

School inspection report

5 to 7 December 2023

Felsted School

Stebbing Road

Felsted

Essex

CM6 3LL

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 governing body maintains rigorous oversight of the school and provides appropriate challenge and support for leaders. Leaders have the appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure that Standards are met. They work together effectively to support the wellbeing of pupils in all phases of the school, in both day and boarding.
2. Recently introduced strategies intended to further improve pupils' behaviour and to inform heads of department about pupil progress are at an early stage of implementation. Leaders are working to fully embed these recent developments into the working life of the school, but this is not achieved as yet.
3. Clearly articulated school policies are made available to parents and the school has due regard for health and safety. Parents express confidence in the school's leadership.
4. A well-designed, broad and balanced curriculum and effective teaching ensure that pupils acquire a range of skills and knowledge and make good progress. As a result, pupils are well-prepared for the next stages of their education or career.
5. Some departments, track pupils' progress effectively and use the information to consider when additional support is required. However, this is not consistent across the school.
6. Effective pastoral care and a school culture that promotes mutual respect successfully supports pupils' physical and mental health and their emotional wellbeing. Pupils feel welcome and included.
7. Pupils are effectively prepared for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. Pupils develop their understanding of global citizenship and sense of global responsibility.
8. Safeguarding is effective. The culture within the school ensures that the welfare of pupils is well-managed. Pupils, including those in boarding, feel safe, secure and well-cared for.

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:

- make more effective use of the recently introduced system for data tracking to inform the support provided to individual pupils to strengthen their outcomes.
- ensure that teachers apply rewards and sanctions in line with the newly introduced behaviour management system, so that behaviour management is consistently effective.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders apply their skills and knowledge effectively to ensure that Standards are met. They question and review their own practice to ensure that provision continually supports pupils' wellbeing.
10. Governors are involved in the quality assurance of the school's implementation of its policies. Governors monitor the work of the school effectively through committees and visits undertaken by individual governors. Governors and leaders set themselves clear targets within a whole school strategy to benefit pupils' attainment and wellbeing.
11. Effective risk assessments are in place for activities, premises and school trips. These identify potential risks and suitable actions to mitigate against these. Leaders review the suitability of risk assessments regularly. Leaders and governors consider any contextual risks and are alert to any unintended consequences of their decisions and the actions they take.
12. Leaders ensure that staff implement school policies effectively overall. However, staff do not always apply the recently introduced behaviour management policy across the school as consistently as possible.
13. Leaders ensure that complaints are handled appropriately in a timely fashion. The complaints policy is made available to parents on the school website along with a wide range of policies.
14. Leaders ensure that staff, including those in boarding, understand and carry out their responsibilities towards safeguarding. Leaders liaise effectively with relevant external agencies.
15. The school meets its requirements under equality legislation. A suitable accessibility plan is in place.

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

16. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Leaders ensure that a rich curriculum enables pupils in all phases of the school to acquire a range of skills and knowledge to prepare them for the next stages in their education or career. A well-structured early years' curriculum supports children's quick development of communication skills. In the prep-school, pupils have access to specialist teaching rooms where they enhance their skills in science, art and technology. A broad range of subject choices enables pupils to select suitable options at GCSE. Sixth-form courses include the International Baccalaureate and vocational qualifications, as well as A levels. Many pupils embark on the extended project qualification and thereby increase the range of their accredited studies. Most of the Year 13 pupils are successful in securing their first-choice destination of further study.
18. Most teaching utilises good subject knowledge effectively. Staff create enjoyable and purposeful lessons so that pupils engage and make good progress. Pupils in many lessons draw on a range of resources to further their learning and synthesise new information effectively. They are enthusiastic and apply themselves to their learning. Teaching does not undermine the school's positive values and does not discriminate against any groups of pupils. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils with higher prior attainment were not always sufficiently challenged to extend their learning.
19. Leaders in the support for learning department carefully guide and support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to meet their learning needs. The curriculum is carefully designed to enable more neuro-diverse pupils to participate, gain confidence and succeed through engagement with activities well matched to their needs. The learning department liaises closely with classroom teachers who provide ongoing support for pupils who have SEND. This support ensures that these group of pupils receive the help they need and make good progress
20. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) are supported well to develop their fluency in English. Pupils from overseas have additional support where appropriate. Some pupils have additional help in lessons from learning assistants, who work alongside teachers. Additional support is available to pupils who have EAL evening drop-in sessions.
21. In 2023 a third of A-level results were at grade A or A*. At GCSE, nearly half of grades achieved were at grades 9 to 7. These results reflect the typical attainment of pupils over time. Pupils following the international baccalaureate achieve well from starting points in a variety of subjects.
22. The school has an effective framework in place to evaluate pupils' work. Recently introduced systems for monitoring pupil progress are in place. In some departments, subject leaders use resulting data to initiate conversations with staff and parents about teaching and learning and to inform the timing and type of support given to individual pupils to help them make progress. However, such use of monitoring and use of achievement data to support pupils is not consistently applied across the school.
23. Pupils benefit from a wide programme of co-curricular activities which include sport, music, drama and art. Extra-curricular activities include medicine and society, journalism, cookery, debating and the combined cadet force. These activities enable pupils to develop their individual character alongside the specific skills applied during the activities.

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

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. Pupils generally behave well in lessons because teachers know them as individuals and relationships between pupils and staff are respectful. Most pupils are tolerant of cultural differences. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to the management of behaviour which seeks to reward positive behaviour and strengthen positive relationships. This approach is typically effective, and the relatively few incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are recorded appropriately and responded to well. However, in a small number of cases, rewards and sanctions are inconsistently applied.
26. Effective supervision of day and boarding pupils is in place, including in the early years. This supports pupils' positive behaviour and ensures that pupils have staff available to support and listen to them.
27. Health and safety checks and maintenance are carried out regularly and facilities are maintained to a high standard. The health and safety policy clearly outlines responsibilities which are appropriately carried out by well-trained and experienced staff. Fire evacuation procedures are known and understood, and regular fire evacuation drills are properly conducted and appropriately recorded. Attendance and admissions registers are kept as required and staff quickly follow up on pupil absences so that potential risks to pupils are minimised.
28. Boarders have access to an independent listener, to regular laundry facilities and nutritional school meals. All pupils have access to suitable first aid and medical facilities to support their physical and mental wellbeing. A helpful and informative induction programme for boarders means that they have a clear understanding of boarding principles and practice. There are positive relationships between boarding staff, senior prefects attached to houses, and boarding pupils. As a result, pupils are confident to communicate their views, including through formal house meetings.
29. Staff support the mental health of pupils. There is a programme to train staff as mental health first aiders and pupils can access the support of trained therapists. Pupils are aware that they can raise any concerns anonymously and their opinions are considered through a variety of forums and councils.
30. The programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is effective. It enables pupils to talk openly about issues such as drugs, alcohol and diversity. The relationships and sex education programme (RSE) includes helpful content that is relevant to the pupils and that is sensitive to the ages of pupils. Staff assess pupils' understanding of key content. For example, assessments check that older pupils have understood important issues such as what constitutes consent.
31. Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is promoted and developed through regular school chapel services and a school ethos, which encourages reflection and what the school terms 'faith in action'.

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

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

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

33. Pupils learn to respect each other, to appreciate fundamental British values such as those of individual liberty, democracy and respect of those with different faiths and beliefs, and they develop appropriate social and cultural knowledge and understanding. They are prepared well for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society and as global citizens.
34. Pupils largely take responsibility for their own behaviour and exhibit a developing awareness of the principles of right and wrong. Children in the early years are rewarded by kindness stars, 'marvellous manners' and 'playtime friend' badges to consistently reinforce and celebrate positive behaviours. In this way, leaders successfully lay the foundations for a school culture based on respect.
35. The international nature of the boarding provision encourages tolerance and respect for those of different cultures. The ethos of respect is further promoted through a well-planned curriculum, including through PSHE and RSE. Teachers skilfully manage pupil discussions about issues such as tolerance, immigration and political propaganda. Twice weekly chapel services in the senior school and assemblies for younger pupils, promote sensitive awareness of difference and diversity by the inclusion of prayers and readings from diverse cultures and in languages other than English.
36. Pupils in the sixth form express their sense of social and environmental responsibility through forums such as the pupil-led equality, diversity and inclusion group and a pupil body working to take steps to contribute positively to the environment. Pupils take on responsibilities for supporting others, such as by acting as prefects or supporting younger pupils.
37. Elections for posts of responsibilities amongst the pupil body across the school foster an understanding and appreciation of the democratic process. The PSHE programme develops and deepens pupils' awareness of British laws and public institutions and services. Pupils successfully learn about personal finance and broader economic issues to prepare them for life after school.
38. Suitable careers guidance is provided through timetabled lessons in Years 11 and 13. Careers events include visits to universities, presentations by alumni, local companies and the armed forces so that pupils are well informed of different options available. Sixth-form pupils are well prepared for university applications. Leaders within the careers department have been particularly successful in helping pupils with SEND achieve their first-choice place at university.
39. Pupils are enthusiastic in their support for a wide range of local, national and international charities and causes, including for young people in the East end of London and in Uganda. Through this, pupils display their sense of responsibility towards contributing to society.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

41. Safeguarding is effective. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained and that appropriate policies are in place and regularly reviewed. Staff are mindful of the importance of safeguarding procedures and of the particular safeguarding needs of boarding pupils and those who have SEND. They understand the possibility that 'it could happen here'. Governors maintain regular oversight of the school's safeguarding procedures, including through a comprehensive annual review.
42. The school responds appropriately when safeguarding concerns, including those about child-on-child abuse, are raised. It has suitable procedures to respond to allegations against staff. Safeguarding leads maintain effective relationships with external safeguarding agencies, including the local authority safeguarding service.
43. The school's record of appointments records that all required pre-employment safeguarding checks on staff, volunteers and governors are appropriately completed before employment begins.
44. The school teaches pupils how to keep safe, including when using the internet. For example, pupils know that they should challenge visitors to the site who are not wearing the appropriate lanyards. Year 13 boarders are trained in active listening and how to deal with reported safeguarding concerns. Pupils feel safe in school. They are aware that there are many adults to whom they can turn for support or advice and can identify the various avenues through which concerns can be raised.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

45. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Felsted School
Department for Education number	881/6009
Registered charity number	310870
Address	Felsted School Stebbing Road Felsted Essex CM6 3LL
Phone number	01371 822600
Email address	info@felsted.org
Website	www.felsted.org
Proprietor	Felsted School Trustee Ltd.
Chair	Mr Robert Brown
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Townsend
Age range	4 to 19
Number of pupils	1027
Number of boarding pupils	543
Date of previous inspection	26 to 28 March 2019

Information about the school

46. Felsted is a co-educational independent boarding and day school for pupils aged 4 to 19 years. The school consists of a pre-prep, prep and senior school which includes a sixth form. It is located on a single site in the village of Felsted in Essex. The school was founded in 1564 and is a registered charity. The directors of Felsted School Trustee Ltd serve as its governors. The current chair of governors was appointed in November 2019.
47. There are eight boarding houses in the senior school, two for Year 13 pupils, one for Year 12 pupils and the other five for pupils from Years 9 to Year 12. There is one co-educational boarding house in the prep school for pupils from Year 5 to Year 8.
48. There are 30 children in the early years in two Reception classes.
49. The school has identified 256 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
50. English is an additional language (EAL) for 70 pupils.
51. The school states its aims are to educate all pupils to develop their individual character and become life-long learners who are aspirational, globally minded and with the skills to flourish beyond the school. The school intends for its pastoral care to support personal growth and emotional development in a community based on the development of mutual respect.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 December 2023

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

53. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and chapel
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of governors and another governor
- discussions with the head, 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.

54. 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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