

School inspection report

10 to 12 October 2023

The Grammar School at Leeds

Alwoodley Gates
Harrogate Road
Leeds
LS17 8GS

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. Leaders and governors are knowledgeable and experienced. The wellbeing of pupils underpins planning, decision making and school development planning. Leaders self-evaluate, assess risk and plan effectively in order to ensure the school meets the Standards and the school's aims.
2. Governors provide effective support and appropriate challenge to the leadership. They have an informed overview of the school's strategic and operational development and ensure that the school meets its responsibilities and objectives.
3. Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of pupils. Pupils develop a wide and diverse range of knowledge and skills. They make good progress as a result of carefully planned and effective teaching and attain well in public examinations. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress as a result of the effective support provided. The positive relationships between teachers and pupils helps to promote good behaviour and engagement in lessons.
4. Children in the early years make good progress and are prepared well for their next stage of education. Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) are effectively supported so that they can achieve a functional level of English, enabling them to make good progress.
5. The primary and senior schools use different systems to track pupils' achievement. This can affect the pace of pupils' progress at the point of transition from the primary to secondary schools.
6. Governors and leaders have made the decision to teach male and female pupils of secondary age in single-sex groups. They monitor the equality of provision with care and ensure that both groups make good progress. Leaders also provide a range of opportunities for all pupils to socialise together and engage in joint extra-curricular activities.
7. Leaders have put in place personal, social and health education (PSHE), relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes to support pupils' personal development. However, the teaching of RSE to older pupils is less effective as they do not understand why some of the content is repeated and do not engage with the topics.
8. There is an extensive extra-curricular programme to support pupils' learning and help support the leaders' focus on inclusion. Leaders' focus on equality, diversity and inclusion means that pupils are aware of current issues in society and the importance of respect for others. Pupils feel safe in school, and there is appropriate staff supervision. Pupils grow in confidence from an early age.
9. There are some instances of inappropriate and disrespectful language between a small proportion of pupils outside of lessons. Governors and leaders are aware of this and have recently introduced strategies to address it, but the introduction of these strategies is too recent to evaluate their success.
10. Pupils are well-informed about cyberbullying and know how to keep safe online. Health and safety are a high priority and the welfare needs of pupils are met. This includes the use of professional

help, if required.

11. The curricular and extra-curricular programmes provide effective social and economic education. Major events such as Black History Month are regularly celebrated to heighten awareness and promote debate. Multi-faith assemblies promote pupils' understanding of the beliefs and cultural traditions within the community.
12. Pupils contribute to wider society by taking part in charity fundraising and community work. Through a variety of activities such as the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), pupils take responsibility and learn the value of teamwork to achieve common goals. Carefully planned careers provision ensures pupils are supported and well-informed when making choices for future pathways.
13. Both governors and leaders ensure safeguarding has a high priority in the school. An experienced safeguarding leadership team and appropriately trained staff devise and follow procedures to play their part in keeping pupils safe.

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 effective transition arrangements to track pupils' achievements are in place so that pupils make the consistently good progress as they move from the primary to the senior school
- strengthen pupils' progress in relationships and sex education by ensuring the curriculum is effectively planned and taught in such a way as to engage pupils
- ensure there are effective strategies to address issues of pupil behaviour outside of lessons, in particular, instances of the use of inappropriate language between pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

14. Leaders throughout the school fulfil their responsibilities successfully and ensure the school meets its aims. The wellbeing of pupils underpins their planning and decision making. Both leaders and governors place a strong emphasis on safeguarding. Pupils feel safe in school. Policies are implemented effectively to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
15. Governors know the school well. They visit the school regularly, attending lessons and meeting pupils and staff. Governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise to their role, such as in the areas of mental health and wellbeing. They challenge leaders and recognise the importance of pupils' wellbeing as central to pupils' success, both academically and in their personal development. In conjunction with leaders, they use the information from pupil wellbeing surveys and meetings with both pupils and staff to identify needs and plan developments, such as the launch of an equity, diversity and inclusion strategy to raise awareness in these areas and to promote inclusion.
16. Governors analyse pupils' attainment with care and set leaders improvement targets for pupil outcomes. Governors have recently focused on careers provision, which has resulted in stronger links with alumni to inform pupils about a range of possible career choices. Vocational routes have been a focus, extending pupils' field of vision about the different choices available to them.
17. Governors and leaders carefully monitor the equality of curriculum provision for the single-sex groups who are taught separately to ensure that neither sex is discriminated against. Leaders are alert to any unintended consequences of their actions and provide a range of opportunities for all pupils to engage in joint activities such as when pupils train together for sports such as athletics, cricket, rounders and hockey. Pupils also have daily opportunities to spend time together in form groups, assemblies and socialising.
18. Leaders work as a cohesive team to plan and deliver the strategy that is focused on inclusivity and the active promotion of pupils' wellbeing. Through this strategy, leaders and governors are able to use surveys to gain knowledge of trends in pupil year groups and identify pupils' needs to further promote positive attitudes to diversity and inclusion. There is regular staff training on diversity and inclusion, which is linked to the leaders' development priorities. Governors often attend this training keeping them well informed.
19. Leaders provide an age appropriate and extensive curriculum. When new initiatives are planned to improve teaching and learning, leaders evaluate the impact of these carefully to measure the impact on the quality of pupils' progress. For example, an independent problem-solving programme put in place to support gifted mathematicians, allowing flexibility and choice to follow classwork or work independently, has resulted in high achievement. Leaders ensure that teaching is supported by appropriate plans, schemes of work and programmes of activities.
20. Throughout the school, including in the early years, leaders promote the values of fairness, respect, equity, diversity, inclusion and engagement. However, this work has not been wholly successful in improving the way that a small proportion of pupils treat each other. There remain some instances of inappropriate and disrespectful language between pupils outside of lessons.

21. Leaders engage and work with other leaders in the wider community to host events and undertake partnership projects with local schools and to support local organisations, including those for the homeless. Pupils benefit not only from direct involvement in such activities, but they learn the importance of supporting their local community.
22. In the early years, leaders' effective planning and their knowledge of the children's needs promote children's development. Children make good progress in the early years. Leaders work closely as a team and self-evaluate to constantly improve their practice, whilst maintaining ongoing communication with parents. The safeguarding procedures are rigorous and children are well cared for within a supportive environment.
23. The management of risk is a high priority for leaders. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place and regular staff training takes place to enhance their knowledge and practice. Leaders are aware of potential contextual risks. For example, staff support pupils to manage any academic pressure they may feel, in order to promote the wellbeing of pupils.
24. Leaders provide the required information to parents using the school's website. This includes details of the safeguarding and behaviour policies. Parents receive regular reports that detail information about their child's achievements. Complaints are taken seriously, addressed promptly and managed in accordance with the school's appropriate policy. Regular reviews of complaints are undertaken and discussed at board level, showing reflective practice to support pupils' wellbeing. Leaders fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act to improve access to the school and its curriculum for groups of pupils.

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

25. The curriculum provides pupils with a broad range of subjects, including the opportunity to extend their learning in the sixth form through the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). In addition, there is a wide-ranging programme of activities appropriate to pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs, including sports, music and drama.
26. Leaders monitor schemes of work to ensure key areas of learning are well developed across the curriculum. An increased focus on academic extension, led by a team of staff, is beginning to impact schemes of work and extension opportunities in lessons and beyond. Links to RSE and PSHE topics such as addiction and the highlighting of British values complement academic content, enabling pupils to broaden their perspective and understanding.
27. Pupils make good progress from their starting points, demonstrating consistent improvement over time, enabling them to achieve highly at GCSE and A level. Similarly, children in the early years and pupils in the primary school make good progress. Leaders use assessment results effectively to monitor pupils' progress. These are carefully reviewed and any trends analysed and acted upon to ensure that teaching meets pupils' needs, as exemplified in the primary school where a dip in reading levels was identified through testing and learning walks. As a result, new testing was introduced and reading levels have improved through a creative, theme-based curriculum which encourages 'a joy for learning'.
28. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support and appropriate resources to support their learning, so they also make good progress. There is comprehensive provision and staff meet regularly to discuss individual needs with bespoke support programmes arranged to meet the needs of learners. Leaders set challenging targets, which pupils aspire to meet. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) receive support from trained staff to improve their use of English. Key information is shared with staff to promote a cohesive approach to supporting these pupils.
29. Leaders focus on developing pupils' secure literacy and numeracy skills from an early age. Pupils display effective communication skills and are keen to articulate their ideas. For example, in primary mathematics pupils use advanced terminology confidently to express their understanding. Senior pupils in lessons such as English display clarity and confidence when expressing their ideas to their peers, enhanced by careful teacher questioning. Similarly in the early years, careful planning and implementation by teachers enables children to develop their speaking skills through structured activities and the support of adults, including to enhance children's vocabulary.
30. Pupils are generally enthusiastic and well behaved in lessons. The positive relationships between pupils and teachers are based upon high expectations of behaviour and effort. For example, in a science lesson, pupils in the senior school demonstrated a determination independently to catch up on work missed due to a residential trip.
31. In the early years, teachers' careful planning supports children's learning well including to develop children's reading skills. This planning reflects a detailed knowledge of children and their individual needs. Phonics, mathematics and literacy are discrete but carefully linked to other areas, such as

practical play. Children's skills are developed through topics, with well-planned schemes, structure and assessment in place. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support children's learning and children respond well to their help and support.

32. The warm relationships between staff and pupils in the early years enable children to develop trust in adults from a young age. Children are inquisitive and learn through their activities. Staff ensure that children engage with growing confidence in a range of activities, building their communication, language and physical skills. For example, when children work co-operatively together constructing a tall house with wooden blocks.
33. Children develop their physical skills through play and discovery, for example using scissors safely to make love hearts in contrasting colours and through activities where music provision is carefully woven to engage children in movement.
34. Leaders have established tracking systems to measure pupils' progress within the individual sections of the school to help leaders identify pupils whose progress is slowing. However, the primary and senior schools use different systems. This can affect the pace of pupils' progress at the point of transition from the primary to secondary schools.
35. The school's activity programme enables pupils to develop their confidence and skills through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. These include sport, music, drama, yoga, enterprise and intellectual societies. Leaders check these carefully to ensure high participation rates are maintained amongst pupils of different ages. Leaders also look to provide opportunities for pupils of all ages to explore their aptitudes and interests.

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

36. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing by ensuring there is a carefully developed programme of physical, personal and health education appropriate to the needs of pupils. The school has undertaken a 'big listen' to ascertain levels of anxiety and resilience amongst pupils. This has led to enhancement of the curriculum focused on wellbeing and helping pupils manage their emotions, for instance when taking part in sport. Pupils feel safe in school and are supported well through an effective pastoral system which is responsive to pupils' feedback, as demonstrated in the changes to supervision, PSHE content, anti-bullying events and the use of peer mentoring.
37. The wide range of physical activities and sports enables pupils to be active, develop a healthy lifestyle and broaden their interests. The programme for PSHE effectively supports pupils' personal development, including their understanding of world faiths, the importance of sharing values and awareness of extremism. Surveys indicate that pupils' knowledge has increased. These programmes are enhanced through visiting speakers and themed weeks on issues such as bullying.
38. Some senior pupils do not progress as consistently in RSE as some of the topics covered are repetitive, such as consent and building positive relationships. Pupils do not understand the reasoning behind the curriculum, which impacts on their engagement with the lessons.
39. Leaders ensure pupils are aware of the need to be respectful and understand differences between people. Pupils' work on equity, diversity and inclusion improves their understanding of the importance of these themes. Pupils often lead debates and assemblies on relevant areas, such as world faiths to increase understanding of, and respect for, the faith traditions represented in the school and beyond.
40. While pupils' behaviour is generally positive, a small proportion of pupils use discriminatory or inappropriate language to their peers outside of lessons. Leaders are aware of this and have taken steps to improve matters. Recent initiatives include a revised behaviour policy and clear sanctions. However, it is too early to evaluate the outcome of the revised policy. Pupils are aware of the importance of building positive relationships but some do not always apply this knowledge in their interactions with peers. Pupils are knowledgeable about bullying and cyberbullying and know how to keep themselves safe online. Any cases of bullying are dealt with effectively by the school.
41. Pupils' spiritual, moral and emotional understanding is developed through ethos statements and mutual understanding of key world festivals which include music. In a drama lesson looking at silent movies, pupils displayed skill and sensitivity expressing their emotions to the audience solely through facial and body movements. In societies such as Model United Nations (MUN) pupils listen respectfully to each other's views. Pupils demonstrate respect for the opinions of others. For example, when discussing ethical issues which scientists encounter when undertaking research.
42. Leaders enable pupils of different ages and genders to mix and socialise in a friendly, supportive manner. Pupils in the sixth form take part in a peer mentoring system where younger pupils in the senior school receive guidance and support. This promotes the leadership skills of the older pupils

and is a helpful source of support for the younger pupils. Pupils in the sixth form also serve as role models to children in the early years, patiently listening and guiding them in their learning activities.

43. Staff in the early years help children to feel at ease and enjoy their activities. Children respond well to the caring relationships and positive attitudes modelled by staff, enabling them to feel secure in their environment.
44. The school site is maintained to a high standard, with robust health and safety procedures in place. There are regular fire evacuation drills. Training for staff, including in fire safety and first aid, is thorough, up to date and recorded. Leaders ensure the continuous application of safe practices through monitoring and regular reviews overseen by governors.
45. There are suitable arrangements and accommodation to care for pupils who are injured or become unwell. There is a large, skilled network of professional help for pupils through student services in the school, including nurses and counsellors, to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders also provide safe spaces such as *The Den* where pupils can talk to staff and sixth formers trained in mental health first aid.
46. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Staff are vigilant to any pupil absences. They follow up promptly if pupils are absent for an unknown reason.

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

47. The curriculum enables pupils of different ages to learn about how to take their place in modern society and the wider world. Pupils show respect for other cultures and are interested in learning about the world around them. Leaders enable both pupils and staff to work co-operatively to achieve their goals, as demonstrated by the work of the Eco committee. This has spearheaded a range of initiatives across the school, including recycling, changing menus and the removal of single use of plastic and aluminium. Leaders engage with the wider community to bring in expertise to broaden pupils' perspectives.
48. Issues affecting the global community are explored in lessons. Topics such as equality, discrimination and the environment are debated amongst pupils. For example, pupils in the primary school learn about Malawi and explain how it is similar and different to the United Kingdom, reflecting more widely on what they can contribute to the lives of others. This enables pupils to gain a deep insight into current issues and how they might be able to make a difference in the future. Pupils' understanding of people's cultures, values and traditions is further enhanced through the celebration of events such as Black History Month, which focuses on the success of particular groups, such as scientists from a range of ethnicities.
49. Leaders of different faiths are invited to the school to promote the school's aim of inclusivity. Regular assemblies focus on the major world faiths. Pupils gain understanding of others' beliefs and cultural traditions. Pupils understand how perseverance and moral integrity can lead to change which positively impacts on society. For example, a recent visiting speaker spoke of hope among young people and the power of an individual to change the world. Pupils learned how the speaker's endeavours have resulted in changes to government legislation and a profound shift in attitudes towards discrimination.
50. Leaders consider that involvement in the local and wider community is an important part of pupils' personal development. Pupils play a central role in the co-ordination of charity fundraising, such as when taking part in the recent Three Peaks Challenge to raise money for muscular dystrophy. Pupils in the sixth form learn about the value of service by undertaking projects, ranging from working in a charity shop to organising a reading club in a local school. Pupils also strengthen their leadership and teamwork through their involvement in activities such as the Scouts, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. In the early years, children display growing social skills in effective teamwork including when working together to construct a castle.
51. The effective and well-planned careers provision helps pupils to prepare for life after school. Pupils are able to make informed choices about future careers and are encouraged to explore a wide range of options, including university, apprenticeships and vocational routes. A new programme called 'Futures', has been introduced for senior school pupils below the sixth form. Pupils are supported in individual guidance sessions, aptitude tests, mock interviews and work experience. In addition to an annual careers conference, leaders have introduced fortnightly bulletins and a programme of topic-

specific talks covering a range of options. Leaders track former pupils through a dedicated careers hub, which helps pupils understand and engage with the range of future career pathways.

52. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of finance. Younger pupils learn how money is used. Pupils in the senior school are prepared for the financial aspects of life after school through talks, workshops and in their learning through the curriculum, including PSHE.

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

53. Governors and leaders ensure there is an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. Through the safeguarding committee, governors provide consistent support and appropriate challenge to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. Governors have a comprehensive overview of safeguarding and identify any required areas for action, such as heightening awareness of the dangers presented by right wing extremism.
54. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest requirements. Leaders have created a well-trained safeguarding team. The team readily engages with local agencies for guidance and support, including to provide training for governors. Referrals to children's services, the police or other agencies are made in a timely manner.
55. Leaders recognise and regularly review contextual risks related to radicalisation, extremism, violence and child-on-child abuse.
56. Staff are knowledgeable and receive regular training to ensure they are aware of the most recent safeguarding guidance. They know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Induction for new staff is comprehensive and carefully planned, covering key areas of safeguarding. This enables new staff to have a thorough understanding of the expectations of the school and their responsibilities in keeping children safe.
57. Pupils learn about aspects of safeguarding through the curriculum. Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
58. Governors and leaders ensure there are robust recruitment procedures in place that reflect the latest requirements. These are regularly reviewed and checked. This includes scrutiny of the record of appointments that records the pre-employment checks on adults to ensure correct practices are implemented consistently.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	The Grammar School at Leeds
Department for Education number	383/6112
Registered charity number	1048304
Address	Alwoodley Gates Harrogate Road Leeds LS17 8GS
Email address	enquiries@gsal.org.uk
Website	gsal.org.uk
Proprietor	The Governors of The Grammar School at Leeds
Chair	Mr Angus Martin
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Woodroofe
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	2061
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 November 2019

Information about the school

59. The Grammar School at Leeds is an independent co-educational day school. The school is a registered charity which is overseen by a governing body whose members are the charity’s trustees. The school teaches pupils predominately in single-sex classes between the ages of 11 and 16 years. There is an early years setting comprising Nursery and Reception classes located on the same site as the primary school.
60. Since the previous inspection, the pre-prep has moved to the main school site, creating a new primary school for pupils aged three to eleven. The leadership team has been restructured, and sports facilities and libraries have been developed.
61. The school has identified 270 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language for 11 pupils.
63. The school states that it aims to be a place of learning and success in all areas which inspires young minds academically, in wider co-curricular life and in personal relationships. It seeks to create a positive, caring and inclusive environment where every child is valued and supported to become confident, resilient and capable. The school inspires pupils to grow, reflect, be kind and have respect for themselves and others, aware of the impact they can have, both locally and nationally.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 10 to 12 October 2023

64. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.
65. The inspectors:
- observed lessons, including joint lesson walks with school leaders
 - held discussions with pupils
 - examined samples of pupils’ work, including talking with pupils about their work
 - held discussions with senior leaders and a range of staff
 - held a discussion with a group of governors, including the chair and safeguarding governor
 - observed a sample of extra-curricular activities
 - attended assemblies and pupil registration sessions
 - visited the early years setting
 - examined curriculum and other documentation.

66. 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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