupils' wellbeing.
9. Leaders communicate the school's aims and ethos effectively. The 'Being Bancroft's' curriculum framework is designed by leaders to promote and reinforce the school's values and principles of physical activity, creativity, scholarship, and futures. Leaders use this framework effectively to give pupils a clear sense of school expectations and support them to be ambitious and fully engaged in school life.
10. Leaders collaborate effectively with external agencies, including counselling services, safeguarding agencies, and the local authority on matters such as attendance and child protection.
11. School leaders demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. They use pupil and staff surveys to inform self-evaluation and make necessary adjustments to policies and practices. Leaders maintain effective oversight of the quality of teaching, supported by learning walks and professional development for staff to instil a culture of scholarship and critical thinking. The school has also engaged in an independent review of leadership, resulting in developed communication, collaboration and support between leaders at the preparatory and senior schools. Leaders maintain effective oversight of how well the house system contributes to the pastoral support provided to pupils.
12. Leaders understand their roles in complaints procedures. They implement the complaints policy meticulously and attempt to find early resolution. Leaders maintain an appropriate log of any complaints considered at the formal stage.
13. Leaders provide and make available all required information to parents and prospective parents. Parents receive regular reports about their own children's progress and achievement. The school provides the local authority with the required information relating to any funded pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
14. Leaders conduct regular and appropriately detailed risk assessments, addressing not only potential risks to physical safety but also those to mental wellbeing. Risk assessments, including those relating to educational trips, include consideration of any pastoral concerns, and, when necessary, leaders liaise with parents and relevant external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Risk assessments for educational trips and visits include suitable consideration of factors such as appropriate staffing ratios. Leaders review risk assessments to ensure their continued suitability.
15. Leaders are committed to ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for the school community. The school has conducted an external accessibility audit and implements a comprehensive accessibility plan to address any barriers. Leaders maintain an effective overview of the accessibility of the school site and curriculum. They ensure that that the school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

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 provide a broad and ambitious curriculum with an emphasis on academic excellence and pupils' wellbeing. The 'Being Bancroft's' curriculum framework incorporates initiatives to develop oracy, critical thinking, and scholarship. The school offers a wide range of subjects, balancing academic, creative and technological subjects so that pupils learn across a wide range of areas. Programmes of study integrate volunteering, trips, and extra-curricular activities effectively to promote pupils' learning. The sixth-form curriculum is academically ambitious, and includes the extended project qualification alongside enrichment opportunities such as the 'Learning for Life' programme, fortnightly lectures, and a 'medics group'. The curriculum is planned effectively to enable pupils to develop a wide range of skills and knowledge. Leaders plan collaboratively to enable pupils to make links between different subjects. For example, recent plans between three departments resulted in a 'robot wars' day through which pupils linked their learning in computer science, physics and design and technology.
18. In the most effective lessons, teachers demonstrate effective planning with clear learning outcomes, well-structured activities, and well-judged use of relevant and good quality resources. For example, careful use of key texts encourages pupils to engage with the source material and recall prior learning. However, some lessons display limited and repetitive planning, resulting in missed opportunities to challenge pupils and deepen their understanding as much as possible. In the most effective lessons, teachers ensure that pupils apply intellectual effort and collaborate effectively. Typically, carefully structured activities are effectively designed to encourage problem-solving and peer assessment. Teachers display a high level of subject knowledge so that pupils of all abilities make progress.
19. Teachers plan their lessons to enable pupils to develop advanced oracy skills. For example, younger pupils participate in debates on themes such as globalisation that challenge them to articulate their knowledge and understanding clearly. Teachers plan lessons well so that that pupils act responsibly and behave well. Teachers create a positive and inclusive learning environment across the school, in which all pupils are equally encouraged to achieve well.
20. Through robust assessment frameworks, senior leaders and teachers carefully track pupils' progress. They use their analysis of this to adjust teaching and provide additional support when needed. Leaders compare the progress of particular groups of pupils, to ensure that there is no untoward variation between them. Pupils attain highly in public examinations and attain places on competitive higher education courses, including degree apprenticeships and the specialist music course providers. All groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points.
21. Leaders have robust systems for identifying pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Regular reviews monitor the effectiveness of classroom strategies and any additional support provided. Leaders of the learning support department use action plans and individual learning profiles to provide targeted support to pupils, including those studying towards GCSE examinations. This includes the use of effective strategies for particular pupils, to help them with social anxiety or behavioural needs. Pupils are effectively supported to make good progress from their starting points.
22. The learning support department identifies any needs that pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) might have. A detailed register of these pupils is maintained and shared with

teaching staff. Teachers make effective use of this to provide pupils with additional support when required. As a result, pupils who speak EAL make good progress in their English.

23. Pupils have access to a diverse range of co-curricular activities outside of teaching time. Leaders provide a weekly timetable of a large number of clubs and societies, catering to a wide array of interests, including sports, music, drama, debating, Combined Cadet Force (CCF), The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE), and Sea Scouts. The recreational programme enables pupils to extend their learning beyond the classroom by exploring subjects in greater depth and to develop new and extend existing skills.

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

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

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

25. Leaders provide a supportive environment where pupils can make progress both academically and personally. They effectively promote pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. Leaders actively monitor pupils' wellbeing through surveys and take steps to address any concerns. For example, 'Reflection Week' provides a structured opportunity for pupils to identify challenges and for leaders to track pupils' emotional wellbeing. Leaders track trends through data collected and take effective action to support pupils when required. Pupils have access to counsellors and know who to talk to, should they consider it necessary.
26. A clear behaviour policy is in place and is implemented effectively. Leaders communicate their behavioural expectations and the school values of fairness and equity clearly, so that pupils are aware of the behaviour expected from them. Leaders' careful recording of incidents allows them to track and manage behaviour. Leaders have introduced measures such as 'timeout' periods and have increased staff presence during lunch to further support pupils. Leaders respond to any behavioural incidents, that occur effectively, including any that might relate to issues such as racism or bullying, so that they are resolved and the school's expectations reinforced. Leaders and staff apply and sanctions fairly and consistently. Leaders maintain suitable and clear behavioural records and communicate effectively to teachers about any behavioural issues affecting individual pupils or groups. The school teaches pupils about why bullying is not tolerated and how to receive support should they have any concerns about possible bullying. As a result of these measures, behaviour is typically good in the school.
27. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, known as 'Learning for Life', helps pupils develop skills to support their own physical and mental health and wellbeing. It covers topics such as relationships and sex education (RSE) and strategies to keep safe and healthy, with age-appropriate content for each year group. The school gathers pupils' feedback to shape the programme and provides training and support for staff delivering the curriculum. This has led to recent improvements in the teaching about themes such as body image, self-esteem and smoking. Talks and workshops delivered by visiting speakers and organisations as well as off-timetable days further enrich the 'Learning for Life provision'. Through these pupils learn about different types of healthy relationships, maintaining sexual health, sexual violence and privacy and consent.
28. Physical education (PE) is provided through timetabled lessons and a wide range of co-curricular sporting activities and fixtures. Pupils develop skills in an extensive range of individual and team sports. Pupils' physical wellbeing is further encouraged through the co-curricular programme, providing pupils with opportunities for competition, skill development, and recreational sporting activity. Sporting leaders adapt the curriculum to take into account pupils' feedback. For example, in response to suggestions by older female pupils, new sports options such as padel tennis, squash, and golf have been introduced.
29. Leaders foster the spiritual development of pupils effectively, including through weekly chapel services, which offer opportunities for self-reflection and contemplation. Leaders partner with local organisations to develop spiritually and intellectually challenging chapel sessions. Pupils show respectful attention during these sessions. Through these sessions, pupils develop their spiritual understanding through reflection and discussion. The curriculum further supports pupils' spiritual understanding. Pupils learn about a range of different religions and their spiritual perspectives and

practices. In religious studies, for example, pupils learn to consider the values and practices of different religions and their spiritual approaches to life. Leaders also promote pupils' spiritual understanding through liaison with national groups representing a range of religions and events like the Taal festival and 'Culture Day'.

30. The premises and accommodation contain suitable facilities and are maintained effectively. Leaders keep effective oversight of all matters relating to health and safety. Regular checks and maintenance of facilities and equipment, including that related to fire safety, are carried out by the facilities team. Comprehensive training is provided to staff, including first aid and fire safety training. Staff conduct regular fire evacuation drills, so that pupils know what to do in the case of fire. Leaders employ robust systems for managing all accidents, including near misses.
31. First aid procedures are effective. Medical leaders are well trained and experienced. The medical centre provides pupils with suitable facilities and all medicines are securely stored. Leaders maintain a suitable log of any administration of medication or first aid.
32. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders review attendance data regularly and respond effectively to any trends. Leaders inform the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.

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

33. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

34. The curriculum is designed to cover a range of issues and perspectives which encourage mutual respect and develop pupils' social and cultural understanding. In 'Learning for Life' sessions, pupils learn about the harm of prejudice and discrimination through unbiased and careful consideration of sensitive and current issues, such as antisemitism and racism. Mutual respect and social understanding are encouraged for example in the art and drama curriculum, in which pupils engage in discussions about class and how language can be used to reinforce power dynamics. In geography and other lessons, pupils explore ethical issues, such as globalisation and views about possible social and ethical implications of cheap imports.
35. Leaders encourage pupil leadership. Representatives from the pupil body meet termly to plan events, respond to current issues and share experiences, promoting tolerance and understanding. For example, the 'Being Bancroft's' festival at the end of the year brings together pupils from all age groups to actively explore different cultures. Such activities also help prepare pupils for life in British society.
36. Leaders provide pupils with up-to-date and impartial careers advice through which they are encouraged to challenge any perceived limits that they might have. Younger pupils engage in one-to-one interview practice, and enterprise projects introduce careers guidance in Years 7 and 8. Regular careers events develop pupils' understanding of the way that different curriculum subjects link to possible future careers. In the sixth form, through a biennial careers fair, university partnerships, employer engagement programmes and links with Old Bancroftians, leaders actively encourage pupils to explore a broad range of options, including degree apprenticeships, internships and university courses, including those overseas.
37. Effective economic education is provided within the curriculum. In business studies, pupils engage in entrepreneurship discussions and practical exercises and develop skills in strategic thinking, risk assessment, and financial planning. In the 'Learning for life' curriculum, all pupils below sixth form age pupils learn about how to manage bank accounts, budgeting, how interest rates work and the issues surrounding debt. Through programmes involving former pupils, older pupils learn about student finance and the practical challenges of life beyond A levels. Older pupils also run the 'economics and finance' club, where they lead discussions and explain financial topics such as mortgages to younger pupils.
38. The school helps pupils learn the difference between right and wrong. Class discussions about ethical topics help pupils think critically, and teachers make sure everyone's point of view is heard. The 'Learning for Life' programme and 'drop-down' days off timetable address topics such as drug use, gangs, relationships, and consent, including legal and moral considerations of these. As pupils mature, discussions delve into increasingly complex issues. Through the curriculum, leaders encourage pupils to challenge assumptions and consider social themes. For example, pupils connect their designs to real-world challenges in design and technology. In 'Learning for Life' lessons, Year 10 pupils consider trafficking, travel and consent.
39. The school effectively develops pupils' sense of social responsibility. Pupils participate in a range of diverse community partnership programmes including one which involves sixth-form pupils helping children with disabilities to swim, and other projects that support young people and adults with

learning difficulties. Pupil-led groups, like the 'sustainable society', contribute to environmental sustainability through biodiversity projects.

40. The curriculum develops pupils' understanding of democracy, the rule of law, and British institutions. Leaders provide a curriculum with a balanced perspective on political issues, encouraging students to develop their own opinions. For example, pupils learn in history lessons about the suffragettes and votes for women. In 'Learning for Life' lessons, pupils have the opportunity to discuss topics such as perspectives about abortion in America how these relate to the main political parties in the United States. The 'Learning for Life' curriculum includes a half-term unit on British Values, including the rule of law and British institutions. In Model United Nations society, older pupils are selected on personal qualities reflecting school values to act as ambassadors. In a recent mock election, pupils led political parties, and all pupils were encouraged to take part in the process and vote. Staff ensure that any discussions that include political themes are carried out impartially and without bias. They encourage pupils to inform their own informed viewpoints.

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 foster a school culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders and governors ensure that the school's safeguarding policies and procedures are comprehensive, effective and reflect current statutory guidance.
43. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements, including through regular review of policies and practice and visits from the designated safeguarding governor. Governors are regularly trained on safeguarding matters, which allows them to effectively scrutinise the school's safeguarding arrangements. Governors receive regular safeguarding reports and provide support and challenge through regular meetings with leaders.
44. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and safeguarding team are regularly trained at an appropriate level for their role. They respond effectively to any safeguarding concerns that arise, including by liaising effectively with relevant external agencies and, when required, referring safeguarding concerns on to them. The safeguarding team provides suitable support to any pupils affected by safeguarding issues.
45. Staff receive regular safeguarding training, including at induction and through regular updates. They understand their roles and responsibilities, including the importance of passing on any safeguarding concerns no matter how small. Staff are confident in implementing the school's procedures, including those relating to any concerns about adults working with pupils that might arise.
46. Leaders log and monitor safeguarding concerns, enabling them to identify patterns, trends, and assess potential risks. Safeguarding records meet the requirements of current statutory guidance.
47. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to share any concerns that they might have. Pupils are able to report concerns in a variety of ways and are made aware of the support available to them.
48. The school teaches pupils how to stay safe, including when online. Arrangements in school for filtering and monitoring of devices are robust and checked regularly.
49. Leaders ensure that all necessary safer recruitment checks on staff, governors and volunteers are carried out before they commence working at the school. These checks are accurately recorded in a suitable single central record of appointments, which senior leaders and governors regularly review.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Bancroft's School
Department for Education number	317/6063
Registered charity number	1068532
Address	Bancroft's School 611 to 627 High Road Woodford Green Essex IG8 ORF
Phone number	0208 559 0032
Email address	office@bancrofts.org
Website	www.bancrofts.org
Proprietor	The Governors of Bancroft's School
Chair	Sir Andrew Ford
Headteacher	Mr Alex Frazer
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	871
Date of previous inspection	1 to 4 March 2022

Information about the school

51. Bancroft's School is an independent co-educational day school situated in Woodford Green, Essex. Its partner school, Bancroft's Preparatory School is situated on the same site and shares many of the facilities of the senior school. The school is a charitable trust, administered by a governing body which oversees both the senior and preparatory schools. The governing body retains representation from the Worshipful Company of Drapers, who founded the school in east London in the 18th century. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2024 and current chair of governors took up his position in May 2022.
52. The school has identified 111 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
53. The school has identified English as an additional language for 290 pupils.
54. The school states its aims are to encourage each pupil to flourish through academic endeavour with enthusiastic engagement in a wide range of co-curricular opportunities, while being supported and nurtured by first-class pastoral care. It aims for all Bancroftians to enjoy and make the most of their time at school, while developing the independence of mind and lasting confidence that will empower them to thrive in their future studies and adult lives.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

4 to 6 February 2025

55. A team of seven 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 of governors
- discussions with the headteacher, 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.

58. Bancroft's Preparatory School was inspected separately at the same time.

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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