ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

9 to 11 December 2025

St Piran's School

Gringer Hill

Maidenhead

SL6 7LZ

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 and governors provide clear strategic direction underpinned by a shared vision and high expectations. They develop and implement effective policies, which ensure compliance and secure ongoing school improvement. Governors offer robust oversight through regular engagement with staff and pupils. They provide targeted guidance to leaders. Their collaborative approach builds accountability and fosters a positive school culture where pupils thrive. Consequently, working together, leaders and governors ensure high standards and positive outcomes for pupils.

2. The early years setting supports, values and inspires its children to thrive. Staff are knowledgeable and committed. They know each child well, so they understand their individual needs. Staff deliver a wide range of purposeful activities. These cover all the required areas of learning, enhancing children's skills, such as in language and numeracy, and promoting concepts of fairness and teamwork. Staff communicate with parents regularly and transparently, fostering a community that contributes well to children's social and academic growth. As a result, children participate actively in their learning, achieve well and form secure relationships.

3. Leaders have rewritten and implemented a carefully structured, ambitious curriculum. It is designed to nurture the intellectual, social and emotional development of all pupils from an early age. Leaders demonstrate a clear vision and unwavering commitment to pupils' academic achievement and personal growth. They place particular emphasis on developing key skills such as problem-solving, creativity, independence and effective communication. As a result, pupils readily take the initiative in responding to the activities teachers set. They are at ease solving open-ended problems and communicate confidently about their achievements, any challenges they face and how they might resolve them. These opportunities have a considerably positive impact on pupils' overall achievement and general wellbeing. This results in pupils' typically demonstrating high levels of resilience, self-knowledge and self-confidence. Consequently, they are extremely well prepared to meet future academic challenges and to contribute meaningfully to the school and wider community. This successful preparation for pupils' next steps is a significant strength of the school's work.

4. Teachers possess strong subject knowledge, enhanced by a culture of continuous professional development. They have a deep understanding of their pupils' needs. Lessons are consistently stimulating, inspiring curiosity and a genuine love of learning. Highly effective individual support enables pupils to participate fully and to excel across a broad range of subjects. Year 6 pupils typically gain admission to their preferred senior schools, with many achieving a wide range of scholarship awards. Pupils consistently demonstrate advanced critical thinking, deep learning and notable confidence.

5. A supportive and inclusive culture nurtures pupils' wellbeing. Staff weave the school's core values into lessons, assemblies and pastoral support. Leaders implement a comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). This helps pupils to build and sustain positive relationships. Staff motivate pupils to be mindful of their own physical and mental health. Pupils exhibit considerate, empathetic and responsible behaviour routinely.

6. The school fosters an inclusive community, emphasising equality and inclusion from the early years. Leaders set clear expectations. They have established a secure culture of open communication. Staff and pupils feel valued and respected. Pupils learn about diversity, so they understand, appreciate

and celebrate individual differences. Pupils demonstrate pride in their school. They show high levels of mutual respect and willingness to contribute thoughtfully to their own and the wider community.

7. Health and safety and fire safety protocols are comprehensive and effective. The school's premises and accommodation are well managed, with well-equipped and well-maintained facilities. Documentation related to all health and safety aspects are appropriately detailed. This detail is underpinned by a continuous, systematic cycle of checks and maintenance, which is carefully recorded.

8. Staff are confident and knowledgeable about the school's safeguarding procedures. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding offer practical support. They keep detailed records and respond quickly to concerns. The school conducts the required pre-employment checks and maintains a suitable single central record of new staff appointments (SCR). However, protocols for verifying the origins of references for new staff are not always consistently applied.

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 clear protocols for verifying the origins of pre-appointment references for new staff are consistently applied and that the associated records are systematically checked.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders understand their responsibilities and fulfil them effectively. They articulate the school's purpose and vision with clarity. This fosters a culture where pupils develop values of kindness, inclusion and respect. Leaders establish policies and procedures that align with statutory requirements, ensuring compliance and accountability for the quality of provision. The consistently well-implemented policies support pupils' wellbeing effectively throughout the school.

10. Governors support school leaders and monitor the impact of their work carefully. They scrutinise reports and engage in probing discussions about all areas of the school's operations during their regular committee meetings. Frequent visits to the school enhance this oversight, allowing them to interact directly with pupils and staff. This insight allows governors to provide ongoing support and appropriate challenge to leaders. As a result, the school consistently meets the Standards.

11. Leaders demonstrate a rigorous and reflective approach to school improvement. They draw on internal and external expertise systematically to evaluate provision and to inform developments. For example, leaders completed a comprehensive and relevant rewrite of the curriculum, in collaboration with external curriculum advisers. Leaders integrate pupils' views into decision-making, leading to initiatives such as flexible classroom seating, including a variety of chairs and tables at different heights to suit individual needs.

12. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Consequently, a comprehensive accessibility plan is implemented, considering pupils' physical and learning needs. Leaders identify and enact measures to enhance pupils' access to the site and to the curriculum. Purposefully designed ramps and railings improve access to buildings. Reasonable adjustments are made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders, for example, provide targeted support for staff, such as through 'Top Tip Tuesday'. This support provides strategies for teachers to use to help pupils with SEND to engage effectively with all aspects of school life.

13. The school website provides relevant information, including key policies and appropriate details of staff and governors. Parents receive regular updates on their child's progress and achievements, typically through parents' evenings and detailed annual reports. These reports include information on pupils' attitudes, such as how well they engage in learning, and also specify clear targets for each subject to guide improvement. The school submits relevant information to the local authority, including reports on how funds are used for pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).

14. Leaders maintain effective links with external agencies, including those focused on supporting pupils who have SEND, as well as local safeguarding partners. These partnerships inform leaders' decision-making and underpin their cohesive strategy for safeguarding pupils' wellbeing. The school promptly notifies the local authority of any pupil admissions or leavers outside the standard transition points.

15. Robust risk management is rooted in a secure understanding of sector-wide and school-specific risks. Effective action to mitigate these risks includes, for example, detailed risk assessments for areas such as the woodland environment and the climbing wall. Ongoing staff training ensures that suitable risk assessments are developed and risks mitigated. Leaders revisit these assessments, including for visits which take place off site, to ensure continued effectiveness.

16. The effective complaints procedure supports parents to raise concerns through informal and formal channels. The transparent three-stage policy is available on the website. Leaders keep detailed complaints records, monitor patterns and carefully document the actions taken when needed.

17. Leaders in the early years demonstrate ambition, expertise, and commitment to continuous improvement of the early years offer. As a result, the stimulating curriculum challenges children and encourages independent thinking. Engaging indoor and outdoor environments foster this growth. Leaders maintain robust oversight of teaching and learning. They monitor pupils' progress through purposeful observations and support staff through regular discussion. This teamwork ensures smooth transitions and consistently positive outcomes.

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. Pupils experience a broad, enriching curriculum that equips them with essential knowledge and skills for successful transition to the next stage of education. Programmes of study extend beyond age-related expectations in the national curriculum. They introduce pupils to varied and complex concepts across many subjects. Pupils, for example, use computer-aided design software to model ideas in textiles. They explore heart anatomy after dissecting a lamb's heart in science. The revised reading scheme has a positive influence on pupils' verbal and written communication, as well as their linguistic skills. Together, these build their confidence and ability to share ideas freely.

20. Leaders have carefully mapped the curriculum to ensure that it is cohesive and that it develops pupils' knowledge and skills progressively. Programmes are thoughtfully designed and planned to meet all pupils' needs. The model is based on seven core principles, such as diversity, 'oneness', and interdependence. It offers interconnected learning across subjects. Through the topic 'diversity', for example, pupils in Year 3 investigate plants in different habitats in science, study the rainforest in geography, learn about the Maya culture in history and analyse themes and perspectives from a range of cultures in English. Teachers consistently use key words, such as analyse, evaluate and create, from the early years onwards. This helps pupils to develop techniques to organise their thoughts, and promotes skills, including those related to interpreting information and in collaborating with others. Year 5 pupils, for example, worked in groups to evaluate events leading to the Titanic's sinking, successfully comparing facts to draw thoughtful and mature conclusions.

21. Teachers set high academic expectations. They use a wide range of highly effective teaching methods and well-chosen activities to motivate pupils in well-structured, engaging lessons matched to pupils' needs. Teachers demonstrate deep subject knowledge and ask pertinent questions that promote scholarship, helping pupils to develop skills such as resilience, adaptability and independence. In the early years, children receive high-quality specialist music and games teaching. Pupils from Year 3 spend time in the science lab, the information technology (IT) suite, the children's kitchen and the design technology workshop. Wider opportunities develop pupils' confidence in aesthetic, scientific and technological skills, enhancing their creativity, and critical-thinking abilities. Overall, pupils thrive in a well-managed learning environment and benefit from positive relationships with their teachers.

22. Leaders and staff closely monitor pupils' progress through regular assessments. These include standardised tests and teacher-led evaluations of what pupils know and can do. Leaders systematically analyse assessment information across subjects and share insights with teaching staff. Teachers use this information to provide personalised support to address any gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. Teachers and pupils contribute to 'what went well' evaluations. This increases pupils' ownership of learning, motivation, and self-awareness. As a result, pupils make good and often rapid progress from varied starting points.

23. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress. Those who need to develop their English language skills rapidly. Teachers provide highly effective individual support, such as modelling language and question responses, keyword lists and, if necessary, through bespoke one-to-one sessions. This ensures that specific language needs are addressed sensitively and that pupils who speak EAL engage well with their lessons.

24. Leaders provide effective support for pupils who have SEND. The provision for these pupils uses effective diagnostic assessment tools to track and monitor pupils' progress, ensuring appropriate support strategies are in place when needed. Some pupils use specialist resources, for example, to improve concentration. Many receive support from caring and knowledgeable teaching assistants. others are also supported by external professionals. Information about pupils is shared with teachers through regular conversations and detailed 'pupil passports'. These passports are collaboratively created documents outlining each pupil's interests, needs, abilities and any challenges they may face in their learning. Teachers use the information well to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress.

25. The diverse programme of co-curricular activities is well attended and thoughtfully designed to help pupils develop interests and talents. Pupils, for example, explore ancient Greek and Roman culture in the classical civilisation club. They develop problem-solving skills in chess or learn to manage emotions in the yoga club. Pupils of all ages develop performance skills through artistic, sporting, musical and dramatic opportunities. They can choose from activities such as woodwork, trampolining, handbells and cheerleading.

26. Children in the early years experience an engaging and stimulating curriculum that motivates and prepares them to become successful learners. Teachers model language clearly, ask effective questions and provide ample opportunities for children to practise language in a range of activities inside and outside. Children, for example, discuss terms such as balancing and difference while making fairy cakes, or talk about the speed at which they are travelling when riding a scooter. Typically, children achieve the early learning goals (ELGs), for example, in communication and language, and many exceed expectations.

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. Leaders have fostered a culture of inclusion and respect. A well-designed religious education curriculum, along with assemblies and services, gives pupils time for spiritual reflection and appreciation of different faiths. Pupils learn to value uniqueness and understand that faith and religion are personal choices. They listen well, support each other and share thoughts without fear of judgement.

29. Pupils complete a large part of the pupil passports themselves, outlining their strengths and specific strategies to help them to succeed, adding to these each year. Consequently, they demonstrate a mature understanding of their own needs. Staff build pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem by encouraging them to persevere, to show resilience and to undertake leadership roles. Pupil leadership opportunities are extensive. For example, the pupil wellbeing council raised awareness of neurodiversity through a pupil-led assembly. They also designed the pupils' wellbeing room. Pupils consistently express themselves with clarity and conviction, inspiring confidence in every interaction. Their ability to listen attentively and respectfully to both peers and adults fosters a culture of mutual respect and vibrant, meaningful dialogue throughout the school community.

30. The school's comprehensive and thoughtfully structured physical education (PE) curriculum promotes pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing. The 'five a day' initiative encourages pupils to maintain a balanced lifestyle through aspects such as taking regular exercise, healthy eating and maintaining positive relationships. PE lessons are inclusive and effective across a range of indoor and outdoor sports. Pupils develop coordination, confidence, self-esteem, teamwork. They refine their technical skills through activities including football, netball, fencing, and biathlon. Weekly swimming classes commence in early years, fostering strength, endurance and water confidence.

31. The PSHE curriculum, known as life skills, is closely aligned with pupils' needs. This includes a suitable relationships and sex education (RSE) programme which is age-appropriate and taught effectively. Pupils learn about puberty, for example, and consider key social issues, including risks such as those associated with gaming and alcohol misuse. Focused events, such as 'friendship week', provide structured opportunities to discuss mental health openly. Staff implement a variety of learning strategies to support pupils' emotional wellbeing, including mindfulness exercises at the start of PSHE lessons and regular wellbeing walks.

32. Pupils' behaviour is of a high standard throughout the school. They understand their responsibility as role models, so they demonstrate kindness, politeness and good manners consistently well. Positive reinforcement from school staff effectively motivates appropriate behaviours. Leaders uphold a robust anti-bullying approach. When bullying occurs, though rare, it is thoroughly investigated, support is provided and detailed records are kept. Pupils are introduced early to a form of sign language, which they use to signal agreement or to challenge others' behaviour and viewpoints. This helps to avoid escalation and supports a harmonious community. The practice is embedded throughout the school.

33. Leaders maintain thorough oversight of site management. They emphasise the importance of robust health and safety procedures, including fire safety. They adhere to required health and safety legislation and ensure that all the required checks are carried out. The school's suitable premises are well maintained. Leaders keep accurate health and safety records. Appropriate fire risk assessments,

routine fire evacuation drills and diligent maintenance of fire safety equipment are all in place. Leaders seek pupils' opinions on managing various aspects of the site. As a result, recent changes include the introduction of speed signs and improvements to the changing rooms.

34. The school's medical facility is centrally located. It provides a welcoming environment for those feeling unwell. Medical staff keep detailed records. They review these regularly to identify and address any patterns emerging. Staff receive training to administer first aid competently, including paediatric first aid for early years staff.

35. Leaders have a secure understanding of, and respond to, changes in pupils' attendance. Staff take accurate registers twice every day. Pupils' absences are followed up promptly.

36. Pupils enjoy well-supervised environments to promote their safety. Vigilant staff provide active, engaged supervision, including during breaktimes and before and after school. Supervision rotas are well planned to enable this.

37. Children in the early years receive a range of stimulating opportunities promoting their emotional and physical development. Staff incorporate 'persona dolls' to help children to talk about and to manage their feelings. Adults show children how to share by modelling the associated behaviours clearly. Acting as positive role models, adults help children to feel safe and cared for. In turn, this encourages children's respect and kindness towards others. A comprehensive physical activity programme enhances children's gross and fine motor skills. Structured activities, such as gymnastics, emphasise climbing, rolling, and balancing. Outdoor activities incorporate tasks such as mixing and tool handling.

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

38. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

39. A culture of inclusion and respect permeates the school. The core values, which are integrated into assemblies, PSHE lessons and form time shape daily practices. Teachers prompt pupils to explore diverse cultures through discussion. In geography, for example, pupils analyse daily life and education in different countries. Pupils mark cultural festivals from around the world, exchanging traditions to deepen mutual understanding. This engagement leads pupils to look beyond personal viewpoints and embrace alternative perspectives. Pupils consider challenges, such as those faced by refugees. This approach motivates pupils to question assumptions about social roles and stereotypes. As a result, pupils learn to appreciate mutual respect and to celebrate diversity.

40. Leaders seek and value pupils' feedback and opinions. Pupils participate in democratic processes through a variety of experiences. Younger pupils, for example, vote for their book choice at the end of the day. The school council, which focuses on school-wide issues, is elected by pupils from their peers. All Year 6 pupils hold two leadership roles. The 'pupil parliament' is made up of four councils: eco, learning, safety and wellbeing. Pupils in Year 6 take responsibility for each council and focus on school wide issues. Leaders and staff listen to pupils' suggestions and consider them when making decisions. Pupils are proud of their contributions to the school community.

41. The promotion of pupils' financial literacy is embedded throughout the curriculum, complemented by opportunities to engage in real-life experiences. In mathematics, for example, pupils learn about money. In information and communication technology (ICT), they explore profit and loss when designing a fun fair and in design and technology they practise basic budgeting while building a bird box. As they progress through the school, the 'aspirations and money' topic in PSHE lessons deepens their economic understanding, including of employment, wages and tax.

42. Teachers in the early years provide many opportunities for children to develop social confidence. Staff guide children to co-operate during play and mealtimes. Well-planned activities such as 'sparkle' and 'bucket' times develop children's ability to share resources, such as bikes, and to take turns, for instance when collecting the chickens' eggs. Children quickly learn to collaborate, to listen respectfully to one another and to show kindness in their actions. Leaders ensure a collaborative approach between Reception and Year 1, systematically familiarising pupils with the skills and the behavioural standards necessary for a seamless transition into Year 1.

43. Pupils develop their sense of social responsibility through active involvement in charitable initiatives and community service. Outreach work includes singing to the elderly at a care home and raising money and awareness for a range of charities. Pupils choose national and international organisations, such as a local charity that works with animals, as well as a charity further afield that raises funds to support education in South Africa. Pupils' involvement, including through a Year 6 visit to South Africa, helps them understand the nature and impact of charity work and instils a sense of responsibility towards others.

44. Teachers prepare pupils for academic progress and social integration as they move to the next stages of their education and life in British society. Leaders support older pupils by guiding their examination preparation and building their interview and presentation skills. A tailored approach ensures that pupils feel supported and well equipped during key transitions to different stages of

their education. This increases pupils' confidence in adapting to change. The curriculum integrates careers education, with regular speakers exposing pupils to diverse career options.

45. Pupils learn to differentiate between right and wrong through a clear behaviour policy and through following the well-promoted school values. In support of this, leaders and staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour and develop age-appropriate respect for the law, institutions and democracy. The curriculum provides structured opportunities to learn about public institutions and services. In the early years, for example, children learn about people who help them, such as dentists and firefighters. Older pupils explore the parliamentary system. The school consolidates respect for democratic processes and public institutions through purposeful visits, including to the Houses of Parliament, and through focused assembly discussions. Teachers ensure that political themes are presented impartially and without bias.

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

46. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

47. Leaders embed well-considered safeguarding arrangements across the school. They encourage open communication about safeguarding, responding promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns. A detailed and clear safeguarding policy is implemented effectively. It is compliant with current statutory guidance.

48. Governors maintain close oversight of safeguarding procedures through formal and informal meetings, including receiving written reports and regular communication on safeguarding matters. During monitoring visits, governors engage with leaders and analyse anonymised reports. This helps them to understand issues, track trends and to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's actions to keep pupils safe.

49. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding receive effective training. They design staff training carefully, starting with induction. All staff members engage in regular online and face-to-face training. Staff also receive ongoing updates from the safeguarding team. As a result, they are knowledgeable about safeguarding issues, remain equipped to handle concerns and feel confident to act when they need to. Staff stay vigilant, for example in identifying child-on-child abuse and in recognising the risks related to radicalisation and extremism.

50. Leaders establish robust systems to record and report safeguarding incidents. They maintain accurate notes and provide clear rationales for the decisions taken. Leaders analyse these logs to identify trends and respond effectively, including adapting life-skills lessons based on these analyses.

51. Pupils of all ages learn how to stay safe, including online. They explore issues such as water safety and the importance of caution with strangers. Pupils do not use mobile phones during the school day. This reduces the risk of online bullying. Leaders implement suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems. They review and address any alerts promptly.

52. Leaders emphasise a culture of listening by providing various ways for pupils to voice their concerns. These include worry monsters for younger children, worry boxes and an online reporting tool for older pupils. Pupils recognise and use these channels. They gain confidence from the support they receive. Warm relationships foster a community where pupils feel comfortable communicating concerns early to a trusted adult. The 'blaze' team consists of staff trained in mental health first aid. Team members are easily identified by their rainbow lanyards.

53. Timely and purposeful partnerships exist with external agencies, such as children's services and the police. Leaders seek advice and work collaboratively with partners to resolve concerns. The consistently applied communication approaches with pastoral teams supports the school's effective safeguarding arrangements.

54. Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of safer recruitment processes. They complete the required pre-employment checks before staff, volunteers and governors join the school. Leaders and governors regularly review a suitable single central record of new staff appointments (SCR). Files relating to these checks are well maintained and detailed. However, the protocols for verifying the origins of references for new staff are inconsistently applied. This hinders leaders' and governors' ability to ensure verification checks have been undertaken effectively.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

55. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	St Piran's School
Department for Education number	868/6004
Registered charity number	309094
Address	St Piran's School Gringer Hill Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 7LZ
Phone number	01628 594300
Email address	schooloffice@stpirans.co.uk
Website	www.stpirans.co.uk
Proprietor	St Piran's School Limited
Chair	Mrs Kate Taylor
Headteacher	Mr Sebastian Sales
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	442
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 November 2022

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Information about the school

56. St Piran's is an independent co-educational day school located in Maidenhead, Berkshire. The school is a limited company with charitable status, overseen by a board of governors.

57. There are 108 children in the early years comprising four Nursery and three Reception classes.

58. The school has identified 52 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.

59. The school has identified six pupils as speaking English is an additional language.

60. The school states its aims are to be a beacon of educational excellence, fostering innovative thinking in all pupils. They seek to create a sustainable, high-performing environment that nurtures talent, champions purposeful partnerships, and provides an outstanding place of learning. The school states it fosters kindness, champions inclusion, and nurtures respect by using compassionate hearts, inquisitive minds and supportive hands to inspire confidence in all.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	9 to 11 December 2025

61. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. 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 another governor
- 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.

63. 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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