

School inspection report

23 to 25 September 2025

Ludgrove School

Ludgrove

Wokingham

RG40 3AB

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. Governors at the school make sure that leaders at all levels have the necessary skills and experience to carry out their roles effectively and with clarity and purpose so that the wellbeing of pupils is promoted and the Standards are consistently met. Leaders are ambitious for pupils' academic and personal development and the school's vision is consistently promoted by leaders and staff.
2. The broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum integrates academic, creative and technological subjects effectively. It is delivered through engaging, well-planned lessons by specialist teachers with secure subject knowledge so that pupils build on prior learning and make good progress.
3. Teaching is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. Staff quickly identify if pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) need additional support to ensure that they make good progress with their English. Rigorous assessment informs teachers' planning. Pupils receive frequent feedback about their attainment and collaborative dialogue between pupils, teachers and parents supports pupils' ongoing improvement and progress. Extensive extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' experiences, build their confidence and add to their enjoyment of school and being a boarder.
4. Lessons in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) are carefully planned and supported by assemblies, form time and a programme of external speakers. The school promotes pupils' self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence and equips them with knowledge and skills to help them navigate life beyond the school. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme fulfils current statutory requirements and contains appropriate content. It develops pupils' understanding of key issues such as the effects of puberty and the dangers of sexual harassment.
5. Leaders actively encourage pupils' understanding of British values such as democracy, fairness and respect through careful curriculum planning and opportunities available across school life. The school develops pupils' sense of social responsibility through engaging pupils in leadership roles, charitable fundraising and initiatives which support the local community. A diverse programme of visiting speakers gives pupils an awareness of different careers and possibilities for contributing positively to society in the future. Some provision is made for pupils' economic education. However, the development of pupils' understanding of how to manage money is currently limited.
6. Leaders ensure that the physical education (PE) curriculum is inclusive and supports the development of pupils' physical skills and awareness of how to support their own health and wellbeing. All pupils have opportunities to represent the school in fixtures and benefit from the camaraderie and teamwork this instils.
7. Leaders foster a respectful and inclusive community in which pupils are valued. Leaders have high expectations for behaviour, which are consistently applied by staff. Pupils understand the school rules and behaviour and conduct are of a high standard across all areas of school life, including in boarding. Positive, respectful relationships between staff and pupils inform the effectiveness of pastoral care.
8. The boarding environment is welcoming, and the boarding accommodation is suitable and comfortable. Boarding staff care for and support pupils well, including through the wide range of activities available to boarders during the evenings and at weekends. Boarders are encouraged to share their views and provide feedback on the boarding experience.

9. The school buildings and site are well maintained. Staff implement comprehensive and suitable health and safety procedures Pupils are appropriately supervised, and medical care arrangements are robust.
10. Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and thoroughly overseen by governors, who check that safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Leaders respond to any safeguarding concerns that arise swiftly and appropriately.

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:

- strengthen pupils' understanding of how to manage money.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders have the necessary skills to execute their roles and responsibilities effectively so that pupils' wellbeing is consistently promoted and all of the Standards are met. Leaders have a clear vision for the school and communicate the school's aims and aspirations for pupils effectively.
12. Governors monitor all aspects of the school's work effectively. Their strategic oversight and development planning is underpinned by a well-established cycle of regular visits to the school to observe all aspects of provision. This provides governors with clear understanding of the effectiveness of the school. The different governor committees meet regularly to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions in areas including health and safety, pupil welfare, safeguarding and the curriculum.
13. Leaders carry out thorough self-evaluation that is informed by advice from external experts, audits and parents' and pupils' perspectives about different areas of the school's work. The school's strategic plan identifies areas for improvement and leaders act swiftly to address these.
14. Leaders ensure the suitability of boarding provision. Clear policies, procedures, induction and training are in place to support boarding staff in carrying out their duties and responsibilities effectively. Staff provide pupils with a boarding experience designed to nurture them and meet their pastoral needs.
15. All required information about the school is provided on the school's website. Along with face-to-face meetings, parents receive frequent written snapshots of their child's academic effort, attainment and general wellbeing, in addition to more detailed reports at key points in the academic year. Regular newsletters and bulletins keep parents abreast of key events and activities which take place across each term.
16. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils. Clear communication between leaders and external agencies helps obtain external specialist support for pupils when appropriate.
17. Leaders have a clear understanding of potential contextual risks presented to the school, including by the nature of the school's site. Risk assessments identify potential risks carefully and include control measures to mitigate these. Regular review of risk assessments by leaders ensures their continued effectiveness.
18. The suitable complaints policy sets out clearly the mechanism and time scales by which complaints are handled. Leaders respond swiftly and sensitively whenever complaints are submitted and reflect on what can be learnt from any issues raised.
19. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders and staff promote the principles of equality, respect and fair treatment. They implement an accessibility plan which is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that the site, facilities and curriculum are adapted as required to be accessible to all pupils.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The well-structured and broad curriculum is designed to enable pupils to develop a broad range of knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects. Leaders frequently review the curriculum to ensure that it is relevant and prepares pupils sufficiently for the next stage of their education, for example in relation to the computing curriculum and pupils' use of digital devices in the classroom.
22. In English, pupils become confident and able readers through the provision of timetabled daily reading sessions, exposure to a wide range of literature and opportunities to draft their own writing and read this out aloud to others, such as when delivering a speech. Teachers use questioning and discussion effectively to support pupils' learning, such as the development of pupils' knowledge of techniques writers use to convey meaning and to create specific effects. Links made with the history curriculum deepen pupils' comprehension and interpretation of texts being studied.
23. In mathematics, teachers plan lessons which include topics that draw on the interests of pupils and ignite their enthusiasm. Collaborative planning of the maths and science schemes of work mean that pupils can apply their mathematical and scientific skills to a variety of contexts. Lessons include activities matched to the pupils' needs and prior attainment which enable them to pursue their learning to an advanced level for their age.
24. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and use a range of carefully selected teaching methods to engage and challenge pupils and develop their learning. Lessons across the curriculum are well planned, with consideration of pupils' aptitudes and prior learning. Specialist teaching in all areas of the curriculum, including Latin, Greek, French, computing and the creative subjects enables pupils to explore the subject matter at hand with precision. Teachers provide clear explanations and help pupils overcome any misconceptions. As a result, pupils make good progress, acquire new skills and knowledge effectively and produce work of a high standard. This prepares pupils well for their next schools.
25. A suitable assessment framework is in place. Teachers evaluate each pupil's attainment through a cycle of regular testing. In lessons, pupils receive frequent oral feedback from their teachers about their work, how to improve and next steps in their learning. Pupils and their parents each receive regular, formal written feedback regarding their effort and attainment levels, accompanied by pupil's own self-assessment, known as 'orders'. This ensures productive dialogue between pupils and their teachers about individual academic performance, meaning pupils can reflect on what and how they are learning. This dialogue and feedback contribute to the good progress that pupils make.
26. Teachers adapt their teaching to support pupils who have SEND effectively. When required, pupils also receive targeted support and guidance from a small specialist team. The needs and individual targets of pupils who have SEND and the effectiveness of the support they receive is monitored closely through weekly meetings between subject leaders and the leader of provision for pupils who have SEND, along with a termly review of pupils' academic attainment data. Pupils who have SEND make good progress from their different starting points.
27. Leaders maintain a register of pupils who speak EAL and assess whether they need any additional support, such as word banks and additional tuition, which are provided when required. Leaders monitor the progress of pupils who speak EAL to ensure that any extra support provided is effective and enables these pupils to develop their English skills and comprehension well.

28. Boarders are well supported in their academic work. Teaching staff supervise homework each afternoon, which is undertaken in pupils' form rooms away from the boarding accommodation. This enables pupils to manage their time effectively and learn to be more independent as they set about their studies.
29. The school provides a large and suitable range of age-appropriate extra-curricular and recreational activities. Staff encourage pupils to explore their interests and develop their skills in areas such as ceramics, singing, gardening and looking after chickens and pigs.

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

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

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

31. Leaders and staff acknowledge and celebrate pupils' achievements through a well-established system of awarding merits and 'work-shows'. These motivate pupils and help develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. As a result, pupils become keen to share their successes. They take pride in their achievements and those of others.
32. The school provides effective pastoral care. Leaders encourage pupils to share any worries or needs that they might have. Leaders and staff meet regularly to discuss pupils' wellbeing and respond promptly to any such concerns expressed. Ready access to emotional literacy support assistants is available for pupils who need it.
33. In theology, philosophy and religion (TPR) lessons, pupils learn about a range of different religions, such as Christianity and Hinduism, and how these relate to each other. Teachers encourage pupils to respect the views and spiritual perspectives of others. They provide pupils with opportunities to discuss and debate a range of spiritual and philosophical ideas such as forgiveness, punishment, suffering for one's beliefs and pacifism.
34. The school has in place a suitable programme of PSHE, which is taught in dedicated weekly lessons, as well as through the assembly programme, daily form time and in the boarding house. Younger pupils learn about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including the benefits of exercise and a balanced diet, positive mental health and how to make healthy choices. They explore how their actions can affect others as well as themselves and how to recognise, respond and seek help if they encounter racism, aggressive behaviour, teasing or bullying. Older pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 explore their emotions and how to manage and express them, as well as strategies to cope with peer pressure. They are taught skills in managing personal risk and develop an awareness of the potential danger posed by individuals and groups outside of school. The PSHE curriculum is integrated into other academic subjects wherever possible. For example, pupils in Year 5 learn about the importance of empathy and understanding the views of others, through writing diary entries related to their class set text in English. In science, pupils in Year 8 consider the effects of air pollution on lung function and breathing.
35. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is taught as part of the PSHE curriculum and in an age-appropriate manner. Pupils gain knowledge and understanding of some of the emotional and physical aspects of growing up, and develop skills to help prepare them for the next stages of their lives. For example, pupils in Year 6 learn about puberty and the changes that adolescence brings, and older pupils explore issues such as sexual harassment, gambling, extremism and addiction.
36. Pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing is enhanced by the school's broad and well-designed PE curriculum and programme, with the physical skills and developing abilities of each pupil tracked carefully, meaning all pupils make progress. The physical education (PE) programme, informed by teachers' expert subject knowledge, develops pupils' physical skills and understanding of how their bodies work. For example, pupils learn about aerobic and anaerobic respiration and how this relates to performance. All pupils have opportunities to represent their school in weekly sports fixtures across each term. Extra practice and training sessions help further develop specific sports-related skills, such as in swimming, for pupils who need further challenge or support.

37. Pupils respond positively to the high and consistent expectations teachers have regarding their behaviour and conduct. They are polite, respectful and move about the school calmly, politely and confidently. Leaders promote positive behaviour in the boarding house through the continual reinforcement of the school's ethos of kindness, trust and respect.
38. The anti-bullying strategy is effective. Leaders and staff make it clear that bullying is harmful and not to be tolerated. As a result, incidents of bullying are rare. When these do occur, leaders and staff responded to them swiftly, offering appropriate support to all parties. Careful record keeping and regular pastoral meetings enable leaders to identify any patterns or trends early and put in place measures to mitigate the risk of any bullying incidents reoccurring.
39. Health and safety arrangements across the school are robust and ensure that the site is well maintained. All required health and safety and fire safety checks and maintenance are implemented appropriately. Staff receive suitable training in fire safety. Pupils learn what to do in case of emergency through regular fire drills, including in boarding hours. Leaders commission audits from external specialists, where necessary, and act on their advice.
40. The boarding house provides boarders with suitable facilities, including comfortable and well-maintained sleeping accommodation. Boarders complete a thorough induction process and are well supported as they settle in. Boarding staff treat boarders in a kind and supportive manner to enable them to feel secure. Pupils are informed how to access help should they need it, including at night. Meals provided to boarders are nutritious and meet their dietary needs.
41. Pupils are well supervised in all areas of the site. Pupils have a clear understanding of the areas they are permitted to access during breaks and in their free time. Supervision of boarders, including overnight, is well organised, with many staff involved in activities each evening. Staff monitor the whereabouts of boarders across the school day.
42. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with current statutory requirements. The school notifies the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.
43. Suitably trained staff care for and support pupils who are sick or injured. The medical room contains appropriate facilities and is available to pupils throughout the day and evening. Staff implement appropriate procedures for the storage and any administration of medication.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

45. Pupils learn to value and contribute to life in British society through assemblies, the curriculum, and through listening to visiting speakers and engaging in charity work such as delivering boxes of vegetables to local food banks and fundraising for the British Legion. Pupils learn about global challenges such as the impact of intensive farming practices on food production. Staff promote understanding of and respect for British society and democratic institutions through engaging pupils in debates and discussion of themes such as the role of the House of Lords and issues raised by current affairs. Staff ensure that any discussions that include potentially political content are conducted fairly and without any bias.
46. Across the school, leaders and staff promote an inclusive community, effectively communicating the importance of respect for others through assemblies, form time, PSHE and TPR lessons. Pupils explore issues relating to diversity and equality, such as current debate around gender identity and different groups' rights and the harmful impact of prejudice and radicalisation. Discussions about such themes promote pupils' sense of right, wrong and fair treatment.
47. The school develops pupils' sense of responsibility towards others. Older pupils fill positions of responsibility such as dorm monitors, acting as positive role models and helping younger pupils settle into boarding life. Opportunities for pupils to act as representatives on the school council and the school's food committee mean that pupils gain a greater sense of their community responsibilities and how they can act on behalf of others.
48. Through the PSHE curriculum, pupils learn about the consequences of aggressive and anti-social behaviour, covering topics as bullying, racism and extremism and the effect these have on individuals and groups. Younger pupils explore how the media presents and sometimes manipulates information. Older pupils consider the influence that historical figures such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and Oscar Romero have had on society.
49. The school provides pupils with some economic education, such as understanding financial risk and how information about economic matters may be inaccurate or biased. However, pupils do not have opportunities to handle money or learn about basic budgeting. As a result, the school does not develop pupils' understanding of how to manage money as substantially as possible.
50. Leaders support pupils to consider their future education with discussions that start in Year 6 and provide them with guidance about entry procedures for senior schools. Pupils develop their interview skills and techniques through practice combined with clear individual feedback which highlights where they are most successful and identifies areas for improvement. The school provides pupils with tailored support for academic tests and scholarship preparation in music, art, drama and sport. Most pupils gain entry to their first-choice institutions. Pupils are given time in PSHE lessons to consider the impact of change and strategies to navigate this as they anticipate the transition to their next school.
51. A range of visiting speakers come into school and talk to pupils about possible future careers such as football manager, adventurer, astrophysicist, journalist, film producer, brigadier general, member of parliament and entrepreneur. A dedicated careers morning for Year 8 provides pupils with the opportunity to consider their future options beyond school.

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

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

53. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders promote a school culture where the importance of safeguarding is clearly understood by staff. Safeguarding policies and procedures reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance.
54. Governors monitor safeguarding effectively, including through the designated safeguarding governor, who scrutinises the work of those with designated safeguarding responsibilities to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed and supports leaders in their decision-making.
55. The safeguarding team responds effectively to safeguarding concerns that arise. They maintain productive links with external safeguarding agencies and refer concerns onto them when required. Suitable procedures to manage any concerns about adults working with children are in place. Leaders inform the local authority of such concerns when appropriate and as required by current statutory guidance. The safeguarding team maintains comprehensive records of any safeguarding concerns and the school's responses to these.
56. Well-developed systems in the boarding house ensure pupils feel secure. Boarders have an independent person they can contact should they have a concern. Boarders are given appropriate access to phones at agreed times. Rigorous mechanisms are in place to monitor the wellbeing of boarding pupils staying with guardians. Any concerns raised are acted upon swiftly and appropriately.
57. All staff receive timely and comprehensive safeguarding training. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities receive additional training to ensure they have the necessary knowledge to undertake their roles effectively.
58. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when online, through targeted teaching and regular updates. Pupils learn about the potential dangers of using the internet, such as avoiding sharing personal information and data when online, as well as checking age restrictions on games.
59. An appropriate internet filtering and monitoring system is in place to prevent pupils and adults accessing inappropriate content when using the internet. Pupils do not have any access to the internet in the boarding house. Leaders act swiftly if any issues are identified either during the school day or out of school hours.
60. Leaders are trained in safer recruitment. They ensure that all required pre-employment checks are completed before adults start work at the school. Staff personnel files are detailed, and the single central record of appointments is accurate and scrupulously maintained.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 61. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Ludgrove School
Department for Education number	872/6002
Registered charity number	309100
Address	Ludgrove School Ludgrove Wokingham Berkshire RG40 3AB
Phone number	0118 978 9881
Email address	office@ludgroveschool.co.uk
Website	www.ludgrove.net
Proprietor	Ludgrove School Trust Limited
Chair	Mr Charles Butterworth
Headteacher	Mr Simon Barber
Age range	8 to 13
Number of pupils	187
Number of boarding pupils	187
Date of previous inspection	17 to 20 October 2022

Information about the school

62. Ludgrove School is an independent single-sex boarding school for male pupils, located near Wokingham, Berkshire. All pupils are boarders. The school was founded in 1892 and became a charitable trust in 1972. It is overseen by a board of governors.
63. The school's boarding facilities are situated within the main school building.
64. The school has identified 27 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
65. The school has identified three pupils as speaking English as an additional language (EAL).
66. The school states its aims are for pupils to grow and develop in a happy caring environment, to explore and expand their potential and to learn to develop an awareness and concern for others around them. The school aims to enable pupils to meet future challenges and opportunities with confidence, good manners and humour.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 to 25 September 2025

67. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

69. 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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