

School inspection report

14 to 16 January 2025

Malvern St James

15 Avenue Road

Great Malvern

Worcestershire

WR14 3BA

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
AREAS FOR ACTION.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHEDULE OF UNMET STANDARDS	14
<i>Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing</i>	<i>14</i>
SCHOOL DETAILS	16
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	17
INSPECTION DETAILS	18

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders are committed to upholding the school's aims and building a culture where pupils feel valued and supported to reach their full potential. However, leaders do not ensure that practice in relation to fire safety meets the Standards.
2. The Standards relating to fire safety are not met as the required external annual service checks are not undertaken in a timely manner.
3. Leaders provide a well-rounded curriculum and extensive co-curricular opportunities that foster academic progress, creativity and personal development. Teaching and assessment practices are effective. Pupils make good progress, and appropriate support is provided when needed. Leaders promote opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, oracy and critical thinking, helping to prepare them for higher education and future careers.
4. The early years provides a stimulating environment that meets children's physical, mental and emotional needs. Leaders plan age-appropriate activities that encourage resilience, confidence and social development. Staff provide learning experiences that help children to achieve their early-learning goals.
5. Boarding provision is well structured and prioritises pupils' wellbeing. Access to an independent person and tailored induction processes for different age groups ensure that boarders feel supported.
6. Leaders ensure that pupils are provided with pastoral guidance and support. The whole-school anti-bullying policy and practice helps pupils to understand their actions. Staff help to foster respectful relationships between pupils.
7. Attendance procedures are appropriate, and leaders demonstrate a sound understanding of statutory guidance. However, the attendance policy did not reflect the school's practice. Leaders revised the policy, adding the name of the attendance champion, during the inspection.
8. Leaders help to equip pupils for their future as members of British society. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme promotes personal and social responsibility. Careers guidance helps pupils to develop their understanding of future pathways and to plan their next steps in a well-informed manner.
9. Leaders ensure that the safeguarding policy and practice is effective within the school. Staff are trained regularly and appropriately in how to manage safeguarding concerns. Leaders collaborate with external agencies when necessary. Recruitment practices are secure, and the record of appointments is maintained accurately.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- there is adequate oversight to mitigate the risks of fire
- fire extinguishers are serviced annually by a qualified and competent external professional.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that all policies are kept up to date in line with statutory guidance.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders and governors foster an environment that encourages pupils to achieve their potential and think independently.
11. Leaders do not have sufficient oversight of aspects of risk management and fire safety. The procedures to minimise the risks of fire are not fully implemented.
12. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing in other areas of their work, including through the decision to provide additional academic opportunities. Initiatives such as the introduction of the Malvern St James sixth-form diploma, which develops qualities such as empathy, communication and resilience, alongside the science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) specialisation, enhance academic rigour while developing leadership potential.
13. Leaders in the early years implement learning activities that help to promote key developmental skills. Collaborative projects are designed to encourage teamwork and problem solving, while role-play scenarios are included to support the development of empathy and communication skills. Leaders prioritise outdoor learning opportunities, which nurture curiosity and an appreciation for the environment. Leaders ensure that staff in the early years receive appropriate levels of supervision to support them in their role.
14. Governors play an active role in overseeing the school's operations. Governors are well informed regarding the school's overall performance, enabling them to support strategic decision-making and ensure leaders uphold the school's ethos effectively.
15. Leaders ensure policies are implemented effectively throughout the school. However, the attendance policy did not adhere to statutory guidance, with an omission in naming the attendance champion. This was amended during the inspection.
16. All required information is easily accessible in hard copy or on the school's website. Parents receive an annual written report outlining their child's progress and achievements. Leaders report to the local authority on the allocation and use of funds provided for pupils with education, health, and care (EHC) plans.
17. Governors and leaders ensure that the school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders promote initiatives such as the 'diversity circle', which provides pupils with a platform to discuss inclusivity and mutual respect. A detailed accessibility plan is in place.
18. The complaints procedure is comprehensive, with detailed records maintained for each complaint, including the stage at which it was resolved, and the actions taken as a result. Governors oversee the process to ensure transparency and accountability.
19. The boarding provision prioritises pupils' wellbeing through a structured and supportive approach. Leaders have a sound knowledge and understanding of boarding, including associated risks and appropriate mitigations.

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

20. Standards are not met consistently with respect to fire safety. As a result, the Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not met.

21. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders provide a well-rounded curriculum covering all required areas, and a range of GCSE options including drama, Spanish and triple science. At A level, pupils can pursue a wide range of subjects including psychology, politics and economics. Leaders ensure that each subject area has clear schemes of work in place which take pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs into account. Pupils make good progress across all key stages, particularly in subjects such as English and classics, where carefully planned teaching strategies ensure a consistent focus on both content mastery and literacy development. Attainment at GCSE and A level is above the national average.
23. Assessment practices are robust and well-integrated across the school. Teachers provide specific and relevant feedback that helps pupils to understand their progress against criteria. This system is supported by a tracking programme that enhances the ability of teachers to monitor progress and identify areas for targeted support.
24. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is planned to support and challenge pupils. Teachers employ teaching methods that extend pupils' thinking and deepen their learning. In biology and design and technology lessons, teachers use questioning to promote critical thinking. In English and geography lessons, teachers provide explicit success criteria to help pupils understand and meet higher expectations. Across the school, teaching is consistently effective, with staff demonstrating secure subject knowledge and using varied methods to support pupils' learning.
25. Teachers adapt classroom strategies and methods for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), resulting in pupils making good progress. Teachers provide detailed and individualised feedback to pupils, ensuring that they understand exactly what steps to take to improve their work.
26. Leaders use data and pastoral information to identify and address the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Lessons incorporate focused questioning and well-planned resources to enhance understanding and confidence. Regular verbal feedback helps pupils who speak EAL to improve the quality of their work. The impact is evident in their ability to engage effectively with the curriculum, resulting in good progress.
27. Leaders' recent focus on literacy is evident in subjects such as history and geography, where curriculums are designed to develop reading, writing and communication skills. An emphasis on developing oracy skills throughout all phases is highlighted by initiatives such as 'poetry by heart', which culminates in a school-wide event that helps to develop confidence and enthusiasm for public speaking.
28. Recreational and co-curricular activities are an integral part of the school's educational provision. Boarders benefit from a well-structured weekend programme. Pupils across all year groups participate in diverse activities such as drama competitions and culinary training through a cookery qualification. Such provision enhances pupils' practical skills, whilst developing their creativity, teamwork and leadership.
29. The early years curriculum is thoughtfully designed to support personal, social and emotional development. Alongside communication and language skills, children make good progress towards early learning goals through stimulating, age-appropriate teaching methods, developing fine motor

skills and building confidence and independence. Staff collaborate closely with the SEND department to tailor support for children, ensuring each child's needs are met effectively.

30. Art and design lessons foster autonomy, encouraging pupils to explore artistic influences and develop their ideas through structured tasks. Similarly, product design lessons combine practical skills with examination objectives, equipping pupils for future careers in fields such as engineering and architecture.
31. Pupils' consistently positive behaviour and high levels of self-motivation contribute to a positive learning environment. Lessons are characterised by mutual respect and cooperation, with pupils eager to participate and build on prior knowledge.

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. Health and safety arrangements are generally appropriate, with detailed risk assessments and well-maintained records in place. However, the Standards relating to fire safety are not met due to the failure to complete all required external service checks, highlighting a gap in the implementation of policy.
34. Pupils, in both the day school and boarding house, have a clear understanding of how to evacuate safely in the event of a fire, as practised through routine fire drills during the school day and at boarding times.
35. Leaders promote pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing through regular pastoral meetings and a programme of assemblies and activities. Assemblies focus on encouraging understanding, inclusion and respect, promoting a supportive environment for pupils. Additionally, activities such as 'wellbeing week', which includes mindfulness colouring, board games in boarding houses and walks with the school dog, provide creative opportunities for relaxation and community building, contributing to pupils' overall wellbeing.
36. Leaders implement initiatives such as the 'diversity circle' club and the 'girls on board' programme to address specific areas of pupils' development. The diversity circle provides a platform for pupils to explore and celebrate diversity, strengthening an understanding of different perspectives and cultures. The girls on board programme equips pupils with the tools to independently navigate friendships, resolve conflicts and build healthy relationships. These initiatives result in increased mutual trust and respect among pupils and a stronger sense of belonging within the school community.
37. The PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums are well designed, addressing age-appropriate topics such as puberty and the reproduction system, self-esteem, body image, appropriate boundaries and respect. These lessons enable pupils to navigate challenges confidently and to develop self-awareness. The RSE curriculum is both informative and engaging, planned in a structured scheme of work. Teachers deliver lessons effectively, facilitating open discussions that enhance pupils' understanding of complex issues.
38. Behaviour throughout the school is consistently positive, with rare incidents of bullying addressed promptly and effectively. Leaders employ restorative practices, conduct annual anti-bullying surveys and ensure that issues are resolved. Leaders ensure that bullying logs are maintained to allow leaders to identify trends and implement targeted actions.
39. Attendance is closely monitored, with strategies and individual support measures in place. The attendance policy includes links to safeguarding procedures and ensures robust record-keeping. Regular communication with parents supports pupils in maintaining high attendance rates. Leaders maintain links with local authorities, informing them about pupils who leave or join at non-standard transition points. However, the attendance policy did not comply with statutory guidance. This was corrected during the inspection.
40. Leaders place a strong emphasis on physical health through the curriculum and co-curricular offerings. A wide range of sports clubs are available, which foster positive attitudes toward

competitive and non-competitive physical activity. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DoE), and activities such as mindfulness sessions, further support pupils' physical and mental health.

41. Boarding provision is of a high quality, with an appropriate balance of activities and free time. The boarding council provides a platform for feedback, ensuring that pupils' voices are heard. The induction process is well structured, particularly for younger boarders, with tailored programmes that ease their transition. Boarders benefit from the opportunity to cook for themselves, promoting independence and healthy lifestyle habits.
42. The presence of qualified medical staff, alongside those with mental health first aid training, ensures that pupils have access to immediate support when needed. The recent opening of an on-site wellbeing centre, known as the Hive, and the appointment of pastoral champions have further strengthened the school's mental health provision. All staff in the early years have appropriate qualifications in paediatric first aid.
43. 'Year leaders' meetings provide pupils with a platform to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem by contributing ideas, engaging in discussions and taking on responsibilities within the school community. These meetings encourage pupils to voice their opinions and collaborate on initiatives, fostering a sense of ownership and capability. The programme equips pupils with valuable leadership experience, which is reflected in their growing confidence and ability to navigate challenges effectively.

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

44. The Standards relating to fire safety are not met.
45. **Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

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

46. Leaders promote pupils' understanding of their societal responsibilities and encourage reflection on what is right and wrong by integrating relevant topics into the curriculum and providing opportunities for real-world application. The PSHE curriculum, complemented by experiences such as charity events and community service, builds a strong foundation in ethical decision-making and social awareness.
47. The integration of real-world issues into the educational experience, such as the mock general election, allows pupils to engage with the political process, express their personal beliefs and develop critical thinking skills. This activity encourages pupils to consider the importance of voting and civic engagement.
48. The involvement of pupils in charity work, such as fundraising for Malvern Special Families and selling handmade items to support global causes, strengthens their connection to both the local community and the wider world. Additionally, activities such as Black History Month, Pride Month and the European day of languages promote tolerance and respect for diversity, allowing pupils to explore different perspectives and develop a broader worldview.
49. Leaders promote mutual respect throughout the school, with pupils regularly demonstrating empathy and understanding towards each other. In a range of activities, including house competitions and co-curricular clubs, pupils from different year groups work together, building a sense of community and respect across the age groups.
50. Teachers provide appropriate lessons on economic education. These lessons cover topics such as mortgage interest rates, the impact of current events on the economy, and the British culture of home ownership. These lessons equip pupils with the knowledge necessary to navigate the economic challenges they may face in the future.
51. The commitment of leaders to cultural awareness is further enhanced by the school's long-standing connection with an area of the Gambia. Biannually, a group of sixth-form pupils visits the region, with the entire school community involved in fundraising efforts. The visits provide valuable cultural experiences that foster empathy and a deeper understanding of global issues.
52. Leaders provide a well-structured approach to careers education and guidance. From Year 7 onwards, pupils have access to online platforms that support career exploration. Careers education is woven into the curriculum, providing pupils with real-world experience by encouraging sixth-form students to participate in community service. This involvement helps them develop practical skills and gain firsthand insight into professional and social responsibilities.
53. Through visits to the school, alumni share their career experiences, providing pupils with insight into a variety of professional pathways, and broadening their aspirations. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school, with a strong understanding of potential career options, including university choices, apprenticeships and gap years.

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

54. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

55. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Boarding pupils benefit from access to an independent person, while day pupils are supported through trusted mechanisms such as worry boxes, and clear guidance on safeguarding contacts displayed prominently on posters.
56. Staff receive comprehensive safeguarding training, including annual updates on Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) as well as one-to-one sessions for new staff. This continuous professional development, along with online assessments and a structured induction programme with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), reinforces a strong safeguarding ethos across the community. As a result, staff are well prepared to handle safeguarding concerns promptly and effectively.
57. Governors receive annual safeguarding training and regularly review policies, the single central record (SCR) and trends identified through online monitoring systems. Leaders ensure policies are in place to address emerging risks, such as safeguarding concerns linked to mobile phone use.
58. Through regular communication, leaders emphasise early identification of safeguarding risks, particularly in the boarding settings. Measures including weekly safeguarding meetings and risk register reviews are in place to ensure that concerns are identified and acted upon quickly. Leaders' handling of low-level concerns, supported by detailed online documentation, enables staff to manage disclosures effectively.
59. Leaders ensure that robust filtering and monitoring systems are in place to safeguard pupils from online risks, including inappropriate content and online abuse. These systems are regularly tested and supported by educational initiatives aimed at pupils, staff and parents, such as online safety guidance provided through PSHE lessons and assemblies.
60. Pupils receive comprehensive education in relation to online safety, in lessons and in assemblies that establish how to navigate the internet safely and encourage responsible self-expression.
61. Leaders work closely with external agencies. Working in partnership with the West Mercia Police, pupils engage in discussions about relevant risks within their context.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
(a)	the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
(b)	appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
NMS 2.1	The school’s governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary.
NMS 2.2	The school’s leadership and management, including its governing body where appropriate, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, appropriate to their role and undertake appropriate training as required.
NMS 2.4	The school’s leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met.
NMS 2.5	The school’s leadership and management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
NMS 2.8	The records specified in Appendix B are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.

Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 8	Where section 87(1) of the 1989 Act applies in relation to a school the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
(a)	arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school; and
(b)	such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for residential special schools.

ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
NMS 9.2	The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured, and they are provided a safe environment in which they can live and learn.
NMS 10.2	The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and ensures alerting systems are accessible and there are clear evacuation plans for all children subject to their needs.
EYFS 3.64	Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.
EYFS 3.65	<p>Providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff, and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency. Providers must have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An emergency evacuation procedure. • Appropriate fire detection and control equipment (for example, fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire blankets and/or fire extinguishers) which is in working order. <p>Fire exits must be clearly identifiable, and fire doors free of obstruction and easily opened from the inside.</p>

School details

School	Malvern St James
Department for Education number	885/6012
Registered charity number	527513
Address	Malvern St James 15 Avenue Road Malvern Worcestershire WR14 3BA
Phone number	01684892288
Email address	fowlef@malvernstjames.co.uk
Website	www.malvernstjames.co.uk
Proprietor	Malvern Education Limited
Chair	Mr Michael Hodges
Headteacher	Dr Gareth Lloyd
Age range	3 to 20
Number of pupils	270
Number of boarding pupils	122
Date of previous inspection	29 September to 1 October 2021

Information about the school

63. Malvern St James Girls' School is an independent day and boarding school. Registered as a single-sex school for female pupils, it is an independent charity overseen by a board of trustees. The school was founded in 2006 as a result of a merger between two former girls' schools. It comprises a pre-preparatory department, a preparatory department and a senior school, all of which share the same site in the centre of the town of Malvern in Worcestershire.
64. The school has 122 boarders, accommodated in four boarding houses on-site.
65. The school has identified 76 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. The school has identified English as an additional language for 77 pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to empower each girl to achieve results that exceed expectations, and to equip them to think independently, discover their own interests and be intellectually curious.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

14 to 16 January 2025

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

69. 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.

70. 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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For more information, please visit isi.net