ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

23 to 25 September 2025

Stamford School

Brazenose House

St Paul's Street

Stamford

Lincolnshire

PE9 2BE

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 have a clear vision for school development based on effective monitoring and self-evaluation. Governors maintain efficient oversight of the school, enabling them to ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders have a strategic approach to the management of risk and take effective and appropriate action to mitigate the risks identified.

2. Parental complaints are managed effectively through a three-stage process. However, the records relating to these complaints are not always accurate.

3. Parents receive reports which provide them with information about their child's attainment, progress and attitudes to learning. However, where pupils are underperforming, written comments do not always provide clear information on what pupils need to do in order to improve.

4. The curriculum is suitably broad and designed to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of pupils. Leaders have a clear strategy for the development of teaching. Teaching is closely monitored and consequently all pupils have the opportunity to make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress because of the care which is taken in considering the support they receive. Pupils' performance is systematically monitored, and this information is used by leaders to ensure that support is targeted effectively.

5. The curriculum is complemented by a well-resourced co-curricular programme, which benefits pupils of all ages and abilities. The programme is wide ranging and well co-ordinated. It supports pupils' skills, interests and personal development effectively. Boarding staff provide boarders with a suitable range of activities during evenings and weekends.

6. The school enables pupils to develop their spiritual and moral understanding, self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Pastoral arrangements ensure that pupils are well cared for. As a result, pupils are confident in expressing themselves. Pupils have a ready understanding of tolerance and respect for others. Pupils understand the need to follow school rules. Leaders successfully identify and address any patterns of negative behaviour. Consequently, behaviour is good and bullying is rare.

7. Leaders have created a welcoming and supportive boarding environment. which is successful in fostering pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to co-exist effectively and respond to the needs of others. Pupils have appropriate knowledge of the range of people they can contact should they have any issues.

8. Leaders have a systematic approach to the management of health and safety, including fire safety protocols. Appropriate first aid is readily available when required.

9. Effective links with the local community ensure that pupils are well informed and well prepared to contribute positively to British society. Pupils benefit from a well-structured careers education programme at the upper end of the school which enables them to make informed choices about their next steps. However, this programme is less well developed for younger pupils.

10. Governors maintain a rigorous oversight of safeguarding practices at the school. Staff understand and implement the school's procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns that might arise.

Leaders carry out recruitment checks as required by current statutory guidance, and these are recorded appropriately. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including when online.

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 school's handling of parental complaints is accurately recorded in order to reflect the school's decision-making correctly
- ensure that reports to parents always contain clear information about what pupils need to do in order to improve their progress and attainment
- strengthen careers education in the lower years so that these pupils are better informed about options for their next steps.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders and managers have the required knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Governors assure themselves that the Standards are met by effective scrutiny and monitoring of the school's practice and procedures. They receive detailed reports, regularly visit the school and scrutinise documentation. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.
12. Leaders have an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school and areas for further development and carefully consider the impact that their actions have on pupils' wellbeing and success. They are methodical and detailed in their self-evaluation which informs their strategic school development planning. This planning focuses on improving the impact on pupils' wellbeing in all areas of the school's provision.
13. Leaders ensure that the school's ethos is embedded and understood by pupils. They are successful in their creation and development of the school's culture since the merger of Stamford School and Stamford High School.
14. Leaders manage any parental complaints appropriately. Complaints are dealt with within the timeframes stated in the school's policy. However, the school's handling of and response to complaints are not always accurately recorded. As a result, leaders' decision-making is not correctly reflected in the school's log.
15. Parents receive reports which provide them with information about their child's attainment, progress and attitudes to learning. However, where pupils are underperforming, written comments do not always accurately reflect the extent of the relative weaknesses of the pupils' work. Consequently, parents are not always sufficiently well informed about what their children need to do in order to develop their progress and attainment further.
16. Required information about the school, including its aims and ethos, is made available to parents, largely through the school's informative website. The school annually reviews the provision for any pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) and provides funding local authorities with an annual statement of income and expenditure.
17. Leaders maintain a suitable range of policies which are well known to staff, parents and pupils as appropriate. These are effectively implemented. Pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted as a result.
18. Leaders have a comprehensive and robust approach to risk management. They have an effective understanding of physical, welfare and safeguarding risks and respond with urgency and diligence to mitigate areas of potential risk when these are identified. Risk assessments identify potential risks thoroughly and detail appropriate steps taken to reduce or remove these. Leaders systematically monitor risk assessments to check their continued effectiveness.
19. Leaders foster effective links with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils. In particular, they maintain an effective working relationship with local safeguarding partners.
20. Leaders have developed a detailed accessibility plan that includes actions to enable access to the curriculum and facilities for any pupils who have SEND. Teaching does not discriminate against any pupil. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. School leaders understand the need to provide a balanced curriculum that addresses the needs, interests and prior attainment of pupils. Pupils are offered a broad curriculum which prepares them for a wide range of opportunities in their next steps in education or employment. A suitable range of vocational courses runs in parallel with A levels. A wide range of creative, technological and aesthetic opportunities are offered. Curriculum leaders provide a coherent approach to the teaching of English and modern languages which ensures that pupils' linguistic and speaking skills are well developed. Pupils are confident in discussion, enthusiastic when reading aloud and have well-developed writing skills. Effective teaching in mathematics ensures that pupils show high levels of numeracy and readily apply their knowledge to calculations in science.

23. Leaders help to develop teachers' subject knowledge and teaching practice. Leadership sets high expectations for inclusive education that supports the progress of all pupils. They systematically monitor the quality of teaching and provide clear and detailed feedback to teachers in order to develop their work. Teachers deal with pupils' questions that are beyond the curriculum and correct misconceptions with ease. They provide targeted and supportive resources to facilitate learning so that pupils are frequently able to complete tasks independently. Teachers give pupils specific feedback so that they know how to improve their work and make good progress.

24. Leaders ensure that teachers plan lessons effectively. Teachers' subject knowledge and effective choice of activities provide pupils with lively, interactive and varied lessons. Pupils respond well to the well-judged pace of lessons and gain significant confidence in speaking and writing as a result.

25. Leaders have a clear assessment framework which is applied consistently. They closely monitor pupils' progress. All results are recorded and mapped against baseline test results and target grades. Pupils who are underperforming are readily identified and quickly supported. Feedback in pupils' work is detailed, and pupils are encouraged to reflect on ways to improve. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points in their GCSE, A level and BTEC courses.

26. Learning support staff have the appropriate training to carry out assessments in school so that any needs are identified quickly. They ensure that staff have relevant training to understand developmental disabilities such as autism and learning disabilities such as dyslexia so that they can provide appropriate strategies to support specific needs. Consequently, these pupils make good progress.

27. Leaders identify pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) when they arrive at the school. They are taught to skim read, and specialist teachers check for understanding of subject specific language and correct mispronunciations. As a result, these pupils gain confidence and fluency and accuracy in their use of English.

28. There is a comprehensive and well-established programme for more able pupils who undertake additional trips and projects and attend lectures beyond the scope of the curriculum. They make good progress and are challenged to extend their learning across the curriculum.

29. Leadership has ensured that there is a varied and wide range of activities in the school which gives all pupils, including those in the sixth form, the opportunity to develop new interests or improve those that they already enjoy. The programme includes sessions such as dance, cookery and chess. These are complemented by a wide range of sports which incorporates team games and individual

pursuits. Throughout the programme there is an emphasis on participation, enjoyment, fair play and skill acquisition.

30. Boarders are enabled to socialise and enjoy their free time in a comfortable environment. They attend a wide range of clubs after school. Evening activities are well structured. There is a programme of activities for the weekend which all boarders attend. As a result, boarders make good use of their recreational time and develop new skills and interests.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. Leaders promote respect for all people through clear behavioural expectations and an exploration of British values as part of the comprehensive and detailed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme. This includes assemblies, merits for kindness, and form time sessions. Pupils show respectful behaviour and tolerance of others.

33. Boarding leaders foster a culture of care for each other, ensuring pupils feel secure and take pride in their houses. House staff provide consistent supervision, inclusive activities and collaborative interactions. As a result, boarders show mutual respect, and speak positively about their experience, which supports their personal development and wellbeing.

34. Leaders actively promote pupils' spiritual and moral development. Weekly chapel services reinforce the school's values, such as care and empathy, in keeping with the school's Christian tradition. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate time away from the hustle and bustle of school life. They enjoy their surroundings, quiet times and the chance to relax.

35. Leadership successfully develops pupils' self-esteem. There are regular opportunities for discussion and debate and for collaboration in creative and practical subjects. Teachers use the school's merit system well. As a result, pupils exhibit a high degree of self-confidence and feel safe to express ideas with their peers.

36. Leadership actively supports pupils to be physically healthy. Physical education (PE) is at the heart of the curriculum. The programme enables pupils to develop their skills and competencies in large participation sports such as rugby, hockey and netball. When pupils compete in teams they learn the values of leadership, belonging to a group and working collaboratively. Pupils develop fitness and skill levels and learn about nutrition and the psychology of sport. The school caters effectively for elite athletes as well as ensuring that all pupils benefit from the PE curriculum.

37. Leaders provide a comprehensive programme of PSHE. Pupils learn about a range of topics from self-efficacy to mental health and emotional wellbeing to the risks associated with social media. As a result, pupils are interested and engaged in discussions and successfully gain further knowledge and understanding of dangers which they may encounter. Consequently, they are well prepared for life beyond school.

38. Pupils are taught relationships and sex education (RSE) which is adapted to their age and needs. Younger pupils are taught about how to form friendships and healthy relationships. Older pupils understand topics such as consent and are taught how to spot signs of control and isolation in relationships. Sixth-form pupils are taught about sexual health and contraception in lessons which include input from the nursing staff. Consequently, pupils are well informed to make decisions.

39. Leaders set clear expectations for pupils and actively promote good behaviour. Pupils are rewarded for behaving well and clear sanctions are issued when pupils do not meet those expectations. As a result, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school and rewards and sanctions are issued fairly.

40. Leaders place significant importance on guarding against and responding to bullying. They have put in place anti-bullying ambassadors and anonymous reporting systems. Pupils can also report concerns through drop-in sessions with trained pupils or staff. A clear zero-tolerance approach is reflected in the school's policy and practice. Pupils trust staff and peers to act appropriately, report bullying as rare, and feel well supported.

41. The school premises and equipment are well maintained. Leadership ensures that classrooms are well lit, clean and organised, which helps to promote a positive learning environment. The boarding houses are comfortable with spacious common rooms and a well-stocked, clean kitchen. Boarders' rooms are spacious and include an area which they can personalise. All boarders have a desk and cupboards of their own and a lockable safe for their personal belongings. There are sufficient showers and toilets. As a result, boarders feel secure and safe and enjoy the environment.

42. Leadership ensures a visible and consistent presence across the school. Boarders feel secure in the house because they have access to a member of staff overnight if necessary. Staff actively monitor pupil behaviour, contributing to a safe and respectful environment.

43. Appropriate procedures are in place to maintain the school's registers of admission and attendance. Attendance is assiduously monitored, and the local authority is notified correctly of any issues relating to attendance and of any pupil who leaves or joins the school at non-standard transition points.

44. There is a suitable culture of safety in the school. Systematic procedures and structures facilitate monitoring and appropriate action where necessary. There is a robust process of review by the health and safety committee to ensure that this is effectively managed. Throughout the school, fire extinguishers and first aid kits are located in appropriate areas. Fire systems are checked appropriately. Fire drills are routinely held, including when boarders are sleeping.

45. Pupils' health, welfare and wellbeing are supported by well-managed processes and well-equipped medical centres, run by trained nurses supported by a team of professionals. This ensures that pupils receive prompt and effective care.

46. Leadership ensures that the caterers provide a nutritious diet. Boarders enjoy a wide and varied menu.

47. Leaders provide a number of pupil leadership opportunities in the boarding houses. There is a house prefect system with roles and responsibilities that are appropriate. These roles are not onerous and allow responsible pupils to maintain their studies alongside their duties.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

49. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to enhance their human, social and economic understanding. An age appropriate PSHE scheme and the use of outside speakers develop pupils' understanding of democracy and money management. Younger pupils learn about issues such as managing debt and the dangers of credit cards. Sixth-form pupils discuss taxation, pensions and national insurance contributions. Consequently, pupils are well prepared to cope with the pitfalls of independent living and, more generally, for life beyond school.

50. Leadership sets a positive tone in establishing a culture of mutual respect throughout the school and within the boarding houses. Pupils exhibit a clear sense of community. Boarders are kind to each other and respectful of each other's space.

51. Leadership ensures that members of the school community not only tolerate but celebrate differences. There is a well-developed curriculum which promotes pupils' understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion. Consequently, pupils have an appropriate understanding of themes such as empathy, different world religions and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues.

52. Leadership actively promotes British values within the PSHE and wider curriculum. This includes an emphasis on democracy, for example through the way in which form representatives, pupil leadership positions and nominated charities are selected. Pupils are appropriately introduced to the values of fairness and the rule of law. Respect for the rule of law is an important aspect of all sports coaching. Pupils are specifically instructed to respect the opposition and accept the decisions of referees and umpires. Developing pupils' knowledge of and respect for public institutions is addressed in the planning of the extensive programme of educational visits. These trips promote pupils' understanding of other countries and cultures.

53. Leadership ensures that the school's ethos of 'Team, Fire and Spirit' is enshrined within the classroom and other activities that pupils take part in. This is especially evident in the wide-ranging programme of house competitions, where pupils can support each other and display teamwork, and in sporting and cultural activities, where pupils often achieve national success. Pupils are accustomed to working together and supporting each other in a range of areas.

54. Leaders provide comprehensive careers guidance through PSHE lessons, assemblies and careers fairs. This provision is particularly well developed in Years 11 to 13. Leaders provide individual interviews, support for the university application process and for other destinations post-school. Pupils in these year groups are not only well informed of options for their future careers but also develop essential skills such as cooking, financial literacy and career planning. Younger pupils identify their relative strengths and how these might fit with potential careers. The provision for younger years is effective but less detailed in its content.

55. Leaders ensure that the boarding provision reflects the school's ethos and prepares pupils for life in modern British society. Boarders take part in the laundry rota, work with peers on prep and keep their dormitories clean. This promotes responsibility in the boarding houses. Clear routines help support their personal development.

56. Leadership ensures that the broader curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn to distinguish between right and wrong. Leaders encourage staff to integrate current affairs sensitively into teaching. This includes work in form time on understanding moral and ethical dilemmas. Pupils learn about tyranny and political injustice, for example when they visit the National Holocaust Centre, and are introduced to a wide range of political issues and injustices. This develops their ability to judge for themselves what is right and wrong. Pupils encounter a balanced perspective, enabling them to engage critically and responsibly with political topics.

57. Leadership provides opportunities for pupils of all ages to accept and experience responsibilities. All year groups have form prefects, pupils in Year 11 act as senior prefects for the senior school and Year 13 pupils are appointed as school prefects. There is appropriate training for school prefects. Other opportunities include roles as charity and subject prefects, heads of house and anti-bullying ambassadors. As a result, pupils learn leadership skills, which prepares them for life in the modern world.

58. Leadership provides numerous opportunities for the school community to interact with and contribute to the local community. This includes an active charity programme. The school supports the local foodbank, a food recycling scheme and a local initiative to support the elderly. Consequently, pupils are well integrated into the local community and make significant contributions to it. They understand their social responsibility and have a keen awareness of local and national issues in the world around them.

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

59. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

60. There is a vigilant culture of safeguarding in the school. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that arise. They consult with external safeguarding partners and refer safeguarding concerns to them when appropriate. Suitable arrangements for the handling of allegations against staff or senior leaders, including low level concerns, are in place. These are well understood by staff and followed when required. Leaders keep suitable records of safeguarding concerns and the decisions and actions taken in response to these.

61. Governors maintain an effective overview of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The governor with particular responsibility for safeguarding conducts thorough reviews of safeguarding practice at the school. All governors undertake suitable training in safeguarding.
62. Safeguarding induction and training for staff, including for the safeguarding team, are thorough, regular and in line with local requirements. Leaders provide safeguarding updates and scenario-based training for all staff, followed by quizzes to review understanding. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to escalate concerns when required.
63. Leaders are aware of the contextual risks and challenges facing pupils beyond the school, including risks relating to radicalisation and extremism. This understanding is used to inform staff training and the development of the PSHE curriculum.
64. Leaders provide a number of ways for pupils to raise any concerns that they might have. Pupils are informed whom they can go to should they wish to share any concerns. The availability and the role of the school's independent person are known to boarders.
65. Leaders ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment checks on adults who work with pupils or reside in boarding houses are made in a timely manner and accurately recorded in a suitable single central record of appointments.
66. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place. Any alerts are immediately reviewed by members of the safeguarding team, who take action as required. These systems are tested regularly by the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

67. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Stamford School
Department for Education number	925/6027
Registered charity number	527618
Address	Stamford School Brazenose House St Paul's Street Stamford Lincolnshire PE9 2BE
Phone number	01780 668000
Email address	headsoffice@ses.lincs.sch.uk
Website	https://stamfordschools.org.uk
Proprietor	Stamford Endowed Schools Trustee Ltd
Chair	Mr Tom Cartledge
Head	Mr Chris Seal
Age range	11 to 19
Number of pupils	1031
Number of boarding pupils	113
Date of previous inspection	9 to 10 November 2022

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Information about the school

68. Stamford School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. It was founded in 1532 as a Christian school. The school is owned and governed by a charitable trust which also includes Stamford Junior School. Since the previous inspection, Stamford High School has merged with Stamford School. The current head was appointed in September 2025, and the chair of governors took up his role in July 2023.

69. There are two single-sex boarding houses for male and female pupils aged 13 to 18 and one mixed house for pupils aged 8 to 12, which also accommodates pupils from Stamford Junior School.

70. The school has identified 257 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).

71. The school has identified English as an additional language for 31 pupils.

72. The school states its aims are to offer an outstanding contemporary education in which pupils develop the ability to think for themselves and to interpret the world around them.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	23 to 25 September 2025

73. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

74. 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 of governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

75. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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