ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

14 to 16 January 2025

Eltham College

Grove Park Road

Mottingham

London

SE9 4QF

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 have created an environment in which pupils are encouraged to pursue academic excellence whilst enjoying the many opportunities available to them. Leaders, in the junior school and senior school, help to foster a love of learning and an inclusive community, in line with the school's aims and ethos.

2. Governors monitor leaders' work rigorously, whilst providing appropriate challenge and support. Governors know the positive aspects of the school, are aware of the areas for development and have a thorough knowledge of risk management.

3. Leaders have appropriate skills and knowledge which enables them to fulfil their roles with confidence. They have developed a broad curriculum that promotes independence and provides clear guidance for progression. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and lessons are well planned. As a result pupils make good progress. Overall the use of assessment data is effective in monitoring and supporting pupils' progress, however there is some inconsistency across departments in the senior school.

4. Effective provision is in place to support any pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result these pupils make good progress from their starting points.

5. Teachers encourage high standards of behaviour for pupils. Comprehensive systems are in place to make sure that policies related to behaviour and bullying are implemented consistently. Sanctions are imposed with care and are adapted to the needs of individual pupils.

6. Effective and robust systems are in place to ensure that pupils in the junior school and senior school feel safe in their school environment. These include appropriate health and safety measures, thorough risk assessments and effective fire safety procedures.

7. The school's provision for looking after the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of the pupils through a dedicated medical service, wellbeing education and a chaplaincy team is effective and consequently pupils are well supported.

8. The extensive co-curricular programme embodies the school's mission to provide a well-rounded education for its pupils The programme promotes pupils' emotional, physical and intellectual skills and enables them to achieve success.

9. Older pupils in the school receive effective careers guidance. However in the earlier years in the senior school, the programme is currently less well developed.

10. The ethos of the school encourages pupils to make connections with the wider community, both locally and internationally. Pupils benefit from a rich variety of activities in the local community as well as international travel and charity work.

11. The safeguarding leads have a thorough understanding of the school's context and work closely with the local authority and other external agencies. They provide regular training, maintain comprehensive safeguarding records and respond to needs as they arise. Pupils know whom they can turn to for reporting any concerns.

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:

- strengthen the consistency of the use of assessment data across departments in the senior school to further improve pupils' progress
- expand careers guidance for younger pupils in the senior school so that they are suitably equipped to make decisions about their future pathways.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Governors and leaders work together to create an environment in which every pupil is known as an individual and where they are encouraged to flourish academically. They provide a rich co-curricular programme which promotes pupils' physical, emotional and mental health. The aims of the school, which reflect its Christian foundation, are known and valued by staff and pupils within the school community.

13. Governors ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities have appropriate skills and knowledge. They maintain close and effective oversight of the junior school and senior school to assure themselves that standards are met. They work closely with leaders to provide both scrutiny and support.

14. Leaders create an environment which is inclusive and values kindness and care. They put pupils' wellbeing at the centre of their planning and decision-making and provide regular reports and updates to the governors to ensure detailed monitoring. Leaders communicate their plans effectively so that staff are well placed to respond to the academic, emotional and spiritual needs of the pupils.

15. Leaders provide a curriculum which caters for pupils' varied ages and abilities effectively. They support teachers to deliver effective lessons which enable pupils to make good progress. They have developed systems to use assessment data and monitor progress. In the senior school, there is some variation across departments in the effectivenss of the systems used.

16. Leaders have a rigorous approach to risk assessment throughout the school. The school has a comprehensive risk register which considers current and potential risks. Staff have an appropriate understanding of risk and of how risks are managed; they are skilled in the completion of risk assessments and risk management within the context of the school day. Leaders are thorough and careful in implementing appropriate health and safety measures.

17. The school implements an appropriate accessibility plan and fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Adjustments are made for those pupils who have SEND so that they can access the school site and the curriculum effectively.

18. Leaders make all required information available to parents. The school website includes an appropriate range of policies and provides suitable information for parents. Reports are sent to parents through a range of meetings and platforms, demonstrating the school's commitment to effective and transparent communication. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information, including in relation to the use of funds, for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

19. Leaders implement the complaints policy effectively and the complaints log is both appropriately maintained and monitored regularly to ensure that trends are identified. The school encourages parents to share their concerns. Leaders respond promptly and within the stated time frame.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders at the junior school and senior school have developed a well-planned, balanced and broad curriculum. The curriculum is age appropriate and helps to develop intellectual curiosity and a love of learning.

22. In the junior school the core curriculum is supplemented by specialist provision for languages, art, music, drama and science, providing a rich environment for pupils to enhance their learning. In the senior school a core of mathematics, English and science allows for a secure grounding in linguistic, mathematical and scientific understanding which is supplemented by a broad choice of humanities and creative subjects. Pupils benefit from a highly supportive environment and consistently achieve a high level of success as they leave the junior school. Pupils achieve results which are above the national average at GCSE and at A Level.

23. Independence is encouraged throughout the school and, as a result, pupils are responsible and reflective learners. Teachers provide tailored feedback and opportunities for self-reflection, enabling pupils to monitor their progress effectively. Teachers develop supportive relationships with pupils. They encourage self-efficacy and self-confidence.

24. Lessons are well planned. Teachers use a range of resources and teaching methods which support pupils' learning and enable them to make good progress. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and encourage pupils to think hard and persevere.

25. In the junior school there is a suitable system in place to assess pupils' achievement. In the senior school there are half-termly assessments and there is a performance framework in place that evaluates the progress of pupils. However, there is some inconsistency in assessing and monitoring pupils' progress across different academic departments. This means that teachers are not always able to provide timely support or challenge to enable pupils to maximise their progress in all subjects.

26. There are robust policies and procedures in place to identify and support learners who have SEND. Strategies to support these pupils are shared with staff in a clear format, helping pupils to access their learning successfully. Pupils with high prior attainment are provided with further challenge through clubs, competitions and visiting speakers.

27. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported in their learning. Levels of fluency are tested on admission and, if needed, additional support is provided. The learning support team works alongside English teachers to offer guidance and support. Teachers are provided with strategies to support pupils in class and as a result these pupils make good progress from their starting points.

28. Leaders ensure that there is a broad range of activities which are designed to respond to the needs of all pupils and to improve their skills and physical and emotional wellbeing. Intellectual activities such as chess and book club are provided alongside a range of individual and team sports and there are many opportunities to develop creative skills such as creative writing, music ensembles and dramatic productions. As a result, pupils of all ages thrive outside the classroom, develop new interests and achieve success, both locally and nationally, in numerous areas.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. The Eltham constitution articulates the vision of the school to promote physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing for each pupil. Leaders and pupils identify three central articles: value yourself, value others and value your environment. Pupils are encouraged to understand that through positive behaviour they can create a supportive community.

31. Leaders ensure that all pupils receive a programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). The curriculum is comprehensive and adapted to the needs and experiences of the pupils. It includes age-appropriate relationships and sex education. The programme is relevant and enables pupils to feel fully prepared for challenges in later life. It equips pupils with the appropriate knowledge and understanding to build healthy relationships with others, make safe decisions and develop their emotional and mental health. Sessions take place in a supportive and non-judgemental environment and staff are well trained in delivering sensitive topics, to the benefit of pupils.

32. The curriculum and co-curricular provision encourage pupils to hold respect for others. Chapel services develop pupils' spiritual and moral understanding and promote quiet reflection. The chaplaincy provides a space for pupils to ask big questions about faith and their spiritual development. Chaplaincy prefects are trained to offer additional support and respond to the spiritual and emotional needs of pupils. The chaplaincy is highly valued within the school and readily engages with pupils of all backgrounds.

33. Leaders provide an extensive sports pogramme which actively supports pupils' physical health. In the junior school this includes netball, rugby, football, cricket and swimming and in the senior school, as well as team sports, an extensive programme of individual sports, including aquatics, skiing and fencing. Talented pupils take part in a high performance programme which supports the preparation needed to achieve at the highest level.

34. Pupils behave well and are polite, respectful, and tolerant.There are clear systems in place which promote positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. The rewards system motivates pupils and boosts their self-esteem. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare but should they occur staff repond promptly and appropriately. Teachers apply sanctions consistently and help pupils to understand the impact that their actions have upon one another.

35. Pupils in both the junior and senior school act as role models and take their responsibilities seriously. Senior pupils and prefects are actively involved with mentoring younger pupils, advising them about subject choices and helping to build self-confidence in younger pupils and in themselves.

36. Pupils' physical and mental health is supported by two onsite nurses as well as by a team of wellbeing staff, which includes a counsellor and chaplains as well as the head of wellbeing. Their collaborative approach ensures a coherent response to pupils' welfare, to the benefit of pupils.

37. Through the effective deployment of school staff, pupils are well supervised throughout the day. Health and safety protocols and procedures are robust and implemented effectively. Leaders ensure compliance with relevant health and safety legislation, including fire safety. All aspects of

maintenance and routine testing are followed effectively, with follow-up actions and further work carried out accordingly.

38. Pupils benefit from a secure and orderly learning environment. Classrooms and facilities across the school are well maintained. High-quality facilities, including well-maintained play areas and spaces for quiet reflection, enhance pupils' physical and mental health. Leaders' decisions to create pedestrianised zones and traffic-free drop-off areas further enhance pupils' welfare.

39. Attendance and admission registers are maintained as required. The attendance policy reflects the latest statutory guidance. Staff promptly follow up and investigate any absences, taking further action when necessary. Local authorities are informed whenever pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

41. The curriculum reflects the school's aims and ethos and provides forums for pupils to discuss human and social issues. Consequently pupils develop a global perspective and demonstrate respect for each other, welcoming the views of others. Societies led by pupils explore a variety of contemporary issues such as misogyny. Pupils are able to discuss issues openly and with tolerance of different viewpoints.

42. Pupils' economic education in the junior school is developed through business initiatives, which develop pupils' financial acumen and problem-solving skills. Teachers provide pupils with the opportunity to 'grow a pound' which teaches them marketing skills as they sell their products to pupils in the senior school. In the senior school, as well as suitable content within the wellbeing programme and in subjects such as economics, societies allow exploration of economic issues such as trade rules between countries.

43. Throughout the school, teachers plan and teach effective wellbeing lessons which prepare pupils well for life in British society by helping them to exercise autonomy and take responsibility for their own decision-making. Junior school pupils understand the concept of democracy and demonstrate a knowledge of how civil society works and the importance of laws. Pupils understand that some individuals are more vulnerable than others and they show a strong sense of mutual respect. They explore ideas around morality and develop a sense of the difference between right and wrong.

44. Pupils exhibit a secure sense of social responsibility, actively engaging in charitable activities during their free time. Their enthusiasm and high-quality work reflect a clear joy in contributing to meaningful causes, fostering a deeper appreciation for the value of collective action. These experiences align closely with the school's ethos of service while cultivating moral and ethical understanding within a broader community context.

45. The school congress promotes respect for democracy and law. Pupils elect representatives and feel they can shape positive change in the school. In the junior school, their changes have included skipping ropes, a new basket ball hoop and ping pong table. The suggestions boxes give pupils the opportunity to share feedback with the school at any time and the school responds diligently to their suggestions. The school ensures that teachers and any visiting speakers present a balanced view of any political issues.

46. Pupils with positions of responsibility see themselves as role models and take their roles seriously. They regularly lead assemblies, as well as putting forward pupils' ideas for improvement to the school environment in all aspects, as well as identifying how this will benefit the student body. Their positions of responsibility encourage leadership skills among pupils and prepare them well for society. Pupil leaders are encouraged and empowered to play a leading role in house groups.

47. Careers guidance is detailed and well resourced. In Years 7 and 8, careers guidance is integrated into wellbeing lessons. As pupils move through the school, they gain greater exposure to careers guidance; however, in Years 7 and 8 the content is somewhat limited. The careers programme for older pupils is strengthened by the active Old Elthamians Society, who are committed to supporting pupils in gaining valuable work experience and making professional connections. The school uses recognised benchmarks to monitor and assess the quality of the careers provision. Pupils are well

supported to make decisions because of the guidance they receive on subject choices and university destinations.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. Governors are committed, know the school well and provide effective oversight of safeguarding. Safeguarding governors ensure that safeguarding leads in the school receive both appropriate scrutiny and support. Leaders ensure that governors receive regular reports, updates and audits, enabling them to have an accurate understanding of issues and monitor trends.

50. Leaders promote a culture of transparency and support. The safeguarding team has a strong understanding of safeguarding and risk management. They work closely with external agencies, seek advice when necessary, and have an appropriate knowledge of local thresholds for referral.

51. Induction and training for all school staff offers guidance on safeguarding matters including for the risks of radicalisation, whilst weaving in local contextual risks. Staff receive regular in-person and online training. This training is supplemented by regular updates from safeguarding leaders. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about local safeguarding risks and how to respond to the needs of pupils. Staff work effectively with pastoral and medical staff to safeguard pupils and their specific needs both in school and during trips.

52. The school maintains thorough and meticulous confidential records which are regularly scrutinised and monitored for trends. Concerns which do not meet the harm threshold are carefully logged and monitored. Staff understand and use the system for reporting such concerns.

53. The school has rigorous and systematic recruitment procedures. Staff with responsibility for recruitment have a secure understanding of the relevant checks required and keep robust records. Files are audited regularly to make sure that all appointments have been completed correctly and these are regularly monitored by leaders and governors.

54. Pupils feel confident in raising concerns, knowing their safety and well-being are consistently prioritised by staff. Leaders have ensured that pupils have a variety of routes to express their concerns,such as speaking to staff, pupil leaders, anti-bullying ambassadors or using an anonymous online system. Pupils in the sixth form who are elected to become mentors to younger pupils are given appropriate safeguarding training, including guidance on what to do in potentially challenging safeguarding scenarios.

55. Pupils receive extensive e-safety guidance about how to stay safe online. Suitable monitoring and filtering systems are in place and these are tested regularly.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Eltham College
Department for Education number	305/6074
Registered charity number	1058438
Address	Eltham College Grove Park Road Mottingham London SE9 4QF
Phone number	020 8857 1455
Email address	mail@eltham-college.org.uk
Website	www.eltham-college.org.uk
Proprietor	Eltham College
Chair	Peter Doyle
Headteacher	Guy Sanderson
Age range	7 to 19
Number of pupils	1075
Date of previous inspection	22 to 25 February 2022

Information about the school

57. Eltham College is a co-educational independent day school located in the London borough of Bromley. The school consists of a junior school, a senior school and a sixth form. The school is a charity overseen by a governing body who, since 2023, also have oversight of Blackheath Prep.

58. The school has identified 228 pupils who have SEND. Two pupils in the school have an EHC plan.

59. The school has identified 213 pupils who speak EAL.

60. The school states that its aims are to provide an outstanding and well-rounded education for male and female pupils, built upon the principles of Christianity.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	14 to 16 January 2025

61. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. 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 headmaster, 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.

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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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