

# School inspection report

10 October 2023 to 12 October 2023

## Clifton College

College Road  
Bristol  
BS8 3JH

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

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors are successful in fulfilling their responsibilities to monitor and support the work of school leaders. They use a range of focused committees to provide informed oversight of particular areas, such as safeguarding. They are supported by advice from external professionals if required. Governors ensure that senior leaders carry out their role effectively and any risks to pupils' wellbeing are identified and mitigated.
2. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the Standards are met. They have a clear vision for what they seek to achieve, which is reflected in their detailed development planning. Both governors and leaders are pro-active in monitoring the implementation of their strategies.
3. The curriculum is wide-ranging and challenging. Pupils make good progress throughout the school. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress as teachers work collaboratively to help them to access the curriculum. Helpful feedback from teachers to pupils on how to improve their work is based upon teachers' secure knowledge of pupils' attainment and needs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support and make good progress.
4. The restructured team of senior leaders has identified the need to improve the quality of some teaching, with particular reference to the use of assessment and understanding pupils' styles of learning. Senior leaders empower subject leaders to evaluate the teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility and report back to them. This initiative has resulted in the creation of new teaching policies. These focus on improving the planning of teaching and learning to ensure pupils make consistent progress across all subjects. However, the impact of these changes cannot be evaluated as they are not fully embedded, and some teaching does not follow the new policies.
5. Leaders have focused on pupil wellbeing and behaviour in recent years and created a more supportive and caring environment in the school, where pupils are able to grow in confidence. However, there remain some instances of unkindness and derogatory language among senior pupils.
6. The relationships between pupils and staff are positive and this supports a purposeful working atmosphere. There is a sense of community and camaraderie within the school, linked to the house system. This benefits both boarders and day members of each house.
7. Children make good progress during their time in the early years setting. Leaders ensure that activities are well planned to enable children to learn well across the early years curriculum. Staff create a caring and encouraging environment for children. There are constructive links with parents, so that parents are well informed their child's learning.
8. Leaders provide an extensive and varied extra-curricular programme and all pupils are involved in a range of sporting activities. These enable pupils to remain fit and exercise regularly, as well as develop new skills and interests while supporting their mental health and wellbeing.
9. Both day pupils and boarders are suitably supervised by staff. Boarding staff know pupils well and promote their wellbeing. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained and provide a safe and healthy environment.

10. Pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and cultures, and leaders promote respect for other members of the school's diverse community. Pupils support their local community in numerous ways.
11. Leaders prepare pupils well for their future lives. There is effective careers provision, so that pupils are aware of a wide range of possible options and are supported in making appropriate choices.
12. Leaders have established effective safeguarding measures. The designated safeguarding leaders ensure staff are well trained and there is prompt liaison with external agencies when required.

### **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 more consistent pupil progress across subjects and year groups by making sure that all teaching follows the school's teaching and learning policies
- implement effective strategies to address any issues of pupil behaviour involving unkindness and the use of derogatory language.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and ensure that leadership is effective. Governors check the schools' work through focused committees and have regular contact with the school, so they are well informed. They make effective use of external agencies and specialist advisors to monitor the implementation of policies and procedures in areas such as safeguarding.
14. The leaders of the school have a clear focus on promoting the wellbeing of all pupils. The creation of new pastoral leadership roles in the school has strengthened provision in this area. As a result, pupils feel safe and can approach a range of staff for support. Nevertheless, although behaviour has improved, there remain a few instances of unkind behaviour and derogatory language.
15. Leaders have introduced new policies to promote consistent progress across subjects and year groups. However, these policies are not fully embedded.
16. Staff in the early years know the children well and respond to their needs effectively, creating a welcoming learning environment. Teaching and learning are carefully planned so that children make good progress and lay down secure foundations for their subsequent learning. Leaders work closely with the local authority and other external agencies, to ensure the best learning experience for the children.
17. Leaders listen to pupils and respond to their views. For example, the views of pupils in the prep school prompted changes in the school's uniform policy. In the upper school, pupils put forward ideas that have resulted in better provision for mental health support.
18. House staff provide boarding pupils with a positive and supportive environment. They promote the wellbeing of boarders and ensure their welfare needs are met.
19. The school's leaders and managers understand the importance of assessing and managing risk in every element of school life. They monitor risk assessments carefully to ensure the control measures they have in place are effective and they also provide training for all staff.
20. There is an appropriate complaints process and leaders ensure any complaints are recorded and managed appropriately. They respond promptly to concerns and make changes to procedures, where this is appropriate.
21. Leaders provide regular and informative reports to parents and ensure that other relevant information is made available to parents as required.
22. The requirements of the Equality Act are fulfilled, so that the needs of pupils are met and there is no discrimination. There is a suitable accessibility strategy. Leaders give careful thought to disability access and suitable adjustments to meet the needs of individual pupils.

### 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

23. Leaders have planned a wide and rich curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils have a firm grounding in all the key areas of learning and develop a wide range of skills. Pupils usually attain grades at GCSE and A level above those predicated from their starting points. The same good progress is apparent in the work of pupils in the pre-prep and prep departments and in the results of standardised assessment tests.
24. Teachers draw on their secure subject knowledge to engage the interest of pupils and they look for opportunities to link learning in one subject to learning in other subjects. For example, when translating the Odyssey, older pupils considered contemporary parallels, linked to their learning in the PSHE curriculum. Teachers use careful questioning to encourage pupils to think deeply about the subject matter, for instance when thinking about the moral questions surrounding historical foreign policy. Teachers use lesson time efficiently and manage pupils' behaviour well.
25. As a result of recent initiatives to monitor teaching and learning across the school, subject leaders have a clear role in improving the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. They have introduced new policies to ensure that teachers make effective use of assessment information and recognise pupils' individual learning styles. Their intent is to promote consistent progress across all subject areas. However, the new policies are not followed by all teachers because the initiatives are newly introduced.
26. The learning support department provides effective support for pupils who have SEND. Leaders are proactive in identifying those pupils who may need support and ensuring that this is put in place. This support enables pupils to make similar progress to that of their peers. Pupils with EAL are supported effectively, including when teachers explain unfamiliar vocabulary, so that they can access the learning effectively. Specialist teachers are imaginative in finding ways to support the pupils' language development, so they achieve a secure fluency in English and can access the school's curriculum.
27. The positive learning environment encourages pupils to apply themselves well in lessons. Pupils concentrate on the task in hand and generally make good progress. Pupils are articulate and confident communicators, not afraid to express their opinions. They have a secure recall of prior knowledge and then they apply this understanding to new areas of learning. They work equally well independently or as collaborative learners. For example, when pupils in the prep school share their creative writing stories with each other and receive helpful feedback from their peers. Pupils' learning skills increase as they move through the school. Older pupils can draw on their mathematical knowledge to analyse information effectively to create their own hypotheses in science.
28. Children who join the early years settle quickly into their new environment. Teaching is effective, and children make good progress because staff know them well and plan activities which meets children's interest and needs. Almost all children reach their expected developmental milestones. Pupils play and learn happily with the equipment provided, with staff there to supervise and encourage them to experiment and explore their ideas.
29. Teachers provide written and verbal feedback which pupils find helpful and which challenges them to think more deeply about their learning.

30. The house staff provide effective academic support to boarding pupils, liaising with form tutors to ensure that boarders maintain good progress with their studies. Boarders can easily approach their house staff or form tutor for advice and support.
31. Leaders provide a broad and extensive extra-curricular programme throughout the school and pupils are encouraged to participate fully. Pupils experience different sports, hobbies, aesthetic interests, and relaxation activities. This supports pupils' personal development by widening pupils' interests and skills. The wide range of options ensure that all interests and levels of aptitude can be met. Leaders monitor pupils' involvement carefully. The house competitions enable a large proportion of pupils to be involved in competitive sport, debating, drama and singing. Senior pupils are often involved in leading and helping with activities for younger pupils, including in-house activities and in the many musical and dramatic performances.

### **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

32. Leaders promote pupils' physical health through a carefully planned curricular and extra-curricular programme. Pupils participate in a wide range of sporting and physical education activities. Consequently, pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of physical health and its effect on their wider sense of wellbeing.
33. Leaders ensure there are effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes. They have adapted the curriculum in the last year, much of this is in response to the views of pupils. The programme covers all the required areas, and now includes more opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning and revisit particular topics if required.
34. The chapel is central to pupils' understanding of spirituality. The school has created a space where pupils can take time for themselves and pupils visit regularly. Themes from chapel services such as love, trust and peace are shared with pupils. Often the services are led by pupils and their peers listen attentively.
35. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' conduct, both in lessons and around the school. The school has made significant progress in promoting good behaviour in recent years and there is a positive culture apparent throughout the school community. Pupils in the pre-prep and prep departments behave well. Children in the early years learn to respect each other, take turns and share items such as play equipment. Staff in the setting model positive behaviour and kindness, which children observe and seek to emulate.
36. In the upper school, the behaviour of pupils towards each other is generally positive and they are often prepared to challenge behaviour that does not meet their high expectations. The work of the anti-prejudice programme has been particularly helpful in promoting respect within the school. However, there is still some unkindness and lack of respect, in the use of derogatory language and occasional physical misbehaviour.
37. Leaders ensure that the premises and accommodation provide a safe and healthy environment. The estates team respond swiftly to any health and safety problem that may occur. The site security is carefully monitored and there is a high level of supervision of pupils at all times.
38. School leaders ensure that all relevant health and safety requirements, including those relating to fire safety and evacuation, are understood and the relevant policies and procedure are implemented effectively. The admission and attendance registers are maintained appropriately, and the school conscientiously follows up the destinations of pupils who leave the school.
39. Leaders create a real sense of community, so that both boarders and day pupils regard their houses as central elements of their lives in school. The positive and friendly atmosphere in the houses enables pupils of varied ages to become confident individuals who support one another and understand the need for mutual respect.

40. Boarders' health and welfare needs are met, along with those of day pupils, through the health and wellbeing centre, which has a welcoming atmosphere.
41. The experience of being part of the boarding community, and in particular belonging to a house with a positive spirit at its core, promotes pupils' self-esteem. The programme of activities for boarders further encourages this sense of community and collaboration. There is a suitable programme of induction for new boarders. Boarding houses are comfortable, welcoming and well maintained. Staff seek boarders' views through regular boarding meetings.

### **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

42. Leaders prepare pupils well for their future lives and work hard to help them become good citizens. Teachers provide effective role models for pupils by emphasizing the importance of respect. This prepares pupils to take a positive role in society in Britain and the wider world, including when pupils in the sixth form display a thoughtful grasp of the principles of democracy.
43. Teachers plan opportunities to relate the subject matter of their lessons to wider themes which develop an understanding of other cultures, such as when considering the impact of climate change on areas of the world. This links to the school's new sustainability programme, which allows pupils to take leadership roles and increases their awareness of environmental issues.
44. Leaders successfully foster in pupils a sense of community, and the importance of mutual support. Pupils develop an understanding of social issues through teaching and learning that include sensitive coverage of topics such as human rights. Pupils have a genuine interest in the world around them and the rights of others.
45. Pupils listen to each other and work collaboratively in a positive classroom environment. Pupils in the pre-prep and prep departments, have a good understanding of British values, which are actively promoted through democratically elected forums such as the school council.
46. Boarders come from diverse communities and fully appreciate the importance of learning how to live with others. Consequently, they understand the importance of mutual respect and knowing right from wrong; they respect each other's property and private space, and they appreciate that this is an important preparation for living in the wider world. Leaders ensure that children in the early years learn the importance of respect and kindness, as well as the importance of public services and the rules help to keep them safe.
47. Pupils are involved in a range of community projects, largely through the *Clifton in the Community* programme, developing a strong appreciation for the diversity of the local community. They learn new skills along the way. Pupils help in charity shops, care homes and primary schools. Senior pupils act as supportive peer mentors for younger ones.
48. Leaders ensure that pupils are financially aware. Younger pupils learn the value of money through play and curricular activities. Older pupils are well prepared to manage their finances in later life through effective teaching about financial management.
49. The careers' programme effectively supports pupils in choosing their future pathways in education or subsequent careers. Pupils are ambitious for their futures and are enthusiastic about what they are hoping to do beyond school. There is a range of activities and outside speakers to give further, more detailed advice and inform pupils' choices.

### 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

50. The school's governors and leaders have put in place effective arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the most recent guidance and is published on the school website.
51. Governors conduct a thorough annual review of safeguarding and monitor procedures carefully. When issues occur, governors and leaders ensure that any lessons learned are reflected in both policies and in training for staff. There is a well-trained safeguarding team within the school, and they maintain positive links with external agencies.
52. Leaders ensure that staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training as they join the school, and this is updated at regular intervals. Staff understand the school's safeguarding procedures, including those for ensuring online safety and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. They know how to report any safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding concerns are recorded appropriately, and any referrals are made promptly to the relevant agencies.
53. Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep safe online. Suitable filtering and monitoring systems are in place.
54. The necessary recruitment checks are completed for staff, volunteers and governors and a suitable record of appointments and the necessary pre-employment checks are kept.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding**

All the relevant Standards are met

## School details

<b>School</b>	Clifton College
<b>Department for Education number</b>	801/6000
<b>Registered charity number</b>	311735
<b>Address</b>	College Road Bristol BS8 3EZ
<b>Website</b>	info@cliftoncollege.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	Clifton College Council
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Nicholas Tolchard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Tim Greene
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1247
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	404
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 November 2022

## Information about the school

55. Clifton College is a co-educational day and boarding school located in a residential suburb of Bristol. It is divided into a pre-school, pre-prep, prep and an upper school, which includes a sixth form. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors, known as the Council. Since the previous inspection, the school has enhanced the resources and opportunities for using information technology for learning and embarked on a new sustainability programme.
56. There is one boarding house in the prep school and seven boarding houses in the upper school, four for male pupils and three for female pupils.
57. The early years setting is located in the pre-school section and educates children from 3 years old.
58. The school has identified 274 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small minority of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for 387 pupils.
60. The prep school states that its aims are “Aim High, Be Kind, Be Brave”. The upper school has as its aims to provide an all-round education, developing all pupils’ potential so they become happy, successful and fulfilled pupils and citizens, prepared for the opportunities and challenges that their futures after Clifton will bring.

## Inspection details

**Inspection dates** 10 October 2023 to 12 October 2023

61. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
62. Inspectors undertook a range of inspection activities including:
- observation of lessons and activities
  - learning walks with senior leaders
  - discussions with the chair and other governors
  - discussions with school leaders, managers and staff
  - discussions with pupils
  - observation of registration periods, assemblies and chapel
  - visits to the boarding houses and meetings with boarding staff and pupils
  - visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
  - scrutiny and discussion of pupils’ work with pupils and staff
  - scrutiny of a range of policies and documentation.
63. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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