ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

23 to 25 June 2026

St Edward's Prep

64 Tilehurst Road

Reading

RG30 2JH

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS **3**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS **5**

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS 5

SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE **6**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE 7

SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION **8**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION 9

SECTION 3: PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING **10**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING 11

SECTION 4: PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY **12**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING 13

SAFEGUARDING **14**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING 14

SCHOOL DETAILS **15**

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL **16**

INSPECTION DETAILS **17**

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders promote a respectful, inclusive and purposeful culture across the school. Leaders and staff consistently model and promote the school's values through the curriculum and pastoral provision. Pupils are caring, courteous, courageous, confident and collaborative. They apply these characteristics routinely in their interactions with adults and their peers.

2. The proprietor and governors provide systematic and robust oversight of the school so that the Standards are met. They ensure a strategic overview of risk management to promote the wellbeing of pupils. Governors provide effective challenge and appropriate support through discussions with leaders and visits. They assure themselves that leaders have the knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles responsibly.

3. Leaders are aspirational in designing and delivering a curriculum that prepares pupils for their future learning and lives. Across the school, 'themes of investigation' and 'enrichment pathways' are carefully planned so that pupils develop rich knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers implement the curriculum skilfully through secure subject knowledge, effective questioning and well-planned learning which engages, supports and challenges pupils according to their needs. As a result, pupils understand what, why and how they learn, confidently applying their knowledge and skills across the curriculum. They demonstrate a deep understanding of their own progress from a very young age and strive to improve. The school's carefully planned curriculum, together with its effective implementation, enables pupils to develop transferable knowledge, skills and understanding beyond those expected for their age. This is a significant strength.

4. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and supported appropriately. Leaders plan targeted enrichment pathways to support pupils' academic, social and emotional needs. In lessons, teachers use a range of resources and structured support so that pupils learn effectively and make good progress.

5. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) develop vital linguistic knowledge and skills. Their needs are identified and supported as soon as they join the school, such as in the early years. Throughout the school, teachers focus on communication and language acquisition. Staff use effective resources and provide individual support to match pupils' needs.

6. Pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing are very well supported. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is delivered so that pupils develop respect for all. Pupils understand the school's behaviour policy and take increasing responsibility for their actions. The physical education (PE) curriculum is inclusive, with equal opportunities for male and female pupils to take part in a range of sports. Leaders are reflective and responsive in adapting the curriculum to meet pupils' needs.

7. Pupils develop an understanding of how economic concepts apply in everyday life. Older pupils gain many opportunities to apply this in practice. However, curriculum planning provides fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of spending and saving money. As a result, their economic understanding in this area is less well developed than other aspects of learning.

8. Pupils across the school take on roles of responsibility with enthusiasm. The head girl and head boy and elected house captains and vice captains help organise events and represent the school appropriately. However, in the older year groups, where there are fewer female pupils, leaders have

not yet considered how to fully encourage their participation in positions of responsibility and leadership opportunities.

9. Safeguarding arrangements at the school are appropriate and effective. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibility ensure that staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe by being vigilant. Pupils are aware of people they can speak to if they have a concern. Governors provide rigorous oversight of safeguarding, including checks on the single central record of appointments (SCR).

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 curriculum around economic understanding so that pupils develop a secure understanding of saving and spending money
- identify ways to encourage further participation of older female pupils in the full range of leadership opportunities available within the school, as the number of older female pupils grow.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders and staff promote an inclusive environment. Staff foster a culture of mutual respect and positive relationships with pupils. They encourage pupils to be caring, courteous, courageous, confident and collaborative. Pupils interact kindly and respectfully with adults and one another. They collaborate effectively and show consideration for individual differences. For example, leaders are mindful that there are higher proportions of male pupils than female pupils in some parts of the school. Leaders are considerate of all pupils when carefully managing arrangements such as social times and learning groups to provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils' personal and academic development.

11. The proprietor and governors provide effective oversight of the school. They meet regularly with leaders and carry out rigorous checks to ensure policies are implemented effectively. Governors consult with staff and parents on strategic changes to the school. They engage in discussion with leaders to offer appropriate challenge and support. Consequently, leaders have the appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles responsibly. The proprietor ensures that the Standards are met consistently.

12. In the early years, leaders engage staff in discussions to provide effective professional development. This includes training to develop communication and language skills for the children who speak EAL in the early years. Staff use skilled questioning, responsive interactions and purposeful play to build on children's interests and developmental needs. Leaders ensure that the environment and resources support children's learning and development appropriately.

13. Leaders are aspirational in planning and reviewing the curriculum so that pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding they need for their next steps. Themes of investigation are carefully designed around relevant topics which engage pupils. This enables pupils to make links in their learning and develop academic skills alongside communication skills and social awareness. Leaders systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. They draw on assessment information and the views of pupils, staff, parents and relevant experts to inform ongoing refinement of the curriculum. They carefully monitor pupils' knowledge, skills and progress, assessing and mitigating any risks associated with the enquiry-based approach. This culture of continual review has led leaders to further strengthen the English curriculum through an increased emphasis on reading, vocabulary, speaking and listening. This has contributed to improved learning and progress.

14. Leaders adopt an effective approach towards risk assessment. They maintain a current and up-to-date risk register which is reviewed and revised regularly. Staff are trained in how to be thorough and considered in their approach to risk assessment. Risk assessment processes across the school are detailed and systematic. They identify hazards, control measures and required actions. Governors check risk assessments regularly to ensure that staff take appropriate steps to review and respond to changing circumstances. There are an array of well-planned and implemented risk assessments for the curriculum, off-site events and the site.

15. All the required information, including policies, is shared with parents via the school website. Leaders provide parents with regular reporting on pupils' attainment, progress and wellbeing through grade cards, written reports and parents' evenings. Reports include clear explanatory information, enabling parents to understand assessment information and their child's progress.

16. Leaders engage effectively with external agencies, such as relevant local authorities and the police, to seek advice and make referrals as required. They work closely with experts to support pupils who have SEND. Leaders inform the local authority when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard times.

17. Leaders ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The school has a comprehensive accessibility plan. It is tailored to the school's context and reviewed regularly. The plan includes reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of pupils.

18. The school has an appropriate complaints policy which is implemented effectively. Leaders keep records of complaints and actions securely. They review these regularly to look for trends so that they can monitor provision and inform training as necessary. Governors maintain oversight of complaints.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. Leaders plan and review an ambitious curriculum to ensure that pupils progressively develop knowledge, skills and understanding. Schemes of work are chosen, sequenced and adapted to match pupils' prior attainment, enabling learning to build logically over time. Leaders intentionally design opportunities for pupils to apply, connect and deepen their learning across subjects, ensuring that knowledge remains meaningful and relevant.

21. Leaders interweave the school's 'themes of investigation' throughout the curriculum. This well-considered, enquiry-based approach is central to the school's approach to curriculum planning, teaching and learning. The themes are well thought through. They provide pupils with rich opportunities to explore their learning in more complex ways. Carefully planned enquiry questions encourage pupils to predict, hypothesise, investigate and collaborate as they deepen their knowledge and understanding. The school's enrichment pathways, such as 'philosophy for kids' and 'higher maths', further extend the knowledge and skills of pupils including those who are ready to apply their learning in more complex ways.

22. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They develop well-established routines and positive relationships to create purposeful learning environments. Teachers use effective questioning to check understanding, address misconceptions and deepen pupils' thinking. They adapt their teaching and use well-chosen resources to provide appropriate support and challenge. Teachers implement the 'themes of investigation' curriculum particularly well. They provide appropriate levels of challenge and support, allowing pupils of different abilities to deepen their learning effectively.

23. Owing to leaders' carefully planned curriculum and teachers' skilled delivery, pupils develop secure foundational knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, pupils develop their linguistic skills, communicate their ideas clearly and verbalise their thinking. They use ambitious vocabulary and literary techniques to produce well-structured writing for different purposes. In mathematics, pupils are resilient when solving increasingly complex problems. They explain their reasoning with confidence. In science, pupils develop secure knowledge and skills through practical investigation. They make connections between scientific concepts and their application to real-life issues including environmental sustainability and renewable sources of energy.

24. Pupils also develop creative, aesthetic and technological skills in subjects such as music, art, drama and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). For instance, in music, pupils learn notation and compose their own pieces linked to themes they are studying. Drama lessons develop pupils' confidence in speaking and listening as well as non-verbal communication skills. Through a range of other subjects, pupils use a range of media to produce observational drawings and original designs. Through information and communication technology (ICT), pupils develop secure technological skills which they apply confidently to support increasingly independent learning.

25. The early years curriculum is thoughtfully planned to build children's knowledge, understanding and skills through a balance of child-led and adult-guided learning. Indoor and outdoor environments are thoughtfully designed to provide rich opportunities for exploration, communication and language development. Staff provide nurturing support. They encourage children to be curious, develop independence and build resilience. Early literacy and numeracy are promoted effectively. Staff place an emphasis on communication, vocabulary development and phonics. Children develop a love of books, confidently applying their phonics knowledge to read and write unfamiliar words. Children

begin to reflect on their own learning by checking that their written work makes sense. As a result, children are engaged, motivated learners who are well prepared to transition successfully to their next steps.

26. Leaders use assessment information and ongoing monitoring to identify pupils who have SEND. Leaders use a range of assessment tools to identify the precise needs of pupils, including for the youngest children in the early years. Leaders provide teachers with well-planned strategies and activities to help children and pupils build focus, attention and develop learning. Teachers are effectively trained to adapt learning for pupils who have SEND in classrooms. They use appropriate visual and digital resources so that pupils can access the curriculum fully alongside their peers and learn effectively. Leaders routinely review pupils' learning to ensure that it is effective and adapt teaching accordingly.

27. Pupils who speak EAL are supported, from the early years, to develop their language skills. Leaders identify pupils' needs and monitor the progress of pupils closely. Teachers adapt learning, making effective use of visual, dual-language resources and translation technology when required. Pupils receive structured support closely matched to their needs. As a result, pupils who speak EAL develop essential linguistic skills.

28. Leaders have established a coherent assessment framework across the school. Staff combine professional judgement alongside formative assessment and standardised testing to monitor progress over time. Assessment information is effectively used to adapt provision to meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils receive ongoing guidance and feedback on their work from teachers. They are routinely required to reflect on their own learning to see how they have improved and to identify their next steps. Over time, pupils acquire the skills and knowledge that they need to be successful in their learning. They learn effectively, achieve well in standardised tests and make good progress in their academic and personal skills. They are well prepared to move on to secondary education.

29. The extra-curricular programme is thoughtfully planned to offer pupils opportunities to develop new interests or hone their talents. Pupils develop language skills in Spanish and communication skills in drama. They can choose clubs that foster technological and scientific interests in STEM subjects, coding and robotics. Pupils take part in a range of sporting activities including multi-sport, rugby, archery and 'Disney dance'. London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) club is well attended and pupils achieve well in graded examinations.

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 place an emphasis on supporting pupils to develop confidence, resilience and self-esteem. Across the school, pupils are encouraged to contribute their views, make choices, collaborate and think independently. Pupils confidently articulate their individual strengths and how they overcome challenges. They understand their needs and know where and how they can get help to succeed. Enrichment pathways such as 'mighty me' enable pupils to develop communication skills and self-esteem through drama.

32. Pupils have opportunities for reflection and to develop spiritual and moral understanding. For example, children in the early years learn about nature while playing outdoors. As they get older, pupils learn how different faiths teach people to care about the natural environment. They learn about the work of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Malala Yousafa. Older pupils recite or write their own poems for Remembrance Day when learning about the sacrifices of older generations. Pupils are routinely encouraged to consider different viewpoints, such as when discussing current affairs in assemblies. Pupils develop thoughtful responses to issues that affect the school community and wider society.

33. The school's pastoral provision supports pupils' emotional wellbeing effectively. Through the curriculum and pastoral support, pupils develop an understanding of the importance of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing and know where to seek help when needed. Leaders work with external specialists to support pupils' mental health when needed.

34. In the early years, children are supported in their emotional development. For example, children develop self-belief and emotional resilience through carefully planned activities. Staff provide opportunities for children to explore, take risks and develop independence. They support children to think about their feelings and the feelings of others. Children are also provided with a range of indoor and outdoor activities to support their physical development. For example, they are taught simple yoga poses to emulate animals on a farm. These, and regular physical outdoor activities, enable children to develop a range of early physical skills, such as balance and co-ordination.

35. The PE curriculum is well planned and well delivered. It enables pupils to cultivate skills in a range of sports including rugby, football, cricket and swimming. Pupils learn about the importance of fitness and exercise, as well as opportunities to participate in competitive sporting activities. Enrichment opportunities such as 'leaders in action' enable sports scholars to develop leadership and responsibility. 'Collaboration champions' help pupils understand the impact of working in a team. Leaders are proactive, taking steps to ensure that pupils' physical health and wellbeing are promoted and actively supported.

36. The PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums are well planned and well taught. They teach pupils how to stay physically and mentally healthy, build positive relationships and make informed decisions. Pupils learn about topics such as healthy eating, sleep and hydration, how to stay safe, including online, and how to recognise and manage risk. Older pupils develop an understanding of the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty and relationships.

37. The school's behaviour policy is well understood by pupils and consistently applied by staff. Pupils are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their behaviour through the 'chance, choice,

consequence' approach. Leaders monitor behaviour, attendance and pastoral information closely. Where required, leaders take effective action, such as developing support plans, communicating closely with parents and staff. As a result, pupils are courteous and behave well.

38. Leaders implement appropriate systems to identify, monitor and respond to bullying. Pupils understand the difference between unkind behaviour and bullying. They know that any concerns raised will be dealt with effectively by adults. Leaders review incidents, identify issues early and reduce recurrences.

39. Supervision arrangements are effective throughout the school day including arrivals, departures, breaktimes, lunchtimes and transitions between lessons. Clear routines and well-established procedures contribute to a calm and orderly environment.

40. Leaders ensure comprehensive oversight of health and safety through regular monitoring and external specialist support. The school's premises are suitable and well maintained. Systematic tracking is in place to ensure any issues are dealt with promptly and effectively. Staff receive regular and effective training so that they understand their roles and responsibilities, including in fire safety. First aid provision is well organised and accommodated. Individual healthcare plans are shared appropriately with staff so that pupils' needs are met.

41. Attendance and admission registers are appropriately maintained. Leaders review pupils' attendance and see if there are any patterns or concerns. They provide appropriate support for pupils and families to promote attendance. As a result, most pupils attend well.

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

42. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

43. The PSHE and religious education (RE) curriculums help pupils to develop respect for all. For example, children in the early years are encouraged to share and talk about photographs of religious and cultural celebrations. This helps them to develop an understanding and respect for different customs including food and music. Pupils in pre-prep learn about similar things people do in different places of worship. Older pupils understand how different cultures and religions have spiritual connections to mountains such as Uluru, Mount Sinai and Mount Everest. As a result, pupils understand the importance of treating others with kindness, dignity and respect. They recognise that everyone should be treated equally, regardless of characteristics such as race or sex, and demonstrate this in their relationships with others.

44. Pupils understand how democracy operates within the school and in wider British society. They explain how voting is used to elect school captains and representatives to the 'school development group' and 'eco-council', enabling pupils to contribute their views to school life. Older pupils develop their understanding of democratic processes, different forms of government and the constitutional role of the monarchy in the UK.

45. Pupils develop a secure understanding of the rule of law. They learn how laws have evolved over time, including through their study of Viking society. Pupils understand why rules and laws are important in protecting individuals and maintaining safe communities. Visits from the fire service and community police enhance pupils' understanding of the role of public services in keeping people safe and upholding the law. They also learn about the role of public services, including the National Health Service, in supporting the wellbeing of society.

46. In the early years, children quickly settle into routines and follow instructions. They play together co-operatively and take responsibility to put classroom equipment away. Children are given opportunities to choose their activities and use their imagination. They are explicitly taught how to take turns, be fair and respect boundaries. They are well supported in their social development.

47. Pupils develop an understanding of how economic concepts apply in everyday life. For instance, children in the early years learn how money is exchanged for goods in shops. Pupils use money to buy items at the pre-prep picnic and to buy gifts for family on Mother's Day and Father's Day. Pupils in Year 6 take part in an enterprise project where they plan a business and manage a budget. They use profits to support a charity of their choice, such as the World Wildlife Fund. However, curriculum planning provides fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of spending and saving money. As a result, pupils' economic understanding in this area is less well developed than in other aspects of their learning.

48. Pupils are encouraged to think about being responsible adults and the careers they would like to pursue when they grow up. For instance, in enrichment, pupils learn sign language, basic first aid, how to sew and how to grow vegetables. In lessons, children in the early years learn about the job of a farmer when they visit a farm. In the pre-prep, pupils learn about the work of environmental centres to protect biodiversity. Pupils listen to talks from visitors including a heart surgeon, dentist and a photographer to understand the jobs they do. Older pupils learn about careers linked to space when they visit the Euro Space Centre in Belgium.

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49. Pupils apply their knowledge and skills through environmental initiatives, enterprise activities and problem-solving. This enables them to develop an understanding of how they can make a positive contribution to their communities. Pupils collect food items that they donate to the Reading food bank and a local refugee charity. At Christmas they perform at the Oracle centre to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation UK. They contribute their artwork about the festival of light to decorate rooms in a local hospital to spread joy.

50. Pupils take on a range of roles and responsibilities in the school. Younger pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility in classrooms and during breaktimes. The 'school development group' and the 'eco-council' are elected representatives from Years 3 to 6. They meet with leaders and make suggestions to improve the school. The head girl and head boy act as ambassadors for the school. House captains and vice-captains are elected by their peers to organise house events. However, female pupils in older year groups are less well represented in these positions of responsibility.

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

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

52. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles. Leaders and governors ensure that they are up to date with changes to statutory guidance. Governors provide effective supervision of leaders' work through regular visits, discussions with staff and checks on the SCR. Collectively, they ensure that appropriate actions are taken to safeguard pupils. An appropriate safeguarding policy is in place and available on the school's website.

53. The safeguarding team provide a comprehensive induction training for staff before they join the school. They provide regular training and updates so that staff understand their responsibility in keeping pupils safe. Staff know when and how to report a concern about a child. They are taught how to be vigilant, relevant to their roles. Leaders provide additional training or support for staff as needed.

54. Staff carry out daily check-ins with pupils as they arrive at school so that they can identify any issues early. Staff understand the importance in reporting concerns in a timely way, including about adults working with pupils. Records of such concerns are kept securely. Safeguarding records are detailed, chronological and indicate decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding team. Information is shared with other staff in the school so that they are aware of pupils who require additional support or monitoring.

55. Those with designated safeguarding responsibility seek advice from the local authority and liaise closely with the police and children's services as needed. The safeguarding team attend training with relevant local authorities so that they are aware of contextual risks. They use this information to provide information for parents. For instance, they help parents understand the risks for pupils when they use the internet or play online games at home. When required, the safeguarding team liaise closely with parents to support pupils and promote their wellbeing.

56. Pupils know who they can speak to if they are worried. They are taught how to report their concerns, including through posters around the school. This information includes appropriate children's services such as Childline. 'Chatter boxes' are situated around the school in key places where pupils can share a worry. The safeguarding team respond to these quickly and sensitively.

57. The school has effective internet filtering and monitoring arrangements. The safeguarding team test pupil and staff devices to check the robustness of the system. Pupils are taught how to use the internet safely. They learn about the importance of privacy and security, copyright and ownership. Pupils understand the importance of protecting personal information and passwords. They are aware of risks such as scams, pop-ups, hacking and inappropriate online contact.

58. The school has appropriate safer recruitment procedures in place. The SCR is maintained accurately and is supported by detailed recruitment documentation, enabling leaders to ensure that appropriate checks are carried out before adults start work at the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	St Edward's Prep
Department for Education number	870/6005
Address	St Edward's Prep 64 Tilehurst Road Reading Berkshire RG30 2JH
Phone number	0118 957 4342
Email address	office@stedwardsprep.com
Website	www.stedwardsprep.com
Proprietor	St Edward's Prep Ltd
Chair	Mr Sam Antrobus
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Parsons
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	157
Date of previous inspection	27 to 29 June 2023

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Information about the school

60. St Edward's Prep is a co-educational, independent day school located in Reading, Berkshire. The school comprises three sections: an early years section, for children in Nursery and Reception; a pre-prep, for pupils in Years 1 and 2; and a prep, for pupils from Years 3 to 6. The school is overseen by a proprietor body. The chair of the proprietor body is supported by an advisory board of governors.

61. There are 70 children in the early years, comprising two Nursery classes and one Reception class.

62. The school has identified 19 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils have an education, health and care plan.

63. The school has identified 10 pupils who speak English as an additional language, who require additional support.

64. The school states its aims are to provide a safe, happy environment in which children develop a love of learning and gain the confidence, character and the capability to fulfil their potential. It aims to develop a passion for, and awareness of, the world, that empowers pupils to take action and make it a better place for all.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	23 to 25 June 2026

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

66. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- 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.

67. 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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