

# School inspection report

6 to 8 February 2024

## **Hurst Lodge School**

Yateley Hall,  
Firgrove Road  
Camberley  
GU46 6HJ

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'.

# Contents

<b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS.....	5
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	7
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	9
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....</b>	<b>10</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	11
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>12</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	13
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>14</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	14
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>17</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders at all levels show high levels of knowledge, skill and understanding. They fulfil their roles effectively so that the school meets the Standards. The leadership teams for both the education and welfare aspects of the school are highly self-evaluative and take account of risk, including unintended consequences, when planning new developments and taking decisions. They are very aware of the diverse needs of pupils, almost all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
2. Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has made many key appointments which have strengthened leadership at all levels. New initiatives are improving pupils' education, behaviour and wellbeing. For example, staff consistently use positive approaches to managing pupils' behaviour, such as formally recognising acts of kindness to others. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on more negative responses and emotions.
3. The school's aims and values are understood throughout the school. The promotion of equality is central to the school's ethos. Respect for others is evident throughout. Pupils typically engage positively in their learning and behave well.
4. Leaders implement a curriculum that is carefully planned to meet the needs of pupils in the school. The curriculum covers all the areas of learning required and is delivered by skilled teachers. Teachers know their pupils well and so can plan to meet their individual needs. The small group sizes, often with additional one-to-one support, and the positive relationships between pupils and staff build trust. This encourages pupils to do their best. Pupils make good progress from their various starting points.
5. Leaders recognise the need to evaluate the impact of these recent changes. In particular, to ensure their long-term planning for the curriculum and the assessment evolves to meet the increasingly diverse needs of a wide range of pupils.
6. Pupils can access a range of qualifications which suit their interests, abilities and aptitudes, including GCSE and A level. These include functional mathematics and English, as well as vocational qualifications. Pupils proceed to further training or higher education and feel well prepared for the next stage in their lives.
7. Leaders successfully promote the development of pupils' social and emotional wellbeing. A team of special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) supports pupils in their learning, helping them to access the full curriculum. Pupils learn to manage their emotions. A well-designed programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and for relationship and sex education (RSE) fosters the school's values of kindness, courage and respect. Teachers also promote pupils' emotional wellbeing further through teamwork activities, as part of their outside learning programme.
8. The school provides all the required information for parents and to local authorities placing pupils at the school. The school has a suitable policy for complaints. Leaders pay careful attention to health and safety matters, including for the prevention of fire and for first aid. Pupils are closely supervised.
9. As befits a school with a large number of vulnerable pupils, leaders and staff prioritise safeguarding. Arrangements are effective and follow the latest statutory guidance. Staff are appropriately trained

and understand their responsibilities to help keep pupils safe from harm. School leaders work effectively with outside agencies to support pupils' welfare and needs.

## 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 implement a longer-term plan for the curriculum and assessment of pupil progress so that the school continues to meet the needs of a diverse range of pupils.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The proprietor, who is also the principal, ensures that the independent school standards are met consistently. Appropriate written policies for the various aspects of the school's work are implemented effectively. Leaders pay close attention to the welfare and wellbeing of the pupils, nearly all of whom have a degree of disability and/or educational, emotional or physical needs, many of whom are regarded as vulnerable. Planning for the curriculum, teaching, support and care are successfully directed towards meeting pupils' individual needs and keeping them safe.
11. Leaders have a clear understanding of pupils' views, using these to inform their planning. Pupils respond positively to the school's ethos and values, showing respect for one another. Pupils recognise the value leaders place on their wellbeing and individual progress.
12. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act and has a suitable accessibility plan stating the adjustments it makes to promote access. The school is inclusive. Leaders actively promote tolerance and do not accept harassment or discrimination.
13. The proprietor has significantly strengthened the senior leadership and management teams, through a combination of new appointments and additional posts. For example, a team of seven SENCOs now leads in a more cohesive way in each section of the school and brings additional specialist skills. As a result, pupils receive the targeted help they need to make good progress.
14. Further recent appointments at middle management level to lead key subjects, manage behaviour and to assist with safeguarding have enabled new developments, some of which have already shown impact. Promoting consistency and confidence in using the new positive behaviour strategies amongst staff has resulted in improved behaviour. Leaders set higher expectations in core subjects to increase challenge and enjoyment in learning, which encourages pupils' self-belief.
15. Leaders demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding related to their roles. The proprietor has an overview of the impact across the school of recent initiatives, but recognises the need to develop this further, so that there is a longer-term plan for the school's development.
16. Leaders take effective steps to manage risk, including those related to individual pupils and their behaviour. Leaders consider the issues of broader risk and how to mitigate against these. The proprietor and leadership teams display strong understanding of their responsibilities regarding safer recruitment and safeguarding. The policy for risk management was adjusted during the inspection to include a reference to the consideration of risk in relation to staff recruitment, and to better reflect the school's current practice on managing the risks related to individual pupils.
17. An informative website and electronic communications provide parents with the information they require. The school reports formally to parents on their child's progress but also keeps in regular contact in between formal reports. The education and healthcare (EHC) plans of those children funded by a local authority (LA) are reviewed annually. The school provides those local authorities with the required information and a statement on how public money is spent.
18. The school implements suitable procedures for the management of complaints. This provides for a three-stage process, of which the first is informal, and specifies timescales for the handling of the complaint. The school, in conjunction with the LA, gives due consideration to the occasional longer-standing complaint and carefully considers any implications for the whole school.

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

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

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. Leaders have created a suitable, well-balanced and relevant curriculum that engages pupils and meets their range of needs. With support when required, pupils are able to make progress academically, socially and emotionally. The curriculum successfully develops the academic potential of each student, whilst also promoting their social and emotional wellbeing. This reflects the school's stated aims of building self-worth and realising potential, through high aspirations and well-focused support.
21. The curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. Pupils make good progress in line with their ability and targets set in their EHC plans. Pupils gain a range of qualifications matched to their interests, abilities and aptitudes, including GCSE and A level. Pupils also achieve nationally recognised qualifications in functional mathematics and English, and vocational qualifications through BTEC. Their results show they make good progress from their starting points.
22. Pupils follow one of two pathways leading to IGCSE and A level or an individually-tailored curriculum, which includes occupational, speech and language therapy, for pupils who have more complex needs. Pupils who have moderate learning difficulties (MLD) follow a blend of core subjects, creative and vocational subjects, leading to GCSEs. In consequence, pupils build secure foundations for later learning and gain qualifications which support their ambitions.
23. The curriculum is well planned, with schemes of work matched to pupils' needs. The curriculum is enhanced by aesthetic and creative activities, such as art and photography, and a focus on learning in and about the natural world, which are matched to pupils' interests. As a result, pupils are motivated to learn and behave well. Academic success means that pupils have an increasing sense of self-worth and many grow less anxious.
24. There are many high-achieving pupils, some of whom gain scholarships to enter sixth forms in other schools. Others are successful in national fashion, fine art and photography competitions. Pupils have gained representative honours including Team GB Olympic team archery, volleyball, paralympic swimming, dressage, and as professional and academy footballers. A few pupils serve the wider community, for example as national representatives for autism.
25. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to meet pupils' identified needs, drawing on an appropriate variety of teaching methods and resources. Pupils progress well because they benefit from intensive support and flexible teaching. Pupils' individual learning styles are carefully considered, helping to remove barriers to their learning. Pupils who have SEND follow the same learning journey as their peers, fostering inclusion. For example, in English lessons pupils in different groups in Years 8 and 9 were studying *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The teaching approaches and tasks set enabled all pupils to play a full part, demonstrating their understanding of their chosen character.
26. Pupils progress well in developing core skills because teachers emphasise the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils systematically develop speaking and listening skills through debate and discussion activities. Pupils are attentive, responsive and behave well because the teaching is typically clear, draws on an interesting range of resources and encourages them to express their own ideas and feelings. Pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively, as teaching reinforces basic numeracy skills and is carefully linked to EHC plan targets. Pupils use information technology IT skills effectively in lessons to help with their organisation of work and enable them to write at length.

27. Leaders support pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) through specialist teaching. These pupils achieve on a par with their peers once they have gained a fluency in English in order access the full curriculum.
28. There is a newly introduced system to assess pupils' overall progress, drawing on teacher observations and formalised testing. The SENCo team regularly review targets from EHC plans, adjusting these as necessary. However, assessment approaches vary across individual subjects. This prevents leaders from having an easy overview of how effective teaching and learning are, and to inform their longer-term planning for curriculum needs. Leaders recognise that the curriculum, although effective, must continue to evolve over time in line with the changing and diverse needs of pupils.
29. Pupils develop their spirit of enquiry and creativity and learn new skills through a range of co-curricular activities, such as for diversity, business and enterprise for older pupils, and chess, music and sports clubs for younger pupils. They value these skills and opportunities.

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

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

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

31. Leaders actively promote pupils' welfare, including their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Through the PSHE and RSE programmes pupils learn about risk and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have an awareness of how to be healthy and are encouraged to take part in exercise. Leaders also provide outdoor learning and teamworking opportunities which support and enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils across the school. Many pupils show increasing confidence as they develop their self-knowledge and understanding.
32. Carefully planned provision supports the wider needs of pupils, such as developing their organisational skills. Leaders provide a place for quiet reflection, The Haven, supervised by trained staff, where pupils can work quietly alone, or take time out from class. This helps pupils in learning how to manage their anxiety or reflect on their behaviour. Leaders have implemented an age-appropriate policy for teaching relationships and sex education (RSE). Parents have been consulted. A mixture of informal and more formal means of assessment, such as surveys, is used to check pupils' understanding of topics such as consent and healthy relationships.
33. Pupils' confidence increases through creative work in art and art-related subjects, where they are free to express their ideas and emotions. Talented pupils excel at A level, increasing their sense of self-belief and ambition.
34. Leaders have established a suitable policy for the promotion of good behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. The SENCo team advise staff in the skills they require to manage behaviour. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively because they reduce anxiety or stress, which might trigger negative behaviour. Pupils learn to manage their own responses, to understand and take responsibility for their own behaviour. As a result, the atmosphere in school is calm and conducive to learning. Pupils understand that bullying is unacceptable and will ask for help if they need it. It does not often occur, and leaders respond effectively when it happens.
35. The PSHE programme stresses equality and inclusion, reflecting the nature of the school and stressing the importance of positive mental health to pupils' future stability and happiness. Pupils develop attributes of kindness, generosity and honesty, and build self-worth and resilience. Pupils gain a good understanding of how to keep safe and how to promote their own wellbeing and good mental health.
36. Senior staff conduct regular audits of health and safety, to secure a safe learning environment for the pupils. Appropriate checks are carried out and logs of safety and maintenance checks are kept correctly, including the measure to reduce the risks from fire. Staff, visitors and pupils are well acquainted with fire safety practice and procedures. The school has suitable arrangements for first aid, with appropriately trained staff and resources. These ensure that pupils receive appropriate and timely care when required. Staff supervision levels are high. The premises and accommodation are kept in good order.
37. School leaders have a suitable policy for admissions and appropriate procedures for promoting and checking on attendance. Information on any missing children or those joining or leaving the school is passed onto the local authority and future schools; and unexplained absence is followed up by relevant staff.

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

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

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

39. Leaders prepare pupils well for the next stage in life and for their future career. This includes developing their financial and economic awareness. The carefully planned programme for careers education is based upon nationally recognised benchmarks. Career guidance is planned in conjunction with parents to find an ambitious and realistic forward path for individual pupils. Pupils' awareness of possible opportunities is increased by talks from professionals in business and industry. Teachers support pupils with university entry and applications for other courses.
40. The destinations of leavers reflect the high expectations of staff and pupils' ambitions. Most Year 11 leavers go on to college. Older pupils progress to university, or take up vocational courses, for example at a local agricultural college, or go into the armed forces.
41. The PSHE curriculum effectively promotes the principles of right and wrong and prepares pupils for life in British society. It considers the rule of law and encourages respect for the values of democracy. In a senior school PE lesson pupils displayed a highly developed understanding of individual characteristics when analysing the barriers facing the fictional character of 'Leon' to participate in sport.
42. Leaders ensure that pupils understand the diverse nature of modern society and the need to respect cultural and religious differences. Pupils recognise individual characteristics that require protection. They are proud that their school has such an inclusive feel. Pupils treat each other and the staff with mutual respect and kindness. They speak confidently about celebrating differences and legal protections in this area, typically stating 'I don't care about differences or what people look like, it's what's on the inside that counts'. In a Year 8 PSHE topic named 'duty and tolerance' pupils effectively challenged their own preconceived ideas on gender roles and identity within society. Leaders and staff model the approaches they wish to see pupils adopt in dealing with others.
43. Pupils understand that school rules are for the benefit of the school community as a whole as much as for themselves. They recognise the rule of law in wider society and the protections it offers. They have a clear sense of fairness and are typically not afraid to challenge perceived prejudice. Older pupils understand how to play their part in building and sustaining a happy school community.
44. Leaders uphold the British values such as democracy, which underpin the work of the school. Pupils enjoy a voice in the school council, by direct representation to the principal, or in the house system. They raise funds for local charities, such as a food bank or environmental wildlife area. Through links within the village and locally pupils appreciate their place in a wider community. Pupils develop empathy and social skills through their various activities to raise funds for charity and seek to address economic disadvantage.
45. Pupils gain an increasing understanding of finance, money and economics through their work in subjects such as functional mathematics. Charitable fundraising activities are costed so that they understand the principles of profit and loss, and some are involved in enterprise clubs.

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

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

## Safeguarding

47. The proprietor prioritises safeguarding. The school has appropriate systems and procedures for safeguarding and implements these effectively to safeguard children. Many pupils at the school are vulnerable and great care is taken to ensure their safety. School leaders have drawn up a suitable policy for child protection, which is comprehensive and follows the latest guidance. The policy provides helpful, clear guidance to staff. Staff training in safeguarding equips them to deal with issues when they arise.
48. Through the well-designed RSE and PSHE curriculum, pupils learn to keep themselves safe. This includes topics such as consent and drug awareness. Pupils learn how to stay safe online, including the appropriate use of social media. Staff monitor internet usage in school through a filtering system.
49. The school has a robust procedure for the recruitment and appointment of staff and implements these procedures effectively. The central record of appointments accurately details the checks that have been conducted.
50. Leaders seek advice when needed and take prompt and well-judged actions on any safeguarding concerns, liaising with outside agencies where required. Staff understand the process of making a referral. Careful logs are kept of any safeguarding concern, whether low level or more serious. The school's leaders manage any incidents effectively when they occur.
51. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is supported by a specialist team of trained assistant designated safeguarding leads. This team works very effectively with other agencies to help keep children from harm. Separate records for safeguarding, behaviour and bullying are closely linked on an electronic system. This gives leaders the information and context they need readily to make decisions. These records provide the overall picture of a child to inform decision-making, and to identify any patterns.
52. Leaders ensure that all staff are properly trained, and that this training is kept up to date. Training includes the duty to prevent extremism. Staff show a secure understanding of the arrangements for safeguarding children and how to implement the school's policy and procedures.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

<b>School</b>	Hurst Lodge School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	850/6046
<b>Address</b>	Hurst Lodge School Yateley Hall Firgrove Road Camberley Surrey GU46 6HJ
<b>Phone number</b>	01252 227002
<b>Email address</b>	vsmit@hurstlodgeschool.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hurstlodgeschool.co.uk">www.hurstlodgeschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	Ms Victoria Smit
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Victoria Smit
<b>Age range</b>	5 to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	173
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 to 28 November 2019

## Information about the school

54. Hurst Lodge School was founded in 1957 and moved to its present site in 2021. The school is a day school, comprising a junior school and a senior school which occupy the same site. Hurst Lodge is a proprietorial school where the proprietor is also the school's principal.
55. The school provides a holistic approach to education to meet a diverse range of pupils from age 5 to age 19. Almost all pupils have special educational needs. Since the previous inspection in 2019, the school has moved to its present site and the principal has appointed new staff to many senior and middle leadership roles.
56. The school has identified 161 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom 144 pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Pupils' needs include those on the autistic spectrum, ADHD, developmental delay, physical and medical needs and anxiety.
57. English is an additional language for four pupils.
58. The school's vision is to develop confident, well-rounded young people prepared for the world they will enter when they leave the school. The school's ethos is based on the values of kindness, respect and courage.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

6 to 8 February 2024

59. A team of three inspectors and a shadow inspector visited the school for two and a half days.

60. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and form time
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- discussions with the learning support leadership team and visit to *The Haven* quiet area
- visit to facilities for physical education and play
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

61. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys. The team also considered the views of a small number of pupils with complex needs, facilitated by a special needs co-ordinator, during the inspection.

### **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).

### **Independent Schools Inspectorate**

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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