ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

10 to 12 December 2024

Worth School

Paddockhurst Road

Turners Hill

Crawley

West Sussex

RH10 4SD

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 monitor the effectiveness of the school well. They ensure that leaders have the knowledge skills and understanding so that the Standards are met consistently. Leaders at all levels have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They work closely together with governors to promote the aims and values of the school, ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils underpins strategic planning and decision making.

2. The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of the diverse pupil body. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are provided with a broad and engaging academic curriculum. Sixth form pupils choose from a wide range of options and courses that prepare them for further study or employment in the United Kingdom or abroad.

3. Pupils make good progress in their academic work. This is as a result of teaching that is well planned and tailored to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils enjoy their learning and are eager to act on the helpful feedback for improvement given by teachers.

4. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. Through individual support and the adjustments made by teachers, pupils who have SEND are confident in their learning and are able to access the curriculum effectively.

5. Leaders provide a comprehensive and appropriate programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education that links closely to the aims and values of the school. This supports pupils to develop a greater self-awareness and understand how to form healthy relationships.

6. Sixth form pupils are well supported as they make choices about the next stage in their life. Staff offer clear guidance on options for further study or employment in the UK or abroad. However, careers education for pupils in Years 7 to 10 is more limited and does not inform pupils about subject and career options as effectively as possible.

7. The school promotes pupils' spiritual awareness well. The Abbey Church is at the centre of school life, providing space for private reflection and communal worship. Pupils are taught about the Benedictine values of humility, service and community life as well as gaining an awareness of other faiths and belief systems.

8. The school develops pupils' sense of social responsibility through its programme of service in the local community. Through volunteering and fundraising, pupils develop a greater awareness of the needs of others.

9. Leaders encourage pupils to take on leadership roles in the school. Pupils train for and fulfil positions of responsibility in houses, the Abbey Church and through leading societies. Such roles help them to develop their self-confidence and ability to work empathetically with others.

10. Leaders provide a wide range of co-curricular activities. Pupils develop their interests and talents in sport, music and drama, and through the many academic and recreational clubs and societies. Pupils are taught about the importance of establishing a healthy balance between their academic work and other activities. Boarders enjoy a good range of activities at weekends as well as having time to relax.

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11. The management of boarding is highly effective. Clear policies and procedures are implemented consistently across all boarding houses. Boarding accommodation is clean, warm and well maintained. Boarders are well cared for as a result of the support offered by residential staff and through the school's medical centre. Boarders are confident to express their views and leaders respond promptly to any matters raised.

12. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are appropriate and effective. Governors and leaders ensure that the safeguarding policy and procedures are implemented effectively, including by making timely referrals to external agencies when required. Staff receive appropriate and regular training in safeguarding. Pupils are confident to share concerns with staff and their concerns are addressed promptly and sensitively.

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:

- strengthen the provision of careers education for pupils in Years 7 to 10, so that they are well informed about a wide range of subject and career options.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors know the school well. They visit often and adopt an evidence-based approach to checking that leaders fulfil their roles effectively. For example, they scrutinise policies, receive survey results, and meet with pupils and staff to ensure that suitable procedures are in place and are working effectively. This assures governors that leaders have the appropriate knowledge and skills to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.

14. Governors offer appropriate challenge and support to school leaders. Through sub-committees, governors work closely with school leaders to ensure that the wellbeing of pupils is prioritised in line with the aims of the school. Close collaboration between governors and school leaders informs the school's development plan, which is based on effective self-evaluation.

15. Governors support and monitor the work of senior safeguarding leaders to ensure that any changes to policy and procedures are implemented effectively. They ensure that liaison with external agencies is timely and appropriate.

16. The leadership of boarding is highly effective. Boarding staff have appropriate training, which is reviewed regularly, and updated when required. Policies and procedures are implemented effectively and consistently across the boarding houses. Well-developed channels of communication between house and academic staff ensure that all aspects of pupils' wellbeing are monitored and supported.

17. Leaders take a strategic and detailed approach to identify and manage any risks to the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders regularly review potential risks within the school's grounds and in the local town, and take appropriate steps to mitigate potential harm. Thorough risk assessments are carried out for school buildings and boarding houses, and for activities on and off the school site.

18. Governors and leaders seek and act upon the views of pupils. Through surveys, councils and meetings, governors and leaders gather the views of pupils and respond positively, where possible, to address their concerns. For example, changes to the school uniform and dress code, and new guidance on ordering take-away food have been implemented in response to pupils' views.

19. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act (2010). Pupils who have SEND receive appropriate support to help them access the curriculum effectively. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place and reviewed regularly. The plan identifies clear and timetabled strategies to ensure that any pupils who have disabilities can access the curriculum, the premises and school information.

20. Leaders take parental complaints and concerns seriously. A log of complaints enables governors and leaders to identify any patterns or trends. Leaders investigate complaints thoroughly and ensure that they respond within published timescales. They consider carefully whether any lessons can be learned from complaints and act accordingly. Leaders respond promptly and sensitively to any concerns raised by boarders. Boarders are confident that leaders deal with any concerns effectively.

21. All the required information is made available to parents and prospective parents. Parents receive detailed and informative reports on their child's progress. School policies and other information, including the aims and ethos of the school, are available on the school's website or sent directly to parents.

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

22. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders provide a wide and engaging curriculum that meets the needs and aptitudes of pupils. Leaders provide a broad range of curriculum choices for sixth form pupils including A level, the International Baccalaureate (IB) and BTEC courses of study, to prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education or career beyond school. Throughout the school, the curriculum is well supported by effective schemes of work that develop subject knowledge methodically.

24. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to deliver lessons that develop pupils' own subject knowledge and skills well and develop their interest in the subjects. Teaching is well planned. Using a variety of techniques, teachers ensure that lessons meet the needs of pupils, including those who have SEND or high prior attainment. Teaching typically enables pupils to acquire effective learning habits, so that pupils are confident to tackle new topics. Through the use of effective questioning, teachers promote thoughtful discussion and learning and, as a result, pupils are confident to take risks in their learning. Teaching enables pupils to become skilled at linking their good knowledge of prior work to their current learning, thus deepening their understanding Teaching enables all groups of pupils to make good progress from their particular starting points and achieve well at GCSE, A level and in the IB.

25. Teachers provide pupils with prompt and clear feedback. As a result, pupils are aware of the strengths and relative weaknesses of their work and understand what to do to improve it further. Leaders and teachers use assessment data effectively to challenge and support pupils to achieve their target grades.

26. Leaders ensure that staff are knowledgeable and trained in how to support pupils who have SEND. The specific learning needs of pupils who have SEND are identified early. Individual learning profiles shared with teachers indicate pupils' specific learning needs. Consequently, teachers are able to provide appropriate support in lessons to enable pupils who have SEND to access the curriculum effectively and make good progress from their starting points.

27. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported in their development of English, when required, so that they make good progress in this area and are confident to join discussions. Teachers provide these pupils with appropriate support, such as lists of subject specific vocabulary.

28. Leaders have devised a co-curricular programme that provides an extensive range of opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. Pupils achieve high standards in music and drama and have a wide range of performance opportunities. Pupils who enjoy sport develop their skills through an extensive programme of competitive fixtures. A rich variety of clubs and societies enables pupils to develop their academic and recreational interests.

29. Boarders participate enthusiastically in the programme of Friday night and weekend activities. The school develops their understanding of how engagement with recreational activities promotes their wellbeing and of the need to balance their academic lives with well-used free time.

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

30. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

31. Leaders foster an encouraging and enquiring spiritual ethos. Through lessons in PSHE and religious studies, pupils are taught about a wide range of faiths and belief systems. The Abbey Church is at the centre of school life. Weekly collective worship, house prayers and Sunday Mass offer pupils time and space for private reflection. Younger pupils benefit from the 'Oasis' programme that enables them to explore prayer and how they can make a difference in their daily interactions with the school community. Older pupils lead worship and act as role models by leading Bible studies and prayer groups for fellow pupils.

32. Leaders provide an effective programme of PSHE, including relationships and sex education (RSE), which meets the requirements of current statutory guidance. Pupils explore issues of personal identity, different types of healthy sexual relationships and the importance of consent. The programme equips pupils to make careful personal choices and teaches them the how to develop a healthy lifestyle.

33. Pupils' behaviour is good. Leaders expect pupils to show courtesy in their dealings with others. Pupils respond accordingly. Leaders ensure that the schools behaviour management policy and the anti-bullying strategy are implemented consistently. As a result, pupils know what expected of them and understand how the school's sanctions are applied. The school deals sensitively and proportionately when any incidents of misbehaviour or bullying occur.

34. Leaders promote a sense of trust between staff and pupils. Pupils are confident to seek help and support when they need it. Pupils' mental health is supported by a trained counsellor and teachers, who prioritise the wellbeing of pupils. Boarders receive care from matrons, tutors, and house staff who are readily available to support them when needed. Boarders can contact their parents quickly and easily. These measures help support pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem.

35. Leaders provide an extensive programme of physical education. Pupils of all abilities develop their skills through a wide range of sporting opportunities and competitive fixtures. Pupils who have a particular skill are supported to develop their skills through specialist coaching. Leaders promote a culture where participation and enjoyment matter more than sporting victories. As a result, pupils learn to value teamwork and participation. Pupils learn about the importance of maintaining their physical fitness alongside their academic work.

36. School premises, including the boarding accommodation, are well maintained. The boarding houses provide a warm, comfortable and suitable environment in which pupils can work, sleep and relax. House common rooms are well equipped with a wide range of recreational games and equipment. Boarders have access to kitchen facilities where they can make snacks and socialise with friends. Boarders confirm that they feel safe and well looked after.

37. Leaders manage the health and safety of pupils effectively. They take effective measures to promote site security and ensure that all required checks and maintenance are carried out. The management of fire risk is effective. Fire drills are held each term in school and in houses, including during boarding hours, and accurate records are kept. Leaders commission and act on the findings of regular fire risk assessments.

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38. The school's medical centre provides suitable care for pupils who are injured or ill. Pupils are supported in accessing medical care from local doctors, dentists and opticians. An appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid, including first aid for sports injuries.

39. The admissions and attendance registers are maintained effectively and in line with current statutory guidance. The school notifies the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard points of transition.

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 provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their social awareness and engage with the local community. Through the Wednesday afternoon community service programme, pupils help run drama sessions in local primary schools and visit the elderly. Others arrange the collection of clothes and food for a local charity supporting people who experience homelessness. Pupils engage in fundraising for charities, such as the local hospice and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).

42. Leaders provide an effective training programme for senior pupils to equip them to take on positions of responsibility in their houses and in the school and support others in the school community. In the Abbey Church, senior pupils provide spiritual guidance through leading worship and prayer groups. In the boarding houses, senior pupils help younger pupils to settle quickly and provide a listening ear. Older pupil leaders act as role models for younger pupils and help to create a coherent sense of community within houses and the school.

43. Leaders encourage pupils to express their views. Through surveys and the school council, pupils readily offer their ideas for school improvement. Leaders meet with pupils who represent their peers regularly and consider reasonable requests carefully. Boarders express their views formally through house meetings and informally through the good relationships between staff and pupils.

44. Leaders have worked with pupils and staff to develop a comprehensive equality, diversity and inclusion strategy which has a positive influence on pupils' behaviour and sense of belonging to the school community. Through assemblies, PSHE lessons and discussion groups, staff promote understanding and raise awareness of issues such as racism, social justice and gender equality.

45. The school develops' pupils' understanding of British society and the rule of law. Through their lessons in PSHE and subjects such as politics, history and geography, pupils learn in an unbiased way about democratic principles and how government operates. Pupils practise democracy when they elect representatives to pupil councils. In PSHE lessons, pupils are taught how laws are made and enforced. Through discussion of current affairs in PSHE lessons, pupils develop a deeper awareness of the ethical issues such as human rights and threats to the environment

46. A wide range of visiting speakers, and PSHE lessons in financial awareness develop pupils' economic understanding. For example, pupils learn how to manage personal bank accounts, apply for student loans, and understand about savings rates and interest. Pupils' charitable fundraising at school events also helps them to develop understanding of how to balance income and expenditure.

47. A comprehensive programme of careers education and guidance helps sixth form pupils make appropriate choices for the next stage in their life. Pupils in their final year are well supported by staff who help them with applications to universities in the United Kingdom or abroad. Sixth form pupils are advised well about a wide range of options after school including employment and apprenticeships. However, careers education for pupils in Years 7 to 10 is more limited and does not inform pupils of possible career and subject options as effectively as possible.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. Suitable arrangements to safeguard the wellbeing of pupils are in place. Staff are alert to any safeguarding concerns and know how to report them. Leaders respond swiftly and appropriately to any concerns and keep suitable and secure records of safeguarding concerns and the school's responses to these.

50. The safeguarding policy and procedures reflect current statutory guidance. Leaders liaise with external agencies appropriately and refer any concerns when necessary. Governors exercise close oversight of safeguarding arrangements through regular contact with leaders and termly visits by the governor with specific responsibility for safeguarding.

51. Pupils are confident to speak to an adult about any concerns. An anonymous reporting system is also available for pupils to report concerns about themselves or others. Leaders respond swiftly, sensitively and effectively to any concerns raised. Boarders maintain regular contact with their parents and guardians. They know how to contact the independent person, who is available to listen to any concerns they might have.

52. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training and know how to recognise and report any safeguarding concerns. Clear procedures are in place for reporting any low-level concerns or allegations against staff. New staff receive formal training on the school's safeguarding procedures as part of their induction.

53. Leaders and staff understand their responsibilities with regard to the 'Prevent' duty. They are alert to the possibility of radicalisation and take appropriate steps to check the content delivered by visiting speakers. Leaders have assessed the contextual risks to pupils in the school, such as county lines, and address these issues through lessons in PSHE.

54. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to stay safe online through their lessons in PSHE. The school has suitable systems in place to filter and monitor online activity. Leaders receive regular reports of any online concerns and act upon them quickly.

55. The school carries out all required pre-employment checks on staff, volunteers and governors in line with current statutory guidance. The school takes appropriate measures to protect pupils from unauthorised persons and checks that all adults who work with pupils understand the school's code of conduct and safeguarding policy. An accurate single central record of appointments is kept which is checked regularly by governors and leaders.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Worth School
Department for Education number	938/6208
Registered charity number	1093914
Address	Worth School Paddockhurst Road Turners Hill Crawley West Sussex RH10 4SD
Phone number	01342 710200
Email address	information@worth.org.uk
Website	http://www.worthschool.org.uk
Proprietor	Worth School
Chair	Mr Jeremy Fletcher
Headmaster	Mr Stuart McPherson
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	663
Number of boarding pupils	265
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2022

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Information about the school

57. Worth School is an independent co-educational Roman Catholic boarding and day school near Crawley, West Sussex. It is located close to the separate community of Benedictine monks at Worth Abbey. The school is a charitable trust whose trustees act as governors of the school.

58. Boarders are accommodated in five boarding houses situated on the school site. Boarders come mainly from the south of England and from countries overseas.

59. The school has identified 208 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

60. English is an additional language for 12 pupils.

61. The school states its aims are to encourage pupils to develop a strong sense of values based on the Benedictine, Christian ethos of the school. It seeks to encourage pupils to know their own strengths and weaknesses, to listen to others, to be grateful, and to serve within the school community and beyond.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	10 to 12 December 2024

62. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

63. 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
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

64. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

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

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