

School inspection report

23 to 25 January 2024

Solihull School

Warwick Road

Solihull

B91 3DJ

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
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
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders have a deep understanding of the needs of the pupils. They actively listen to the views of pupils as part of the ongoing process of self-evaluation and development, which promotes pupil wellbeing. Leaders continually seek the means to promote and fulfil the school aims of fostering ambition, providing opportunities and creating a supportive community.
2. Governors actively fulfil their responsibilities to ensure that leaders have the relevant knowledge and skills. They maintain a comprehensive oversight of the implementation of policies through a focused group of sub-committees who report termly to the governing board. Governors and leaders work effectively to understand and mitigate risks to pupil wellbeing.
3. The detailed monitoring of pupil progress helps staff to identify and respond to individual pupil needs effectively. This is a significant strength of the school. The pastoral, academic and safeguarding teams regularly collaborate to monitor progress and identify individual pupil needs. As a result, provision for individual pupils is adapted to their emerging needs and increasing levels of maturity. This enables every pupil to aspire to the highest levels of progress and attainment. Leaders provide professional development for teachers which enables them to develop effective classroom strategies to facilitate the learning of pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with specific additional needs. As a consequence, pupils make significant progress from their starting points. Leaders continually evaluate their approach, respond to change and monitor for any possible unintended consequences that might be detrimental to individual pupils.
4. Pupils grow in self-confidence and self-esteem in an environment characterised by mutual respect and inclusivity. Leaders implement a well-planned programme of wellbeing and personal development which supports the ethos of the school. Leaders have created many opportunities for pupils to support others both within the school and in the wider community. Pupils are well prepared for life after school by high quality and personalised careers advice.
5. The early years foundation stage (EYFS) provision is a happy and safe learning environment. The curriculum supports the needs and interests of the children, enabling them to make good progress from their starting points. They gain increasing independence and self-awareness through different learning opportunities in the classroom and when learning in the outdoor woodland area.
6. Pupils have a positive attitude to all aspects of their learning and thrive on being challenged by their knowledgeable teachers. Teachers use a range of strategies to enable pupils to make good progress. However, teachers do not always use the technological resources available to them to the full extent possible to further extend pupils' learning in the prep and lower school. Pupils are ambitious for themselves and for others, learning equally well in collaboration with their peers or independently.
7. Leaders provide an extensive co-curricular programme which enables pupils to take part in a range of cultural, creative, academic, outdoor and community-based activities. All pupils engage in a varied range of sports. These activities not only help pupils to experience new challenges but also impact positively on their physical and mental health.
8. Safeguarding is effective and follows the latest statutory guidance. Leaders implement appropriate training for staff which is updated regularly. Leaders keep suitable records of safeguarding concerns and take prompt action when needed. Leaders liaise with external agencies as appropriate.

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

- Teachers should ensure that they make full use of the technological resources available to extend pupil learning in the prep and lower school.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders have the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the needs of pupils which is informed by their regular discussions and engagement with staff across both school sites. They actively listen to the views of pupils to ensure these are taken into account in developmental planning. Leaders from different areas of the school collaborate effectively to evaluate and develop provision and opportunities for pupils. They use the school's key aims of 'ambition, opportunity and community' to initiate academic and pastoral policies and processes. Staff throughout the school understand their roles in implementing these and as a result, pupils achieve ambitious goals and are well prepared for adult life.
10. Governors maintain oversight of the implementation of school policies and strategic planning. They have ensured that leaders have the relevant skills to carry out their roles and to ensure that standards are consistently met. The governing body provides challenge for school leaders and scrutinises all areas of the school's operation through a group of sub-committees.
11. Leaders monitor pupil progress thoroughly, so that targeted support and strategies are put in place for individual and specific groups of pupils. Academic, pastoral, learning support and safeguarding teams work in close partnership to ensure all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress from their starting points.
12. Leaders maintain close oversight of teaching through a programme of direct observation, departmental reviews, listening to the views of pupils and monitoring pupil progress. As a result, they identify areas for development and put targeted measures into place to ensure that opportunities for pupil learning and progress are enhanced.
13. Leaders implement the school's risk assessment policy effectively and have embedded a culture of risk mitigation to promote pupil wellbeing across the school. Leaders liaise appropriately with external agencies and in a timely manner. Staff are thoroughly trained to identify and manage risk across both the senior and prep schools including in relation to pupil welfare, site management and educational visits.
14. Leaders in the early years have high levels of skill and knowledge appropriate to their roles. They are well trained and hold regular supervision meetings with their staff. Safeguarding, health and safety and risk assessments policies are robustly implemented to ensure the wellbeing of the children. Leaders have established a child centred learning environment which effectively supports all areas of learning for the children in a safe and happy environment.
15. Leaders ensure that teaching does not discriminate against any pupil or group of pupils and subsequently meet their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Appropriate accessibility plans are in place for both school sites.
16. Leaders and staff are regularly available to meet with parents and listen to any concerns that might arise. Complaints are responded to appropriately and suitable records are kept. The school regularly provides information to parents on the progress of pupils as well as more general guidance on policy and operational matters.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders implement a comprehensive programme of monitoring of individual progress and this is a significant strength of the school. Staff use the rigorous framework for pupil assessment to identify and respond to the needs of all pupils. Those pupils with SEND and different welfare needs make progress in response to targeted support provided in and outside lessons. Leaders have established a programme of detailed collaboration between staff who monitor the progress of each pupil. As a result, pupils make significant academic progress relative to their starting points. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make progress in line with their peers and are closely monitored so that individual support can be provided if needed.
19. The curriculum provides considerable opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding and to enhance their scientific, creative and technological skills. They consistently show high levels of numeracy across a range of subjects. Similarly, their linguistic and literary skills are well developed, for example by sixth form pupils critically analysing a metaphysical poem by John Donne. Pupils throughout the school communicate articulately and express their views with well-thought-out arguments.
20. Leaders' in-depth understanding of the needs of the pupils means that the curriculum is well planned and regularly reviewed to meet their needs. A wide ranging co-curricular programme provides considerable challenge and motivation for pupils, so that they extend their skills and achievements. The significant level of participation of pupils in activities ranging from debating to climbing is complemented by extensive opportunities for music, sport, drama and outdoor education. Pupils value the positive impact on their social and leadership skills and self-confidence which result from their participation in co-curricular activities.
21. Leaders in the early years provide opportunities for children to learn and they make good progress through play and exploration of the world around them. The well-planned curriculum enables children to develop their spatial awareness, agility and fine motor skills both in the outdoor space and the forest school. Children are encouraged to be independent learners and express themselves confidently using a range of age-appropriate vocabulary. Leaders have recently enhanced the curriculum in the early years to further develop numeracy and literacy which enables children to make a seamless move to Year 1.
22. Leaders' effective oversight of teaching and learning across the school informs plans for professional development, with the focus constantly on how to effectively support pupils' learning. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of the needs of their pupils. Leaders provide teachers with ongoing support in using the most effective teaching strategies to enable pupils to make good progress.
23. Pupils have consistently positive attitudes to their learning and are motivated to succeed. They recognise that the investment of time and effort in their own learning not only enables them to make good progress but enhances their self-confidence and wellbeing. Pupils thrive on being challenged and work equally well in collaboration with others or independently, as illustrated by the outcomes of the sixth form extended project research qualification.
24. Teachers demonstrate a high level of subject knowledge and lessons are often fast paced with effective questioning to challenge pupils. This enables pupils to make significant progress, as seen when a group of sixth formers used the target language exclusively in a Spanish literary discussion.

Teachers manage behaviour effectively. Teachers use a range of strategies and resources to enable pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding. However, some teachers in the prep and lower school did not use technology effectively to extend pupils' learning and this can limit their overall progress. Teaching across the curriculum, including assemblies, promotes British values.

25. Teachers provide pupils with extensive verbal and written feedback on their work. Pupils respond positively and feel that they are able to make more rapid progress as a result of the individualised support from their teachers. Pupils know how to improve their work and thrive on the opportunities for peer assessment and setting their own ambitious targets which enable them to do so.
26. The quality of teaching across the school enables pupils to make good progress relative to their starting points. The attainment of pupils at A level is above the national average. At GCSE pupils' attainment is well above the national average. Pupils' level of attainment in the prep school, when compared against national norms, is above the national average.

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

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

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

28. Staff deliver personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education through an extensive curricular programme for wellbeing and personal development (WPD). Leaders foster an open culture in which they actively seek feedback from pupils on the wellness curriculum. Pupils value wellbeing lessons which enable them to develop their understanding of the needs of everyone in their community, including those with protected characteristics. The impact of opportunities to reflect and discuss issues such as consent in relationships has a positive effect on pupils' self-awareness and their sense of moral responsibility for others.
29. Leaders promote pupils' physical health through an extensive and well-resourced programme of sporting activities. Pupils participate in team sports at a variety of different ability levels and in many individual based pursuits such as yoga and fencing. Pupils recognise the importance of physical health and their participation in voluntary activities is extremely high, impacting positively on their physical and mental health.
30. Pupils value the opportunities for reflection and consideration of their own place in the world. Within the school's context as a Christian foundation, Chapel is central to the spiritual growth of many pupils. Leaders recognise the importance of inclusivity and provide multi-faith prayer rooms and alternative quiet spaces for pupils who wish to take a break from the demands of the school day.
31. Children in the early years articulate their emotions through the use of age appropriate resources such as the 'visual feelings meter'. Leaders integrate wellbeing throughout the curriculum and this helps children to develop mutual respect for their peers through play. The nurturing environment of the setting has a positive impact on the children's development of self-control and social development. As a consequence children behave well throughout the early years setting. Through opportunities provided by the physical education curriculum, children gain an understanding of the importance of physical health in their lives.
32. Leaders implement appropriate policies for behaviour and antibullying. Leaders and staff respond swiftly when behavioural problems occur and in response to allegations of bullying. Staff maintain detailed records and these are monitored effectively by leaders so that both victims and alleged perpetrators are fully supported. Positive relationships between staff and pupils enable mistakes to be acknowledged and lessons to be learnt through a process of reflection and contrition alongside the application of sanctions. Mutual respect between teachers and pupils results in high standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school.
33. Leaders implement suitable health and safety protocols and policies across both school sites. The school premises and accommodation on both campuses are maintained to a high standard to provide a safe environment for pupils. Leaders ensure that the risk from fire is mitigated through detailed fire risk assessments which are reviewed regularly. Fire equipment is serviced appropriately, fire drills take place at least termly, evacuation routes are frequently checked and staff regularly receive fire training.

34. First Aid and medical provision are appropriate for supporting pupils who are unwell or have specific medical needs. Suitable numbers of staff are appropriately trained in first aid including paediatric first aid for those who work in the early years setting.
35. Supervision levels throughout the school are appropriate including suitably qualified staff in the early years setting. The school's attendance and admissions registers are maintained appropriately.

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

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

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

37. Leaders have established a school community characterised by mutual respect and inclusivity which positively impacts the social development of pupils and fully embraces the school's aim of creating a supportive community. Pupils talk with openness and a sense of pride about the diversity of the community. Pupils have a high regard for the rule of law and a well-developed sense of fairness, meaning that they are confident to speak out where they see injustice. Pupils respect the integrity of teachers and appreciate the willingness of staff to consider pupils' views. Pupils readily engage in peer mentoring work. They thrive on the opportunity to represent the views of their peers through membership of various school councils, and the equity group, which focuses on equality, diversity and inclusivity. Leaders' emphasis on the development of vertical house groups enhances integration and mutual respect across different year groups.
38. Leaders successfully foster a values-based community in which pupils and staff embrace cultural difference and respect the diversity of ideas. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and they develop an increasingly mature moral compass as they move through the school. Pupils develop an increasing understanding of the differences in human perspectives of wider world issues, such as conflict in the Middle East. Assemblies and lessons on personal development prompt pupils to actively discuss current issues facing humanity. Teachers facilitate these discussions in a sensitive and impartial manner, with a positive impact on pupils' growing social awareness.
39. Leaders lead by example in modelling good citizenship through their actions. This is exemplified in their constant promotion of a democratic community in which a high priority is placed on listening to the views of all members of the school. Pupils recognise the importance of serving others in a democratic society and the importance of standing up for others. In both the senior and prep school pupils regularly have the opportunity to elect their representatives to the school councils and prefect bodies.
40. Fundamental British values are embedded in the school culture and pupils are consequently well prepared for life in wider society. Pupils have developed a strong understanding of the role of British public institutions in a democratic and diverse society. Pupils understand the importance of equality and respect for different cultures, and for those with protected characteristics, as shown, for example, by the school's active involvement in the Show Racism the Red Card campaign.
41. Leaders place a high priority on the economic wellbeing of pupils. Teaching is planned effectively to enable pupils to make progress in understanding how to apply their numeracy skills to real life financial decision making. Older pupils understand the effect of the cost of living crisis on mental health, while also appreciating how to manage their student loans after leaving school.
42. Leaders in the early years have effectively implemented a wellbeing and personal development curriculum. This enables children to develop an understanding of the feelings of others, collaborate and resolve differences through mutual respect. Children learn about the world and the different types of people in British society through story telling and role play.
43. Leaders ensure that the school's co-curricular programme provides opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution to the local community. Pupils are actively involved in raising money for local charities, often through pupil-led initiatives, as well as volunteering as community ambassadors.

Pupils appreciate their responsibility to support others in society through their volunteering work in the local community. This has a positive effect on their social awareness and personal growth.

44. Leaders recognise the importance of careers education from a young age, beginning with a focus on careers in curriculum planning in the prep school. Senior school leaders have established a well-resourced and personalised careers programme for older pupils. This is implemented by specialist staff who play a supportive role in helping pupils make balanced decisions about future pathways. Pupils are helped to understand the consequences of their choices through individual bespoke guidance, and appreciate the support they are given when making A-level subject choices. Pupils value opportunities to meet with professionals from the world of employment through weekly career lunches as well as an annual calendar of bespoke events. The oldest pupils value the specialist support provided when applying for international degree courses and professional apprenticeships.

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

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

Safeguarding

46. Leaders maintain and implement an appropriate safeguarding policy so as to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. Pupils feel safe in school, reassured by the many points of contact with trusted adults to whom they can turn if they have concerns.
47. Governors conduct a thorough annual review of the safeguarding policy and monitor its implementation through the work of the pastoral and safeguarding sub-committee. Governors and leaders ensure that when serious incidents occur, any lessons learnt are reflected in both policies and training.
48. Leaders take appropriate action to identify and mitigate any risks associated with the safety and wellbeing of pupils. Appropriately trained safeguarding teams are in place at both the senior and prep schools. Leaders and governors place a high priority on safeguarding, as evidenced in the recent appointment of a full-time designated safeguarding lead to oversee provision throughout the school. The school works effectively with external agencies when required. Safeguarding concerns are recorded accurately and monitored on a daily basis by safeguarding and pastoral teams, who collaborate to ensure appropriate support is provided to individual pupils.
49. Staff and governors are suitably trained in child protection procedures, including online safety and the possible risks in the local community from radicalisation and extremism. Low level concerns are reported appropriately, and the records are monitored effectively. Staff understand the importance of reporting allegations about adults working in the school.
50. Leaders ensure that pupils are aware of how to stay safe online. Appropriate oversight of the school's filtering and monitoring of online activity is in place.
51. Leaders implement suitable safeguarding arrangement for the early years setting. Appropriate recruitment checks ensure that all staff in the setting are not disqualified from childcare. Mobile phone and personal devices are not used in front of children.
52. Leaders ensure that recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and governors as required. A suitable central register of appointments is in place and staff files include the evidence needed to confirm that checks have been made.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Solihull School
Department for Education number	334/6003
Registered charity number	1120597
Address	Solihull School 793 Warwick Road Solihull West Midlands B91 3DJ
Phone number	0121 705 0958
Email address	admin@solsch.org.uk
Website	www.solsch.org.uk
Proprietor	Governors of Solihull School
Chair	Mr Damian Kelly
Head	Mr Charles Fillingham
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	1545
Number of children in the early years registered setting	66
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2023

Information about the school

54. Solihull School is a co-educational independent day school located in Solihull, West Midlands. The school consists of a prep school and a senior school which includes a sixth form. The prep school is located on a separate site approximately half a mile from the senior school. The school is owned by a charitable company; whose trustees form the school's governing body. A new chair of governors was appointed in 2022 and the current head took up his post in January 2023.
55. There are 66 pupils in the early years setting comprising one Nursery and two Reception classes.
56. The school has identified 226 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. English is an additional language for 30 pupils.
58. The school states its aims are to engender an enduring thirst for learning and a sense of wellbeing; to provide a breadth of opportunity and inspire a depth of ambition; and to prepare pupils for adult life as happy, charitable, confident young people with a strong moral compass and global perspective.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 to 25 January 2024

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

60. 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 staff, school leaders and members of the governing body
- Discussions with pupils
- Visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- Scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school
- Tours of the school premises

61. 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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