

School inspection report

11 to 13 March 2025

West Lodge School

36 Station Road

Sidcup

Kent

DA15 7DU

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. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school and ensure that leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities so that the school meets the Standards consistently.
2. Leaders accurately self-evaluate the school's successes and areas for development, with both support and challenge from governors. Leaders identify and mitigate any contextual risks to the school and implement rounded and well-informed improvement plans, linked to the school's aims and ethos.
3. Pupils benefit from a broad, inclusive and age-appropriate curriculum. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and communicate effectively so that pupils understand how to improve their work. Lesson planning and resourcing feature due consideration for the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). As a result, pupils make good progress.
4. Leaders are ambitious for pupils' learning and achievement. By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils attain above average in standardised tests in mathematics and English compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The majority of leavers gain entry to their first choice of senior school.
5. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. They facilitate and regularly review reasonable adjustments and implement a suitable accessibility plan. Policies and procedures are aligned with current statutory guidance and staff training ensures that they are implemented effectively. Important information is readily accessible on the school's website.
6. Leaders implement a suitable programme for pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE). The programme takes into account the age and needs of the pupils. The school's extra-curricular programme is well planned and enables pupils to explore and develop their interests.
7. Pupils feel safe at school and leaders actively promote their physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. Leaders' implementation of the school's behaviour and bullying policies is typically effective, and as a result, polite, considerate and respectful relationships are commonplace. However, the school's behavioural management strategies are not always effective in preventing a small number of pupils from repeat poor behaviour.
8. Leaders and staff identify potential risks within school and implement appropriate measures to mitigate these. Health and safety arrangements, as well as first aid provision and fire safety procedures, are comprehensive and comply with current regulations.
9. Through a range of guest speakers, trips and charitable initiatives, leaders ensure that pupils develop a broad social and economic understanding and appreciate the contribution they can make to their local community and wider society. In the older years, careers education is delivered through the PSHE programme and external speakers, including parents.
10. Leaders maintain a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the statutory framework for the early years and ensure that children from the youngest age are supported to meet age-related

expectations. Children learn to understand and regulate their emotions, become confident communicators and develop numerical fluency. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

11. Leaders have developed an effective safeguarding culture. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they can approach a trusted adult for guidance and support when required. Safeguarding procedures and staff training are in line with current statutory guidance. However, some staff do not have as secure an understanding as possible of the school's procedures for reporting low-level concerns. In addition, leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities do not liaise with external safeguarding partners as effectively as possible.

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 behaviour management strategies are consistently successful in preventing repetition of poor behaviour from a small number of pupils
- strengthen staff's understanding of the school's procedures for reporting low-level concerns
- strengthen the safeguarding team's liaison with local safeguarding partners.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Governors and leaders work as a cohesive team to actively promote pupils' wellbeing. An efficient board and committee structure supports governors' monitoring of the implementation of the school's policies and procedures. Governors visit the school regularly and offer both support and challenge to school leaders by analysing termly leadership reports and collaborating over school improvement targets. Their effective oversight ensures that leaders demonstrate good knowledge and skills and fulfil their roles effectively.
13. Leaders communicate and promote the school's aims and ethos effectively. The 'West Lodge Way' is a pupil-friendly version of the school's ethos that is promoted through displays across the school and referenced daily during discussion.
14. Policies and procedures reflect statutory guidance. Leaders regularly review how effectively and consistently policies are implemented and the extent to which they are understood by staff and pupils.
15. Leaders use a variety of data, including assessment scores and pupil surveys, to develop a broad understanding of the school's most effective aspects and areas for development. A development plan is in place to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted, including through effective teaching. As a result, pupils make consistently good progress across the curriculum.
16. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A clear and detailed accessibility plan and individual education plans (IEPs) ensure that reasonable adjustments are made as necessary to support pupils who have SEND. Leaders review the curriculum and monitor lessons and activities to ensure that teaching is inclusive. They liaise effectively with external agencies and professionals to ensure that pupils who have SEND receive appropriate support.
17. The school provides parents with a wide range of useful information. Leaders regularly upload the latest versions of documents onto the school's website so that parents are kept up to date. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and attainment through receiving regular and detailed reports. Leaders provide local authorities with appropriate information related to funded pupils who have education, health and care (EHC) plans.
18. The school operates an effective complaints procedure. Leaders take parental concerns seriously and they are dealt with in an open and timely manner in line with school policy. Governors and leaders regularly review the complaints log and, where appropriate, lessons are learned, recorded and acted upon.
19. Governors and leaders have a strategic approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing. There is a robust risk-management culture that influences decisions at all levels, especially in relation to educational visits. Risk assessments are thorough, bespoke and reviewed regularly by leaders. They identify potential risks carefully and put forward appropriate measures to mitigate these. Whenever necessary, individual pupils' needs are taken into account.
20. Leaders in the early years implement suitable policies and procedures to ensure the setting meets current statutory requirements. The environment is suitably staffed, and children are continuously supervised, particularly during rest, play and the start and end of the school day. Early years staff receive age-specific training in relation to SEND, safeguarding and food hygiene. The site and

facilities are suitable for early years children and promote their development and independence. Leaders carefully plan children's transitions from home to school and to the next class, enabling children to become familiar with their new environment and to feel secure.

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. Leaders plan the curriculum so that all pupils undertake a wide and varied timetable of lessons and activities appropriate to their ages and aptitudes. Specialist teaching and suitable use of resources, in areas such as modern foreign languages, engineering and computing, foster pupils' interest and self-motivation. A broad programme of educational visits and extra-curricular clubs, from cookery to Lego construction, extend and deepen pupils' learning and skills both within and beyond the curriculum.
23. Teaching staff adapt classroom strategies, making good use of resources and lesson time to meet pupils' different needs. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to advance pupils' learning and understanding. Lesson planning considers pupils' prior knowledge and attainment so that pupils build on their previous learning productively and make good progress. Teachers are quick to provide additional support when pupils do not make expected progress. Equally, where pupils are ready for more challenge, teachers provide complex tasks that deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
24. Pupils make good progress with their literacy skills, including speaking and listening. As they move through the school, pupils read fluently, communicating with confidence and presenting their views in a reasoned and logical way. Equally, the curriculum and teaching support pupils to develop proficiency in mathematics. Pupils develop fluency in calculations through regular application of their mathematical skills and understanding. Teaching enables pupils to apply their knowledge in problem-solving and mathematical reasoning.
25. Leaders implement an effective framework for assessment which provides detailed, individual tracking data for all pupils. They use the information collected to inform a broad programme of additional targeted support, including for pupils who have higher prior attainment. Leavers are consistently offered places at selective senior schools and awarded a range of scholarships.
26. Leaders provide teachers with detailed guidance about how to support pupils who have SEND. The needs of pupils who have SEND are consequently well known to teaching staff, who make reasonable adjustments in most lessons to meet their needs. Leaders maintain effective oversight of the provision for pupils who have SEND. They use accurate and detailed assessments, including those conducted by external professionals, when appropriate, to identify specific targets and strategies for support, which are used effectively both within the classroom and during one-to-one sessions.
27. Pupils who speak EAL are entered into the school's EAL register upon entry. Their progress is closely monitored, and individual support is introduced whenever needed. As a result, pupils who speak EAL make good progress with their English.
28. In the early years, children develop confidence and independence in their learning as a result of an appropriate curriculum and well-trained staff. Resources and activities are thoughtfully matched to children's needs and interests. Staff support children well to develop their language and conceptual understanding through activities such as role-play, questioning and the introduction of subject-specific vocabulary. Children become articulate and confident communicators as they share their ideas in lessons, support and encourage each other, and listen well to what each other has to say. The vast majority of children meet the early learning goals across all areas of the framework.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. Pupils participate in an extensive range of physical activities through their physical education (PE) lessons, competitive sports and a range of extra-curricular activities from athletics to early-years yoga. This enables them to develop their balance and gross and fine motor skills, as well as to achieve well in a wide range of sports. Pupils also have opportunities to explore and develop their physical abilities in a range of outdoor environments such as during outdoor learning sessions and whilst on residential trips from Year 4.
31. Leaders support pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing effectively. The introduction of 'learning powers', a core set of skills and characteristics that define success in learning, has had a positive impact on pupils' resilience and adaptability. Regular opportunities to present and then reflect upon their work supports pupils to be self-aware and comfortable with their achievements and personal areas for development. For those pupils who need additional support, recently introduced initiatives such as construction brick therapy, the creation of a sensory space and an 'emotional colour chart' have led to improved self-esteem on the part of those individuals.
32. The religious studies (RS) and PSHE programmes develop pupils' learning about a wide range of religious beliefs and spiritual perspectives. Assemblies, ranging from religious service to pupil-led presentations on themes such as the nature of the universe, allow for further moments of spiritual reflection and widening perspective.
33. Pupils are well supervised by effectively deployed adults at all times. Appropriate staff-to-child ratios are always maintained in the early years.
34. Pupils and staff share warm, respectful relationships and, as a result, pupils move around the school in a calm and considerate manner. Behaviour management in lessons is consistent and typically effective. Leaders monitor trends in behaviour and typically apply sanctions effectively and provide support for pupils affected by any behavioural incidents. However, the school's behaviour management strategies are not always successful in preventing repetition of poor behaviour from a small number of pupils.
35. Bullying is rare and is not tolerated. Pupils are taught about the harm that bullying can do and strategies to manage conflict. They understand how to identify bullying and are comfortable reporting any concerns to a trusted adult.
36. Staff in the early years help children to feel at ease and to enjoy their activities. Children feel secure in their environment as a result of the caring relationships and positive attitudes modelled by staff. They learn to regulate their emotions and develop empathy for others with the support of soft toy characters, each representing a different emotion. In addition, the early years curriculum regularly promotes children's physical and emotional wellbeing through activities designed to support these, both indoors and outdoors, and through regular PE lessons and clubs. As a result of this provision, children consistently reach goals in relation to self-care and physical development.
37. The PSHE and RSE programmes enable pupils to develop an age-appropriate understanding of the features of respectful relationships, including the importance of respecting an individual's privacy and consent. Parents are consulted and kept informed regarding any curriculum updates. These

programmes are well delivered to meet the needs of the different age groups. Pupils are taught how to recognise and manage their emotions and gain an age-appropriate understanding of the physical changes they might experience as they move through adolescence and puberty. The RSE programme meets current statutory requirements.

38. The school site is maintained to a high standard. Robust health and safety procedures are in place, regularly reviewed and implemented effectively. There are regular fire evacuation drills. Regular checks and maintenance are carried out across the premises. Leaders keep detailed records of these and take suitable action to address any issues. Appropriate systems are in place for the control of traffic and people on site. Health and safety training for staff, including in fire safety, is thorough and up to date.
39. Appropriate first aid procedures and suitable accommodation are in place to care for pupils who are injured or who become unwell. First aid is provided by suitably trained staff, with staff in the early years trained in paediatric first aid. Pupils with specific medical needs are well known to staff and receive suitable care. Any medicine is appropriately administered and stored securely. Appropriate records are kept, including those relating to accidents, injuries and the administration of medicines.
40. Leaders maintain admission and attendance registers appropriately and review these regularly to monitor patterns of absence. Staff are vigilant and follow up any unexplained absences promptly. Leaders comply with local reporting procedures in relation to children missing education. They inform the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.

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

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

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

42. The curriculum supports pupils to develop respect for other faiths and cultures and to take an interest in the wider world. The PSHE, geography and RS programmes provide opportunities for pupils and parents to share diverse beliefs and customs. In PSHE lessons, pupils learn about the different forms of prejudice and discrimination and the harm they can cause individuals and society. In geography lessons, pupils learn how slavery has influenced the modern world both geographically and politically.
43. Leaders promote respect for British society and its institutions. From a young age, pupils learn to value democracy when either standing or voting for positions of pupil leadership. In year 6, pupils visit the Houses of Parliament to learn about the democratic process. Pupils develop their understanding of the differences between right and wrong through the school's teaching about themes such as fairness and justice as part of the PSHE programme, and through the rules and behavioural expectations set out by school leaders. Year 6 pupils apply their developing understanding in an annual mock trial at the Royal Courts of Justice.
44. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for the wellbeing of others. From an early age, pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to lead and support their school community, such as by acting as members of the eco-council or through the rotational senior responsibilities given to all members of Year 6. The eco-council engages the local community in their work, for example through the development of a shared local garden. A number of other school initiatives promote pupils' sense of service and charity, such as regular support for local foodbanks, local litter picks and choir excursions to a local care home.
45. Pupils receive age-appropriate guidance about careers and financial management. In the early years, a paramedic, dentist and vet visit the school and talk about their work, and children meet police officers at a local station. Pupils receive visits and attend workshops from professionals representing different careers, such as design and environmental engineering. Year 6 pupils take part in an annual competition based on a television show about entrepreneurship where they have to create and present a business concept and consider both expenditure and profit. Such activities support pupils' preparation for later adult life.
46. The school provides pupils with effective support and guidance through teaching and academic support groups with regard to preparing for entrance examinations. Leaders' close liaison with senior schools supports a smooth transition process for leavers. Parents and pupils discuss options open to them with staff and are well supported in choosing their next school, including through visits, transition days and presentations from recent alumni. As a result of such measures, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

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.

Safeguarding

47. There is an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. Governors' formal annual review of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures is supplemented by their regular oversight and challenge. The designated safeguarding governor meets regularly with the safeguarding team to offer support and challenge and review the suitability and effectiveness of the school's responses to safeguarding concerns or any issues that have arisen.
48. The school's safeguarding policy and procedures reflect current statutory guidance and are a central feature of induction for new staff. Staff training, both in-person and online, includes all required elements, including the school's safeguarding procedures, the staff code of conduct and the whistleblowing policy. However, the safeguarding team's liaison with external safeguarding partners is not as developed as possible.
49. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities engage with local agencies for safeguarding refresher training. As a result, leaders and staff are aware of when and how to make referrals relating to safeguarding or child protection concerns such as child-on-child abuse, children missing education and any concerns about radicalisation or extremism. However, the safeguarding team would benefit from more regular liaison with external safeguarding partners.
50. The safeguarding team responds effectively to safeguarding concerns that arise and maintains suitable records of these and the actions taken in response to them. The team closely monitors any pupils affected by or deemed to be at risk of being affected by safeguarding issues.
51. Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, including when online, and understand how to report concerns. Arrangements for the monitoring and filtering of online technology are effective and leaders respond to any alerts promptly.
52. Robust safer recruitment procedures are in place that reflect current statutory requirements. All required pre-employment checks on new members of staff, governors, volunteers and contractors are carried out before they commence working at the school and are recorded in a suitable single central record (SCR) of appointments. Staff files are detailed and appropriate. Leaders' and governors' effective oversight ensures that all steps in the safer recruitment process are followed systematically.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	West Lodge School
Department for Education number	303/6002
Registered charity number	283627
Address	West Lodge School 36 Station Road Sidcup Kent DA15 7DU
Phone number	0208 3002489
Email address	office@westlodge.org.uk
Website	www.westlodge.org.uk
Proprietor	West Lodge School Ltd
Chair	Mrs Christine Head-Rapson
Headteacher	Mr Robert Francis
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	170
Date of previous inspection	15 to 18 March 2022

Information about the school

54. West Lodge School is an independent co-educational day school situated in a modernised Victorian building in Sidcup. It was founded in 1940. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a governing body. The school has one class per year group from Nursery to Year 6.
55. There are 42 children in the early years comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
56. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. The school has identified English as an additional language for 12 pupils.
58. The school states its aims are to encourage pupils to regard themselves as valued and successful, thereby developing and maintaining high self-esteem; to promote a 'growth mindset' so that pupils see a challenging task as an opportunity to test themselves, to learn and to grow from the experience; to develop links with home so that parents and school can work in partnership for the benefit of the pupils; to foster each pupil's moral and religious awareness to nurture co-operation, tolerance, empathy and respect for themselves and others; to encourage independence so that each pupil can take responsibility for their own learning; to display and promote good behaviour at all times in order that each pupil can accept responsibility for their own actions and to structure a wide range of learning experiences which offer equal opportunities for each pupil to experience success.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

11 to 13 March 2025

59. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

60. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

61. 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.
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