

School inspection report

14 November 2023 to 16 November 2023

Carrdus School

Overthorpe Hall
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX17 2BS

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor, through the governing body, ensures that those with leadership and management responsibilities have the appropriate skills and knowledge and effectively discharge them so that the requirements of the relevant standards and statutory guidance are met.
2. The school's aims and approach to education, known as the Carrdus Pathway, centre on academic rigour and the development of a pupil's individual character with the attributes of self-confidence, independence, resilience, aspiration, empathy, and imagination. Pupils demonstrate many of these qualities in lessons and in their extra-curricular activities. Pupils are happy at the school and have a sense of belonging.
3. Teaching enables pupils of all ages, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to make good progress overall from their starting points. Pupils exhibit positive attitudes to learning and value the support they receive from staff. However, teaching does not always help pupils to develop the ability to think critically about what they are learning or engage with more challenging concepts in the subjects that they are taught. In some areas pupils do not receive consistently helpful feedback from their teachers about how to improve their work.
4. Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness has identified several areas for improvement, including the need for better progression and challenge in the curriculum. This has resulted in action plans being implemented to help ensure the most effective aspects of the school's provision, such as the successfully established practice in English, are consistently applied across the school.
5. Pupils are well prepared for senior school and achieve places at their preferred destination schools.
6. Leaders actively promote the principles of equality and meet the requirements under the Education Act 2010. Pupils maintain respectful relationships. Behaviour management is effective throughout the school and interactions reflect the school's emphasis on treating others with mutually equal regard, whatever differences may exist
7. Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to broaden their experience beyond the classroom in extra-curricular activities. Pupils learn effectively about life in British society and extend their awareness of cultural diversity in Britain.
8. The school's premises and accommodation are routinely maintained to an appropriate standard. There are effective systems for health and safety, including fire safety. Leaders oversee risk management and a sufficiently systematic approach to mitigating risks is in place, and is being further developed.
9. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Governors maintain suitable oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures.

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:

- teaching enables pupils to develop the ability to think critically about what they are learning and engage with more challenging concepts in the subjects that they are taught.
- feedback to pupils consistently strengthens their understanding of how to improve their work.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school to ensure that Standards are met and that leaders promote the wellbeing of the pupils effectively.
11. Across the school, senior leaders assist staff to effectively implement policies and procedures so that pupils benefit from consistent practice. Leaders have a clear understanding of the direction of the school's development and communicate this effectively with the school community.
12. The school meets its requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and does not allow any discrimination against pupils. The school promotes the principles of equality through an ethos of respect, which is promoted by staff's considerate regard for members of the school community.
13. Effective measures are in place to identify hazards and mitigate risks. Leaders work closely with the maintenance team to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to minimise potential risks. Staff receive training in how to carry out risk assessments and risk assessments are regularly and frequently reviewed to ensure their continued suitability.
14. The school provides parents with all the required information, such as through policies and other information available on the school website. Staff communicate with parents about their child's progress, including through regular school reports.
15. Leaders evaluate the success of school practice effectively and have, for example, identified monitoring, tracking and evaluation of pupils' progress as a priority for continued development.
16. The school's complaints policy sets out the three stages to be followed to raise a concern about the school, including informally and how to escalate a complaint through the school's formal processes. Leaders communicate about the complaints procedure clearly and respond to any complaints appropriately and swiftly. Records of complaints include identification of actions taken in response to any complaints received. Leaders provide parents with the required information about the number of complaints in the preceding year.
17. Leaders maintain appropriate links with other agencies, such as when safeguarding concerns arise. Regular safeguarding audits and reports to the governing body ensure that safeguarding remains a priority and that governors' responsibilities to safeguard the pupils are met.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Children's skills develop well in the early years. Most children achieve the early learning goals which set out national expectations of learning and development by the end of the Reception year. This is because of teaching that is tailored to meet their needs. Staff adapt the way they interact with individual children to promote their curiosity and follow their interests. Leaders have recently introduced a new scheme of work to teach early reading skills. Children learn about the sounds letters make in a systematic way by following the scheme.
19. Effective teaching of the curriculum makes sure that pupils gain knowledge and develop skills across a suitable breadth of subjects. The range of subjects taught ensures that pupils have opportunities to gain knowledge and develop a breadth of skills. For example, pupils achieve high grades in singing and playing musical instruments, and several pupils obtain scholarships in arts, drama, sports and academic areas.
20. Teachers use detailed schemes of work to inform their expectations of learning. They advance pupils' progress by communicating their secure subject knowledge effectively. However, teaching does not always develop pupils' capacity for thinking about the subjects in depth or their ability to deal with more challenging concepts. Pupils identify the activities, which ignite their enthusiasm for learning, but many do not feel challenged in some aspects of their learning. Leaders are successfully building on the effective practice established in English to enhance pupils' progress and level of achievement across the curriculum.
21. Pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement in lessons where teaching encourages them to share their views and opinions and develop as reflective learners, positively influencing their attitude to learning. Pupils are quizzical and curious about the world around them and are able to link their learning with personal experiences resulting in higher-order thinking, but this was not typical of the teaching across the school. As a result, some pupils lack the opportunity to apply and test their knowledge and tackle more difficult concepts.
22. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. This is because leaders of this provision identify pupils' needs carefully and communicate with teachers about the strategies to use to help pupils progress further and meet their individual targets.
23. The school has a suitable framework for assessing pupils' progress and attainment. In some subjects, staff communicate clearly to pupils about how to make further progress. However, feedback to pupils does not always help them understand how to improve their work and move forward in their learning.
24. Pupils engage in a range of clubs, house competitions, drama and music productions. As a result, they develop and apply their skills in these areas. Educational visits and contributions from invited speakers deepen pupils' motivation to learn and enable them to extend their knowledge further.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. The school enables pupils to understand what constitutes a healthy and active lifestyle through assemblies and lessons, such as those in science, physical education and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). The PSHE programme includes appropriate content. It teaches pupils how to support their own physical and mental wellbeing. For example, pupils learn strategies to recognise and deal with anxiety.
26. Leaders consult with parents about the relationships education programme and ensure that it contains suitable content for pupils to acquire age-appropriate knowledge and understanding. Pupils feel confident to share ideas during these lessons.
27. A suitable written behaviour policy is implemented consistently. Pupils comply with behavioural expectations and the few behavioural or bullying incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils know that bullying is not tolerated. From the early years upwards pupils behave in a way that is kind and respectful to each other and to adults. They wait their turn and listen to what others have to say.
28. Leaders and managers keep detailed behavioural records that inform their effective identification of pupils' pastoral needs. Leaders work closely with the learning support staff, teachers, the counsellor and medical professionals to ensure the wellbeing of individual pupils is identified and action taken if necessary.
29. Pupils benefit from assemblies where specific themes, such as empathy, equality, inclusion, children's mental health, the rights of the child and the prevention of bullying, are explored.
30. Suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of first aid and medication, with early years staff, alongside others, being trained in paediatric first aid. Effective health and safety procedures are in place, including those for fire safety. There are clear protocols to maintain the security of buildings. The premises and accommodation are kept to a suitable standard through regular checks and maintenance. Pupils state that they feel safe at school.
31. Pupils are suitably supervised at all times, including in the early years, where required staff-to-child ratios are maintained.
32. Staff and visiting speakers use resources and materials that promote positive values. As a result, pupils receive consistent messages around the importance of respect and tolerance for other people.
33. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

34. The curriculum's schemes of work incorporates exploration of different cultures. Teaching promotes the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different beliefs. It does this through imparting consistent messages about the importance and relevance of these values. Pupils learn about consequences of significant events in Britain and the world, such as changes to methods of governance.
35. Pupils are actively involved in charitable giving and fundraising through whole school events, such as cake sales and community projects. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility to the environment through exposure to discussion of issues that relate to this, such as the role that bees play in the eco-system.
36. Pupils experience economic education that make effective use of understandable scenarios to develop pupils' economic understanding. For example, pupils learn about methods of trade and how these have altered over time. A school business after-school club broadens the pupils' understanding of economics.
37. Pupils develop social awareness and a sense of social responsibility. Collaboration is evident in lessons and pupils willingly share resources. Pupils value taking on responsibilities and increasingly accept positions of leadership as they progress through the school. Year 6 pupils take on several leadership roles during the year, including working as 'buddies' with children in the Reception year.
38. Pupils are equipped for the next stage of their education through the preparation for their transition to senior school. Pupils listen to visiting speakers and engage in presentations about a range of careers.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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Safeguarding

39. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Safeguarding procedures, including those relating to child-on-child abuse, are in line with current statutory guidance. The school responds to any safeguarding concerns effectively and in a timely manner, including by liaising with and referring concerns to local agencies when appropriate. The school has suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff.
40. Safeguarding leads receive appropriate training for their role and have the time to fulfil their responsibilities successfully. They liaise with relevant partnerships and external agencies as incidents arise and refer to children's services in a timely manner maintaining records in line with statutory guidance.
41. Safeguarding leads receive appropriate training for their role. All staff receive suitable and regular safeguarding training, commencing at induction. Staff are aware of the expectations placed upon them and understand the referral process and the thresholds for reporting issues or incidents. Staff work closely and effectively together to promote pupils' wellbeing. Pupils feel that they can talk to an adult if they have any concerns.
42. The school conducts all the appropriate safer recruitment checks and records these as required on a single central register of appointments.
43. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when online. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place to mitigate risks.
44. Governor's oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements is effective. The safeguarding governor maintains a close working relationship with the safeguarding leads and others with safeguarding responsibilities and conducts regular audits of the effectiveness of safeguarding.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Carrdus School
Department for Education number	941/6046
Registered charity number	1042783
Address	Carrdus School Overthorpe Hall Blacklocks Hill Banbury Oxfordshire OX17 2BS
Website	carrdusschool.com
Proprietor	Tudor Hall School
Chair	Mr Simon Beale
Headteacher	Mrs Samantha Bagshaw
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	113
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 May 2019

Information about the school

45. Carrdus School, formerly offering an education for female pupils aged 3 to 11 years and male pupils aged 3 to 8 years, became fully co-educational in September 2020. The school is located in Banbury, Oxfordshire, and comprises the early years for children aged 3 to 5 years, the lower school for pupils aged 5 to 7 years and the upper school for pupils aged 7 to 11 years. The school is owned by Tudor Hall School, a charitable trust and is overseen by a board of governors. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
46. The school has identified 19 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
47. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language.
48. The school aims to give every child a happy and confident start to school life. It intends to meet their needs in a safe learning environment in which academic challenge, the values of confidence, independence, resilience, aspiration, empathy and imagination are instilled, and pupils' wellbeing, physical and mental health are actively promoted.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 14 November to 16 November 2023

49. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
50. Inspection activities included:
- discussions with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff
 - visits and tours to areas of the school, including the early years, to observe lessons, assemblies, registration sessions and extra-curricular activities
 - scrutiny of a range of policies, records, logs and other documentation
 - a review and discussion in relation to samples of pupils' work alongside pupils and staff
 - discussions with groups of pupils from a range of year groups.
51. 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

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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