

# School inspection report

25 to 27 November 2025

## **Leweston School**

Sherborne

Dorset

DT9 6EN

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 promote pupils' wellbeing effectively, both during the school day and in boarding time. They monitor the quality of provision regularly and thoroughly. Leaders take effective action to improve any areas they identify as needing further development. Leaders are experienced and knowledgeable. They ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
2. The curriculum is appropriate and well planned throughout the school, from the early years through to the sixth form. Leaders review the curriculum regularly and adapt it to meet pupils' needs. The curriculum provides pupils with knowledge and understanding across a broad range of subjects. Older pupils have access to suitable choices at GCSE and A level, with BTEC qualifications also available. Pupils make good progress across the school and achieve well in public examinations.
3. Teachers have good subject knowledge and deliver the curriculum well. In the early years, teaching is matched to the needs of young children. Teachers adapt learning to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers make learning interesting. They take pupils' individual needs and interests into account when planning lessons. However, there is a small amount of inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Some teaching is less effective because it is not as well matched to pupils' needs. Where this is the case, some pupils do not engage as well with their learning and make less progress as a result.
4. Respect is given a high priority in the school. Pupils are taught about protected characteristics, such as race, religion and disability. They learn about the importance of fairness and equality. Pupils develop an appreciation of the differences between people and demonstrate positive attitudes towards diversity in society. Pupils are respectful towards staff and their peers.
5. The school offers a wide and diverse physical education (PE) curriculum and sports programme. It provides extensive sporting facilities and well-qualified staff. Pupils are enabled to take part in a range of sports, including pentathlon and equestrianism. Pupils achieve well, with some competing at national and international level.
6. The school's Catholic social teaching programme has a positive impact on pupils. It encourages them to be thoughtful and considerate and to understand the ways in which some people in society are less fortunate than others. Taking part in charity work helps pupils to develop an understanding of the ways in which people can support the more vulnerable members of society.
7. Pupils are very positive about boarding. They enjoy spending time with their friends and the support they receive from boarding staff. The boarding houses are welcoming and well maintained, with spaces for socialising, study and relaxation. Boarders are supported with their studies and with their emotional needs.
8. Leaders give safeguarding a high priority. They maintain an effective safeguarding culture both during the school day and in boarding time. Staff report any concerns about pupils promptly using the school's agreed systems. Leaders take timely and appropriate action in response to concerns raised, where necessary.

## 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:

- develop the small amount of less effective teaching so that all teaching is consistently well matched to pupils' needs.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders have a clear vision for the school, which is widely known and understood. They prioritise all aspects of pupils' wellbeing, including academic achievement. Leaders work with external agencies, such as children's social care and health services, in pupils' best interests. Leaders are vigilant, taking pre-emptive action to address any issues that arise before they have the chance to develop further. Leaders lead by example, demonstrating the respectful interactions they expect from pupils. Important values, such as kindness and consideration, are routinely promoted. As a result, the school is a friendly, welcoming and supportive place where pupils achieve well.
10. Leaders are knowledgeable and experienced. They carry out their responsibilities effectively. Leaders regularly evaluate the quality of the school's provision, identifying both what is working well and priorities for further development. They maintain a focus on continual improvement and have high expectations for the school.
11. Leaders have good knowledge and skills in relation to boarding, having undertaken appropriate training. They know and understand the relevant statutory requirements and make sure that these are implemented fully and consistently. Leaders make boarders' wellbeing their highest priority. As a result, boarders are provided with suitable accommodation, where they are supported, cared for and safeguarded.
12. Governors visit the school regularly. They meet with leaders, review documents and hold regular committee meetings covering all aspects of the school's work, including boarding. This enables them to hold leaders to account so that the Standards are met consistently.
13. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The school welcomes everyone, whatever their background or personal characteristics. The school's accessibility plan has recently been reviewed and developed. It is well focused on ensuring that all pupils have full access to the curriculum and the school site.
14. Risk-management processes are robust, and risks are managed effectively. Leaders are knowledgeable and suitably trained. They identify risks promptly, including those that are not immediately obvious. Leaders put control measures in place to mitigate the risks they identify. For example, specific risks associated with the equestrian centre are identified in great detail and addressed thoroughly. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.
15. Leaders keep up to date with changes to guidance and statutory regulations. They review and update policies, where necessary, in line with those changes. Policies are implemented consistently. They are shared appropriately with pupils, parents and staff so that they are understood by the school community.
16. The school provides parents with a range of information, mainly through its website. Parents are provided with detailed termly reports about their child's attainment, progress and attitudes to learning. Leaders provide local authorities with all required information, including about the use of funds related to education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Leaders report to local authorities, as required, when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.
17. The school has a suitable complaints policy, which is published on its website. Leaders respond appropriately when parents raise concerns, and the complaints policy is followed where necessary.

Leaders keep detailed records of the actions taken in response to complaints and the outcomes of their investigations.

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

**18. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. The curriculum is appropriate and well considered. Leaders review the curriculum regularly to ensure that it remains suitable and meets pupils' needs. Schemes of work are matched to pupils' ages and stages of development. The curriculum is planned and delivered effectively so that pupils make good progress throughout the school. Pupils achieve well at GCSE and A level and in BTEC qualifications.
20. In Reception, the curriculum covers the seven areas of learning in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework. The curriculum gives appropriate emphasis to early reading development. Children are taught phonics using an accredited, systematic programme. The mathematics curriculum is well focused on the development of key mathematical skills and concepts.
21. Staff in the early years plan learning through a mixture of adult-led and child-initiated activities, both in the classroom and outdoors. Teaching is well matched to each child's stage of development. Staff plan learning in ways that interest and engage children. Children are given plentiful opportunities to practise the skills that they learn. They make good progress during their time in the early years and are ready to move on to Year 1 when the time comes.
22. The prep-school curriculum is designed to be 'creative but ambitious'. Overarching topics, such as 'migration and movement', are used to create meaningful links between subjects. Leaders plan the curriculum around high-quality texts. The curriculum is broadened by a range of subjects taught by specialists, including modern languages and performing arts.
23. In the senior school, the curriculum has a well-considered core that covers key subject areas, including English, mathematics and science. When they join the senior school, pupils also learn about a broad range of other subjects. The school offers pupils a range of GCSEs, including equestrian studies, computer science, fashion and textile design, Latin, PE and sport.
24. In the sixth form, pupils are offered a range of A level options, alongside BTEC qualifications. They are given options that include equestrian studies, cookery, sciences, drama and theatre, economics, mathematics and languages. The sixth-form curriculum is enhanced by the 'Leweston enrichment and activity programme', which includes opportunities such as the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), and lifeguarding qualifications.
25. Teachers adjust the curriculum, and how it is taught, to meet pupils' individual needs. Lessons are well structured, with a clear focus on what pupils are intended to learn. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. This helps them to explain clearly, answer pupils' questions and identify common misconceptions. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well so that they can concentrate and learn. There is a small amount of inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Some teaching is less effective because it is less well matched to pupils' individual needs. Where this is the case, some pupils are less engaged with their learning and make less progress.
26. The school provides well for pupils who have SEND. Pupils' needs are identified at an early stage and provision is put into place, as necessary. Pupils' progress is monitored closely, and provision is adapted in response, where necessary. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their individual starting points.

27. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are identified when they join the school. Support is put in place to enable pupils to access the curriculum and engage fully with school life. Where appropriate, staff work individually with pupils ahead of class teaching to ensure that they understand the key vocabulary needed in different subjects. Pupils who speak EAL made good progress.
28. Assessment processes are carefully considered and well established. Throughout the school, pupils' learning is assessed regularly, both formally and informally. Leaders monitor the outcomes of assessment closely. Teachers adapt the curriculum and their teaching approaches in response to assessment outcomes. This helps pupils to make good progress.
29. Boarders are well supported academically. Younger boarders participate in daily supervised prep. Older boarders study independently. They have suitable spaces to study, and support is always available when needed. Boarding staff understand boarders' individual learning needs and put measures in place to address them.
30. The school provides an extensive co-curricular programme. This encourages pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and interests across a broad range of areas. For example, many pupils take part in the school's equestrian programme. Other options include sports, board games, laser shooting, community choir, drama and a 'pentathlon academy'. Pupils are given opportunities to go on trips and visits to places of interest. Boarders regularly go on shopping trips to nearby towns. Pupils attend residential trips, including overseas, such as to Nepal and the Netherlands.

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

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

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

32. Leaders emphasise the importance of mutual respect. Leaders and staff model respectful behaviour in their interactions with pupils and other adults. This helps pupils to know what is expected of them. Pupils learn about the differences between people, such as in relation to race, religion and disability, through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum and assemblies. They learn to celebrate those differences and appreciate the diverse nature of society.
33. Catholic social teaching underpins the school's work. Through this, pupils learn about social responsibilities and the inequalities in society. For example, they learn about foodbanks and why they are necessary. This helps pupils to develop a moral compass and an understanding of how people can help each other. They take part in charity work, supporting people both locally and overseas.
34. Spirituality plays a big part in the life of the school. Daily acts of collective worship provide opportunities for pupils to pray or to reflect quietly on matters of importance to them. Weekly mass is celebrated by the whole school community, with non-Catholic pupils welcomed and accommodated. Religious studies is a core part of the curriculum for all pupils. Pupils learn about major world religions and develop knowledge and understanding about how other people's beliefs may differ from their own.
35. The PSHE curriculum is suitable and delivered effectively. In prep, the school uses a commercially produced scheme of work, chosen carefully to suit the school's needs. From the early years onwards, pupils learn about important matters such as safety and healthy lifestyles, in a way that matches their age and stage of development. In the senior school, the PSHE programme covers a similar range of areas, with an overall focus on preparation for adulthood. This helps pupils to be ready, for example, for situations they may face when they start university.
36. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is taught alongside PSHE and is an integral part of the curriculum. Younger pupils learn about being a good friend and the importance of using 'kind hands'. Pupils learn about bodily autonomy and their right to say no to things they do not like. This builds into a more mature understanding of consent as pupils move through the senior school. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of pupils who have SEND, such as the provision of small-group or individual sessions about more sensitive topics, where necessary.
37. The PE and games curriculum is varied and well developed. Pupils engage in competitive sports from Year 3 onwards. Pupils learn about the importance of good sportsmanship, such as welcoming visiting teams and coping with losses. The school offers a wide range of sports, including pentathlon, equestrianism and swimming, making use of its facilities and specialist coaches. Pupils achieve well, with some performing at national level.
38. In the early years, children are given frequent opportunities to develop their physical skills. Some plan appropriate and well-focused activities, such as those that help children to develop their finger strength and dexterity. Staff also take advantage of chances to promote physical development that present themselves spontaneously, such as when children are playing outside.

39. The behaviour policy is implemented fairly and consistently throughout the school and during boarding time. There are very few serious incidents, and when they do occur, they are dealt with swiftly. Pupils behave well during lessons and in less structured times of the day. Pupils learn about bullying and the forms it can take through the PSHE curriculum. There are very few bullying incidents, but when they do occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively.
40. Pupils are well supervised throughout the school day, including during breaktimes. Sufficient staff are available during boarding time, so that there is always an adult available if help is needed. Positive relationships with staff help boarders to feel secure and supported.
41. The school is clean and well maintained. Health and safety procedures are robust, both in the school and in boarding. Required checks, including those relating to fire safety, are carried out routinely by suitably qualified people. Leaders ensure that fire drills are conducted during boarding time as required.
42. The boarding houses provide suitable accommodation, including areas for boarders to study and to socialise. Boarders have places to store their possessions, and lockable storage is readily available. Boarders have daily access to their phones so that they can keep in regular contact with their parents.
43. First aid arrangements are robust, with sufficient staff trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid. The school's wellbeing hub is staffed by qualified nurses and is readily accessible to pupils throughout the day. Robust health care arrangements are in place for boarders, including if they become unwell. All boarders are registered with the local GP surgery, and doctors visit regularly.
44. The school's prefect system is appropriate. Prefects are given suitable roles and responsibilities, and their work is supervised closely.
45. The school's admission and attendance registers are maintained in line with current regulations. Leaders monitor attendance closely and take effective action in response to absences.

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

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

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

47. The school promotes fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance, effectively. The school's ethos is closely aligned with these values, which permeate the school. Pupils learn about fundamental British values through PSHE and other aspects of the curriculum. For example, in the prep school, texts are carefully chosen to help pupils learn about and appreciate diversity in British society.
48. The school's Catholic social teaching programme encourages pupils to develop an understanding of how they can be a positive influence in the world. Pupils engage in charity work, such as working with a local foodbank and supporting an international Catholic charity. This helps them to develop an understanding of the inequalities in society and an appreciation of their own advantages.
49. Pupils learn about the difference between right and wrong throughout their time at school. From the early years onwards, children learn about how their behaviour can affect other people. They learn what is and is not acceptable. Pupils learn about rules and the importance of following them, for everyone's benefit. As pupils grow older, they learn about laws and the criminal justice system, including the parliamentary system and how laws are made.
50. Pupils are given a range of opportunities to take on responsibility, such as doing jobs to help in their classrooms or becoming a prefect. These increase as pupils grow older and make progress through the school. Pupils are also encouraged to become gradually more self-sufficient, for example, by walking to the equestrian centre from the prep school independently. These incremental steps help pupils to be ready for adult life by the time they leave the sixth form.
51. In the early years, the development of children's social skills is promoted well. They are encouraged and supported to play positively with others and to share. Staff use carefully chosen texts to help children to learn about the world around them and their place in it. Children learn about people who help society, including nurses, doctors and the emergency services.
52. Children begin to learn about money in the early years, for example through role-play activities. Economic education is taught through the PSHE and mathematics curriculums. For example, when learning about the risks associated with smoking, pupils also calculate the financial implications of making this choice. Economic education develops as pupils move through the school, ensuring that they have the key knowledge they need for adult life by the time that they leave the school.
53. A detailed careers programme runs throughout the school. Younger pupils learn about the world of work and the wide range of possibilities that are available to them. They learn that anyone can be anything, and that choices should not be limited by personal characteristics. Older pupils receive accurate, up-to-date and impartial guidance about their options after school, including apprenticeships. The school hosts a biennial careers fair for pupils and their parents, providing opportunities to speak with representatives from various careers. Pupils in the sixth form are given the support they need with decisions about university choices and the application process.

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

**54. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

55. Leaders make safeguarding a high priority. As a result, there is a positive safeguarding culture throughout the school and in boarding. There are suitable safeguarding systems in place, which work well. Leaders understand the school's context. This helps them to identify safeguarding risks and put measures in place to mitigate them.
56. Safeguarding procedures in the boarding houses are robust. Registers are taken regularly to ensure that staff always know where boarders are and that they are safe. Boarders know that there is an independent person that they can contact about any worries or concerns. Prominently displayed notices mean that boarders have ready access to the independent person's contact details.
57. Staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction when they join the school. They continue to receive regular ongoing training and updates, which help them to stay up to date with changes to statutory guidance and safeguarding practice. Staff are vigilant and report any concerns about pupils promptly.
58. Records of safeguarding concerns are detailed and thorough. They record clearly the concerns that staff report, and the actions taken in response to them. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding seek advice from outside agencies, such as children's social care, and make referrals where necessary. Leaders take timely actions that are in pupils' best interests.
59. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of other staff, including low-level concerns. They report any concerns promptly, about themselves or other adults. Leaders respond appropriately to any concerns that are raised, and detailed records are kept.
60. Safer recruitment processes are robust. Leaders know and understand the relevant statutory guidance well. All required pre-appointment checks are carried out before anyone is allowed to take up their post. The single central record (SCR) of those checks meets requirements and is well maintained.
61. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring arrangements check pupils' use and restrict what they are able to access. These arrangements apply both to the school and the boarding houses. Leaders are fully aware of the additional risks around internet use associated with boarding and put measures in place to mitigate them. For example, access to the internet is switched off an hour before boarders' bedtimes to ensure there is no inappropriate or excessive use.
62. Pupils learn about a range of ways to keep themselves safe. The PSHE curriculum is matched to pupils' ages and stages of development. Pupils are taught about online safety and potential risks when using the internet. They learn ways to protect themselves and how to seek help if they need it.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Leweston School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	838/6025
<b>Registered early years number</b>	EY308762
<b>Registered charity number</b>	295175
<b>Address</b>	Leweston School Sherborne Dorset DT9 6EN
<b>Phone number</b>	01963 210691
<b>Email address</b>	admin@leweston.dorset.sch.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.leweston.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Leweston School Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian Lucas
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Paget-Tomlinson
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	480
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	71
<b>Number of children in the early years registered setting</b>	81
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 to 23 September 2022

## Information about the school

64. Leweston School is a co-educational day and boarding school in Sherborne, Dorset. The school has a Roman Catholic ethos. It is owned by a charitable trust and is governed by a board of governors. The school operates on a single site.
65. There are four boarding houses, which are all on the school site. Three boarding houses are for female pupils, and one is for male pupils.
66. There are ten children in the early years, comprising one Reception class. There is also a separate early years setting, which is registered with Ofsted, that provides for children from three months to four years.
67. The school has identified 22 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
68. The school has identified 38 pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
69. The school states its aims are to give pupils an experience of life in a Christian community by affirming each individual as a sacred and unique part of God's creation, nurturing in each person a sense of dignity and self-worth, and valuing diversity and appreciating the contribution that every pupil makes to the life of the school. It aims to provide the highest quality of teaching and learning, which is responsive to and supportive of the needs and aspirations of the individual, by fostering intellectual curiosity, a desire to seek truth and a life-long love of learning; enabling pupils to discover their own strengths and weaknesses, to learn from 'failures', and to develop the determination to persevere, in order to pursue their goals; supporting all pupils in their pursuit of academic and personal excellence and ensuring every pupil can take part in the school curriculum.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

25 to 27 November 2025

70. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

71. 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 another governor
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the facilities for physical education and the equestrian centre
- 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.

72. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)