

School inspection report

3 to 5 February 2026

Cheam School

Headley

Newbury

RG19 8LD

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and governors ensure that the Standards are met consistently, including the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS). Leaders maintain clear oversight of the provision. They ensure that policies and routines are implemented consistently. In the early years, children benefit from a richly communicative and nurturing environment that promotes their confidence, independence and engagement in learning. Leaders of boarding ensure that the required policies and documentation are up to date and implemented effectively. Regular oversight and targeted staff training ensures that boarding is a well-integrated and valued part of the school. This contributes positively to pupils' learning, personal development and overall educational experience.
2. Comprehensive training and staff appraisal equip staff and governors with the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders and governors set clear priorities, placing pupils' wellbeing at the centre of school life. They balance academic ambition for pupils carefully with pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Governors provide effective strategic oversight and risk assessment. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The restructuring of school sections and leadership roles, to continue to enhance curriculum continuity and organisation from the early years to Year 8, is in the early stages of implementation.
3. Governors monitor key aspects of the school's performance through personal visits, detailed reporting from school leaders and through regular reviews of all aspects of the school, including safeguarding. Although they receive detailed information regarding pupils' academic achievement, current analyses do not show the progress and attainment of specific pupil groups or whole-school trends clearly. This limits leaders' and governors' ability to identify strengths and to highlight precisely where further intervention may be needed.
4. Parents have access to comprehensive information through the school's website and newsletters. They are kept well informed about their child's progress. The school's complaints policy is implemented consistently and effectively. Leaders respond promptly to concerns, maintaining appropriate records of actions taken and the associated outcomes.
5. The curriculum is broad, well balanced and enriched, including through modern and classical languages. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities in the creative and performing arts. There is a consistent focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills to a high level throughout the school. Planning identifies the knowledge and skills pupils need to acquire. However, it does not routinely build progressively from the early years onwards. This leads to some variations in the continuity of pupils' learning. A varied enrichment programme is offered to all pupils during the extended school day. Activities during this time enable day pupils and boarders to extend their talents and interests, to develop new skills and to build confidence.
6. Most teaching is well planned. A comprehensive assessment framework is used well to track individual pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL), make good progress from their starting points. Most pupils attain well by the end of Year 8. The majority of pupils gain entry to the senior school of their choice. Many achieve scholarships in academics, sport, music, art and drama.

7. The school's personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes enable pupils to understand key issues that have an impact on their emotional and physical wellbeing. Pupils' physical development is enhanced through a wide range of opportunities in physical education (PE), co-curricular activities and active recreation times. Pupils' spiritual awareness is nurtured through the caring ethos of the school, religious education (RE), assemblies and chapel services. Effective staff deployment ensures that there is appropriate supervision at all times. The school has a clear behaviour policy with a focus on pupils showing respect, understanding and taking responsibility for their behaviour. Pupils consistently demonstrate kindness and consideration towards others. They are clear that bullying of any kind, including online, must not be tolerated. Effective health and safety policies and procedures are implemented, including for fire safety, first aid, admissions and attendance.
8. Boarding staff support boarders effectively in their academic studies, as well as in their personal development. Pupils benefit from a warm, homely atmosphere in the community. They take part in a wide range of activities and socialise together during their free time. These experiences develop boarders' social skills, independence, resilience and confidence.
9. Leaders have recently introduced a framework for developing pupils' character education based on the philosophy of Aristotle and the cultivation of positive personal qualities. These include intellectual, moral, civic and performance virtues, which are taught alongside PSHE and RSE. These values are woven through the school's culture. They are reflected in daily school life by pupils who take responsibility for their own character development and make the right choices. Pupils are keen to work towards achieving the Cheam diploma in character education. This programme is in the early stages of development.
10. Pupils are well prepared for life in British society. The school's core values of curiosity, kindness and community underpin their attitudes, relationships and daily experiences. From the early years, pupils are well supported to develop effective communication skills. They learn to listen attentively and engage confidently with others. Pupil leaders take on a wide range of responsibilities that contribute positively to the school, the local community and the wider world. Across the school, pupils show enthusiasm for supporting charities, demonstrating empathy and a mature sense of social responsibility. Careers guidance and economic education equip pupils with the knowledge, practical skills and high aspirations needed to achieve success academically and personally.
11. There is an effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Pupils' mental health and wellbeing are supported sensitively. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding. They are confident about the actions to take if any safeguarding concerns arise or if a pupil makes a disclosure. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including when online. Suitable safeguarding risk assessments are in place. Referrals are made appropriately to the local authority. Safer recruitment procedures are followed diligently. All the required checks are completed for new staff and recorded accurately.

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

The proprietor and leaders should:

- strengthen planning for learning so that knowledge and skills routinely build progressively from the early years onwards to provide greater continuity and to continue to enhance pupils' academic and personal development
- strengthen the depth of analysis of pupils' achievement information to ensure improvement actions are precisely targeted and consistently effective for different pupil groups.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders and governors ensure that the Standards are met consistently, including the NMS. They articulate clear priorities, placing the wellbeing of every pupil at the heart of school life. Their academic ambition for all pupils combines effectively with their clear ambition for pupils' personal, social and emotional growth.
13. In the early years, leaders ensure that policies and routines are implemented consistently well and that staff receive appropriate training to develop their practice. Children benefit from a language-rich and caring environment, which nurtures their confidence and independence.
14. Boarding leaders ensure that all required policies are implemented consistently and that boarders and their parents receive comprehensive, up-to-date information. They have a clear understanding of the needs of flexi-boarders. Consequently, every boarder experiences a nurturing environment that supports their wellbeing, confidence and growing independence.
15. Governors are ambitious for the school to continue to improve. They engage regularly with staff, pupils and parents to hear their views, for example through meetings and surveys. Consequently, they provide effective strategic oversight, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. They offer appropriate challenge and support to senior leaders in constructive and collaborative relationships.
16. Governors and leaders evaluate risk strategically. They consider the likelihood of any unintended consequences carefully. Appropriate training and risk assessments are in place, including for safeguarding. Potential hazards are identified, evaluated and mitigated promptly. Risk assessments are regularly and systematically reviewed. They are clearly documented and adapted to reflect changing circumstances.
17. Governors have recently appointed a new headteacher. They have prioritised restructuring the school's sections and leadership team to provide greater continuity in the curriculum and organisation across year groups and in boarding. As the new structure is implemented, care is taken to retain the school's history and the many positive features already embedded in its practice. These include an enriched, well-resourced curriculum with a culture of high expectations, a wide range of co-curricular opportunities, effective pastoral care and flexi-boarding in a caring and supportive environment.
18. The governing board is well structured. The associated committees cover all statutory responsibilities, including finance, health and safety, wellbeing, safeguarding and boarding, teaching and learning, marketing and admissions. Governors monitor key aspects of the school's performance. This includes thorough detailed reporting by leaders and regular reviews of information, for example, linked to safeguarding, recruitment, training, admissions, absence and behaviour. Although governors receive analyses of pupils' academic achievement, the information provided does not show the progress and attainment of specific groups and whole-school trends clearly. As a result, leaders and governors have limited insight into strengths and emerging needs. This makes it more challenging for support and improvement actions to be targeted as accurately as they could be.
19. Policies are reviewed regularly, updated in line with statutory guidance, understood by staff and implemented consistently well. Leaders liaise as required with other agencies, including

safeguarding partners. This ensures that pupils' needs are supported effectively. Leaders communicate appropriately with the local authority regarding reviews and the use of funds for pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). The school implements a suitable accessibility plan. This includes adaptations to school information, the curriculum and physical accessibility to the premises. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

20. Governors ensure that the premises are maintained to a high standard. Pupils have access to an extensive range of high-quality resources. This enhances the breadth and quality of their learning experiences. Facilities include specialist accommodation for the early years, art, science, physical education, design technology, computing and the creative and performing arts.
21. Parents have access to a range of information through the school's website and detailed newsletters. All the required policies and information are published on the school's website. Parents are regularly informed about their child's progress and attainment.
22. The school has a suitable complaints policy, which is implemented effectively. Leaders respond promptly to any concerns raised by parents and pupils. The number of formal complaints received for the previous year is made available as required. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken and the outcomes of the complaint.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

24. Pupils experience a broad, balanced and enriched curriculum. This encompasses the required areas of learning, including English, mathematics, science, technology, humanities, creative subjects and PE. It is based on the national curriculum and entrance examinations for selective schools.
25. Nursery and Reception staff plan learning aligned with the early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum. In doing so, they consider children's developmental stages and individual interests carefully. Children take part in a wide range of open-ended indoor and outdoor experiences, promoting active, independent learning. The early learning environment encourages children's curiosity, exploration and positive interaction with their peers. They are supported by key staff who know each child well. Staff use this knowledge effectively to guide planning for children's next steps in learning. The transitions from home into nursery and then into the next class are thoughtfully organised. As a result, children become familiar with new routines and build secure relationships with their new teachers.
26. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and highly knowledgeable. Their planning identifies the knowledge and skills pupils need to acquire. This takes account of examination requirements as well as pupils' needs and interests. However, at times, planning is not as consistently effective as it could be in a few subjects and year groups. This leads to some variations in continuity and the extent to which pupils build securely on prior knowledge. Overall, the curriculum enables pupils to think critically and creatively, to research, sort, record, analyse and evaluate information. They develop knowledge of another language and culture in addition to English. Pupils also acquire a classical foundation through the study of Latin, Greek, and Roman history, literature and mythology.
27. In English and mathematics, and across the wider curriculum, there is a consistent focus on developing pupils' advanced mathematical and linguistic skills. A well-established culture of reading encourages pupils to engage with increasingly challenging texts, including classic literature, extended non-fiction and subject-specific material. In mathematics, pupils progress to applying complex reasoning, solving multi-step problems, interpreting data with accuracy and using algebraic and geometric concepts with confidence. As they move through the school, pupils write with increasing sophistication. They produce analytical essays, structured arguments and creative pieces, demonstrating precision and deep understanding.
28. Pupils build aesthetic and creative skills to a high level across the curriculum, especially in music, drama, computing, design technology and art. All pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of productions and performances. These help them to secure confidence, teamwork skills and self-expression. Many pupils play an instrument, participating in ensembles and the school orchestra. They often achieve highly in examinations set by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA).
29. The majority of teaching is well planned and appropriately challenging. Pupils take pride in their work, reflecting high standards of presentation and self-motivation. Across most subjects, pupils engage in high-level learning, such as tackling complex problem-solving tasks, analysing texts in depth and producing extended pieces of writing demonstrating reasoning and creativity. Teachers provide feedback against clear criteria in most subjects. This enables pupils to understand their achievements and what they need to do next to take their learning to the next stage.

30. A comprehensive assessment framework is in place. This incorporates ongoing teacher assessment and standardised tests in English and mathematics. In the early years, assessment of children's learning is closely aligned to the early learning goals. Children typically achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception class. They develop secure early reading skills through well-structured phonics teaching. As a result, they recognise the sounds that letters make, blend accurately and apply their knowledge when reading simple texts. They work independently and co-operatively with their peers to manage their routines and to solve problems. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points, achieving well by the end of Year 8.
31. Pupils who have SEND make rapid progress because the learning development team have extensive expertise in supporting specific learning needs and promoting positive behaviour. Accurate and detailed assessments, including those carried out by external specialists, are used well to create individual intervention plans. These include precise targets, clear strategies for classroom support and, where appropriate, tailored individual or small-group sessions to address gaps in learning. Teachers across the school benefit from regular training, guidance and modelling from the learning development team. Consequently, they support pupils' needs effectively. Strategies, such as pre-teaching key vocabulary, breaking tasks into manageable steps and providing visual scaffolds, help pupils to access learning with increasing independence. Effective targeted interventions include structured phonics programmes and precision teaching. Short, frequent, well-focused sessions reinforce specific skills through repeated practice and immediate feedback. This leads to measurable improvements in pupils' outcomes.
32. Leaders implement effective approaches for checks on learning and support for pupils who speak EAL. Clear systems are in place to identify pupils' needs from the outset. These include, for example, using familiarisation days, parent questionnaires and specific EAL assessments to identify aspects of language requiring support. Close collaboration between teachers of EAL, the head of learning support and development, and class teachers ensures that appropriate classroom adaptations are implemented consistently well. Adaptations include visual aids and translation reading pens. These strategies allow pupils to access learning effectively and to build confidence in learning across all curriculum areas. Half-termly assessment meetings ensure that provision remains flexible and responsive with timely interventions where required.
33. A varied enrichment programme is provided for all pupils in the extended school day. It includes prep and a range of activities including robotics, orchestra, construction club and science club. Teachers guide pupils sensitively to activities to support and extend their talents, learning and personal development. This guidance allows boarders and day pupils to discover new interests, to develop skills and to build confidence beyond the classroom.

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

34. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

35. The PSHE curriculum, which includes suitable and effectively taught RSE content, is meticulously planned and well resourced. This equips pupils with the knowledge and confidence they need to make informed, responsible choices as they grow and mature.
36. In the early years, children learn about positive relationships, friendships, feelings and safety routines. For example, they learn to take turns and to recognise emotions, and they gain understanding of how to move safely around the classroom and outdoor spaces. As pupils move through the school, PSHE and RSE are implemented as a core subject by form tutors, with specialist teaching for older pupils. Pupils build on their early learning through age-appropriate topics. These include learning how to manage changes that occur during puberty, making healthy lifestyle choices and understanding how to look after their emotional wellbeing.
37. Personal, social, health and economic education is reinforced through assemblies, external speakers and across the wider curriculum. For example, understanding human biology and reproduction in science, and justice, human rights, environmental responsibility and the impact of historical decisions on different communities in humanities.
38. Staff receive comprehensive training and ongoing guidance from school leaders. This ensures consistent and effective PSHE and RSE provision throughout the school. Pupils' progress is checked through observations, discussions, assessed tasks and end-of-unit evaluations. Detailed analysis of these assessment outcomes is used well to inform ongoing planning and to address any gaps or misconceptions in pupils' learning.
39. Spirituality is fostered through the school's ethos, the curriculum, assemblies and services. Pupils are encouraged to value the non-material aspects of life, such as kindness, friendship, curiosity and personal reflection. The RE, and philosophy and ethics programmes broaden pupils' understanding of a range of world faiths and what spirituality means within different cultural and personal contexts.
40. Pupils' physical development is promoted effectively from the early years. Younger children learn about healthy eating and dental care. They develop core strength, co-ordination and spatial awareness through activities such as climbing, balancing and using wheeled toys. In PE, leaders take care to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive. All pupils have access to wide-ranging sporting activities, including an extensive sporting fixtures programme. Pupils participate enthusiastically. They understand the importance of maintaining balance in daily life, including in recreation, rest and sleep.
41. The school's behaviour management and anti-bullying procedures are effective throughout the school. The respectful culture is supported by a clear anti-bullying policy that is reinforced through assemblies and PSHE lessons. Pupils develop a sound understanding of what constitutes bullying. They recognise that it is never acceptable. Staff maintain detailed records of both positive and negative behaviours, including details of any rewards or sanctions given. Leaders use this information to monitor patterns, to celebrate positive conduct and to ensure that consequences are fair and proportionate. Pupils are well supported to take responsibility for their behaviour and to make amends where appropriate. Positive behaviour and effort are acknowledged through praise,

commendations, certificates and awards in assemblies. Pupils appreciate the way acknowledgements highlight resilience, kindness and effort as well as academic success.

42. Effective staff deployment ensures that pupils are consistently well supervised throughout the school day. This includes before and after school, at breaktimes and lunchtimes, during activities, on school minibuses and when participating in trips. In the early years, staffing ratios meet or exceed statutory requirements. This ensures that young children receive warm, attentive supervision from their key person. In the boarding provision, appropriate staffing at all times provides consistent oversight, support and care for boarders. Across all areas of school life, staff model respectful interactions, build positive relationships and promote pupils' thoughtful consideration of each other.
43. There are suitable facilities for the administration of first aid in the medical centre and across the school. The school's nursing staff, together with more than the required number of trained first aiders, including in paediatric first aid, ensure that pupils in all areas of the school receive prompt, competent and sympathetic care. Children in the early years are appropriately supervised during mealtimes and snack times. Early years staff are trained in how to respond if a child chokes. Medicines are stored securely and administered in accordance with school policy. Leaders maintain thorough records of any accidents and the administration of medicines.
44. Leaders ensure that the admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with current statutory guidance. They monitor attendance diligently, putting support in place without delay for any pupils whose levels of absence cause concern. Leaders provide the local authority with timely information regarding any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition times.
45. The school premises are maintained to a high standard. This includes outdoor play facilities for younger children, and sporting and recreation areas for older pupils. Staff responsible for health and safety are suitably trained, knowledgeable and diligent. They ensure that staff throughout the school are well trained. The required health and safety checks, including those related to fire safety, are carried out and recorded accurately. Regular evacuation drills and the efficient management of buildings support pupils and staff. Consequently, they know how to respond in the event of an emergency.
46. Boarders benefit from well-organised induction arrangements and a welcoming, family-style environment. PSHE themes are reinforced through daily routines, pastoral discussions and opportunities for boarders to develop independence, healthy habits and positive relationships. They learn, for example, to organise their belongings, manage their time effectively and take responsibility for their personal hygiene and wellbeing. They enjoy nutritious food and drink in clean, well-maintained facilities that help them to feel comfortable and well cared for.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

48. Leaders have recently introduced a framework for developing character education based on the ideas of Aristotle and the development of positive qualities. These include intellectual virtues, such as critical thinking and curiosity; moral virtues, such as honesty and respect; civic virtues, such as contributing to the community; and performance virtues, such as perseverance, resilience and teamwork. All of these work together to help pupils to develop practical wisdom in order to make the right choice in different situations. Extensive planning identifies where character is taught and developed, as well as where it is woven through the school's culture and everyday interactions. More widely, it is reflected in the conduct of pupils, who take responsibility for their own character development by reflecting on their choices, setting personal goals and seeking opportunities to practise positive behaviours.
49. Leaders throughout the school have considered carefully how character education is woven into their areas of responsibility. Pupils understand right from wrong and have a mature sense of moral responsibility. They understand the difference between rules and laws, the consequences of breaking them, the importance of fairness and making right choices. Pupils are in the early stages of deepening their understanding of the virtues promoted and appreciating how their character development is much more than gaining points towards an award.
50. Pupils' effective communication and social skills are encouraged throughout the school. This begins in the early years, where children learn to share, take turns and express their ideas with growing confidence. The 'understanding the world' area of learning helps them to build self-awareness, as well as knowledge of different people, places and the wider environment. These skills are enhanced as pupils move through the school, including in lessons, where they frequently work in pairs and groups, and during performances, boarding activities, breaktimes, enrichment opportunities and trips.
51. British values of democracy, respect for all, individual liberty and understanding of different faiths and beliefs are promoted actively through PSHE, character education, the wider curriculum and assemblies. These principles align closely with the school's core values of curiosity, kindness and community.
52. Pupils learn about human rights, different forms of discrimination and prejudice. They recognise injustice and challenge inequality. They gain an understanding of democracy through exploring the function of Parliament, the role of members of parliament and how elections work. Teachers are diligent in presenting a balanced political perspective, supporting pupils in questioning sources, verifying facts and recognising bias.
53. Pupils develop leadership qualities through a range of roles, including serving as school councillors, house captains, sports captains, and eco, digital, food and boarding representatives. Senior pupils are keen to support and nurture younger pupils. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities as role models.
54. The school supports a wide range of charity and community links, helping pupils to understand the importance of service and social responsibility. Pupils regularly take part in fundraising events. They support a range of charities, including support for families who need refuge, the Royal British

Legion's poppy appeal, local foodbanks and community-based initiatives including the local sports festival and fete. Through these activities, pupils develop empathy, gratitude and a genuine understanding of others' needs.

55. Pupils build their understanding of economic concepts through practical, age-appropriate activities woven into the curriculum. They learn about need and want, saving and spending, considering the value of money through real-life contexts including their community and charity fundraising events.
56. Pupils and parents receive helpful information and guidance about the choice of their child's next school. This includes thorough meetings with senior staff, preparation for assessments and opportunities to visit prospective schools. As pupils move through the school, they are introduced to a range of careers through activities such as talks from visiting professionals and curriculum links to real-world jobs. These experiences help them to broaden their aspirations and to make informed decisions about their next steps.

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

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

Safeguarding

58. There is a deep commitment to supporting pupils' wellbeing, including to supporting their mental health. A culture of safeguarding is embedded securely throughout the school.
59. Leaders, governors and staff receive comprehensive safeguarding training and regular updates, including those relating to the 'Prevent' duty, which covers the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, they are well equipped to identify concerns promptly and to respond effectively to keep pupils safe.
60. Governors and leaders maintain rigorous oversight of safeguarding. Safeguarding policies are regularly reviewed so they align with current statutory guidance and local authority provision. Leaders ensure, for example, that procedures reflect updates from the local safeguarding children's partnership and that they incorporate local thresholds for referral and early help. Governors check that safeguarding is effective through regular safeguarding meetings, annual reviews, discussions with staff and pupils, surveys and scrutiny of leaders' reports.
61. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems are in place to prevent pupils and adults accessing inappropriate material when using the internet. These systems are tested regularly. Leaders use them effectively to block access to illegal, inappropriate or harmful internet content.
62. Members of the safeguarding team are suitably trained and have sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities. They have a detailed understanding of statutory requirements, including local authority thresholds for referrals.
63. Any concerns are recorded by staff in precise detail on the school's secure electronic system. Safeguarding records detail the referrals made, the rationale for decisions and the actions taken in response. The safeguarding team monitors these records routinely. Team members work effectively together to assess and manage risk. Leaders ensure decisions are informed by shared information and regular reflection on individual cases as well as emerging patterns. Prompt, appropriate action is taken, including referrals to children's services when required. The team liaises effectively with external agencies, such as family support services, health professionals and the police, whenever necessary.
64. Regular supervision meetings allow early years staff to reflect on their practice, to discuss children's individual needs, and ensure that safeguarding is a high priority within the setting. Strictly applied procedures ensure that staff and visitors are not permitted to use personal devices in areas where children are present. Staff may use only setting-owned devices. All images are stored and managed in line with safeguarding requirements.
65. Boarding staff work closely with those with designated safeguarding responsibilities. Boarders are encouraged to speak openly about their wellbeing. They are taught how to keep safe. Personal devices are not permitted, helping to protect pupils, and promoting healthy relationships. Boarders are supported to maintain regular contact with their parents. They also have access to an independent person, as well as safeguarding contact numbers for Childline and the Children's Commissioner's Help at Hand service, should they wish to raise any concerns.
66. The induction for new staff is thorough. This includes an introduction to the school's safeguarding, behaviour and whistleblowing policies, the staff code of conduct, and the procedures for contacting

the safeguarding team. Staff are clear about the actions they must take if a disclosure is made or if any safeguarding concerns arise. They also understand how to recognise and report low-level concerns relating to the conduct of adults. Staff make self-referrals diligently when appropriate. Leaders take prompt, considered and appropriate action. This includes referrals to the local authority regarding any concerns or allegations that arise about adults working with pupils.

67. Pupils learn how to keep safe through a well-planned curriculum that includes RSE, PSHE and computing. In PSHE, pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of risks, personal safety and how to make informed choices. They are taught about healthy relationships, consent and personal boundaries. Computing lessons teach pupils how to stay safe online, including recognising unsafe content, online bullying and protecting personal information. Pupils understand what is meant by a trusted adult and where they can seek help if they have any worries or concerns.
68. Safer recruitment procedures are securely in place. The school completes all the required pre-employment checks before adults commence working at the school. The single central record of appointments (SCR) and staff files are accurate and well organised. They are monitored regularly and thoroughly by leaders and governors to ensure consistent compliance with the Standards.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Cheam School
Department for Education number	850/6006
Registered charity number	290143
Address	Cheam School Headley Newbury Berkshire RG19 8LD
Phone number	01635 268242
Email address	office@cheamschool.co.uk
Website	www.cheamschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Cheam School Educational Trust
Chair	Sir Mark Harford
Headteacher	Mr Nick Milbank
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils	321
Number of boarding pupils	134
Date of previous inspection	24 to 26 January 2023

Information about the school

70. Founded in 1645, Cheam is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. It has two sections, the pre-prep for children in the early years and pupils in Years 1 and 2, and the prep school for pupils in Years 3 to 8. The school is a charitable trust whose governors act as directors of the company. The headteacher was appointed in January 2025.
71. Pupils from Year 4 can board on a weekly or flexi basis. Boarders are accommodated in a single boarding house on the school site.
72. The early years provision consists of one Nursery class with 16 children and two Reception classes catering for 22 children between them.
73. The school has identified 113 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
74. The school has identified English as an additional language for 15 pupils.
75. The school states that its aims are to give every pupil a happy, confident and well-rounded start to their education, combining academic ambition with a deep commitment to personal growth. It focuses on nurturing curiosity, independence and a genuine love of learning, whilst ensuring that pupils feel known, supported and encouraged to challenge themselves. Equal value is placed on character, kindness and resilience, and enabling pupils to develop the integrity and self-belief they need to thrive beyond the classroom, broaden their horizons and foster a sense of responsibility to others and the wider world.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

3 to 5 February 2026

76. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

77. 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 governor responsible for safeguarding and boarding
- 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 the boarding house accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

78. 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

For more information, please visit isi.net