ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

14 to 16 January 2025

Malvern College

College Road

Malvern

Worcestershire

WR14 3DF

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 and school leaders have a shared vision for a school that provides pupils with a wide variety of opportunities to achieve success. They maintain effective oversight through regular visits and an effective committee structure. In this way, governors promote the achievement of the school's aims and the wellbeing of pupils.

2. Leaders promote pupils' welfare through a comprehensive set of policies and handbooks which are implemented effectively. Leaders supplement these with robust risk assessments to support an ambitious programme of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are given a high degree of independence and develop leadership skills and resilience throughout their school life.

3. Leaders of boarding are aware of the specific needs of boarding pupils and use this knowledge to promote their wellbeing. The boarding houses provide a comfortable and welcoming environment. Boarders form positive relationships with the house staff and each other. All the boarders' material needs are taken care of through a wide range of support in the houses.

4. The curriculum meets the needs of a diverse group of pupils, providing a range of courses supplemented by an academic enrichment programme. Teachers know their pupils well and use appropriate resources to plan lessons that enable pupils to make good progress. While most lessons are taught effectively, in some lessons teachers do not adapt their teaching sufficiently to specific groups of pupils with different levels of prior attainment, and this results in some uneven progress.

5. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. A specialist learning enrichment department provides clear information for teachers, who use this to provide effective support. Where necessary, additional appropriate support is provided so that pupils make good progress.

6. Leaders monitor all aspects of school life carefully. Pupils' academic progress is regularly evaluated through scrutiny of achievement data and regular learning walks. Pupils' involvement in co-curricular activities is logged and the information is used to support pupils in accessing a wide range of activities. Pupils achieve well in public examinations, perform successfully in sports and gain self-confidence and social skills.

7. Leaders ensure that all aspects of health and safety are appropriately monitored. Fire precautions are appropriate, including for boarders. Leaders provide appropriate oversight of the school premises and its security.

8. Pupils celebrate their diverse school community and treat each other with understanding and mutual respect. Clear expectations around behaviour are consistently implemented so that pupils behave well towards one another. Rare instances of bullying are dealt with swiftly and pupils are confident in raising concerns with their teachers.

9. Pupils study life skills throughout the school, which includes personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and the required curriculum for relationships and sex education (RSE). This is delivered effectively by specialist teachers and external experts. Regular reviews, incorporating feedback from pupils, ensure that the programme is up to date and relevant to the pupils.

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10. Leaders have created a robust safeguarding culture within the school. Day and boarding pupils understand that they have a range of ways to seek help, including through support services that are external to the school. Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and report any concerns promptly. Leaders take effective action in response to any concerns, including liaising with external agencies where necessary. Leaders ensure the suitability of staff and other adults on the school site, including those resident in boarding accommodation.

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 the consistency with which teaching is adapted to meet the needs of different groups of pupils in lessons.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Governors and school leaders have created an ethos in the school that actively promotes pupils' wellbeing. Leaders aim for all pupils to find a path to success alongside developing the 'Malvern qualities' of kindness, resilience and curiosity, which are encouraged throughout the school. These clear expectations result in a positive environment in which pupils feel valued and part of the community.

12. Governors maintain close oversight of the school's activities and their impact on pupils' outcomes. They meet regularly with senior leaders and receive detailed reports on all aspects of the school's operations, including safeguarding. Leaders undertake regular, detailed analysis of specific issues to enable effective scrutiny and set the strategic direction of the school.

13. The core curriculum of academic subjects is supplemented by the super-curriculum of enrichment activities and a varied co-curricular programme. Within these areas there are multiple pathways which provide pupils with opportunities to excel in their own areas of interest. Leaders monitor pupils' involvement and achievement in these activities and pupils are supported in making the most of the opportunities available.

14. Leaders are committed to self-evaluation and continuous improvement. They undertake regular reviews of the effectiveness of their policies and provision. Feedback from pupils is integrated into these reviews and is embedded in decision-making, for example in planned changes to the timings of the school day.

15. Staff with responsibility for boarding have created a boarding environment focused on pupils' welfare. They have implemented a rolling renewal programme for the boarding houses which ensures the upkeep of facilities and furniture. By integrating boarders and day pupils into house communities, leaders have created an environment in which pupils can build strong relationships.

16. Leaders have an effective approach to the management of risk and ensure detailed risk assessments are in place for all aspects of the school's activities. These are regularly reviewed and updated in response to changing contexts and emerging risks. As well as promoting the safety of pupils on-site, this robust approach supports an ambitious programme of adventurous activities to develop pupils' resilience and independence.

17. The school is run according to a comprehensive and well-organised set of policies and handbooks. These are accessible to staff, pupils and parents and are implemented effectively to promote the wellbeing of pupils, including those who board. Parents are provided with detailed information on all aspects of school life, including regular updates on pupils' progress.

18. Leaders have established strong links with partners in the local area and use these to monitor and promote the safety of pupils. Where necessary they liaise effectively with local agencies, for example children's services, and take appropriate action to support the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information, including the use of funds, relating to any pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

19. A detailed accessibility plan ensures that adjustments are made to support pupils who have SEND or are suffering from short-term injuries. Staff receive regular training around supporting all pupils to

make the most of the activities on offer. As a result, pupils who have SEND are well integrated into the life of the school. The school meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

20. There is a clear policy in place for parents to make complaints. Where these do occur, the school responds rapidly to address any issues. There are mechanisms for boarders to raise any concerns and these are acted upon promptly. Governors review records regularly and ensure that any emerging patterns are acted upon.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders have implemented a flexible curriculum with a range of pathways through the school. Pupils in Year 9 study a curriculum that emphasises breadth of experience and helps develop the skills they will need for later study. Older pupils are given a variety of options, for instance combining fewer GCSEs with non-examined complementary studies or choosing between the International Baccalaureate (IB) and A Levels in the sixth form. This range of courses enables pupils to make subject choices that fit with their individual aptitudes and aspirations.

23. The core curriculum is supported by a 'super-curriculum' of academic enrichment activities which challenge pupils beyond their core studies. For instance, pupils in the Aston Society produce presentations on their personal interests which stimulate engaging discussions. This develops pupils' ability to link ideas across academic disciplines and explore ideas in depth.

24. Pupils develop speaking, listening and literacy skills across a wide range of subjects. Teachers use effective questioning to develop these skills and stimulate discussion, for example when exploring Martin Luther King's impact on society in a Year 10 religious studies lesson or summarising learning in Year 12 psychology. Teachers' secure subject knowledge and their careful use of technical language across the curriculum enables pupils to use subject-specific terminology accurately. For example, Year 12 pupils confidently use suitable terms when solving problems in further mathematics.

25. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are effectively supported both in class and with extra lessons, ensuring that they access the curriculum successfully and develop their confidence.

26. A dedicated 'pre-sixth' course enables some Year 11 pupils new to the school to study an accelerated one-year programme, culminating in a reduced number of GCSEs. These pupils are well prepared for study in sixth form and are fully integrated with the rest of their year group.

27. Pupils' mathematical skills are developed across the curriculum beyond mathematics lessons, for example in business and design and technology lessons. Pupils develop their strong creative and aesthetic understanding though the broad visual arts curriculum. Younger pupils take part in a carousel of activities which include art, photography, textiles and design technology. Pupils achieve highly in creative subjects and have had artwork exhibited in national competitions.

28. Teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge alongside records of pupils' prior attainment to plan lessons that enable them to make good progress. Teaching resources are stimulating and include opportunities for pupils to develop collaboration and practical skills, for instance by carrying out investigations in science. Teachers are adept at using online resources which support pupils' learning and build their confidence in using digital technology.

29. Leaders have a comprehensive system for tracking pupils' attainment throughout the school. Pupils' progress relative to their starting points is carefully monitored throughout the year. Where necessary, additional support is provided to pupils through subject clinics or support from their tutors. Pupils achieve well in public examinations and experience success in national competitions including Olympiads and engineering challenges. Subject leaders and teachers regularly take actions to raise the ambitions of pupils who may underestimate their potential.

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30. There is effective support for pupils who have SEND. Pupils are identified through a thorough screening process and careful monitoring by academic tutors. Clear information is given to teachers by the learning enrichment department, enabling teachers to plan their lessons to meet pupils' needs. Where necessary, individual support is provided to help pupils make good progress. Although pupils who have SEND are well supported, in some lessons teachers do not adapt their teaching to effectively meet the needs of pupils with different levels of prior attainment.

31. An extensive programme of recreational activities is available for day pupils and boarders, including at weekends. Pupils achieve high standards in music and drama, taking up the many opportunities to perform in a range of concerts and plays. Pupils' involvement in these activities is carefully monitored by tutors to ensure they develop social, creative and physical skills.

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

32. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

33. Leaders have created nurturing house communities in which pupils, including boarders, gain a sense of security and belonging. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and pupils benefit from consistent support and guidance. Teachers encourage pupils to form good relationships with each other, including across different year groups and between boarding and day pupils.

34. The high expectations set by teachers encourage pupils to live together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide variety of house activities, such as charity triathlons and other fundraising events, which help to strengthen and broaden pupils' friendships.

35. Leaders create school rules that are fair and transparent, and a culture of explanation rather than punishment prevails. Clear oversight ensures that these rules are applied consistently, and as a result pupils behave well. Any incidents in which standards fall short of expectations, such as the use of inappropriate language among pupils, are carefully recorded and leaders respond quickly to any emerging trends. Any rare incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively.

36. The school offers a wide range of sporting and physical education opportunities which develop pupils' physical and mental health. This provision is regularly reviewed and adapted in response to feedback from pupils, for instance by introducing new sports more familiar to pupils from overseas or increasing the number of competitive fixtures for girls. As a result, pupils embrace the sporting programme, learning new sports, competing at a high level and improving their physical fitness. Further opportunities to develop physical skills are embedded in the co-curricular programme, for example in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DoE) and Outdoor Pursuits, which also develop pupils' resilience and self-awareness.

37. Pupils throughout the school study an effective life skills programme of PSHE which includes the required provision for RSE. These sessions, which are taught by specialist teachers and external experts, give the pupils an understanding of how to develop healthy relationships both in person and online. Teachers expect the pupils to be honest and open-minded in discussions, which allows pupils to gain self-awareness and an understanding of others.

38. Pupils develop an appreciation of the spiritual aspects of life through regular assemblies and services in the school chapel, which are further developed in ethics and religious education lessons in Years 9 and 10. Pupils are interested in different approaches to spirituality and are supported in exploring their own spiritual sense.

39. There is effective supervision of pupils, including in evenings and weekends. Pupils' whereabouts are regularly checked and there are clear procedures in place should any pupil go missing. This high level of supervision, supported by detailed risk assessments, enables the school to grant pupils the freedom to develop independence, self-confidence and resilience around the school site and in visits to town. Boarding pupils are well cared for by diligent staff who understand the boarding standards and implement them effectively to promote the wellbeing of pupils, including those from overseas.

40. Leaders implement robust systems to ensure that the school premises, including boarding houses, are as safe and well maintained as possible. Regular checks are carried out across the school site

with clear schedules in place and systems for reporting any issues. Appropriate measures are in place to reduce the risk of fire, and evacuation drills are carried out regularly, including at night.

41. The well-resourced medical centre provides support for any ill or injured pupils, including boarders. Boarders' medical needs are carefully managed and access to external services is supported. A large number of staff have first aid training, and the medical centre is staffed at all times to provide additional support. Accidents are recorded systematically and any trends are identified and appropriate action is taken.

42. Leaders have put in place a well-structured process to monitor pupil attendance. Regular monitoring meetings provide an opportunity to identify any emerging patterns. This proactive approach allows for early intervention, with key pastoral staff promptly notified when necessary. All required information is recorded and the school notifies the local authority of any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

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

43. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

44. The school celebrates its diverse international community. Through the house system, pupils are encouraged to socialise together, for example by taking part in quizzes or cooking together at the weekend. Overseas pupils share their own culture through global awareness days and bilingual pupils support younger pupils in learning their language. As a result, pupils demonstrate informed and respectful attitudes towards each other.

45. Fundamental British values are promoted throughout school life and integrated into the curriculum. Pupils analyse the meaning of tolerance in life skills lessons and learn about democracy and freedom in religious studies lessons. Regular talks in chapel link British values to current events, giving pupils historical and contemporary perspectives on the country they live in.

46. The study of ethics and morality are integrated into the curriculum. Pupils study ethics as part of their life skills course, for example through studying the impact of discrimination and the aspects that make people different from one another. Pupils in Year 10 can opt for an in-house philosophy, politics and economics course as an alternative to an examined GCSE, enabling them to explore a range of approaches to fundamental questions about how to live our lives. Within the houses, staff build on these lessons through an emphasis on individual responsibility and moral action.

47. Across the school, pupils take on leadership roles as college prefects, house prefects and representatives on a wide range of school councils. The many pupil-led societies provide further leadership opportunities, alongside opportunities to develop collaboration and understanding between different groups. Pupils understand how to use their initiative and have a sense of personal and communal responsibility.

48. Pupils are prepared well for life beyond the school. Regular visiting speakers introduce pupils to the UK legal system, including relevant aspects of criminal law. A wide-ranging programme of economic education introduces pupils to financial ideas including budgeting, mortgages and taxation. This programme has recently been extended in response to pupils' feedback, for example by incorporating savings and investments into the programme.

49. Pupils have a strong sense of their responsibilities to wider society. Pupils organise and lead a range of fund-raising activities to support global and national charities. At a more local level, pupils are active in the community. Pupils work with local primary schools to develop and deliver science enrichment activities, support music lessons and share language skills through the Language Leader Award. These activities form a key part of the Malvern Award, which recognises and rewards pupils' contributions within the school and beyond.

50. The school's career framework offers structured guidance for all years. Pupils are introduced to a range of career pathways including universities, apprenticeships and alternative options such as the army or flight school. Pupils receive individual advice from staff who are trained to provide consistent, impartial support. The school emphasises equal access for all pupils and engages parents through career forums. By starting early, this programme ensures that pupils are well prepared to make decisions about their futures.

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

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

52. Leaders have embedded a robust safeguarding culture in the school. Pupils know who to contact if they have a concern and they do so. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and make active use of the procedures in place. Any safeguarding concerns raised by pupils are promptly reported and dealt with effectively.

53. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding have a thorough understanding of their role and a suitable knowledge of current local and national guidance. They are aware of the contextual risks that apply to their local area and cohort of pupils, including any risks to particular sub-groups such as boarders and pupils who have SEND. Where necessary, effective welfare plans are in place for vulnerable pupils.

54. The designated safeguarding governor meets regularly with safeguarding leaders. They carry out formal termly reviews of safeguarding processes and are kept up to date with any serious ongoing safeguarding concerns. Governors review safeguarding annually, including by scrutinising any trends and learning lessons from recent cases.

55. All staff and governors receive suitable training when they join the school, and this is refreshed regularly through updates delivered by safeguarding leaders and external specialists. This means that staff have the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately to any safeguarding concerns.

56. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. Older pupils all receive leadership training which includes safeguarding so that they can support younger pupils in the houses, creating a culture that is focused on promoting the welfare of pupils. There is a suitable system in place for filtering and monitoring access to the internet and this is reviewed and tested regularly.

57. Any safeguarding concerns are clearly recorded in detailed logs and these are monitored carefully. Where necessary, leaders with responsibility for safeguarding liaise effectively with local agencies, including the local authority and child and adolescent mental health services. Records are carefully analysed and where trends are identified, procedures are updated and relevant additional training is introduced.

58. Leaders have put in place clear expectations for staff conduct. Staff understand the importance of reporting any allegation or concern about other adults' behaviour. Where any reports of this nature are made, leaders respond promptly, keeping clear records and seeking advice from external agencies where necessary.

59. Appropriate arrangements are in place to check the suitability of all staff, contractors and resident adults. These checks are accurately recorded in a single central record (SCR) of appointments. Leaders and governors review these processes and records regularly to ensure their effectiveness.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

60. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Malvern College
Department for Education number	885/6011
Registered charity number	527578
Address	Malvern College College Road Malvern Worcestershire WR14 3DF
Phone number	01684 581500
Email address	headmaster@malverncollege.org.uk
Website	https://www.malverncollege.org.uk
Proprietor	Malvern College
Chair	Mr Robin Black
Headteacher	Mr Keith Metcalfe
Age range	13 to 18
Number of pupils	645
Number of boarding pupils	532
Date of previous inspection	7 to 8 October 2021

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Information about the school

61. Malvern College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 13 to 18 located in Malvern, Worcestershire. The school is divided into two sections, with pupils aged 13 to 16 in the lower school and older pupils in the sixth form. A small proportion of students complete a one-year pre-sixth form course. The school is part of a charitable company overseen by a board of trustees who are supported by a local governing board with delegated responsibilities.

62. Boarding accommodation is provided in 11 houses. A large majority of pupils are involved in boarding, either as full boarders or day boarders who spend up to three nights per week in school accommodation. Day pupils are integrated within the houses.

63. The school has identified 96 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

64. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 132 pupils.

65. The school states its aims are to develop outstanding young people with the skills, resilience and initiative to flourish and make a positive impact in a rapidly changing global marketplace.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	14 to 16 January 2025

66. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

67. 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 and other 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.

68. 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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