

School inspection report

21 to 23 November 2023

Caterham School

Harestone Valley Road

Caterham

SURREY

CR3 6YA

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. The school's leaders understand well their responsibility to promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders have developed strategies that support the school in its objective to provide pupils with an environment in which they are challenged to be the best they can be.
2. Pastoral care underpins the academic, extra-curricular and sporting achievements pursued by the school. A small thriving boarding community contributes to the richness of school life, expanding the educational opportunities of day pupils as well as of boarders. Governors' planning begins and ends with the school's pupils, whose current and long-term wellbeing is central to policy, practice and development decisions.
3. The governing body is actively involved in the life of the school. Governors carry out on-going quality assurance of the work of leaders and managers. The scrutiny of school life, undertaken by a range of governor committees, is comprehensive. The board audits governors' skills to identify areas that could be enhanced. The board uses external experts to support, when necessary, the discharge of occasional specific responsibilities.
4. Teaching engages and generates intellectual interest and ambition among pupils at a high level. This is a significant strength. As a result, pupils develop a strong love of learning, for its own sake.
5. Leaders have created an atmosphere and culture that very successfully promotes pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. This culture enables pupils not to worry about what others think about them, to be ambitious and to be thoroughly respectful of each other. This is a significant strength.
6. The school uses data effectively to support the pupils in their achievements, providing effective feedback where required in most cases. This is being developed to ensure that all pupils receive tailored support by their teachers.
7. The management of safeguarding is effective. Mitigating risks is part of the school's safeguarding culture and it is everyone's responsibility. Recorded incidents are analysed in detail to ensure pupils are safeguarded appropriately. Numerous ways are provided for pupils' voices to be listened to. Staff are well trained in effective listening skills and safeguarding, enabling them to support pupils within the whole school community.

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 the focused work to ensure data is used effectively, providing helpful feedback and support for all pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. School leaders are knowledgeable and forward looking, actively promoting pupils' wellbeing both pastorally and academically, including in boarding. Leaders ensure that they communicate the school's aims to parents and pupils, and articulate them through the ethos of school life. Leaders skilfully and systematically, through a detailed management plan and self-evaluation, ensure that these aims are fulfilled by practices in all areas of the school. Leaders create policies and procedures that suit the context of the school and provide effective oversight and monitoring of them.
9. Leaders ensure that teaching offers high levels of intellectual engagement. Leaders are innovative and dynamic in their approach to promoting learning. The curriculum is highly regarded by pupils and very successful in promoting a love of learning. Leaders place great emphasis on enabling pupils to be confident and comfortable in themselves. A bespoke whole-school information system provides a record of all academic and pastoral matters. This helps staff to support and monitor pupils during their school life, creating tailored plans to meet individual pupils' needs.
10. Leaders make sure that they are easily accessible to parents and deal with any concerns they have promptly and with care. Complaints are recorded and responded appropriately and in line with the policy. Leaders demonstrate that they have the relevant knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
11. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and well supported in all aspects of school life. Leaders and managers provide extensive opportunities for pupils to discover and develop their aptitudes and talents, making informed choices about their current and future aspirations and career paths.
12. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and has an effective and well-monitored accessibility plan, supporting pupils, staff and visitors access to the school. Teachers, staff and governors are well trained and have appropriate skills to carry out their roles. The governing body regularly undertakes a skills audit to ensure that, between them, governors have all the skills and experience needed to fulfil its functions effectively.
13. Managers and leaders ensure that boarders live and work in a safe and secure environment. Boarding teams enrich the educational opportunities and experiences for pupils. Leaders provide all necessary documentation to parents and prospective parents on the school website. A regular half-termly reporting system is in place and virtual parents' evenings are held throughout the year. This helps parents and staff to work together to support pupils in their learning.

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

14. The curriculum is wide ranging and ambitious. Leaders have introduced 'EDGE' and 'learning to learn' programmes which help widen pupils' horizons. Pupils across all years 'explore, develop, grow and evolve' through interdisciplinary learning. They develop high levels of skill in oracy, research and wider philosophical thinking. This encourages a deeper understanding of subject matter which, in turn, enhances pupils' personal development.
15. Across all subjects, teachers' clear instructions, and the whole school strategy focusing on reflection, lead to pupils' high levels of ambition, engagement and effort in lessons. Pupils make rapid progress, regardless of their ability. The impact of the curriculum is reflected in the consistently high attainment in external examinations. At both GCSE and A level, pupils make strong progress from their starting points at the beginning of the course. Leaders use data analytically to track progress and provide support when needed. Middle managers are continuing to work with the data to develop more focused feedback to ensure effective support for all pupils.
16. Specialists and subject teachers provide individualised help to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), or whose progress has faltered. Consequently, there is very little difference in the attainment of different groups of pupils. Data is collected by the school so that intervention and enrichment strategies can be planned to support pupils. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with the SEND team, teachers and external agencies to support pupils who have specific behavioural needs.
17. Teaching is highly effective. Teachers engage very well with pupils and generate intellectual interest and ambition in them. Leaders provide a clear direction in these areas and give individual teachers the opportunity to develop their own approaches. Consequently, pupils develop advanced learning skills and cultivate a love of learning. Pupils of all ages and aptitudes develop a thirst for knowledge, enthused by teachers who are themselves seeking to learn and develop through research projects and coaching.
18. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which they transfer to pupils very effectively. They have an acute understanding of the needs and abilities of each pupil. Teachers provide a vibrant learning atmosphere in which pupils become self-motivated so that they think and learn for themselves. Teachers ensure there is no discrimination against any group and, encourage the development of fundamental British values such as democracy, respect and tolerance.
19. Pupils are extremely engaged in lessons and are confident speakers and listeners. They develop knowledge, skills and understanding of many complex topics. They engage enthusiastically in tasks that require them to think deeply and take risks. Pupils work co-operatively and purposefully in groups, with the confidence of being in a safe space to discuss their views and challenge those of their peers. Pupils are confident and articulate.
20. The school's use of tablets and digital learning platforms allow pupils to quickly access tasks and to use a variety of applications in lessons to support their understanding. Leaders have focused well on embedding innovation and digital learning into the curriculum within lessons, and in a wide variety of co-curricular opportunities. Pupils enthuse about their learning in this area and know that it is an essential element of life beyond school. Academic enrichment is fully embedded with very popular academic societies across the departments.

21. Leaders provide a wide range of co-curricular opportunities. These have a positive impact both on pupils' mental and physical development and on their wellbeing. Leaders ensure that opportunities in, for example, sport, drama or music are available to all pupils while ensuring that pupils with talents are given the chance to excel. The recreational programme develops skills for pupils of all abilities. Access to extensive facilities in sport and the performing arts contributes to pupils' high levels of performance. School sports teams frequently compete in national competitions.

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

22. Leaders have instigated a wellbeing programme that is comprehensive and appropriate to pupils' ages. It successfully equips pupils with a sophisticated understanding and respect for difference and diversity. Pupils develop knowledge and understanding of British public institutions and fundamental values. The programme helps to develop well rounded and informed young people.
23. In line with the school's ethos of embedding mutual respect, staff generate an atmosphere and culture that empowers pupils to be their true selves. Differences are celebrated and pupils value each other equally. Staff encourage pupils to be ambitious and to be respectful of each other. Pupils have plentiful opportunities to have their voices heard. They lead assemblies and societies both in the school and within the wider educational environment, such as to other schools through relevant associations.
24. Pupils act in a manner that supports the school's ethos. The school's management of behaviour is effective. Leaders approach incidents proportionately and constructively. Leaders ensure a supportive, caring and safe environment in which pupils can develop their skills.
25. Leaders provide a wide-ranging programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education which is mapped out and developed each year. This includes relationships and sex education (RSE) which supports pupils very well in navigating through their teenage years. The curriculum provision is reactive to issues that arise or that pupils would like to discuss.
26. The supervision of pupils, including boarders, is effective. It enables pupils to feel safe and secure throughout the school day, aiding them to learn effectively. Boarders know the staff who are responsible for them at all times. The admission and attendance mechanisms are suitable and efficient. New members of the school community undergo an effective induction process, which results in pupils settling into the school quickly.
27. There are rigorous policies and procedures in place which promote the health and safety of the school community. The medical provision is well-resourced. Pupils are confident in approaching the medical staff for help should it be required. Staff are appropriately trained in first aid and are aware of their responsibilities. First aid is provided effectively when needed.
28. The co-curricular clubs and societies provide opportunities for pupils to take the lead and develop areas of interest beyond the curriculum. Staff provide effective support and encouragement for them to do so. Pupils have a suitable balance of activities and teaching time, immersing themselves in their art, drama, music or sporting interests alongside their schoolwork. Leaders enable pupils to develop deeper self-confidence, leadership, resilience and team-work skills through the opportunities provided. Leaders provide an extensive range of co-curricular activities, including linguistic, technical, creative and sporting. The co-curricular programme encourages pupils to develop adaptability and a sense of their own responsibility. The programme offers a safe environment to learn how to cope when things go wrong and how to grow by learning from mistakes. Pupils are encouraged to explore their strengths and talents. Pupils can immerse themselves in art, drama, or music or enjoy spending time with their peers, providing balance to their school lives. Boarders have access to many of the school's facilities and opportunities during

boarding time and have a bespoke activities programme that they access in the evenings and at weekends.

29. The facilities for boarders are clean, welcoming and safe. Boarders enjoy spending time with their friends and have an appropriate balance of activities and free time. Boarding prefects are trained in additional key skills to help support the boarding community. Pupils know who they can talk to and they always have access to staff, including at night. There is regular investment in the boarding accommodation, most recently the refurbished girls' house located in the grounds, contributing to the warm community experience and 'family' feel. Clear staff communication and recordkeeping between house and academic staff, and particularly with the health centre staff, supports boarders' welfare.

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

30. The innovative 'EDGE' curriculum and 'learning for life' course, promote pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain after school. The curriculum encourages respect for the law, institutions, other cultures and democracy. Pupils meet with alumni to explore a range of pathways and to gain a deep understanding of a range of occupations. For example, they discussed law as a possible career choice with a former pupil. Teachers and other staff set high examples of enthusiasm for subject, activities and promotion of the school's principles. Pupils' clear sense of right and wrong is apparent in their personal behaviour, language and treatment of others.
31. Leaders ensure that pupils feel part of a close yet outward-looking community. Leaders ensure that pupils' views are heard and listened to through a variety of pupil councils. Pupils value the chance to voice their opinions and to see things change because of their suggestions. Pupil councils contribute to pupils' understanding of other cultures. The wide range of languages studied by pupils helps to break down barriers between cultures and allows pupils the chance to learn about other countries in more detail. A group of pupils meets regularly to discuss matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. The group has recently disseminated information to pupils on homelessness, neurodiversity, Black history and transphobia.
32. Pupils receive effective careers guidance and in the sixth form through the EDGE carousel initiative which aims to give all pupils 21st century skills such as collaboration and networking. It has six elements to it including degree apprenticeships, medical and creative subjects, Oxbridge entrance and a chartered institute of securities and investments (CISI) qualification which focuses on various financial services. There is a careers fair for Years 7 and 8 and dedicated time throughout the curriculum for all year groups.
33. Respect for others is deeply embedded in the school. Social and cultural development is secured by a well-developed pastoral system, and wide-ranging creative opportunities, publicised clearly around the school. The school actively promotes pupils' leadership skills in wide areas of the school's life. Some pupils go on to take part in leadership extension programmes beyond school. Leaders encourage pupils to become confident, articulate communicators who are committed to using their skills for the good of society.
34. Leaders support senior pupils in leading assemblies and groups where they can work closely with those younger than themselves. Economic and climate issues have led pupils to think about food waste and recycling as a community. Assemblies are often led by pupils who encourage all in the school to make a collective difference. Leaders stress the importance of 'giving to society' in time, talent or money and support the pupils in their contributions.

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

35. Leaders prioritise safeguarding. Both day and boarding pupils feel safe at school. Pupils feel safe to talk to staff about sensitive or complex issues.
36. Leaders have ensured that, through effective and frequently updated training, staff understand what to do if they have concerns about pupils or the behaviour of adults. Appropriate action is taken in response to concerns, and the risk to pupils is evaluated and mitigated. Records are thorough and detailed, showing actions taken and decisions made. Leaders know the correct protocols to follow should they need to challenge potential radicalisation of pupils.
37. Safeguarding leaders work closely and collaboratively with external agencies, when necessary, to protect pupils at risk of harm. Recruitment checks on staff and other adults are robustly carried out and recorded. Pupils understand protocols to keep themselves protected when using social media. They identify many adults in the school community to whom they would talk if they had concerns or anxieties.
38. Governors work closely with safeguarding leaders to ensure that there is a detailed oversight of safeguarding procedures and to check that these are properly implemented. The designated safeguarding lead has received appropriate training and carries out the role effectively. Leaders identify the particular risks to boarders and mitigate these well including by ensuring strong communication between all involved with the boarding community, supplemented by effective written records and logs.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Caterham School
Department for Education number	936/6538
Registered charity number	1109508
Address	Caterham School Harestone Valley Road Caterham Surrey CR3 6YA
Phone number	01883 343028
Email address	enquiries@caterhamschool.co.uk
Website	www.caterhamschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Caterham School Ltd
Chair	Ms Monisha Shah
Headteacher	Mr Ceri Jones
Age range	11 to 19
Number of pupils	1000
Number of boarding pupils	164
Date of previous inspection	30 April to 2 May 2019

Information about the school

39. Caterham School is a co-educational day and boarding school located in Caterham, Surrey. The school is part of the Caterham family of schools, with a preparatory school situated on the same site. The two schools share some facilities. It is a charitable trust overseen by a board of trustees. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors was appointed in 2022.
40. There are three boarding houses. A house for girls in Years 9 to 13 is located in the grounds of the school. Two houses for boys, one for Years 9 and 10 and one for Years 11 to 13, are both located in the main building.
41. The school has identified 100 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small minority of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
42. English is an additional language for 164 pupils.
43. The school states that its aims are to provide an education for life, blending the best of tradition with the opportunities provided by modern technology and developing the whole child. It aims to ensure that pupils understand their responsibility towards others and are well equipped to engage positively with a rapidly changing world as accomplished problem-solvers and innovators. The school aims to develop pupils who are confident in their ability to lead and with a clear appreciation of and respect for the views and potential of others.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 November 2023

44. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

45. 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 headteacher, 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.

46. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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