

School inspection report

21 to 23 November 2023

Swanbourne House School

Swanbourne

Milton Keynes

Buckinghamshire

MK17 0HZ

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 are knowledgeable about their responsibilities to ensure the wellbeing of pupils throughout the school and successfully promote the school's aims. Governors have effective oversight of the school and ensure that Standards are met.
2. Since the previous inspection, the school has merged with the Stowe Group of schools. The knowledge, skills, and understanding of the new governing body support the strategic decision-making process. Any risks, including those of unintended consequences, are recognised and mitigated.
3. Leaders oversee the effective implementation of a broad curriculum. As a result of effective teaching and helpful feedback in most subjects, pupils engage positively in lessons and make good progress. Pupils have secure knowledge, skills, and understanding across many subjects. Where pupils' progress is less consistent, some teachers do not provide clear feedback to pupils about how to improve their work. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) progress well because they are well supported by staff and their needs are recognised and met in the planning of lessons.
4. Children in the early years make good progress. They are fully engaged in their learning because staff plan activities which meet their individual needs and interests.
5. Pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) have effective support and make good progress with this aspect of their learning because staff consider their needs when planning lessons.
6. New assessment procedures used to monitor the achievement of the pupils have been introduced. Where these procedures have not yet been embedded, leaders' oversight of teaching and teachers' planning are less effective.
7. Pupils understand the importance of good mental and physical health. School leaders provide an extensive range of co-curricular activities for pupils which increase their self-esteem and self-confidence and prepare them well for the next steps of their education.
8. Through effective policies and procedures, leaders meet the welfare needs of pupils throughout the school. Adults support pupils effectively and pupils are confident to report any concerns that they may have. Leaders in boarding are suitably qualified and experienced and promote the welfare of boarders. Staff are effectively deployed to ensure the supervision of boarders. Boarders feel safe and well cared for. Leaders create roles such as prefects and elected members of the school council so pupils feel they can contribute towards the running of the school.
9. Safeguarding within the school is effective. Governors monitor the effectiveness of the safeguarding policies and procedures. Leaders within the safeguarding team have suitable levels of experience and training for their roles to support the needs of the pupils. There are appropriate safer recruitment procedures in place for all new members of staff.

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 all pupils receive effective feedback on their work which supports their consistent progress
- ensure the consistent use of assessment data to plan teaching and monitor the progress pupils make so that their emerging needs can be consistently met.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders and governors are knowledgeable about their responsibilities to promote the wellbeing of pupils. Since the previous inspection, governors have successfully overseen the merger with the Stowe Group of schools. Governors understand their roles and have an effective oversight of the continued development of the school. The governing body is actively involved in appraising the effectiveness of the senior leaders and their areas of responsibility. Governors are aware of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school through regular meetings with leaders, observations, attendance at school events, and ongoing communication with staff.
11. Through the school's self-evaluation process and reflection, leaders and governors oversee a detailed development plan to meet the needs of the pupils. Longer-term strategic planning is effective, and fully considers the wellbeing of the pupils. Governors are well informed of potential risks faced by the school and any unintended consequences of changes they implement. They oversee an effective process of risk management. Leaders oversee the effective implementation and development of policies and procedures. They ensure they are understood by staff so that they support the wellbeing of pupils.
12. A suitable complaints procedure is in place, ensuring that when a complaint does arise, the complainant receives a clear and timely response and that records are appropriately maintained. Leaders are reflective when issues arise, ensuring that lessons are learned where appropriate.
13. Governors and leaders ensure that the premises are well maintained throughout the site, creating a safe environment for the pupils. Potential risks are identified, and leaders take effective steps to manage them. Leaders oversee the implementation of an accessibility plan ensuring suitable support is in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders oversee the effective provision of information for parents on the school's website, in regular newsletters, information events, and reports on pupil progress. Leaders are visible and accessible for parents to discuss different aspects of their children's learning.
14. The wellbeing of boarders is effectively addressed by leaders and governors. They carry out an ongoing self-evaluation to ensure procedures support the needs of the boarders. The leaders within boarding are suitably qualified. They arrange a comprehensive range of extra-curricular and recreational activities. There are clear routines for boarders, and staff are deployed appropriately to oversee supervision of the boarders during boarding time. As a result, pupils thrive in the boarding environment.
15. Leaders in the early years are highly effective in promoting the wellbeing of the children. Teachers ensure children learn in a wide variety of ways and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed securely in the early years and that all staff have appropriate levels of training. Children are effectively supervised and there are appropriate staffing ratios.
16. Governors operate effective oversight of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. They carry out regular audits including an annual formal review. The designated safeguarding governor liaises effectively with the school leaders. Leaders implement policies and procedures effectively to safeguard pupils. They contact external agencies to make referrals or to seek advice. Staff are aware of how they should raise concerns through the regular training and updates.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders provide a broad curriculum that effectively prepares pupils for the next stage of their education. Leaders make effective use of the outside environment and resources to enrich pupils' learning. Pupils understand and apply core skills such as collaboration and independence and review and improvement. These skills are reported on by staff, enabling pupils to recognise areas of strength and areas for development.
19. A suitable framework has been introduced to evaluate pupils' work and progress. The data is intended to inform teachers in their planning and identify next steps for pupils. However, due to its recent introduction, its use is not yet consistent across all subjects and year groups.
20. In some subjects, teachers give effective feedback, so that pupils understand their areas for improvement. However, in other subjects, feedback on how to improve is less clear and this restricts the progress of some pupils.
21. The broad curriculum enables pupils to develop their linguistic, literacy, and numeracy skills. Teachers use a range of strategies to build on pupils' knowledge and skills, supported by effective questioning. Pupils are challenged through a range of suitable tasks and can apply their skills to new tasks.
22. Pupils engage positively in their learning and respond well to the challenging tasks posed by teachers. For example, in design and technology, older pupils designed a range of shop facades and added them to their models, enabling them to apply practical and artistic skills. Pupils respond positively to praise, and they value the reward system which recognises the effort they show in their learning.
23. Leaders have implemented a curriculum for the younger pupils which encourages them to articulate their mathematical thinking and improve their problem-solving skills. Effective teaching in the creative arts enables pupils to develop skills in art, music and drama. Pupils apply their musical skills in a range of different activities and have achieved significant success in external examinations. Many pupils take part in drama productions. The technology curriculum develops pupils' practical skills and their ability to apply these effectively across a range of subjects. For example, pupils apply skills learned in design and technology to aid their progress in coding in computing.
24. Pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points. They are well supported through the effective deployment of staff and the identification of their needs in the planning of lessons. Teaching staff are well informed of their needs, ensuring that suitable support strategies are in place.
25. Staff in the early years use their understanding of the children's individual needs to plan engaging activities. Children are fully engaged in their learning and utilise the resources within the setting to develop their knowledge, skills, and understanding. Teachers use a range of stimuli to help children learn and remember the sounds which make up words. Children make good progress and almost all achieve a good level of development as a result of well-planned and appropriate learning activities.
26. Staff consider the needs of pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) when planning lessons to ensure that good progress is made with their understanding and fluency. For example,

additional vocabulary sheets are provided in lessons to support pupils in understanding the specific vocabulary that is covered in the topic.

27. Leaders provide a broad and varied recreational extra-curricular programme. The Saturday enrichment programme offers a variety of additional activities to support their learning. For example, pupils have access to fashion and design workshops, or an enterprise club, learning about modern business. Pupils broaden their experience through a wide range of educational trips. Boarders take part in the evening activities available to them and a range of weekend trips, enhancing their boarding experience by developing their skills and interests.

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. Leaders implement an effective programme of personal social, health and economic education (PSHE). This helps pupils understand the importance of their physical and mental health. Pupils value the support they receive from staff, several of whom have mental health first aid training. Pupils recognise that they have a range of adults they can turn to for support, including a counsellor.
30. The programmes for relationships and sex education (RSE) and PSHE cover the required aspects and are shared with parents so that they can support the learning of their child. Pupils understand the importance of maintaining healthy relationships and how to approach differences of opinion.
31. Teachers communicate clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well and learn to respect those around them. Any issues are dealt with fairly. Pupils are reflective about their behaviour and value any additional support, such as behaviour support plans.
32. Teachers, supported by senior leaders, seek to prevent bullying through assemblies, tutor time, PSHE and an anti-bullying week. Pupils understand what bullying is and how to report incidents. Staff are effective in dealing with any bullying and leaders maintain records to monitor the effectiveness of procedures and to identify any issues. When bullying occurs pupils receive suitable support.
33. Pupils' spiritual understanding is developed through the school's weekly chapel services and assemblies where they have time to reflect and consider moral issues. In music, pupils consider the different feelings they have when listening to different composers and can articulate how different pieces of art make them feel. Younger pupils have an appreciation of nature and the world around them through their outdoor learning programme.
34. Leaders encourage pupils' participation in a wide range of physical education and personal development activities, which have a positive impact on their physical health. A wide range of sporting activities offered in team and individual sports helps them to gain a sense of wellbeing, self-esteem and achievement as a result. Pupils achieve success in local, regional, and national sporting competitions.
35. Children in the early years are encouraged to make sensible choices of food and to take part in physical activities. Staff help them to become more independent, so they can organise their own belongings. Supervision and health and safety have a high priority within the setting.
36. The school premises and boarding accommodation provide suitable accommodation and are well maintained. Fire evacuation drills are carried out regularly. Leaders ensure that appropriate risk management is in place for fire safety and that staff understand their roles and responsibilities through regular training. Governors and leaders ensure health and safety procedures are suitably implemented throughout the school.
37. Pupils, including boarders, who become unwell are looked after in the school's well-resourced medical room. The medical provision is overseen by the school nurse who manages the training of staff. Staff within the early years have appropriate paediatric first aid training.

38. The attendance and admission registers are effectively maintained and stored. Staff understand how to record attendance, and absences are followed up.
39. Leaders in boarding and residential staff look after boarders effectively. They create a caring environment where boarders feel safe and secure. They value the support they receive through the induction process. Their privacy is respected, and they can keep their personal possessions safe. Boarders receive access to balanced and nutritional meals and snacks in house during boarding time. There are always staff available to supervise and help them.

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. Leaders oversee the implementation of the curriculum which educates pupils effectively about society and prepares them for life in the wider world. Pupils understand the values of living in a democratic society including when they apply for positions of responsibility and for places on the school council, both of which promote their self-esteem and self-confidence. They understand the importance of representing their peers and they value the opportunity to have their views heard and acted upon. Pupils feel that their views can make a difference.
42. Senior pupils take on positions of responsibility and understand the importance of being role models to younger pupils. Their leadership skills are developed through the school's leadership programme, preparing them effectively for the next step in their education.
43. Leaders and staff encourage pupils throughout the school to consider the needs of others. Pupils learn about different charitable causes around the world through guest speakers, informative assemblies, and issues that have impacted them personally. As a result, they develop a strong awareness of their social responsibilities and engage with the local community through supporting local food banks, litter picking in the local area, and singing for local care homes.
44. Through their geography lessons and assemblies, pupils are aware of the responsibility of looking after the environment, and the moral choices this can involve. Younger pupils know the importance of respecting laws and they understand rules about road safety. They know how to keep safe in cars, on public transport, and when crossing roads.
45. In the early years, staff model respectful behaviour and the importance of listening to the views to others. Children learn to share and to take turns with play equipment. They know that rules help them to keep safe, and staff help them to develop positive relationships based upon kindness.
46. Pupils display a common mutual respect for all members of the school community. Highly positive relationships between pupils and staff enhance the learning environment. Pupils enjoy collaborating through their learning. They understand the positive impact teamwork has whilst valuing individuality and respect for diversity. As a result, they are well prepared for their next stage of education and later life.
47. Leaders ensure that the school's ethos offers a celebration of diversity. There are regular chapel services to promote different faiths and cultures. Cultural diversity is also promoted through the school's religious education curriculum which involves visits to religious establishments and talks from speakers of different faiths.
48. Pupils have an economic and financial understanding through the work covered in their numeracy lessons. Younger pupils spend time considering different amounts of money, whilst older pupils look at the impact of spending differing amounts of money on food choices. Boarders are given independence when learning about the value of money during their weekly supermarket trips.
49. Older pupils receive appropriate guidance and support around preparation for life in British society. They are aspirational about their futures through a suitable programme of careers education. This begins in the early years when they receive regular visits from different professionals, for example,

visits from members of the emergency services. Older pupils go through the process of applying for positions of responsibility and they have access to the school's annual careers fair which helps them think about their futures. Older pupils feel that they are well prepared for their next schools.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils are effective. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are knowledgeable in their roles and responsibilities. They make effective use of the shared expertise in safeguarding across the Stowe Group. There are regular meetings as a safeguarding team to discuss any current issues where appropriate minutes and actions are recorded.
52. Safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively, including those relating to boarding. There is an appropriate procedure in place to identify and record low-level concerns about adults working with children. Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of their responsibilities, including how to report concerns about other adults if the situation arises. Records show that the school refers concerns effectively, and they communicate clearly with external agencies where the need arises. Any referrals to children's services or the local authority designated officer are made in a timely manner.
53. Leaders ensure that all staff and volunteers, including those in early years, receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training as they join the school, and this is updated at regular intervals. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies, including the headteacher, have appropriate levels of experience and training, to carry out their roles. Those with safeguarding responsibilities maintain safeguarding files effectively and records show that any reported concerns are acted upon promptly.
54. The designated safeguarding governor meets each term with the safeguarding team to review procedures ensuring that the governing body is kept abreast of safeguarding throughout the school.
55. Governors oversee the implementation of suitable procedures for safer recruitment of staff and volunteers. Leaders involved in the recruitment process are knowledgeable and ensure that a single central record of recruitment is effectively maintained. All relevant recruitment checks are carried out on staff within the school including volunteers and supply staff.
56. Leaders ensure that suitable filtering systems are in place to protect pupils online, and monitor online material that is available to pupils. Effective teaching about online safety means that pupils feel they know how to stay safe online and the importance of protecting their personal information.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Swanbourne House School
Department for Education number	825/6022
Registered charity number	310639
Address	Swanbourne Milton Keynes Buckinghamshire MK17 0HZ
Phone number	01296 720264
Email address	office@swanbourne.org
Website	swanbourne.org
Proprietor	The Stowe Group
Chair	Simon Creedy-Smith
Headteacher	Nick Holloway
Age range	3 to 13
Number of pupils	298
Number of boarding pupils	52
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2018

Information about the school

58. Swanbourne House School is a co-educational day and boarding school located in Swanbourne, Buckinghamshire. The school consists of a prep school, which is within the main school building, and a pre-prep, including the early years setting, located in a different building on the same site. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, the school has merged with the Stowe Group of schools and has appointed a new headteacher.
59. Boarding pupils, aged between 7 and 13 years are accommodated within the main school building in one boarding house with separate accommodation for male and female boarders.
60. There are 32 children in the early years comprising two classes for nursery-age children, which the school calls 'pre-reception'.
61. The school has identified 29 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language for 12 pupils.
63. The school states that its aims are to unlock and develop the confidence and individual talents of each child. They seek to nurture every pupil and enable them to be resilient through the widest variety of opportunities. They look to ensure both day and boarding pupils are well prepared for their next school and adult lives in a fast-moving and challenging globalised world.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 November 2023

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

65. 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 head, 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 with pupils and staff
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. 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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