

School inspection report

14 November 2023 to 16 November 2023

Heathcote School

Eves Corner
1 Little Barrow Road
Danbury
Chelmsford
CM3 4BQ

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 proprietors, who form the school board, provide effective support and challenge to the school leaders. They take an active part in the formation of the school strategic plan, which supports the school's vision and aims. Leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including through ensuring the successful implementation of the school's policies. As a result, leaders actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils and ensure that the Standards are met.
2. Leaders ensure that the planned curriculum meets the school's vision and aims. Teachers' assessment is effective. As a result, pupils increase their understanding and develop their skills and receive targeted individual support. Almost all leavers obtain places at their first choice of senior school.
3. In the most effective lessons, teachers ensure that lessons are appropriately paced, fostering pupils' interest in their work and their ability to think for themselves. Pupils of all ages make good progress. However, in some lessons pupils are not consistently engaged in their learning.
4. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is in place and is taught well. The school community promotes positive relationships successfully. Pupils of all ages are comfortable in each other's company. Pupils are highly respectful of others.
5. The curriculum develops pupils' social and economic wellbeing effectively. Pupils develop their understanding of democracy, British law and institutions, the world of work and ideas about equality. Pupils support others both inside and outside the school community through a range of roles and responsibilities. Pupils have a clear sense of the differences between right and wrong.
6. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders ensure that robust systems are in place for responding to, reporting and tracking any concerns about pupils' welfare. Staff and proprietors take part in regular safeguarding training. They have a secure understanding of safeguarding procedures. Staff know how to report any concerns that they may have. Leaders ensure that all appropriate checks are made to ensure the suitability of staff. The proprietors maintain an effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures and ensure that monitoring and filtering of the internet is in place.

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 and managers should ensure that teaching consistently promotes pupils' engagement in their learning.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. The proprietors carry out their responsibilities effectively in collaboration with school leaders. They carefully monitor the school's policies and procedures and maintain oversight of how leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities. The proprietors are actively involved in the daily life of the school and know it well. They use this knowledge to provide effective support and challenge for leaders. However, the rigour of review varies across areas of provision.
8. Leaders ensure that the school reflects its aim that every pupil should be encouraged to recognise their own self-worth, building character, confidence and compassion. Proprietors, leaders and managers prioritise pupils' self-esteem and welfare when making decisions about the school's provision. Pupils readily demonstrate these qualities in all areas of their school life.
9. Leaders at all levels ensure that the school meets its requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate against pupils unlawfully. They ensure that the school promotes principles of equality, respect and fair treatment. The school rejects the use of corporal punishment.
10. The school documents many risk assessments. These effectively assess potential risks relating to different areas of the school, trips, activities and health concerns and identify measures to mitigate against these. Leaders and proprietors regularly review risk assessments to ensure that they remain effective.
11. The school maintains a close and supportive partnership with parents and provides them with all the required information. For example, the school website provides parents with current policies and information about the destinations of school leavers.
12. The school implements a suitable complaints procedure effectively. Leaders and staff are readily available to parents and deal with their concerns promptly and carefully.

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

13. Senior leaders plan the curriculum to provide a variety of subjects. Pupils achieve well in a range of curriculum areas and are encouraged to 'have a go'. They acquire new skills and knowledge within a highly positive working environment, which is characterised by productive relationships between pupils and their teachers. The range of subjects taught ensures pupils have many opportunities to gain knowledge and develop skills. Almost all leavers progress to a place at their preferred choice of senior school.
14. In the early years, children make rapid progress from their starting points. The early years classroom is well resourced and has been organised to complement the curriculum. Teachers' high expectations of behaviour ensure that children are engaged in their learning and develop their concentration and listening skills. Activities are closely linked to the desired learning outcomes. Adults support children of different ages well and the open-ended, fun tasks enables children to succeed in an age-appropriate way. Staff engage warmly with the children and use questioning effectively to extend their learning and develop their vocabulary.
15. In the most effective lessons, the use of challenging questions and deliberate 'mistakes' add to the enjoyment and progress of the pupils. For example, pupils were able to articulate the difference between weight and mass, and explain the difference between Newtons and Kilograms as units of measurement. However, pupils do not engage in their learning consistently well in all lessons.
16. Teachers use the comprehensive assessment programme to identify pupils' prior attainment. Regular feedback during lessons helps pupils understand how to edit and improve their work. Effective short-term, targeted support for individual pupils enables them securely to develop skills. Pupils make good progress, including those with special educational needs.
17. Leaders ensure there is an effective programme to develop pupils' linguistic and literacy skills. As a result, pupils have highly effective communication skills and are articulate and confident in their use of language from an early age. An effective introduction to the relationship between letters, sounds and writing in the younger years enables pupils' written skills to develop well. Pupils' mathematical competency develops steadily as they move up through the school. A recent change to the curriculum has ensured the pupils are completing more problem-based activities to embed their learning.
18. The range of extra-curricular activities available enables pupils to develop their skills beyond the classroom and in areas that they particularly enjoy. Opportunities include computer strategy games, origami and yoga. The extra-curricular activities also enable pupils to develop their skills in working alongside older and younger pupils.

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

19. Leaders promote the physical and mental wellbeing of pupils, equipping them with the skills to take good care of themselves. Pupils are encouraged to become reflective and resilient, helped by the daily reflection they perform at the end of each school day. The leadership team closely monitor pupils' wellbeing across the school so that any necessary additional support for individual pupils is quickly put into place.
20. Leaders and staff know their pupils extremely well. They positively promote pupils' wellbeing, listening carefully to pupils' suggestions and implementing them where possible. For example, leaders have recently extended the use of 'worry boxes' to all classrooms. The school has trained mental health first aiders who support pupils if necessary. Leaders ensure that staff are actively on hand to offer support throughout the day.
21. Pupils develop mature levels of self-awareness and self-esteem. They enjoy each other's company and work together well. The school has clear policies and protocols for dealing with incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Bullying is rare and the playground is a happy and harmonious place. The leadership team regularly review concerns raised, entries in the behaviour log, and staff observations of pupils' wellbeing.
22. The comprehensive PSHE programme and appropriate relationships education programme support pupils' development of a secure understanding of personal and health topics. Leaders and staff model the school's expected conduct very well. Teachers nurture and encourage pupils, enabling them to develop in self-confidence. Leaders effectively develop the pupils' spiritual understanding and mutual respect through involving parents from different faith groups to provide workshops and presentations, including those relating to Black History Month, Diwali and Eid.
23. Pupils participate in an effective programme of physical education, supplemented by the physical extracurricular clubs. These develop pupils' physical skills and their ability to work in a team. The school makes effective use of outside space, and a nearby local sports field, for both unstructured play and organised activities. Pupils are supervised across the site and clear protocols, which support the pupils' safety, are well established and understood by all.
24. Leaders ensure suitable maintenance of the premises and accommodation. Leaders implement methodical systems to ensure that health and safety and fire safety arrangements are effective. First aid is administered in a timely and effective manner by trained first aiders. Those with specific medical needs are cared for effectively by additionally trained staff.
25. Leaders ensure that appropriate attention is given to the maintenance of accurate admissions and attendance registers by an experienced and appropriately trained manager. Leaders track any patterns of absence carefully, to ensure that these are appropriately followed up.

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

26. The curriculum develops pupils' social and cultural understanding well. For example, as a result of their studies, pupils articulate ideas about the importance of empathy and equality and the concept of children's rights. Leaders provide pupils with age-appropriate news journals that develop pupils' understanding of British law and institutions which enable pupils to form and share ideas about wider global issues. The curriculum reflects the school's aim to build pupils' character, confidence and compassion.
27. The curriculum furthers pupils' economic knowledge and understanding successfully. For example, older pupils explore ways of raising funds for charitable causes and begin to learn about the English tax system. Leaders develop pupils' early understanding of the world of work effectively, such as through a recent careers week. Speakers included positive role models, such as a female NASA scientist and a male midwife, helping pupils to dispel ideas of gender stereotyping. Pupils learn about democracy and engage in the democratic process in age-appropriate ways. For example, pupils vote to determine which charities their houses should support. Pupils demonstrate understanding that people can express opposing views which deserve to be respected
28. Pupils have a well-defined sense of right and wrong. They develop a high degree of respect for difference in their daily interactions as they mature.
29. Older pupils play a helpful and active role in their school community. They clearly value their responsibilities and take a real pride in how they support the achievements of the younger children in the school. Leaders utilise the school council and other mechanisms to hear the voice of the pupils and effectively encourage them to appreciate democracy and influence the development of the school. Leaders successfully enable pupils to contribute to life in their immediate village, including being pen pals of residents in a local care home and singing at meetings of a local community group.

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

30. Leaders and governors prioritise the welfare of pupils. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements, including those relating to child-on-child abuse, are effective and in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders also make certain that school procedures are clear, well understood and followed by staff.
31. The proprietors maintain an effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures. They carry out regular safeguarding reviews, following guidance from the local authority safeguarding team, and ensure they are in regular touch with the safeguarding team at the school.
32. The school responds to safeguarding concerns effectively. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) maintains suitable records of any issues that arise and liaise effectively with relevant external agencies when appropriate. Safeguarding training is appropriate and regular. Staff are well trained and supported to manage any safeguarding issues that may arise.
33. Leaders ensure that procedures for the safer recruitment of staff are thorough and in line with statutory requirements. The school conducts all appropriate pre-employment checks and records these as required, on a single central record of appointments.
34. The school has appropriate procedures to respond to any allegations that might be made about any adults working at the school.
35. The proprietors check that the internet is suitably filtered and that basic monitoring procedures are in place. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils understand the steps they should take if they have safeguarding concerns, and know who they can share these with.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Heathcote School
Department for Education number	881/6018
Address	Heathcote School Eves Corner 1 Little Barrow Road Danbury Chelmsford CM3 4BQ
Website	heathcoteschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Heathcote School Ltd
Chair	Mrs Nadine Solsberg
Headteacher	Mrs Samantha Scott
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	113
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2019

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit www.isi.net.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

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