

# School inspection report

Date 30 January to 1 February 2024

## **St James Senior Girls' School**

Earsby Street

London

W14 8SH

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. The governors and leaders have the appropriate skills to guide the school's strategic direction and ensure compliance with Standards. Leaders promote an inclusive environment, actively oversee the implementation of policies and prioritise pupils' wellbeing and positive mental health. As a result, pupils leave the school as well-rounded, confident individuals.
2. Schemes of work, lesson plans and wider educational experiences align with the school's ethos and aims. A well-planned approach from leaders results in a broad and balanced education which fosters pupils' personal and social development. Pupils' emotional and spiritual growth is nurtured through the incorporation of a daily quiet time, coupled with pauses at the start and end of each lesson.
3. Leaders have developed a curriculum which enriches and enhances pupils' intellectual and emotional development. Creative thinking and technological proficiency are evident in the sixth form, but less developed in the younger years. Teachers have the appropriate skills and knowledge so that pupils learn well and make good progress in most lessons. However, not all lessons are planned to extend pupils' technological and creative thinking skills in line with the other aspects of their learning.
4. Leaders place a determined emphasis on promoting positive physical, mental health, and emotional wellbeing among pupils. They implement a range of programmes and activities which create a supportive and inclusive learning environment, fostering self-confidence, resilience and a sense of purpose in pupils.
5. Leaders have developed a well-structured personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) scheme of work which incorporates a character education programme. This prepares pupils effectively for life in British society by providing a comprehensive education covering human, social, economic, and citizenship aspects. Additionally, leaders' high expectations ensure pupils develop a personal sense of responsibility and community engagement. Pupils are well prepared for their future careers. Pupils learn in a respectful, tolerant and diverse cultural environment.

## 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 step

- Leaders should ensure that teaching extends and challenges pupils' technological and creative thinking skills and engagement, particularly in Years 7 to 11.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to fulfil their responsibility to promote pupils' wellbeing. In conjunction with the governors, they provide clear strategic direction. They regularly review policies to ensure their effectiveness and alignment with the school's ethos. All required information is accessible on the website and parents are encouraged to reach out for any additional information they may require.
7. The governors, who report to a board of trustees which oversees all three St James Schools, visit the school regularly. Through informal meetings with staff and pupils they acquire an understanding of the day-to-day life of the school and assure themselves that leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure that standards are met. Through formal meetings, the governors monitor leaders' work, setting clear strategic direction and providing effective support to ensure policies are implemented effectively.
8. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably qualified and experienced and possess the skills to teach the curriculum and co-curricular activities. They ensure curriculum delivery considers pupils' needs using monitoring processes which are informed by pupils' assessment data.
9. The school's aims and ethos are practised daily through ten minutes of silent self reflection at the start of each morning and afternoon. Pupils are encouraged to use the peace to reflect on being their best selves. Through open relationships between staff and pupils, and regular consultation on pupils' views, leaders provide an inclusive and empowering environment in which pupils thrive. The integration of a few minutes quiet time at the start and end of each lesson finishing with a Sanskrit dedication, *Om Paramatmane Namah*, fosters a calm atmosphere conducive to spiritual growth.
10. Effective systems are in place to identify and manage risk of harm. Staff are clear on the reporting lines for any potential hazards. Leaders demonstrate a keen awareness of risk management and ensure that staff are trained to identify and report potential hazards promptly. Pastoral and safeguarding staff maintain effective relationships with external agencies, facilitating early intervention in aspects such as safeguarding.
11. The wellbeing of pupils is prioritised within leaders' decision-making so that pupils feel supported and cared for by staff. Teachers manage potentially harmful behaviours amongst pupils proactively. A programme of outside speakers focuses on developing positive mental wellbeing and a commitment to providing an open atmosphere of trust, where pupils feel able to speak to a member of staff with concerns.
12. The complaints policy is published on the school's website. There were no formal complaints in the previous academic year. Informal complaints are meticulously recorded and where necessary reviewed to inform further improvement.
13. An appropriate accessibility plan is implemented. Clear lesson planning protocols ensure activities do not discriminate, and the school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

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

**All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

14. The curriculum is well planned and inclusive. It covers a broad spectrum of subjects, fostering intellectual and social skills. Pupils' development of knowledge is fostered through schemes of work designed to stretch and challenge their understanding. There is a detailed annual self-evaluation undertaken by each department. As a result, pupils develop skills, gain knowledge and foster interests across a range of disciplines.
15. At GCSE and A-level pupils achieve grades at least in line with those expected from their starting points. The majority of Year 13 pupils gain places at their first choice of university. Tracking systems, and regular assessment ensure pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEND), are carefully monitored and early support is provided where required.
16. Leaders have recently introduced a new marking policy which has an increased focus on teachers' feedback and pupils' consequent response and reflection. As a result, each piece of work builds on the identified targets from the previous piece and pupils make discernible progress.
17. Teachers' planning considers pupils' ages, aptitudes, and needs. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils is evident and utilised to plan appropriate activities, as well as in facilitating effective support. Teaching generally enables the acquisition of new knowledge and promotes good progress.
18. Lessons are largely purposeful and engaging, with effective adaptations made for pupils with SEND. Pupils in the sixth form use an enquiry based active learning approach to broaden their intellectual, technological and creative skills. This is in line with the school's aims. Similar opportunities for developing these skills are less evident in Years 7 to 11. Although pupils acquire new knowledge not all teachers plan effectively to extend their technological and creative skills, which limits opportunities to apply their intellectual curiosity.
19. Pupils who have SEND benefit from a wealth of resources provided by the additional needs department. Pupils' strengths and areas for development are captured in individual support plans known as pupil passports. Tracking of their progress is systematic. As a result, pupils who have SEND progress at least in line with their peers. Specialised strategies to support pupils with EAL are shared with the staff who teach them and as a result these pupils make similar progress to their peers, and become fluent in English.
20. Pupils extend their academic inquiry and exploration beyond the confines of the curriculum through extended project-based activities, such as a personal endeavour project in Year 7. Pupils in Years 8 to 11 independently pursue their own academic interests, known as 'horizons', and sixth-form pupils undertake the national Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). The well stocked library supports the development of pupils' research skills. Here pupils source information and conduct independent research which encourages them to use technology responsibly.
21. The school successfully develops British values. These are embedded in both structured and non-structured activities, for example, house debating competitions, citizenship within the school's character programme and the respect seen amongst pupils during the daily, compulsory, silent self-reflection times.
22. Leaders' commitment to fostering the emotional and spiritual development of the pupils is evident. Pupils develop mindfulness and learn meditative techniques to help them deal with anxiety,

particularly as they approach public examinations. As a result, pupils are self-reflective and have an awareness and empathy for those around them.

23. There is a wide choice of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy success in a variety of sporting fixtures and clubs including football, netball, lacrosse, athletics, gymnastics, dance, fitness and martial arts. These support their self-esteem, and help them to gain new physical skills. Pupils develop their leadership as they initiate and run their own clubs, such as Ukelele, Dungeons and Dragons and Glee.

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

**All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

24. Through assemblies, the character programme and specific activities such as stress management, leaders foster the positive aspects of challenge, promoting resilience and a sense of purpose among pupils. Parents and pupils recognise the leaders' approach to mental health, emotional wellbeing, and the extra-curricular programme. Pupils are confident in approaching teachers for academic and emotional support when needed, reflecting a caring and trusting pastoral ethos.
25. Pupils spirituality is fostered through the teaching of Sanskrit and philosophy. Through these subjects pupils develop inner calm and a high degree of self-reflection, which supports them in their relationships with others. The school supports pupils' differing faiths, for example, the school's meditation room doubles as a multi-faith prayer room when required.
26. Pupils develop self-confidence by actively participating in assemblies and house debates. They gain in self-esteem as they take on leadership roles in clubs such as eco-club, school council and house responsibilities. The leaders' commitment to mental wellbeing is evident in classroom and corridor displays that celebrate pupils' work in this area. Pupils are self-motivated and demonstrate initiative, particularly within prefect roles where they have used opportunities to elicit change, such as wellbeing initiatives and the introduction of sanitary products in pupils' washrooms.
27. The school's character programme is used to deliver PSHE. It incorporates advice on contemporary issues such as how to stay safe at parties and festivals, and drink spiking. It also contains online safety covering topics tailored to different age groups. As a result, pupils gain knowledge and understanding on areas of potential harm that they may be exposed to outside school. Relationships and sex education (RSE) lessons provide a safe space for pupils' discussion, ensuring they are well informed about decisions they may face. A transparent approach to RSE, including parental consultation and withdrawal rights, reflects leaders' commitment to inclusivity and positive parental involvement.
28. Leaders use the school's aims and ethos as guiding principles in their approach to behaviour and sanctions. Reflection time at the start of lessons creates a calm, focused atmosphere which ensures pupils are ready to learn. The clear behaviour policy, implemented through an escalation of sanctions, ensures a disciplined and respectful learning environment. Behaviour in lessons is positive, and pupils demonstrate high regard for each other.
29. There is an effective anti-bullying strategy. Bullying is rare and promptly addressed. Pupils demonstrate a proactive approach to addressing bullying and favour intervention rather than being passive bystanders. The school's ethos creates a tight-knit community where bullying is not tolerated.
30. Admission and attendance records are effectively maintained, reflecting leaders' commitment to organisational efficiency and safeguarding. Supervision of pupils is a priority, evident in clear reporting lines, meticulous attendance monitoring and robust procedures for off-site sports lessons. As pupils transition to other schools their destinations are followed up and communicated to the local authority, protecting pupils from any potential safeguarding concerns of missing education.



31. Teaching areas are well-maintained and provide a conducive learning environment. This reflects the high attention given to health and safety. Staff have clear processes in place to identify risks. Departments regularly discuss health and safety matters including appropriate risk assessment. Staff are well trained in health and safety and understand it is everyone's responsibility. First aid is administered effectively through the use of clear systems and many well-qualified staff. Well-stocked first aid kits are located strategically around school.

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

**All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

32. The school's character programme is effectively planned so that pupils access a broad range of human, social, and economic education, which aligns with the school's ethos. Each year, topics are revisited in an increasingly age-appropriate way to ensure understanding is embedded and knowledge is increased. This preparation effectively equips pupils for life beyond school, evident in activities such as citizenship lessons on the British political system and discussions about societal values. Pupils develop a sense of self alongside an awareness of the responsibilities of being part of a wider community. In doing so, they learn to identify how their actions and emotions affect those around them, making them more considerate.
33. Pupils engage in various pupil-led initiatives and volunteering opportunities which contribute to the local and wider community. They perform community service, which fosters their sense of responsibility and awareness of various charitable causes. For example, they cook for a local care home, talk to its elderly residents and read with children in the Nursery. The library serves as a hub for pupils to take initiative, contributing ideas for displays and engaging with young adult fiction that addresses themes of equality, diversity, and inclusion.
34. The school effectively prepares pupils for life beyond secondary education. Pupils appreciate the personalised guidance provided by teachers. The leaders' committed focus on economic education is evident in both Years 10 and 13 where pupils are taught topics such as 'loan sharks', mortgages, savings, employee rights, student loans, taxation and budgeting. Numerous curricular and extracurricular opportunities are available for pupils to develop daily living skills, independence and employability skills. Pupils learn financial literacy in Years 10 and 11 and transition skills in the sixth form in preparation for the next stage in their lives.
35. Pupils are well prepared for their future careers through up-to-date, impartial careers guidance. The well-planned programme provides a comprehensive career skills framework, which starts in Year 7 and develops through to the sixth form. Pupils in the sixth form are provided with personalised guidance and mentorship opportunities from external professionals across various disciplines. As a result, they leave school with the knowledge and skills to make informed choices on future career pathways.
36. Pupils develop a secure understanding of right and wrong through character education lessons, the ethos of the whole community and supportive pastoral staff. Through the diverse nature of the school, pupils develop an appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures. Pupils are proud and openly celebrate their differences. Their commitment to mutual respect and tolerance of diverse faiths and beliefs permeates the school, fostering a harmonious environment.
37. The active promotion of British values is evident through posters displayed prominently around school, depicting a hand to remind pupils of five categories of values. Pupils show genuine understanding of these, reinforced through activities such as PSHE lessons on drugs and the law in Year 9. Pupils are able to express and explore their views on current social and political issues through forums such as the politics club and house debates.

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

**All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

38. Leaders at all levels prioritise safeguarding and pupils' wellbeing. Governors ensure safeguarding standards are met through reports from staff and regular formal and informal meetings. A suitably experienced governor, who has oversight of safeguarding, meets with the safeguarding lead at least termly. They regularly review practice to ensure procedures are robust. Regular and comprehensive training actively engages staff through themed meetings and safeguarding quizzes. Staff are thoroughly trained to use their knowledge to raise and respond confidently to safeguarding matters should they arise. They are well informed about pupils at higher risk.
39. Effective measures are in place to manage risks and protect pupils from harm, including a self-referral form for staff to record low-level concerns. Staff adherence to mobile phone conduct policies, such as refraining from taking photos using personal devices, promotes a secure environment. Any pupil access to the internet through devices used at school is safeguarded by filters, which are monitored by a senior leader.
40. Regular guidance and education, such as in PSHE, ensure pupils are well informed about staying safe online and that they know who to turn to if they have a concern. Leaders demonstrate a proactive response to issues, for example when local knowledge indicates raised threats to safeguarding. Staff are clear on the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. They respond promptly when unsafe behaviour is identified amongst pupils. When incidents do occur, leaders make timely and appropriate referrals to external agencies. Staff work with parents appropriately to provide pupil-centred support following incidents.
41. Leaders prioritise safer recruitment practices. The required checks are carried out prior to new staff appointments. The single central record of appointments is well maintained and accurately reflects information in staff files. Leaders conduct regular audits to ensure these are thorough and accurate, promoting a secure environment for staff and pupils.
42. A proactive approach, effective reporting systems, and a culture of sharing ensures a safe and nurturing environment for pupils. Leaders regularly review and assess risks, identify areas for improvement and have clear action plans in place.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

**All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	St James Senior Girls' School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	205/6399
<b>Registered charity number</b>	270156
<b>Address</b>	St James Senior Girls' School Earsby Street London W14 8SH
<b>Phone number</b>	02073481777
<b>Email address</b>	office@sjsg.org.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.stjamesgirls.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Independent Educational Association Ltd.
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Annabel Lubikowski
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Emma Bell
<b>Age range</b>	11–18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	244
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 to 10 October 2019

## Information about the school

43. St James Senior Girls' School is an independent day school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. It is registered as a single sex-school for female pupils. The school is part of a charitable trust, St James Schools. In March 2020, the board of trustees formed two governing boards: a combined board for St James Senior Girls' and St James Preparatory School in Olympia and a separate one for St James Senior Boys' School in Ashford. St James Senior Girls' School shares a building with the preparatory school whilst remaining a separate school. The main school site for senior girls accommodates Years 7 to 11. Years 12 and 13 are based in a separate sixth-form centre nearby. Since the previous inspection, a new head was appointed in September 2023.
44. The school has identified 81 pupils as having SEND. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language for 40 pupils.
45. The school states its aims are to provide an environment in which pupils develop an appreciation of unity in diversity. It seeks to provide an education which nurtures and enriches the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual development of its pupils. The school offers regular opportunities for stillness and quiet to teach pupils how to be at ease with themselves, to appreciate the value of being fully present and to develop their ability to concentrate.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

30 January to 1 February 2024

46. A team of 3 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

47. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods, quiet times and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and safeguarding governor
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- 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.

48. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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