

# School inspection report

14 November 2023 to 16 November 2023

## High March School

23 Ledborough Lane  
Beaconsfield  
Bucks  
HP9 2PZ

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 directors, ably supported by an advisory board of governors, ensure that senior leaders demonstrate appropriate knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted. Both the directors and governors have appropriate expertise and training to enable them to provide effective oversight of the school's strategic direction and to give suitable challenge to ensure its policies are implemented.
2. Pupils make good progress overall, reflected in high-quality outcomes, including those achieved in 11+ examinations. The implementation of the curriculum is most effective where teachers share best practice and development planning supports a commonality of approach across the school. However, there is some inconsistency in the progression and continuity of the curriculum from the junior house to the upper school. Leaders have begun to address this. Pupils' educational experience is enhanced through the broad extra-curricular programme.
3. The needs of pupils who have SEND are identified at an early stage and highly effective individualised support is put in place, which enables them to make rapid progress and achieve well. This is a significant strength of the school. Staff consider with great care, how to adapt teaching to meet the needs of pupils with SEND successfully. An embedded school culture, which celebrates difference, supports high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence among this group of pupils.
4. The early years provides a nurturing, happy and secure environment, where staff provide a high-quality curriculum, which results in strong outcomes across all areas of learning. Staff's knowledge and care for individual children ensure that an adaptive and flexible approach is used to enable all children's needs to be met.
5. Effective health and safety arrangements ensure pupils remain safe while on site and when attending activities in other places. During the inspection, the school swiftly and satisfactorily addressed any areas identified by inspectors as posing undue risk to pupils.
6. The successful fulfilment of the school's aim for pupils to prosper in an environment of kindness and friendship is reflected in high levels of pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence and their happiness at school. A strong sense of community pervades the school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for and benefit from close relationships with both staff and peers. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities available to them to take on meaningful roles of responsibility which support growth in their wellbeing and personal development.

### **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 that the continuity and progression between junior house and upper school, developed by the school's leaders in recent years, continues to be strengthened, so that pupils' progress is maximised.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Governors ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities at the school have the knowledge and skills to promote the wellbeing of pupils. Relevant presentations to governors by senior leaders and regular direct contact with pupils and staff provide governors with clear oversight of the school's strategic direction, its policies and their implementation. Governors provide effective oversight and challenge in monitoring educational standards. The consistently strong relationship between governance, leadership and management enables the school to effectively support the implementation of its aims.
8. Leaders have established an effective review process, which ensures that policies and procedures have regard to applicable guidance and are relevant to the needs of the pupils. They ensure that policies and procedures are successfully implemented. This includes fulfilling the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, so that the needs of different groups of pupils are met and there is no discrimination. An appropriate accessibility plan ensures that the needs of pupils with disabilities are given due consideration. Leaders provide suitable staff training to support the effective implementation of policies.
9. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development through an effective process of self-evaluation based on clearly articulated aims and a child-centred focus. This enables leaders to effectively promote pupils' wellbeing through a strong pastoral structure and ethos inspired by the friendly family environment the school achieves. Forums such as the school council and eco committee give pupils an effective voice that contributes towards improvements in the school community.
10. Leaders support the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum by appointing appropriately qualified staff. Planning and provision for pupils who have SEND contributes strongly towards the rapid progress and high self-esteem of pupils. A high proportion of leavers successfully gain places at a range of selective senior schools. However, there is some inconsistency in the continuity and progression of the curriculum across the junior house and upper school. The school's own self-evaluation has identified that planned opportunities to use ICT more imaginatively as a tool to support outcomes for pupils should be further embedded.
11. Pupils' educational outcomes and wellbeing are effectively promoted through close home-school collaboration. Required information is made available on the school's website which enables parents to access a comprehensive suite of relevant policies and helpful guidance on school life. The school's reporting system provide parents with information about their children's progress. This outlines areas of strength and for further development, both in face-to-face meetings between staff and parents, as well as in regularly published written reports.
12. Parental concerns or complaints that are raised are recorded and addressed appropriately. Complaints are appropriately managed in a timely manner, in accordance with the school's published policy.
13. Leaders and managers have created a safe working environment for the school community. They ensure that documentation and procedures for health and safety are robust and reviewed regularly, making appropriate use of professional agencies. There is a distinct awareness of risk and clear and appropriate mitigations to safeguard pupils' welfare.

14. The early years provides a child-centred programme based upon the seven areas of learning. Effective supervision of early years staff contributes to children successfully acquiring basic skills and enjoying many opportunities to initiate learning.

### **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

15. Pupils, including those who have SEND, experience a broad and balanced curriculum. This is supported by the effective implementation of appropriate schemes of work and programmes of activities that are suitable for the age and needs of pupils. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress developing their fluency in English as a result of the effective support they receive. A firm grounding is provided in all key areas: linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, aesthetic and creative, physical and speaking, listening, numeracy and literacy.
16. Children in the early years experience an interesting programme of activities in a highly nurturing environment which enables them to enhance their skills across all areas of learning. Staff's knowledge and effective use of a high-quality play area using a comprehensive range of creative resources promote the development of children's language through imaginative play and storytelling.
17. An appropriate assessment framework is in place. In most year groups, work is carefully assessed, and pupils benefit from clear and effective feedback that clearly signposts areas for improvement. Leaders have identified the need to ensure that the assessment of pupils' progress is consistently tracked across the school and that gaps in knowledge and understanding are consistently addressed.
18. Pupils are supported in the appropriate acquisition of new knowledge, skills and understanding. Lessons are well planned utilising teachers' clear understanding of the needs and prior attainment of pupils. Teachers employ suitable strategies in lessons to build upon any gaps identified in learning. Those pupils who have SEND make rapid progress due to the high-quality resources appropriate to their needs and highly effective support for them. Pupils achieve well and gain places in their chosen senior schools.
19. Appropriately qualified teachers demonstrate a suitable level of subject knowledge and skills. They usually employ effective teaching methods which engage pupils' interest, motivating them to apply high levels of effort to tasks they are set. Much teaching Provides appropriately engaging activities and suitable challenge. Teaching promotes pupils' strong recall of prior knowledge which they apply effectively to new areas of learning. Pupils work hard and act responsibly in lessons.
20. Teaching encourages pupils to respect British values and act as responsible citizens. This was exemplified during the school's highly successful neuro-diversity week in which difference was celebrated. Reasonable adjustments are made for pupils where necessary so that teaching promotes the good progress of all groups of pupils.
21. A broad and interesting extra-curricular programme that meets a range of needs and interests successfully enables pupils to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding whilst gaining independence and developing skills for life. The school provides appropriate opportunities for recreation, which include access to varied and stimulating playtime activities in which pupils fully participate.

## **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

22. Leaders actively promote pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing through the effective implementation of a suitable range of policies. Risks to pupils' welfare are appropriately assessed and proportionately mitigated but are not always recorded clearly. The pastoral system promotes a nurturing environment and a clear culture of care which helps to develop pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.
23. A strong culture of respect, including for different groups of people, and mutual trust, underpins the school community. This results in positive pupil relationships and a well-developed appreciation of the spiritual and non-material aspects of life. Pupils cite the friendliness of the school, equal treatment and respect for all as important factors underpinning their happiness. The school's curriculum policy and its implementation promote tolerance towards others. For example, in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons following anti-bullying week, pupils strongly endorsed the view that being different is worthy of celebration.
24. PSHE lessons and relationships education help pupils of all ages, including children in the early years, to understand how to protect their own physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing, as well as that of others. The relationships education programme covers all the required areas and ensures that pupils develop a clear understanding and appreciation of the different relationships they might encounter. Open and positive relationships between school and home further promote pupils' wellbeing.
25. Pupils participate in an appropriate range of physical activities in lessons, in inter-school sporting fixtures and in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which enable them to enjoy and appreciate the benefits of regular exercise. Lessons about how to stay physically healthy include suitable guidance on oral hygiene in the early years and regular guidance on healthy food choices for all ages.
26. Pupils' behaviour is of a high standard. Leaders and managers ensure that the school's clearly articulated behaviour policy is consistently and fairly applied. Pupils display an innate sense of right and wrong; they are keen to implement the school's rules to 'be kind, be ready, be respectful, be safe'. They have a clear understanding of bullying. Staff deal swiftly and effectively with the rare cases of bullying, keeping appropriate records, implementing suitable sanctions, as well as mediation to affected relationships. Staff are well trained in identifying different types of bullying and effective means of addressing the needs of both victim and perpetrator.
27. The school engenders a sense of belonging and of mutual support and respect. This is evident in the classroom and within the wider life of the school. During breaktimes, pupils of all ages were observed to be playing happily together. They enjoy positive relationships with children and adults alike. They describe the positive impact of the support they are given through initiatives such as *Girls on Board* to resolve disagreements on the occasions they occur.
28. The school's premises are well maintained and provide a safe physical environment for pupils. Any risks associated with activities that take place on or offsite are appropriately identified and mitigated. Pupils are appropriately supervised both when on school premises and offsite. Admission and attendance registers are well-maintained.

29. Health and safety and fire precautions are implemented effectively. Suitable medical facilities are available for pupils when they are injured or unwell. First aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by appropriately trained staff.

**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

30. There are many opportunities for pupils to learn about the society in which they live as well as the wider world. Studies of, and engagement with, different communities within the United Kingdom and around the world encourage pupils to respect other people.
31. Pupils are given an age-appropriate introduction to different institutions and their role in British society through the curriculum and wider activities. They develop an understanding of democracy in elections to pupil forums such as the school council and the eco committee which include voting for initiatives that have been debated. Visits from members of the police force and fire brigade enable pupils to understand the role played by the emergency services in safeguarding people from harm. Pupils' economic education is supported when they tackle problems in mathematics involving money and through the fund-raising events they organise.
32. Fundamental British values are actively promoted at the school, for instance through the assembly programme. From an early age, respect and tolerance towards people from different cultures who hold different beliefs are firmly embedded in pupils' attitudes towards others. Pupils understand the right of people within British society to express views openly and appreciate that they have an active voice within their own school community. Staff promote an understanding of the consequences of making right and wrong choices.
33. Pupils are well supported in preparing for the next stage of their education, including their senior school entry examinations. However, pupils are not always comfortable taking risks in their learning which enable them to see that overcoming challenges and dealing with setbacks support their personal growth.
34. A strong emphasis on service to others underpins a wide range of activities. Pupils support a range of community groups, from making donations to an organisation that provides lunches for the elderly and lonely to those in Year 6 who work with a local group to build bug hotels. The school provides support for environmental causes through its active eco committee.
35. Pupils' personal development benefits from the roles of responsibility available to them, including positions as monitors, new pupil buddies, prefects, sports and house captains, which are enthusiastically and proficiently fulfilled. These opportunities contribute to pupils' preparation for life beyond the school.

### 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

36. Provision for safeguarding and to promote the wellbeing of pupils at the school is effective. Safeguarding arrangements benefit from the robust oversight of governors and the effective leadership provided by safeguarding leaders. There are suitable arrangements for listening to pupils.
37. The suitable safeguarding policy is updated at least annually and undergoes an appropriate review process. Annual and ongoing policy updates are shared appropriately with staff. Leaders ensure that staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training as part of their induction upon joining the school, which is updated at regular intervals. Those with safeguarding leadership responsibilities also receive suitable training.
38. Staff take their responsibilities seriously in terms of promoting and protecting pupils' wellbeing and safety. They understand how to manage and report safeguarding concerns, including those for online safety. They also understand the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism.
39. Staff rigorously prioritise the needs of pupils at risk. Contextual risks to pupils' welfare are appropriately assessed and suitably mitigated. Safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly and effective use is made of support from external agencies. Concerns are recorded appropriately, and robust processes are followed if issues arise. High levels of persistence are evident in the way the school seeks to protect pupils requiring supportive interventions. Pupils indicate that they feel very safe at school.
40. Safer recruitment checks are completed for staff, volunteers and governors and a suitable record of appointments is kept.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

<b>School</b>	High March School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	825/6019
<b>Address</b>	23 Ledborough Lane Beaconsfield Bucks HP9 2PZ
<b>Website</b>	highmarch.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs Belinda Avery and Mr Michael Chapples
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Colin Hayfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kate Gater
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	292
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 to 20 June 2019

## Information about the school

41. High March School is an independent day school for pupils aged between three and 11 years. The school is located in a residential area of Beaconsfield. The school is overseen by two directors. The school comprises the junior house, for pupils aged between three and seven, and the upper school for those aged between seven and eleven. Since the previous inspection, the school's senior leadership team has been restructured and provision for modern foreign languages has been extended with the introduction of Spanish and Mandarin. The head took up her post in September 2019.
42. The early years caters for 67 children aged three to five, comprising two nursery and two reception classes.
43. The school has identified 24 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils at the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
44. The school states that its aim is to promote educational excellence in an environment of kindness and friendship.

## Inspection details

**Inspection dates** 14 to 16 November 2023

45. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and half days.
46. Inspection activities included:
- observations of lessons, activities and an assembly
  - lesson walks with senior leaders
  - discussions with the proprietors and chair of governors
  - discussions with school leaders, managers and staff
  - discussions with pupils
  - observations of registration periods
  - premises tour
  - examination and discussion of pupils' work
  - examination of a range of policies and documentation provided by the school.
47. 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).