

School inspection report

14 to 16 October 2025

St Nicholas' School

Redfields House
Redfields Lane
Church Crookham
Fleet
GU52 0RF

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. Leaders are proactive and visible around the site, operating an open-door approach to managing staff and supporting pupils. They evaluate the school effectively and implement actions designed to develop the school further.
2. Governors challenge leaders to ensure they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and consistently. Governors prioritise safeguarding in their oversight of the school and effectively assess contextual risks to the school.
3. The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. Across the school, pupils make good progress and typically attain results at GCSE above national averages. Teachers use assessment and feedback to guide pupils about how to improve their work further.
4. Leaders provide staff with clear guidance to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and, as a result, these pupils achieve well. Individual specialist support is also provided to those pupils who require it.
5. Staff teach the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme in an age-appropriate manner. They enable pupils talk about topics confidently and demonstrate curiosity. Pupils learn how to support their own emotional and physical wellbeing
6. Behaviour management is effective overall. However, there are some inconsistencies in how the behaviour policy is applied in the senior school, resulting in some low-level disruption in the classroom and unhappiness for some pupils.
7. Leaders provide a wide range of high-quality recreational and enrichment activities. These include sports, art, drama, academic clubs and charitable endeavours. This supports the development of pupils' social skills and highlights the importance of contributing to the wider school community.
8. The school encourages pupils to recognise the importance of respecting all people, regardless of their individual background. The school promotes pupils' learning about inclusion, culture and diversity through the 'THRIVE' values of 'togetherness, hard work, resilience, independence, valuing others and excellence' that it has developed.
9. Leaders have established a safeguarding culture in the school that is understood by all staff. Clear recording and reporting procedures support safeguarding leaders to act quickly and effectively when safeguarding concerns arise. Leaders seek advice from external agencies in a timely and appropriate manner to help ensure that pupils are effectively safeguarded.

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:

- ensure that the behaviour policy is consistently applied in the senior school to address poor behaviour as effectively as possible.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The school's ethos is reflected in its aims, policies and practice. Leaders create an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and equality. Leaders actively promote the wellbeing of pupils and consideration of this is at the heart of leaders' decision-making. Leaders are approachable and encourage pupils to speak with them and contribute to decision-making.
11. Leaders at all levels demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. They are engaged in regular self-reflection and review, consulting with pupils, parents and staff as part of this process. For example, teaching and learning are regularly monitored via departmental learning walks and observations. The creation of a 'director of teaching and learning' role has led to a renewed focus on the quality of academic delivery.
12. Leaders implement a transparent and suitable complaints procedure and encourage dialogue and early resolution. Leaders keep appropriate records of formal complaints, as well as informal ones. Leaders scrutinise these to identify any patterns.
13. The school provides parents with all required information. Policies are available on the school's website along with a wide range of other information. Parents receive regular reports about their child's progress and learning. Leaders schedule both online and face-to-face meetings between parents and teachers for them to discuss their child's progress.
14. Leaders maintain effective links with external agencies, such as the local children's services hub and other local authority departments, sharing pertinent information appropriately with them and obtaining advice where necessary. The school provides the local authority with the required information relating to funding for pupils who have education and health care plans (EHC plans).
15. Leaders ensure appropriate oversight of risk management. Risk assessments identify potential sources of harm to pupils from the environment and learning activities and put forward measures to mitigate against these. Leaders are proactive in identifying risk and provide staff with training where required. Risk assessment of educational trips and visits are thorough and subject to a clear process of checking and approval prior to any agreement being given. Third-party lets on site are subject a rigorous risk assessment and checking process.
16. The governance of the school is effective and has a well thought out plan for development. Leaders are supported by the governors. They are challenged to evaluate the decisions they take across all aspects of the school, including the curriculum, recruitment and commercial activity. The oversight by governors ensures that leaders utilise their knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. As a result, the school meets all of the Standards.
17. Leaders implement a suitable accessibility plan outlining reasonable adjustments for pupils who have SEND. Leaders continually evaluate the site to ensure that accessibility is improved. The school meets its requirements under the Equality Act 2010.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. There is a well-planned curriculum throughout the school. It is planned to provide pupils with age-appropriate learning opportunities that build on prior learning. Pupils have access to an appropriate range of subjects including science, technology, mathematics, languages, humanities and the arts. The curriculum is suitably flexible to enable personalisation for pupils who require more support or whose prior attainment prepares them to take additional qualifications. The curriculum is enriched through cross-curricular initiatives such as science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) week, international languages week and joint departmental trips.
20. A wide-ranging programme of co-curricular activities further supports pupils' independent learning and development of skills. These include graded examinations for LAMDA (the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art), The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and working towards British Science Association awards. Staff encourage pupils to find an activity they are interested in or suggest new activities, such as boxing or chess, to develop a wider range of skills.
21. In the early years, children work towards the early learning goals (ELGs) and curriculum mapping interconnects the seven areas of learning. For example, pupils acquire understanding of the world alongside physical skills through outdoor learning lessons. Early years staff understand how children develop and plan appropriate next steps for individual children. Staff provide children with effective support and dialogue that introduces new vocabulary and creates a language-rich environment, helping children to develop their communication and language skills well. Children typically reach nationally expected development by the end of the Reception Year.
22. Teaching across the school is effective. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and understand the needs of their pupils. In lessons, effective teaching methods, such as well-pitched questioning and regular assessment, are used to evaluate pupils' progress and address any misconceptions that they might have. Teaching across the school enables pupils to become confident and effective communicators. They volunteer information, are eager to speak and ask questions of staff to develop their thinking. Staff enable pupils to apply their mathematical skills and understanding across the curriculum, such as in food technology, art and textiles, and construction play in the early years. Pupils make good progress and, in the senior school, typically achieve above expected levels in GCSE examinations.
23. Leaders ensure that there is a suitable framework in place to evaluate pupil performance regularly and thoroughly across the school. Staff gather baseline data using externally benchmarked analysis and pupils are tracked against this at regular points. Teachers frequently provide pupils with feedback to improve their next piece of work. In the senior school, pupils who are not making expected progress are provided with effective individual subject support outside lesson time.
24. Performance is shared with parents at regular points throughout the year including through face-to-face parents' evenings, reports and achievement grades. In the Juniors, homework tasks are shared in planners and in the Seniors, online. Contact is swiftly made should a pupil not complete a task.
25. Teachers across the age range skilfully incorporate the promotion of British values, such as tolerance and the rule of law, across the curriculum and the range of recreation activities that are on offer.

26. Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils who have SEND, including those who have an EHC plan. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND provides teachers with individual learning plans (ILPs) that include clear strategies to meet the needs of individual pupils who have SEND. For example, some pupils who have SEND in the senior and junior departments have a reduced curriculum to enable them to receive support tailored to meet their needs, including, when required, occupational therapy and speech and language support.
27. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported. Teachers adapt their teaching to provide support, including the provision and reinforcement of key terminology, and encourage pupils who speak EAL to speak in class.

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

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

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

29. The premises are well maintained. Staff are suitably trained in health and safety. Leaders make use of external experts to conduct regular audits across the site. Fire safety drills are conducted half-termly, and many staff are trained as fire wardens.
30. All pupils from Year 1 to Year 9 have religious studies (RS) lessons. In these, pupils are taught about a range of faiths and religious perspectives and practices and the similarities and differences between them. Pupils from different faiths are provided with spaces and opportunities to pray, should they require them.
31. First aid provision is appropriate and led by a medical officer. Staff are trained across the phases of the school, including in paediatric first aid in the early years. They implement appropriate procedures to administer any first aid or medication that is required. First aid kits are regularly checked.
32. The relationship and sex education (RSE) curriculum reflects the requirements of the current statutory guidance. Younger pupils learn about different types of healthy relationships and family structures. Older pupils discuss age-appropriate topics such as contraception, consent and sexual exploitation. Pupils are encouraged to ask searching questions. Staff feel confident in leading RSE sessions, following subject-specific training in this area. Regular feedback is used to adapt the programme to meet the needs of the pupils. Parents are kept appropriately informed about the content and materials used.
33. Behaviour management in the school is typically effective. Guidance from leaders and staff enable pupils to recognise different types of bullying and poor behaviour. They encourage pupils to report any concerns about bullying, including anonymously should the pupils wish. Leaders respond to reported behavioural concerns and bullying incidents are dealt with carefully and comprehensively, utilising both sanctions and an approach that encourages pupils to resolve their disagreements. Pupils' behaviour in the infant and junior departments is positive. However, in the senior school, behaviour is variable, causing some low-level disruption in lessons and unhappiness for a small number of pupils. This is because of some inconsistency in the application of the behaviour management policy by senior school staff.
34. In PSHE, pupils are taught about a range of issues to support their physical and emotional wellbeing in an age-appropriate way. Staff are supported to develop knowledge and skills through the provision of training and access to well-chosen resources across the school, such as 'My Happy Mind'. The school uses specialist external providers when appropriate to address issues such as nutrition and conflict resolution. The school's 'THRIVE' values are promoted through PSHE, starting in the younger years. Characters representing each of these school values have been developed to support young pupils understanding and application of these. All pupils can earn rewards for demonstrating a core value.
35. Children in the early years effectively develop gross and fine motor skills during regular outdoor learning sessions. A suitable range of activities are provided to promote the physical development of younger pupils, such as water play and ride-on toys.

36. In physical education (PE) the importance of activity and good nutrition is emphasised. There are many sporting opportunities at the school, including minority sports such as basketball, boxing and dance. Participation in sports is high, enabling pupils to develop their sports-related and teamwork skills, stamina and co-ordination. Leaders take pupils' feedback into consideration when reviewing the PE and sports provision. Pupils learn how exercise can keep them physically and mentally fit.
37. The school promotes an effective culture of pastoral care and supports pupils' emotional wellbeing well. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to feel safe and supported, Leaders provide pupils with access to the school's counsellor and a therapy dog. Emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs) work across the school to encourage emotional wellbeing and to provide support for individuals as required. Staff are sensitive to changes in pupils' behaviour and are quick to respond.
38. The admissions and attendance registers are maintained in line with the requirements of current statutory guidance. Leaders communicate expectations of attendance well and monitor attendance carefully, following up any absenteeism appropriately. The school informs the local authority whenever any pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.
39. Supervision across the site is appropriate according to the age of the pupils. Appropriate staff-to-child ratios are maintained. Staff are vigilant to the needs of the pupils, both in and out of the classroom. In the senior school, staff monitor the site effectively during breaktimes and many are available in their classroom for 'drop-in' sessions.

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

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

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

41. Pupils receive effective and up-to-date careers advice that follows nationally available benchmarks. This helps pupils identify their aptitudes, skills and areas for development so that they can make informed decisions about their next steps into further education and beyond. Recent leavers are invited to return to speak with pupils about their diverse range of career paths. In the early years, during a regular 'people who help us' topic, professionals such as the police are invited into school to talk about their jobs. In Years 7 to 9, the PSHE curriculum features a careers topic each year. The careers lead holds meetings with individual pupils in Years 10 and 11 to provide them with further advice.
42. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to develop a sense of social responsibility and support charitable causes. Pupils regularly engage in activities such as Harvest food collections, visiting care homes to sing, taking part in the Cancer UK 'Race for Life', and twilight walks in support of a charity aiding those with brain tumours. Pupil-led charity events are frequently held, including cake sales and concerts.
43. The school promotes pupils' understanding of and respect for diversity and the importance of inclusive attitudes. A weekly 'Diversity Club' provides opportunities for pupils to discuss a range of cultures and explore issues such as racism, sexism and homophobia. Staff encourage pupils to consider thought-provoking questions about equal and respectful treatment. The school holds events to mark and celebrate Diwali, Harvest Festival, International Women's Day and 'diversity day'. Older pupils study themes such as people's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and different types of diversity. An international week of languages is celebrated annually. Senior pupils debate ethical themes such as human rights, capital punishment and free speech.
44. Economic education is delivered across the year groups. Children learn about coins and transactions through engaging with a role-play shop. Older pupils use interactive financial resources designed by a national bank. In Year 11, pupils consider topics such as national insurance, pensions, mortgages and financial planning as part of their PSHE curriculum.
45. The school actively promotes British values, such as the rule of law and mutual respect, via curricular and extra-curricular activities. In PSHE, pupils learn about Parliament, the democratic voting system and how this compares to other systems around the world. Democracy is also promoted through pupils' engagement with elections for the school council, where pupils campaign to represent other pupils' views. This helps them understand that they can effect change in their community. Pupils can distinguish right from wrong and are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and behaviour. Laws and institutions are discussed from the earliest years. Key British values are displayed in every classroom.
46. Leaders promote pupils' social and cultural awareness through a carefully planned enrichment programme of local, national and international trips. These are used to reinforce the curriculum as well as broaden pupils' experiences beyond school.
47. Pupils across the school have many opportunities to take on responsibilities which encourage the development of leadership skills and an appreciation of being part of a caring community. School council representatives are rotated regularly. In class responsibilities are shared, such as prefect

duties in the juniors. In Year 11, senior leadership roles are subject to an application process, with most girls who apply being given some form of responsibility.

48. In the early years, snack and mealtimes are used as an opportunity to develop social skills and independence. Staff support children to sit and talk together, taking turns to speak and asking each other questions. Senior pupils regularly visit the infant school to support in the class as part of a volunteering programme. They read stories, engage with children's activities and help children explore the play equipment outside.

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

49. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

50. Leaders consistently promote an effective safeguarding culture and practice across the school. Staff are vigilant and confidently report any potential safeguarding concerns that arise.
51. Safeguarding leaders work effectively as a team and are trained to a level that enables them to actively promote safeguarding across the school. They are given time to fulfil their role and provide regular updates to staff on a range of safeguarding issues.
52. Leaders ensure that all required pre-employment checks are undertaken on staff and volunteers. The single central record of appointments (SCR) is accurate and is regularly scrutinised by governors. Letters of assurance are in place for contracted catering and cleaning staff.
53. New staff are provided with comprehensive safeguarding training as part of their induction to the school. This sets out the school's safeguarding expectations and reporting and recording procedures. Staff are made aware of the procedure to follow should they have concerns about staff or pupils and are encouraged to self-refer should this be appropriate.
54. Safeguarding leaders respond to safeguarding concerns swiftly and carefully and put support in place for pupils who are affected. They liaise promptly and effectively with external agencies, including children's services, the local authority and the police where appropriate.
55. A robust and thorough internet filtering and monitoring system is in place, tested regularly and overseen by leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. The safeguarding team follows up any alerts of concerns quickly. Leaders monitor the use of school devices, including when they are off site, and follow up any concerns the next day. Leaders provide parents with advice to help them support pupils' online safety at home.
56. The PSHE curriculum, pupil-led assemblies and activities in tutor time are all used to teach pupils how to use the internet and social media safely. Staff in the infant and junior departments use materials and workshops from the NSPCC to teach pupils how to keep themselves safe.
57. Throughout the school, leaders and staff encourage pupils to feel that they can talk to any adult of their choice should they have a concern. Pupils across the school (juniors and seniors) can share concerns anonymously via an online form.
58. The leadership team and governing body have safeguarding as a standing item on meeting agendas to ensure it is central to the decisions made at the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	St Nicholas' School
Department for Education number	850/6036
Registered charity number	307341
Address	St Nicholas' School Redfields House Redfields Lane Church Crookham Fleet Hampshire GU52 0RF
Phone number	01252 850121
Email address	headpa@stnicholas.school
Website	www.stnicholas.school
Proprietor	St Nicholas School
Chair	Mr Chris Netherton
Headteacher	Dr Olwen Wright
Age range	3 to 16
Number of pupils	286
Date of previous inspection	10 to 13 May 2022

Information about the school

60. St Nicholas' School is an independent day school for female pupils aged 3 to 16 years and male pupils aged 3 to 7 years. It was founded in 1935 and is a registered charity, overseen by a governing body. The current chair of governors took up his responsibilities in July 2025.
61. The school has an early years department which is housed in a separate building along with Years 1 and 2. There are 32 children in the early years comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
62. The school has identified 50 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
63. The school has identified three pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
64. The school states its aims are to encourage each pupil to achieve the highest possible standards in academic work and to benefit fully from an aesthetic and physical education. It seeks to support pupils to develop self-esteem, confidence and leadership and to cultivate a sense of responsibility, together with a growing awareness of moral and spiritual values. The school aims to offer all pupils a caring environment in which to develop the skills and knowledge they will need both in school and in their future lives.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

14 to 16 October 2025

65. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
66. 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
 - scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
 - scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.
67. 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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