

School inspection report

19 September 2023 to 21 September 2023

Oldham Hulme Grammar School

Chamber Road
Oldham
OL8 4BX

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 fulfils its ambitious aims. Leaders nurture pupils' talents and interests from a young age. They enable pupils to realise their potential by providing a challenging curriculum and an extensive co-curricular programme and by encouraging pupils to engage in both. Pupils respond to this positively and work hard as they strive to excel. Leaders know individual pupils well due to the effective pastoral structures and strong house system, and they put pupil wellbeing at the core of their work.
2. Pupils achieve well at all stages of their education. Pupils, including children in the early years, make good progress in relation to their starting points. The individual support offered to all pupils, but especially to those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is effective. Well-planned teaching in response to comprehensive individual education plans ensures that staff cater effectively for pupils' learning needs.
3. Leaders ensure that pupils are supported well and pupils are well prepared for their next steps in life. As a result of the high-quality care provided pupils, including children in the early years, are happy in school. Consequently, they thrive and grow into well-rounded young people. Leaders promote tolerance, understanding and respect for others and pupils embrace difference. The school is a diverse and accepting community. Relationships among pupils, and between pupils and staff, flourish.
4. Self-evaluation is integral to leaders' approach to strategic development and internal planning. Governors ensure that there is a comprehensive strategic plan in place that guides leaders to fulfil the school's aims. Leaders understand their responsibilities to actively promote pupils' wellbeing. Governors maintain systematic oversight of the work of the leadership team, so that senior leaders carry out their roles effectively in most respects.
5. However, leaders do not always ensure that, following evaluation and planning, the systems in place for monitoring some aspects of provision are robust. Consequently, while safeguarding practice at the school is effective, the most recent review of the safeguarding policy did not identify minor errors within the policy. Similarly, while health and safety practice at the school meets required standards, leaders' oversight of health and safety requirements is inconsistently implemented.
6. Following recent evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and learning across all ages leaders have introduced a number of new strategies, for example, the implementation of the 'Challenge for All' initiative. Teachers are working hard to implement this new initiative, which is impacting positively on some pupils but is yet to be embedded. As a result, in some cases, teaching lacks challenge. Leaders' development of more effective marking and feedback strategies is enabling pupils to better understand their own strengths and areas for development and pupils are responding well to this.

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 governors should:

- Ensure that health and safety protocols, including fire safety procedures, are rigorous and effectively monitored.
- Ensure that the safeguarding policy, and other related policies, always contains accurate information.
- Continue to embed stretch and challenge across the curriculum for pupils of all ages, including children in the early years.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. The governance of the school successfully enables the school to fulfil its aims. Governors ensure through their work with leaders that the education on offer is vibrant and inclusive. They listen first hand to pupils' views and make sure that pupil wellbeing is at the fore of their strategic thinking. Governors monitor school standards systematically through a series of committees that oversee various aspects of the school. An annual safeguarding review is undertaken. Governors challenge leaders appropriately in most cases and require them to report regularly regarding their areas of responsibility. However, monitoring and oversight of the content of some required policies, including the safeguarding policy, are not always rigorous.
8. Overall, leaders demonstrate the relevant knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. However, in some cases leaders' oversight of the implementation of policy has not been sufficiently robust.
9. Senior leadership is successful in ensuring that the school meets its aims. Leaders have a clear vision for the school's future development based on thorough self-evaluation. Leaders at all levels have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They work together systematically to ensure that the school standards remain high. Whilst the school is in a period of transition with several senior leaders having been recently appointed, staff are responding positively to the challenges and opportunities this brings. With the move to full co-education in the senior school in progress, in those year groups and classes where pupils remain separated by sex, the school has a clear rationale for making sure that there is no detriment experienced on the basis of pupils' sex.
10. Governance ensures that leaders and managers effectively implement the comprehensive risk assessment policy. Leaders give staff clear direction about how to assess, manage and report risks. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out, for example, with regard to site safety, potentially hazardous materials, educational trips, transport, and safe recruitment. Leaders take action to mitigate risks. However, with regard to the outcome of the fire risk assessment, there was a delayed response to addressing the recommendations. Leaders ensure that pupils understand the importance of risk management, for example, through teaching pupils how to consider and mitigate risks related to practical activities in science lessons and how to stay safe online.
11. Leaders ensure that staff are easily accessible to parents and deal with their concerns promptly and carefully. Complaints are recorded and responded to appropriately. Information is made available and provided to parents as required. Regular reports to parents on pupils' progress are detailed and informative. The school rejects the use of corporal punishment.
12. Leaders understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act. The education provided by the school does not discriminate and reasonable adjustments are made for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A suitable accessibility plan is in place.
13. Governors ensure that leaders within the early years demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are rigorous and children are well cared for within a safe and happy environment. Leaders in the early years hold regular supervision meetings with staff and staff attend training courses as required. This ensures that children's needs are catered for effectively.

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

14. Senior leaders maintain effective oversight of the curriculum, regularly reviewing and adapting the offer to cater for pupils' needs. Leaders have shaped the curriculum to reflect technological advances, and pupils use technology well to support and extend their learning. An extensive co-curricular programme has been created that challenges, excites and motivates pupils. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a range of activities, which develop new skills, confidence and resilience, for example, chess club, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and philosophy debate club. Pupils perform in drama productions at the local theatre and many play a musical instrument to a high standard. Pupils play a variety of sports including at local, county and national level, for example, in netball, cricket and swimming. Leaders encourage pupils to read for pleasure and new library facilities in the prep school to complement the senior school library have provided further places in which pupils prioritise and enjoy reading. Well-maintained outdoor space enables pupils to play together safely and relax.
15. Leaders' systematic monitoring of teaching and learning ensures that pupils, including those with SEND, make good progress in their learning. Almost all pupils attain grades at GCSE and A Level in line with or above those expected for their ability. Focused planning and knowledgeable teaching enable pupils of all ages to develop skills and knowledge in line with their needs across most areas of the curriculum. Pupils with SEND are well supported by teachers and their attainment is in line with their peers. Individual educational plans are effective working documents and the emotional support for pupils with SEND is contributing well to pupils' outcomes. Pupils with English as an additional language also attain in line with their peers. Children in the early years make rapid progress from their starting points, for example, in communication, language and numeracy.
16. In the early years, a varied programme of activities is provided, tailored to children's individual needs in relation to the areas of learning and development. Children engage fully in their learning, inspired by well-planned activities, such as thematic free-play and storytelling. Children are confident to speak out and they use a wide range of vocabulary to express themselves.
17. Pupils of all abilities display well-developed communication skills, due in part to their highly effective listening skills that teaching fosters. The emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy skills from an early age ensures that pupils progress well in English. Senior school pupils write at length, effectively and in a variety of styles. Pupils' mathematical skills are well developed, through well-sequenced mathematics lessons across the ages. Pupils, including children in the early years, apply their mathematical and scientific knowledge in context, with ease. For example, in a prep school mathematics challenge, pupils successfully applied their understanding of shape, and measurement skills, to design and construct a weight-bearing bridge out of paper and straws.
18. Senior leaders' ongoing evaluation of teaching and learning has led recently to the development of a 'Challenge for All' programme that aims to stretch and extend pupils' thinking. Challenge was evident in many lessons, when well-planned teaching and extension activities enabled pupils to think independently. However, across all ages, including in the early years, some teaching lacks challenge and this can limit the progress of some pupils.
19. Pupils respond well when teachers provide quality feedback on their work. From an early age pupils learn to self-assess their work appropriately and set themselves targets for improvement. Pupils feel empowered when feedback is detailed and personalised and most pupils can articulate clearly how

to improve their work. When marking and feedback is not as detailed and specific to the pupils it is less effective and pupils struggle to understand how they can make improvements in their learning. Leaders have implemented strategies to address this inconsistency and are working to embed these strategies across the school.

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

20. Leaders' focus on the school's values, as embodied by the 'Hulme Spirit,' ensures that pupils are caring and kind. Pupils show sensitivity to others' needs when working together. Older pupils show great thoughtfulness for the wellbeing of younger peers. They readily engage in peer mentoring activities, for example, by supporting younger pupils with their mathematics or volunteering to help with prep co-curricular clubs. Leaders' focus on the development of pupils as holistic individuals ensures that pupils acquire well-developed social skills.
21. Relationships among pupils, and between pupils and staff, are positive and are based on mutual respect. This is evident in the strong sense of community felt by all. Leaders model respect and consideration of others in all they do and pupils reflect this in how they work and communicate with people. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and are not afraid to call out injustice. They value integrity and display honesty and openness in discussions.
22. Leaders provide a wide-ranging programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), which includes appropriate provision for relationships and sex education. The PSHE programme reflects the school's ethos of empowering individuality and promoting inclusivity. Teachers encourage mutual respect for other people and, consequently, the school is a diverse and accepting community. Most pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of the ways people differ. Pupil minority groups feel well supported by the school. The decision by leaders to introduce co-curricular activities that celebrate diversity and inclusion, for example, the *Prism Club* (the school's LGBTQ+ group) and *DICE* (diversity, inclusion, community and equality) group, has impacted positively on pupil wellbeing.
23. Pupil wellbeing is central to the school's thinking and leaders actively listen to pupils and value their opinions. Pupils feel heard, valued and included and recognise that their opinions are acted upon, for example, leaders readily incorporated pupils' ideas when making changes to the school uniform. Leaders encourage pupils at every opportunity to never give up when faced with difficulties. Consequently, pupils' resilience and self-confidence grow as they experience success in areas where they once may have failed. Pupils develop high levels of self-awareness and an informed understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses.
24. Supported by a broad religious studies curriculum, pupils' spiritual understanding is well-rounded. Pupils are aware of their moral responsibilities and they respect the school's behaviour code. Pupils behave well in lessons due in part to the clear and warm expectations set by teachers. In the senior school, pupils' behaviour outside of lessons had been previously identified by school leaders as occasionally boisterous. Leaders have taken positive and successful steps to address this. A calm corridors policy has been introduced and staff on duty are vigilant. Leaders ensure that pupils, including children in the early years, are supervised appropriately at all times. There is an effective anti-bullying policy in place and the majority of pupils agreed in ISI's pre-inspection survey that the school manages any incidents of bullying well.
25. Leaders encourage pupils, including children in the early years, to participate in a range of physical activities through a well-managed physical education programme and wider sporting activities.

Pupils demonstrate good levels of physical fitness. They understand the power of exercise and the positive impact it has on mental health.

26. Leaders ensure that the school premises and accommodation are maintained to an appropriate standard. Suitable arrangements are in place to care for pupils who become unwell or who have specific medical needs. First aid is administered in a timely manner. Staff receive regular training in first aid and all staff in the early years are trained in paediatric first aid. The attendance and admission registers are properly maintained.
27. Appropriate health and safety practices are in place and implemented effectively, in most cases. There is a suitable health and safety policy and any issues raised by staff are acted upon in a timely manner. Precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire and fire equipment is checked systematically. Fire drills take place termly and staff receive regular fire training. Suitable fire risk assessments are carried out by an external provider. However, leaders do not always ensure that fire risk assessments are reviewed systematically and recommendations acted upon quickly. The school had been slow to put up fire safety signage in very recently refurbished areas of the school. This was rectified before the end of the inspection.

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

28. Leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to make valuable contributions to both the school community and wider society. Pupils care deeply about the school and embrace the range of leadership roles on offer. They understand that they make a big difference to the community when taking on leadership roles, for example, as a school council representative or a Hulme Student Ambassador. The well-established house system is fundamental to pupils' social development and pupils talk with pride of activities organised by house captains, for example, charity fundraising, sports competitions and creative arts events.
29. Pupils recognise that philanthropy is an important aspect of the school's outreach programme. Each year, pupils raise money by organising a range of activities for a variety of charities, including the charity that is chosen by pupils. Older pupils volunteer in the local community, for example, through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, including in local primary schools to support children with their reading.
30. The wide-ranging curriculum and inclusive co-curricular programme promote pupils' cultural knowledge and prepare them well for living in British society. Pupils recognise the cultural richness and diversity in beliefs of their peers. Pupils of all ages both celebrate and embrace such difference. Pupils understand the importance of individual liberty and value democracy, aware that in some parts of the world human rights are not always respected. Pupils appreciate opportunities provided for free speech, for example, through debating and the hustings to elect head students.
31. Pupils' life-skills, including economic understanding, are developed well through the PSHE programme. Whilst older pupils spoke of feeling well prepared for life beyond school, pupils would benefit from more knowledge and understanding of financial matters at an earlier age. This is an area of the PSHE curriculum that leaders recognise could be enhanced and are addressing as part of their ongoing developments of the PSHE curriculum.
32. Leaders work together to support the next steps for pupils, including those with SEND, at each stage of their education. An effective Year 6 into Year 7 transition programme is in place. Older pupils are well supported when making subject choices. An extensive careers guidance programme includes an annual careers fair that pupils value highly. Specialist careers staff equip pupils to explore a wide range of future options. Older pupils gain work experience across a range of industries. Sixth-form pupils receive bespoke advice as they apply for further education. They successfully take up a variety of degree and apprenticeship courses and many go on to study at prestigious establishments across the UK and abroad.

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

33. School leaders make suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including children within the early years. Leaders work effectively with external agencies. When concerns arise, the school makes timely referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and the police, where appropriate.
34. Effective measures are taken to manage any identified risks associated with pupils' safeguarding. When incidents occur, they are managed well. Leaders keep detailed safeguarding records. Records are used effectively to monitor and adapt practice as required. Leaders are aware of contextual safeguarding risks and vigilant to any signs of concern.
35. Leaders ensure that all staff, volunteers and those with safeguarding lead responsibilities receive appropriate training that is updated regularly. Governors also receive appropriate annual update training and understand their statutory responsibilities. There is a named designated safeguarding lead for the early years.
36. Staff understand child protection procedures, including those for online safety and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. They recognise and report safeguarding concerns appropriately and effectively monitor pupils' attendance. Staff know how and when to report concerns or allegations made about staff, including low level concerns. Scrutiny of the school's safeguarding policy and other related policies found some information to be inaccurate. Contact details for safeguarding partners and some references to statutory guidance were not up to date. This was rectified during the inspection and the safeguarding policy was updated to reflect the effective practice in school.
37. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to stay safe, including when online. Pupils are clear about who to go to if they have worries or a concern. Leaders have put in place a well-resourced counselling service that includes weekly drop-in sessions. Pupils are confident to access this service if required and speak openly of how this impacts positively on their mental wellbeing.
38. Appropriate safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and governors and a suitable central register of appointments is kept.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	Oldham Hulme Grammar School
Department for Education number	353/6012
Registered charity number	526636
Address	Chamber Road, Oldham, OL8 4BX
Website	www.hulmegrammar.org
Proprietor	The governing body of Oldham Hulme Grammar School
Chair	Mrs Valerie Stocker
Principal	Mr Tony Oulton
Age range	2 to 18
Number of pupils	734
Date of previous inspection	17 to 19 September 2019

Information about the school

39. The school is an independent co-educational day school situated in Oldham in Lancashire. Founded in 1611, it is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. The prep school, which caters for pupils from nursery up to the age of 11, is located across three campuses each within a short distance from the senior school site. Since the previous inspection a new chair of governors was appointed in December 2021, a new principal took up post in December 2022 and a new head of the prep school was appointed in September 2023.
40. The prep school includes an early years setting, which accommodates children from age two. There are currently 38 pupils in the setting across two nursery classes and one Reception class.
41. The school has identified 115 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
42. English is an additional language for 39 pupils.
43. The school states that its aim is to provide a vibrant, inclusive education that nurtures pupils as individuals, empowering them to realise their potential. It seeks to encourage pupils' enjoyment of learning, spirit of enquiry and pursuit of excellence within a disciplined and stimulating learning environment.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 19 to 21 September 2023

44. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.
45. Inspection activities included:
- discussions with teaching and support staff, the school's leadership and management, and members of the governing body
 - discussions with pupils about their academic education, wellbeing and their experiences of school life
 - scrutiny of pupils' work in collaboration with pupils and staff
 - observations of teaching and learning across all year groups
 - observations of a sample of co-curricular activities
 - collaborative lesson walks with senior leaders
 - observations of registration time and assemblies
 - tours of the school premises
46. 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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