

School inspection report

5, 6, 7 and 11 November 2024

Cherwell College Oxford

Cherwell House

Osney Lane (off Mill Street)

Oxford

OX1 1BZ

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' knowledge, skills and understanding about statutory requirements are underdeveloped so Standards are not all met. Leaders do not apply a strategic approach in ensuring that systems and processes are organised or reviewed regularly. There is lack of oversight with regards to the effective implementation of school policies and required legislation. Leaders were not aware of the requirements of current updates to statutory requirements linked to attendance. Training for safeguarding leads is out of date and statutory guidance related to safeguarding is not followed. Leaders do not have suitable training to comply with the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS).
2. Leaders had not ensured that the information on previous inspection reports, results of public examinations and the attendance policy are readily available to or prospective parents.
3. Pupils are taught to be respectful and inclusive of all, regardless of race, belief or disability in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is taught during PSHE lessons. However, not all pupils attend RSE lessons and leaders do not ensure that exemptions are made in accordance with statutory requirements.
4. Safeguarding arrangements in the school do not always follow statutory guidance. Measures to ensure that pupils are protected from harm lack clarity and consistency and are not reviewed regularly for effectiveness. Leaders are not proactive in developing partnerships with relevant authorities in order to improve their knowledge about current safeguarding practices to ensure that they consistently promote the welfare of pupils.
5. Leaders ensure that pupils receive personalised teaching to enable them to be successful in school, external examinations and their next steps in education. They provide pupils with a choice of subjects at A level, taught by a range of specialist teachers who offer subjects that match pupils' interests.
6. Teachers know their pupils well and offer them guidance and support tailored to their needs. Pupils develop knowledge, understanding and the skills needed to succeed in their subjects. Leaders have begun to improve the way written feedback is recorded, to give pupils additional tools when revising, but this is not consistently embedded in all subjects.
7. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported with teaching strategies and resources so that they learn effectively. Pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans receive support from staff, in partnership with relevant external authorities and professionals so that provision is matched to their needs, including when they are taught online.
8. Additional support is offered to pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Teachers adapt lessons to match pupils' levels of proficiency. This enables pupils to access the curriculum and manage university applications effectively.
9. Leaders ensure that a range of extra-curricular activities are available to improve pupils' physical and mental wellbeing. Attendance at these activities is optional. Leaders do not monitor attendance at these or evaluate their impact.

10. The school follows effective health and safety protocols with suitable policies and regular checks. Staff are trained suitably in fire safety and first aid. Records of training and first aid procedures in the teaching buildings were not systematic or updated. This was rectified during the inspection.
11. Boarders have good quality sleeping and living accommodation and well-maintained facilities. They are well supported by boarding staff in their academic studies and their personal and social development. Boarders develop their independence and behave responsibly.
12. Pupils and staff understand the behaviour policy and pupils behave well. They are self-confident and take responsibility for their academic and personal development. Pupils, particularly boarders, are well supported by staff who care about their physical and mental wellbeing. They know there is always someone they can go to if they have a concern.
13. Leaders organise a range of visits and lectures from experts in a variety of topics. Pupils demonstrate their understanding of current affairs, knowledge of British institutions, rule of law and the role of democracy. They volunteer in a range of activities to support various initiatives in their local community.
14. Pupils are ambitious and self-motivated and seek opportunities to extend their knowledge. They are well supported and well informed about further education and are ambitious in their choices.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not all 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 not all met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- every registered pupil is provided with relationships and sex education
- statutory guidance is implemented with regards to the appointment of the designated safeguarding lead
- designated safeguarding leads undergo training at least every two years to equip them with a clear understanding of their role, how to identify, understand and respond to specific needs, processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies and provide support to staff.
- the attendance policy is updated and implemented in line with statutory guidance
- staff who care for boarders have appropriate training.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that information provided on the school's website complies with statutory guidance
- improve record-keeping, including safeguarding logs, complaints and fire and first aid staff training so that they can be checked and reviewed to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted

- develop the tracking of pupils' access to physical education to ensure all pupils undertake physical exercise consistently
- ensure that there is consistency in the way feedback is provided to pupils to enable improved progress for all pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

15. Leaders do not demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that Standards are met consistently. There is lack of clarity amongst the proprietors in understanding their roles and responsibilities with little oversight of provision.
16. Policies are not always implemented in line with statutory guidance. Systems and procedures are not organised centrally, or reviewed regularly, so leaders lack an understanding of what needs to improve. Leaders do not have the required information readily available, for example, about when training is out of date.
17. Leaders were not aware of the requirements to ensure that all the required information is shared on their website. Previous inspection reports, besides the latest inspection, and public examination results were not shared. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
18. Leaders ensure that the school's aims and ethos are shared with pupils, staff and parents. Leaders provide information to the local authority about how funds received for pupils with an EHC plan are allocated.
19. Effective links and partnerships are developed in order to increase the offering of extra-curricular activities. Leaders liaise with the local authority to ensure suitable provision for pupils with EHC plans so that their needs are met.
20. Pupils are supported through individual or small group lessons to make good progress in the subjects that they choose. Leaders engage specialist staff to teach a range of subjects to accommodate pupils' choices. Pupils are well supported in their applications to a range of universities.
21. Health and safety checks are carried out regularly and risk-assessments are in place. These practices are effectively documented in the boarding house. Training logs for fire safety and first aid for the teaching buildings were updated during the inspection. Training for safeguarding leads was not current and the head of boarding did not have training in the management and practice of boarding.
22. The school's complaints policy and procedures are shared. However, leaders do not maintain complaints logs so that they can spot trends and patterns.
23. Leaders and staff know pupils well and are available to support them and promote their wellbeing. As pupils often learn individually with a teacher, except for PSHE, leaders are aware of the risks of pupils becoming isolated. They facilitate opportunities for pupils to learn together through extra-curricular activities.
24. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The school has a suitable accessibility plan. The boarding house is accessible for pupils and staff with disabilities.

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

- 25. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

26. Leaders provide a curriculum where pupils are taught a range of subjects individually with a teacher or in small groups. They ensure that the school is inclusive and adapts the curriculum to match pupils' needs. Each pupil's timetable is personalised to meet their requirements and builds on their prior attainment.
27. Leaders provide pupils with a choice of subjects to suit their interests. Pupils study A-level or GCSE courses. Pupils choose from a range of subjects including English, mathematics, further mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, sports science, computer science, psychology, business, history, classical civilisation, law, economics and politics. A few pupils study languages such as Italian, Spanish and Hebrew and creative subjects such as art and photography.
28. Pupils speak confidently and communicate their learning clearly. They participate in or attend debates to improve their speaking and listening skills. Additional lessons are offered to pupils, where necessary, to improve their linguistic skills. Pupils develop appropriate mathematical and scientific skills through application and in practical work. The weekly art club allows pupils the opportunity to develop their aesthetic and creative skills.
29. Teachers carefully adapt teaching strategies and resources to meet the needs of individual pupils. They offer individual verbal feedback to pupils as they learn. Leaders provide written feedback and pupils make improvements to their work. However, feedback is not provided consistently across all subject areas.
30. Staff identify any special educational needs through their observations of pupils. Strategies are shared with teachers who adapt lessons to suit pupils' needs. Leaders ensure that suitable access arrangements are made for eligible pupils to enable them to be successful in public examinations. Pupils with EHC plans are given additional support from school staff, and relevant external professionals, in order to promote their academic performance and wellbeing, including when they learn online.
31. Pupils who speak EAL are assessed on entry, and before applying to universities, to determine their proficiency in English. Additional lessons are offered to those who require it, to help them to access the curriculum. Teachers make suitable adjustments to their lessons. For instance, they offer pupils key word lists and explain unusual terms and phrases so that they can successfully access the learning.
32. Teachers develop positive relationships with pupils, promote good behaviour, and closely monitor pupils' wellbeing. Pupils' performance is evaluated regularly through observations in lessons as well as regular feedback on their performance in mock examinations which helps to build their academic confidence. Pupils go on to study at universities in the UK and overseas. Pupils achieve well in public examinations at A level.
33. Parents are well informed about their child's progress through monthly reports. A full report is sent to parents every half term with information about academic achievement and pupils' welfare. Reports include helpful guidance for pupils about their next steps.
34. Extra-curricular activities such as debating and creative performance are planned so that pupils develop their communication skills. These clubs equip pupils with global awareness, public speaking

and critical thinking skills. Sport clubs such as badminton and football develop pupils' team building skills as well as their physical fitness. Daily living skills are taught in PSHE lessons and particularly to boarders. Pupils are self-motivated and make suggestions to improve the range of activities such as punting and a chess club. Day pupils are encouraged to join boarders in optional extra-curricular activities on the weekends.

35. Pupils are encouraged to pursue their individual talents and interests such as music lessons and are supported with time away for sports training and fixtures. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to attend events such as Model United Nations and pupils are supported in their studies for entrance exams required by universities.

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

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

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

37. The school's admissions register is well maintained. Weekly summaries of pupils' attendance are recorded electronically. However, leaders were unaware of the statutory requirements outlined in recent attendance guidance. There was no attendance policy on the website. Leaders amended and uploaded an existing policy during the inspection. Nationally agreed attendance codes are not used. The need to inform the local authority when pupils join or leave at non-standard times is included in the school's safeguarding policy. However, there were no such incidents recorded to check if this was applied in practice.
38. Pupils are taught to respect others, including with regard to age, disability, gender, race or beliefs. Their spiritual and moral understanding is developed through PSHE lessons, discussions and extra-curricular activities such as seminars. Pupils know how to recognise relationships which are not healthy and are taught strategies to manage such situations. They understand the importance of consent in relationships and when using social media.
39. RSE is taught during PSHE lessons. Leaders do not ensure all pupils attend RSE lessons to ensure compliance with statutory guidance meaning that not all pupils gain the necessary knowledge and skills from the RSE curriculum.
40. Health and safety checks are regular. Clear fire exit routes are labelled and fire alarm servicing and evacuation drills are carried out regularly. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding, fire safety and first aid. Risk assessments for trips organised by staff are in place. The management of food safety, cleanliness and hygiene is monitored through external audits. The kitchen and catering areas are clean and provide a choice of food for pupils. Regular testing ensures that pupils have access to safe drinking water and hygienic washing facilities.
41. Pupils are taught how to look after their physical and mental health. The school facilitates memberships in a local gymnasium and indoor sports centre where pupils can play sports such as badminton or football. There is insufficient oversight by leaders to ensure that all pupils take part regularly in physical fitness.
42. Boarders are cared for with effective health and safety protocols. Supervision in the boarding house is effective. The building has a secure entrance and the reception area is manned during the day. The boarding house has a medical room and the head of boarding knows the pupils' medical needs well. Accommodation is well maintained and secure. Boarders have their own rooms where they have their own washing facilities and a safe space for their personal possessions.
43. The common room in the boarding house is spacious and equipped with recreational facilities. Trips and other recreational activities are organised regularly. Boarders have a suitable balance of free time and time for study. Supervision is effective. Welfare concerns in the boarding house are logged securely and the head of boarding ensures that these concerns are followed up. Boarders have weekly visits from a suitably trained staff member who is available to listen to their concerns. They know how to contact an independent listener.
44. The school has an effective behaviour policy and anti-bullying strategy in place. Pupils and staff understand the policies. Pupils behave well and incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils follow rules and

are well supported by staff. They understand the consequences of their actions and know that rules are established to keep them safe. Staff and pupils treat each other with mutual respect.

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

45. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

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

46. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills and gain cultural knowledge and understanding. Pupils visit other schools and universities in the city for talks and lectures about a wide variety of topics. Pupils take a keen interest in current affairs around the world and speak confidently about their knowledge and express their opinions with consideration for others.
47. Pupils are knowledgeable about British institutions and aspects of the law. Pupils who study politics develop a deeper understanding of democratic systems and share their knowledge with other pupils during debates and talks. Pupils learn to develop informed and balanced views. They share their knowledge with other pupils through regular debates on current issues in the United Kingdom and abroad.
48. A variety of trips and visits to the theatre, museums and other educational organisations in the city, effectively enrich pupils' knowledge about British institutions and society. Lectures from experts such as neuroscientists help students understand the importance of sleep. Talks by a dyslexia specialist increase pupils' awareness and the benefits of research.
49. Pupils are taught about the importance of tolerance in PSHE lessons. They demonstrate their understanding through their inclusive and respectful approach to staff and students from diverse backgrounds. They organise and participate in events to celebrate different cultures.
50. Pupils take on leadership roles within the school such as writing articles in the newsletter and organising clubs, and trips to local museums. They volunteer in their local area, helping to keep public spaces clean and green. Pupils help to organise competitions hosted by the school and volunteer during art exhibitions, across the city. Economic education is included in the school's PSHE scheme of work. Pupils learn how to manage their money and important facts about borrowing, rates of interest and credit scores.
51. Pupils are articulate and motivated by the support they receive in their lessons, which they apply during self-study. Staff offer personalised advice to students to help them choose their subjects. They are encouraged to be ambitious in their plans for further studies and in their choice of careers.
52. Pupils, including those who speak EAL, are supported in their applications process to apply to universities in the United Kingdom and overseas. Pupils are encouraged to attend open days at universities. They are well informed about making choices about universities, apprenticeships and careers. Staff offer personalised careers advice as well as organising events by speakers in order for pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of career options.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and both deputy designated safeguarding leads, are proprietors of the school. All three members of the safeguarding team do not have recent safeguarding training and demonstrate a lack of understanding of their responsibilities in relation to statutory guidance. Leaders ensure that the safeguarding policy is updated in line with statutory guidance; however, in practice, statutory guidance is not followed.
55. Leaders do not ensure that safeguarding concerns are logged with sufficiently detailed actions. It is unclear, from the records in the log, when the school makes a referral to relevant authorities. Recent records did not comply with statutory guidance to include written rationale for decisions taken.
56. Leaders do not have sufficient oversight with regards to filtering and monitoring of the internet within the school.
57. The school ensures that updates from the local authority are shared with staff. Staff are made aware of changes to statutory safeguarding guidance.
58. Staff are aware that they can report a concern directly to the local authority. Contact details for all relevant authorities are shared in the safeguarding policy on the school's website. Staff are required to complete safeguarding training and are asked to acknowledge that they have read the safeguarding policy when they join the school.
59. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online during PSHE lessons. They understand the risks they can be exposed to on social media and how to mitigate those risks.
60. Leaders have appropriate safer recruitment training and appropriate recruitment checks are recorded in the single central record.
61. Posters around the school inform pupils about the safeguarding team. Pupils are confident in approaching members of staff, including tutors and the head of boarding, with any concerns.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 62. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
NMS 2.2	The school’s leadership and management, including its governing body, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, appropriate to their role, and undertake appropriate training as required.
NMS 2.4	The school’s leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the Standards are met.
NMS 2.5	The school’s leadership and management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils
NMS 2.6	Senior boarding staff are knowledgeable and experienced and have undertaken appropriate training in the management and practice of boarding. They use this to ensure that boarders’ welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A(1)	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor—
2A(1)(b)	ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2).
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
NMS 17.1	Boarders are supported to develop good relationships with fellow pupils and staff which are based on mutual trust and respect. Through regulations made under section 34 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, boarding schools are required to teach relationships education to primary school pupils and

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (‘ISSR’)

	relationships and sex education to secondary school pupils.
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Safeguarding

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
7(a)	arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
7(b)	such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 8	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that -
8(a)	arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school; and
8(b)	such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools or the National Minimum Standards for Accommodation of Children under Eighteen by Further Education Colleges.
NMS 8.1	The school should ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and • such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

School details

School	Cherwell College Oxford
Department for Education number	931/6016
Address	Cherwell College Oxford Cherwell House Osney Lane (off Mill Street) Oxford OX1 1BZ
Phone number	+ 44 (0) 1865 242670
Email address	secretary@cherwell-college.co.uk
Website	https://www.cherwell-college.co.uk
Proprietor	Cherwell College Oxford Limited
Chair	Stephen Clarke
Headteacher	Stephen Clarke
Age range	15-20
Number of pupils	25
Number of boarding pupils	13
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2023

Information about the school

63. Cherwell College Oxford is a co-educational, independent boarding school under the proprietorship of Cherwell College Oxford Limited. Company directors, Stephen Clarke and Helen Clarke are also the Principal and Vice Principal respectively. The finance officer is also a company director. The school is located in the city of Oxford.
64. There are twenty-six pupils on roll of which three pupils attend lessons online. Most pupils study A levels. A very small number of pupils are studying GCSEs.
65. Thirteen full-time boarders reside in a purpose-built boarding house located a short walk away from the school.
66. The school has identified ten pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Seven pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
67. English is an additional language for fourteen pupils.
68. The school states its aims are to send students on to a leading university and onward to a career where they will be able to work independently for the benefit of themselves and those around them.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5, 6, 7 and 11 November

69. A team of three inspectors visited the school for one and a half days and conducted inspection activities remotely for a further day.

70. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- 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.

71. 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

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For more information, please visit isi.net