

# School inspection report

25 to 27 November 2025

## **Pinewood School**

Bourton

Swindon

SN6 8HZ

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

<b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....	5
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE .....	7
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	9
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....</b>	<b>10</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	11
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>12</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	13
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>14</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	14
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>17</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders establish a nurturing atmosphere in which kindness permeates through the positive interactions between staff and pupils. Leaders take time to get to know pupils well, so they understand pupils' interests and achievements. Pupils develop confidence and build their self-esteem as a result of the care and attention that they receive at school.
2. Governors and leaders ensure that the Standards are consistently met through reflective practice and evaluative analysis of pupils' outcomes. They consider the views of pupils, parents and staff in their decision-making processes. This responsive approach drives continuous improvement across the school.
3. Leaders provide an engaging and ambitious curriculum encompassing the school's values of respect, curiosity and perseverance. Pupils experience a variety of subjects, enabling them to become well-rounded individuals with a wide range of knowledge and skills. The curriculum is supported by a carefully planned extra-curricular programme, which offers pupils further opportunities to develop new interests. Leaders review the curriculum to ensure that subjects and aspects of learning remain relevant. Consequently, pupils are prepared appropriately for their future lives. However, the curriculum for technology is not as well developed as other subjects in achieving this aim.
4. Leaders implement an extremely effective system of providing feedback for pupils on how to improve, known as 'stepping up'. Teachers provide specific and relevant feedback so that pupils have a clear understanding of the precise steps required to improve their learning. Targets are tailored to individual pupils' requirements. They are designed to support an aspect of learning that pupils might need to practise, or to give them a more challenging task to extend their learning. Pupils are directly involved in target setting through self- and peer-assessment activities. Pupils consistently follow up on their targets, and make tangible progress in their learning. This enables pupils to have an in-depth understanding of themselves as learners and to develop confidence in their ability to continue to improve. The 'stepping up' system is embedded across subjects and year groups. Leaders monitor its effectiveness so that all pupils benefit. This is a significant strength of the school.
5. In the early years, leaders and staff support children successfully to achieve well. Children enjoy their learning experiences. The school's culture of continuous improvement ensures that staff reflect on and improve their own practice, as appropriate. As a result, children in the early years experience a broad and balanced curriculum which is suitably based on learning through play. Teaching that is structured age-appropriately supports children to develop formal skills, such as reading and writing, in preparation for Year 1.
6. Leaders in the boarding provision create a caring and stimulating boarding experience for pupils. They provide safe and comfortable accommodation, with round-the-clock supervision to keep boarders safe.
7. Leaders integrate support for pupils' wellbeing, alongside support for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This support is facilitated by the school's learning skills department. 'The nest', a dedicated classroom support base, is freely accessible to pupils during the day and is also used for targeted support. This co-ordinated and open approach means that pupils

attach no stigma to receiving any additional support they require. Their needs are met effectively as a result.

8. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the benefits of living in a multi-cultural society and of why inclusion is an important attribute. Through structured discussions in 'life skills' lessons, which cover the school's curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), pupils explore values such as fairness and respect and why these are essential for living as responsible members of a community.
9. Leaders provide opportunities to celebrate individual pupils' successes, such as through the kindness café, awards for the 'gold' programme, in which pupils investigate a topic of their choosing, in merit awards and in celebration assemblies. Leaders recognise achievements beyond academic outcomes so that pupils gain confidence in their abilities in a holistic way.
10. Leaders successfully maintain a robust safeguarding culture in which members of staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. This is underpinned by comprehensive and effective oversight from governors.

## 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:

- further enhance the technology curriculum so that pupils develop their technological skills as effectively as other aspects of their learning, so that they are fully prepared for the next stages in their education and beyond.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders place high priority on promoting pupils' wellbeing by creating an environment in which pupils are nurtured and kindness prevails. Their decision-making focuses on ensuring that the school's approach to wellbeing is systematically enhanced. Leaders' development of 'the nest', for example, has provided a space where pupils can access emotional support, and they have appointed a wellbeing leader to oversee this aspect of school life.
12. Governors work collaboratively and effectively with leaders. They set the strategic direction of the school, including through reviews of leaders' self-evaluation processes and school development planning. Governors ensure that leaders have the knowledge and skills to meet the Standards consistently. They achieve this through frequently reviewing and questioning leaders' practice. This includes considering aspects such as safer recruitment practices and analysing pupils' progress.
13. Leaders work cohesively when evaluating their work and compiling their development plans. They are responsive to pupils' views, as demonstrated by their ongoing efforts to enhance pupils' wellbeing and the school's community atmosphere. Effective actions taken as a result include enclosing the swimming pool so that it is available all year round. When acting on improvements, leaders are careful to analyse any potential risks. They are mindful of ensuring that the school's core values of curiosity, perseverance and respect remain central to their work. This means that they continue to promote pupils' wellbeing while remaining ambitious about the continuous development of the school's offer.
14. Governors and leaders have a comprehensive approach to managing risk. Governors regularly review their risk register to ensure that it remains relevant and that risk-mitigating factors are effective. Leaders implement detailed risk assessments relating to all aspects of their work, including the security of the site, use of facilities and visits off site. Staff in the early years complete daily risk assessments to ensure that resources and the learning environment remain safe for use. Risk assessments are reviewed routinely so that staff can consider whether any changes to practice are required.
15. Leaders carefully review statutory guidance to compile policies and procedures. They ensure that staff know how to implement policies so that they support pupils successfully both academically and pastorally.
16. Leaders in the early years implement suitable development plans focused on improving their practice further. They consider actions to continue to secure children's engagement in their learning. This includes introducing systems for staff to incorporate children's interests into their planning, as well as to promote their wellbeing, such as ensuring that the transitions between year groups are smooth. Leaders' learning reviews continue to enhance the quality of teaching and children's achievement over time.
17. The boarding provision is well led. Leaders ensure that pupils have a positive boarding experience through a variety of stimulating activities and comfortable accommodation. Leaders establish warm relationships with boarding pupils so that they feel settled and secure when staying away from home.
18. Subject leaders embed the school values into their teaching so that pupils are immersed in the expectations of respect and curiosity, and show perseverance. They provide regular opportunities

for pupils to work collaboratively so that they learn to work as a team and show respect for their peers. Pupils undertake open-ended projects where they research a topic of their choice. In doing so, they develop their curiosity for learning and are encouraged to ask searching questions to gain new knowledge. Teachers instil perseverance. Pupils are supported to understand the value of hard work. As a result, they know how effectively it contributes to their learning.

19. Leaders provide a variety of information, including key policies and contact details, via the school's website. Parents receive written reports outlining their child's progress and next steps in their learning.
20. Leaders ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 so that there is no discrimination at school. They have a detailed accessibility plan that outlines the actions taken to enhance the accessibility of the school site and the curriculum.
21. Leaders foster close and beneficial links with external agencies. They liaise with the local attendance officer and ensure that they inform the local authority about pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard times.
22. Leaders implement suitable arrangements for managing informal and formal complaints. Parents can access the complaints policy via the school's website. Leaders follow statutory guidance in keeping appropriate records of complaints, including details of actions taken to resolve any concerns raised. Governors have effective oversight of the complaints process.

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

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

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

24. Leaders implement a dynamic and broad curriculum that meets the needs of pupils of different ages and aptitudes. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to investigate and work on open-ended projects, such as the 'gold' programme and the humanities fair. The curriculum is enriched through meaningful links between subjects, including the newly designed humanities curriculum and regular special event days, where pupils learn about topics such as Mayan culture or participate in problem-solving activities. Pupils develop their creative skills through drama, music and dance lessons, and learn about self-expression and imagination. Pupils achieve well in art. They explore a range of media and produce high-quality artistic pieces. Pupils develop some technological skills through computer science lessons. They gain some design and technology skills through cross-curricular links with other subjects. However, the technology curriculum is not as well developed as other subjects in deepening pupils' knowledge and understanding to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
25. Children in the early years experience a play-based curriculum that is appropriate to their needs, enabling them to make good progress in their learning. Staff promote children's oral language development by engaging them in conversations and modelling a broad vocabulary. Staff skilfully interact with children at play, asking questions to develop their thinking and imagination. Staff ensure that children are immersed in story books and nursery rhymes so that they develop their acquisition of wider language knowledge and skills, such as rhyme and phonics. Teachers help children to learn phonics sounds and how to blend these into words. Children apply these skills well when learning to read and write simple sentences. Children develop their mathematical understanding in meaningful ways, such as measuring their feet with blocks and counting items when they are playing. Children's progress is carefully monitored, with effective strategies in place for those who require additional support.
26. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons carefully so that they meet pupils' needs. They support pupils to build on previous learning in order to develop their skills and understanding incrementally. Teachers convey high expectations for pupils' behaviour clearly in the classroom so that they work calmly when required. At the same time, they plan stimulating activities that enthuse pupils and engage them deeply in their learning. Teachers respond to ways in which pupils enjoy learning, for example, by providing opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively with others and to take part in discussions. As a result, pupils learn how to work respectfully as part of a team and to develop their communication skills.
27. Teachers consistently provide effective feedback, in the form of 'stepping up' targets, to support learners of different needs and aptitudes. This is highly beneficial for pupils' learning because the precise and personalised feedback helps them to understand what they need to do to improve further. The expectation that pupils engage with these targets is deeply embedded across subjects and year groups. This enables pupils of all ages to correct misconceptions quickly, deepen their understanding, extend their thinking and achieve well. It also helps them to apply the school's value of perseverance, as they come to understand that successful learners are those who constantly strive to improve.
28. Leaders monitor individual pupils' progress closely using a structured assessment framework that compiles a range of information linked to teachers' checks on pupils' learning. This information underpins the school's clear academic priorities and leaders' responsive approach to pupils'

emerging needs. Ongoing assessments result in tailored support for pupils that is monitored routinely to ensure its effectiveness. Leaders consider the progress of different groups of pupils, such as gender-based groups and pupils who have SEND, to systematically check that pupils consistently make the progress they should.

29. Teachers work closely with the learning skills department to ensure that pupils who have SEND are effectively supported to achieve well. Teachers are involved in reviews of personalised support plans, outlining appropriate strategies to use in lessons and details of any additional support provided.
30. Teachers ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported to develop their English language acquisition. They use translating resources in class and ensure that pupils receive one-to-one support if required. Consequently, pupils achieve well and access the curriculum successfully alongside their peers.
31. Leaders enrich the curriculum through a skills-focused extra-curricular programme so that pupils can experience a broad range of activities after school. Activities are grouped into different strands, such as service, adventure and creativity. As a result, pupils gain an understanding of how each activity benefits their overall development. Pupils can choose from a variety of different activities, including street dance, ceramics and cookery. In participating, they learn new skills and develop new interests.

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

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

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

33. Leaders create a respectful school ethos in which pupils understand the importance of showing mutual respect and kindness to others. Leaders model kind and caring interactions so that pupils are valued and well cared for. The positive relationships between staff and pupils have a beneficial impact on pupils' confidence and self-esteem because they are nurtured and recognised. In turn, pupils learn how to interact kindly with each other, showing empathy for others through respect for individual differences. Acts of kindness are rewarded through an invitation to the kindness café, where leaders celebrate individual pupils who have demonstrated respect for others.
34. Understanding of respectful relationships is reinforced through the school's bespoke curriculum for PSHE, through which pupils develop their moral understanding as they consider what constitutes respectful behaviour in the school community and in the wider world. In these lessons, pupils also develop their understanding of how to look after their emotional health, through strategies such as talking to trusted adults and using breathing techniques. Pupils can access 'the nest' at any time they feel the need to speak to someone, or if they require some time to feel calm. PSHE lessons include mindfulness sessions. These allow pupils to learn how to calm their emotions and also reflect on their spiritual connections with each other and the world around them.
35. Teachers in the early years support children's emotional wellbeing by providing a nurturing environment so that children settle quickly and have close relationships with the adults at school. Children are confident to speak freely with staff should they have any concerns. Teachers use stories and circle time to explore different emotions and to help children to understand how to recognise and deal with these emotions.
36. Leaders liaise with teachers of PSHE and science to ensure that the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum is delivered effectively. Teachers follow statutory guidance and plan lessons so that pupils receive accurate, age-appropriate information that helps them build healthy relationships and develop respect for themselves and others. Younger pupils learn how to navigate friendships and resolve conflict. Older pupils learn about puberty and reproduction.
37. Leaders promote an inclusive physical education curriculum, with the aim of encouraging pupils to develop a life-long involvement in physical activity. Pupils develop skills in agility, balance and co-ordination, as well as learning how to play team sports, such as hockey, football and cricket. Regular swimming sessions help pupils to develop their physical stamina. Sports coaches give 'stepping up' feedback so that pupils have an enhanced understanding of how they can improve. Pupils learn about the importance of a balanced diet in PSHE and science lessons and how healthy eating works in harmony with exercise to promote their physical health. Pupils put this knowledge into practice when making healthy decisions at mealtimes. Leaders ensure that there are well-planned and nutritious menu options available, utilising food grown in the school's kitchen garden.
38. Teachers in the early years provide opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. As well as timetabled lessons in games and swimming to develop co-ordination and stamina, children develop physically when playing outside and when riding on bikes and trikes. They improve the strength in their hands and arms so that they are ready to start to write as they progress through the school.

39. Leaders and teachers apply the behaviour policy fairly and consistently, resulting in pupils displaying kind, positive and considerate behaviour. Where pupils' behaviour does not meet expectations, leaders encourage restorative conversations to support pupils to understand how their choices affect others.
40. Leaders implement an effective anti-bullying policy. They encourage an open culture so that pupils know how to share their concerns with trusted adults throughout the school. Teachers support pupils to understand what bullying is and how to prevent it through the use of an anti-bullying charter, which all pupils sign at the beginning of the year. Incidents of bullying are rare and are resolved effectively when they occur.
41. Leaders demonstrate attention to detail in implementing health and safety arrangements. They regularly review the suitability of the school premises and facilities, taking swift and effective action when issues arise. They ensure timely servicing of equipment, including that relating to fire safety. Leaders commission a fire audit and action any recommendations. They conduct regular fire drills, including when boarders are sleeping.
42. Boarding pupils benefit from their boarding experience. They develop social skills, deepening existing friendships and making new friends across year groups. Pupils feel safe and are well supervised by boarding staff. They have a suitable balance of activities and free time, as well as assistance with homework, when applicable. Their dormitories are comfortable and clean. Food options are plentiful and nutritious.
43. Leaders ensure that pupils are well supervised throughout the school day, including during boarding times. They maintain appropriate staffing ratios for children in the early years.
44. Leaders fulfil their legal requirements to maintain admission and attendance registers. They promote the importance of attendance and take prompt and suitable action to remedy any attendance concerns.
45. Leaders ensure that medical care for pupils takes place in a timely and competent manner in suitable medical accommodation. They provide and renew staff training appropriately, including paediatric first aid training for an appropriate number of staff in the early years.

### **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. Pupils display the school's values of curiosity and respect when learning about other cultures. In theology, philosophy and ethics (TPE) lessons, pupils learn about world religions and consider how individual liberty affords people the right to practise their beliefs. They learn about the culture and language of different places, such as when studying Mumbai in geography lessons and when learning songs in the languages of their peers. These activities ensure that pupils understand the importance of inclusion and that discrimination is neither fair nor legal. Leaders have ensured that texts used in the English department and library books across the school reflect diversity. This supports pupils to deepen their understanding of equality. Pupils show respect to staff and their peers as a result and welcome visitors warmly to the school community, regardless of background or difference.
48. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to develop their understanding of how they can contribute in a positive way to the local and wider community. They develop links with local state schools so that pupils can collaborate with those from other schools. In Year 8, pupils visit local schools and offer learning help for younger pupils there. Leaders offer opportunities for pupils to engage with charity fundraising and to develop their leadership skills in pupil-led charitable efforts, such as serving coffee for parents at charity events and leading stalls at the Christmas fair. Chosen charities are often decided by pupils in the school council and in house meetings. At the pupils' request, a recent charity initiative involved raising money to help repair the roof of the local village hall.
49. Teachers encourage pupils to become good citizens by helping them not to be bystanders when they observe injustice. Pupils enhance their understanding of right and wrong as part of the PSHE curriculum, where they learn about civil and criminal laws. They consider the implications of the Equality Act 2010 and how this affords protection for different groups of people. They understand laws relating to drug misuse and why there are legal age limits for alcohol and cigarettes. Pupils apply this knowledge to philosophical discussions in TPE lessons when considering if laws should ever be broken and what new laws might be suitable for today's society. They develop their understanding of public institutions when learning about different political ideologies in history, linking this to how parliaments operate. Teachers ensure that all discussions involving political themes are conducted with a balanced perspective.
50. Teachers in the early years help children to develop their social skills. Through their play, teachers enable children to learn how to share and take turns. Children take part in regular circle-time discussions where they talk about what it means to be a good friend. They consider how to be kind to others and reflect on any occasions when they could have been better at showing kindness. As pupils get older, PSHE lessons and assemblies provide opportunities to reflect further on social skills. If required, teachers actively support pupils who are experiencing social difficulties. They provide tailored support programmes to help pupils develop their social understanding and interactions.
51. Leaders are responsive to pupils' views. They regularly engage pupils in discussions about how the school can improve. This takes place through school council meetings and regular surveys of all pupils. Through this reflective work with pupils, leaders, for example, redesigned the PSHE programme for Year 8 in order to enhance the way in which they teach careers education. The new

curriculum for careers enables pupils to develop their understanding of the range of options available to them in the next stage of their education and for life beyond school.

52. The PSHE programme enables pupils to develop their understanding of financial matters, such as looking at investments and savings. Pupils deepen their understanding of finances through practical activities, such as budgeting for cookery and planning how they can make a profit for charity at the Christmas fair. Pupils also consider the moral aspects of money and reflect on the difference between wants and needs. They understand that money alone does not always make people happy.

### **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. Governors have thorough oversight of safeguarding. They carefully review safeguarding risks as part of their risk register analysis. They undertake safeguarding training and ensure that they work with the safeguarding team to provide appropriate support and challenge. Governors are effective at promoting ongoing improvements to safeguarding practice by reviewing case studies, prompting leaders to evaluate their decision-making and rationale for their actions.
55. The safeguarding team are both robust and caring in their approach to safeguarding. They follow statutory guidance in recognising, recording and reporting safeguarding concerns. They take appropriate action to manage any concerns raised. Routine monitoring arrangements ensure that the actions taken are effective. Safeguarding leaders develop close relationships with the local authority safeguarding team to provide pupils with the most appropriate support. They welcome any feedback on improving their practice further, such as when commissioning an audit of safeguarding arrangements conducted by the local authority.
56. The safeguarding team provides regular and informative safeguarding training for all staff. This includes induction procedures for new staff and ensuring that staff have timely updates to any changes in regulatory requirements or practice. Effective staff training means that staff understand that safeguarding is a collective responsibility. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil or any adults working at the school.
57. Leaders maintain an accurate single central record (SCR) that catalogues pre-appointment checks for all staff and those living on the school site. This ensures that adults are suitable to work with children. Appropriate training in safer recruitment enables leaders to keep their practice up to date with regulatory requirements.
58. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They know they should speak to a trusted adult about any concerns, or use a 'worry box' to post their concerns in writing. Leaders ensure that pupils understand how to keep themselves safe when online through PSHE and computer science lessons. Pupils understand that they must be vigilant about potential scams and aware of the impact of online bullying. There are suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems in place at school, which are tested regularly.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Pinewood School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	931/6080
<b>Registered charity number</b>	309642
<b>Address</b>	Pinewood School Bourton Swindon Wiltshire SN6 8HZ
<b>Phone number</b>	01793 782205
<b>Email address</b>	office@pinewoodschool.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.pinewoodschool.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Pinewood School Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Richard White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Neal Bailey
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 13
<b>Number of pupils</b>	389
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	125
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 to 15 September 2022

## Information about the school

60. Pinewood School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in Bourton, Wiltshire. The school was founded in 1875. Originally for male pupils, it became co-educational in 1976. The school is overseen by a charitable trust, with trustees undertaking the role of governors, collectively known as the Council of Governors. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the Council of Governors has been appointed.
61. Pupils can board on a flexi basis from Year 4 and on a flexi or weekly basis from Year 5. Boarders are accommodated in the main school building, with separate areas for male and female boarders.
62. There are 41 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery and two Reception classes.
63. The school has identified 102 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
64. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for ten pupils.
65. The school states its aims are to realise the potential of all pupils by developing character, values, curiosity, learning and skills through a variety of opportunities that present themselves within the academic, sporting, musical, dramatic and artistic arenas, as well as through the boarding, activity and adventure programmes.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

25 to 27 November 2025

66. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

67. Inspection activities included:

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

68. 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)