

School inspection report

4 to 6 March 2025

Papplewick School

Windsor Road

Ascot

Berkshire

SL5 7LH

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. The school is well led and managed. Leaders have suitable knowledge and skills. They use these appropriately to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is promoted effectively. Governors maintain clear oversight of the school's policies and their implementation. They challenge and support leaders to continue to improve the school. External specialists are used to provide advice where appropriate. Leaders and governors work well together to evaluate the school's performance, plan for its future development and manage risk. Together, they ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently.
2. The school's broad curriculum and wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities support pupils' learning effectively. Programmes are reviewed regularly and adapted appropriately to meet pupils' needs. Pupils develop a broad range of knowledge and skills. They achieve well across the curriculum, so they are well prepared for their next stages in education.
3. Learning is typically well planned. Teachers have robust subject knowledge. They use resources skilfully to engage and motivate pupils. Effective questioning encourages discussion and debate in lessons. Consequently, pupils are curious and creative. They build confidence as they articulate their ideas and opinions. Teachers provide effective feedback, so pupils know how to improve their work. Leaders measure and evaluate information about pupil performance. Teachers, however, do not use this information consistently well to identify gaps in learning so they can be addressed quickly.
4. Leaders prioritise pupils' physical, emotional and mental health needs. They listen carefully to pupils' views. A range of effective methods allow pupils to share any concerns and ideas for improving the school. The comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is highly effective in helping pupils to develop self-awareness and an understanding of others.
5. The school's facilities are well maintained. Boarding houses are comfortable and of good quality. Leaders and staff foster a supportive boarding environment. Boarding staff are well qualified. They are adept at caring for pupils and in meeting pupils' social and emotional needs. Leaders ensure that boarding is central to the ethos of the school and effective in supporting pupils' personal development.
6. Pupils develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem. Staff are effective in teaching pupils how to work, play and care for one another. Pupils collaborate well in lessons, on the sports fields and at social times. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are positive. Pupils understand why respectful behaviours are important. This is reflected in their conduct.
7. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Staff are appropriately trained to identify and report any safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding leaders take prompt and effective action when necessary, including liaising with external agencies to seek advice and make referrals. Leaders ensure that all required staff recruitment checks are completed before new staff join the school.

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:

- ensure that teachers use pupils' assessment information to plan learning consistently well, so that any gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are addressed quickly and so pupils are moved on promptly when they are ready to apply their learning in more complex ways.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders ensure that the school delivers an education in line with its aim to provide a broad and inclusive offer in which pupils feel secure, confident and happy. Pupils' wellbeing and needs are central to decision-making. School leaders and staff are approachable and supportive. Pupils feel valued and that their voice is heard. Leaders establish effective relationships with pupils and their families. Boarding arrangements create a strong sense of community and are highly effective in supporting pupils' personal development.
9. The board of governors is experienced and knowledgeable. They monitor the school's work closely through regular reports and in meetings with senior leaders. Their checking ensures that procedures, such as for health and safety, safeguarding, and promoting pupils' wellbeing, are effective. Governors know the school well. They ensure that the school's values and ethos underpin ongoing developments. They provide close and supportive oversight. This ensures that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively and that the Standards are met consistently. External specialists provide audits and advice to support leaders' work in areas including, for example, safeguarding and health and safety.
10. Governors and leaders have a thorough understanding of the school's effectiveness and how it can continue to improve. The detailed school development plan is well informed by thorough evaluation of the school's performance. The plan is reviewed regularly and amended to ensure its effective implementation is in line with the school's aims. Leaders are ambitious in securing improvements. They have, for example, strengthened the provision for pupils' personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). A designated lead teacher links effectively with staff to support pupils' wellbeing. Governors have recently formed a welfare committee to provide closer oversight of the school's provision and greater support to leaders in promoting pupils' personal development.
11. Leaders ensure boarding staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles. There is regular and relevant training, including a thorough induction programme for new boarding staff. Links between teaching and residential staff are well developed to ensure highly effective communication regarding all aspects of boarders' wellbeing.
12. Governors and leaders take a strategic approach to managing risks relevant to the school's context. Supported by relevant training, they work together effectively to identify potential risks. Appropriate strategies prevent or minimise any risks identified. Risk assessments for the school premises, activities such as sport and educational trips are detailed and effective in mitigating concerns. Leaders monitor risk assessments closely and, where necessary, adapt them appropriately to meet pupils' needs.
13. Leaders and governors regularly review school policies. They ensure that procedures are implemented effectively. The required information, including that for boarding, is provided and available to parents on the school's website, as well as through the parent information booklets. Pupils' progress is reported regularly to parents through half-termly updates as well as in parent-teacher meetings and written reports.
14. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The school has a suitable accessibility plan, which is kept under regular review. The plan identifies suitable measures to ensure effective access to the school, the curriculum and its wide-ranging provision.

15. The complaints policy is implemented effectively. Parental concerns are responded to in line with the procedures identified. Leaders keep detailed and secure records of complaints and any actions taken in response to concerns raised.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum which is broad and balanced. The breadth of subjects taught ensures pupils develop a wide range of knowledge and skills. Pupils' sporting, musical and artistic skills are particularly well developed. This is because teachers with substantial subject knowledge plan ambitious and stimulating programmes of work. Art displayed in classrooms and around the school demonstrates pupils' high level of achievement in areas such as watercolour painting, ceramics and still life drawings. Pupils' strong aptitudes in choral music are reflected in the powerful singing in the chapel services by the choir and the whole school. On the sports fields, pupils become knowledgeable and skilful in a wide range of sports. Overall, the well-planned and wide-ranging curriculum ensures pupils make good progress. They are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Consequently, many are successful in gaining places at selective senior schools.
18. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and supportive. They plan and deliver lessons that are ambitious and engaging. Teachers' effective use of questioning deepens pupils' learning. Pupils are at ease with their learning and comfortable to ask their own questions. They are intellectually curious, showing eagerness to extend their knowledge and understanding. Teachers listen carefully to pupils' views and adapt lessons in response to their interests and contributions. They are skilful in encouraging pupils' discussion and debate in lessons. Consequently, pupils become confident in articulating their ideas and expressing their views to others.
19. Leaders and staff use their observations and assessments well to ensure tasks are tailored to meet pupils' needs. Leaders use assessments, for example, to closely monitor reading levels for all pupils and to identify when and how pupils should receive additional support. Teachers' feedback helps pupils to review their work and to understand how to improve it further. Leaders measure and evaluate information about pupils' performance. Teachers, however, do not use this information consistently well to identify any gaps in learning, adapt programmes of work and to plan future learning.
20. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. Their needs are identified. Effective support is organised by the leader of the SEND provision. Staff receive clear advice, information and training in how pupils can be supported in class. Targeted intervention is provided through individual support and the use of external professionals as required. The SEND leader works effectively with boarding and teaching staff to ensure that both the personal development and learning needs of pupils are met. This includes support in PSHE lessons to ensure pupils across the school develop a secure understanding of neurodiversity.
21. There are some pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language (EAL). An EAL coordinator effectively oversees the identification of pupils' needs and organises any additional provision that pupils require. Pupils receive effective support in class and, where needed, receive additional targeted lessons to support their language development. Teachers are effective in adapting lessons to ensure that pupils who speak EAL make progress in line with their peers.
22. The extra-curricular programme is extensive and popular. A wide selection of academic, sporting, creative and performing arts opportunities develop pupils' skills in a range of areas such as chess, football, cooking and origami. Boarders have a varied programme of activities after school and at weekends. This includes the herpetology society, squash, scrabble, orchestra, military history and film club.

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

23. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

24. Leaders promote pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing consistently well. They provide a range of methods for pupils, including boarders, to share any concerns, including a confidential email messaging service. Pupils can also choose to meet with an independent listener. They develop high levels of self-knowledge and self-esteem. As a result, they are confident to share their feelings and views with others. They know that adults will respond in a timely, empathetic and effective manner.
25. The PSHE programme has been strengthened. In consultation with parents, leaders have created a comprehensive offer which includes appropriate relationship and sex education (RSE). A specialist coordinator plans and teaches PSHE lessons throughout the school. Pupils study topics such as growing up, relationships, online safety, respect, anti-bullying and healthy eating. The programme is adapted well to cover topics that emerge in school and wider society. Lessons are taught thematically. They frequently link with national awareness events, such as anti-bullying day and neurodiversity week. Parents are regularly consulted about PSHE and RSE. Topics are adapted and refined in response to feedback. The PSHE programme is highly effective in helping pupils to develop an understanding of themselves physically, emotionally and mentally.
26. Pupils develop their spiritual and moral understanding through regular chapel services and assemblies. They learn about different religions in theology, philosophy and religious studies lessons. Chapel services are central to school life. They serve to develop pupils' spiritual understanding, tolerance and respect for others.
27. An effective behaviour policy is in place and implemented consistently so that pupils behave well. Pupils understand the sanctions and rewards system and the rationale for it. Leaders and staff respond promptly and fairly to any incidents of misbehaviour.
28. An appropriate anti-bullying strategy is in place. Pupils learn what constitutes bullying and strategies they can use to avoid or respond to it. Rare cases of bullying are dealt with effectively by leaders in line with school policy. Pupils show high levels of respect for each other.
29. The school's premises and buildings are in good condition and well maintained. Health and safety checks and fire safety procedures, including fire drills for boarders, are rigorous and meet requirements. Leaders seek relevant external expertise to maintain all health and safety requirements, including staff training. Any actions highlighted by external assessors are promptly implemented. Medical and first aid facilities are appropriate for day pupils and boarders.
30. Boarding houses are comfortable and welcoming. Boarders' bedrooms, common rooms and washing facilities are clean, spacious, light, of good quality and well maintained. Boarders have a safe space for their possessions, access to refreshments and adequate free time. There is an extensive and popular range of activities. The food and drink provided are healthy, plentiful and meet the required standards. Boarding staff are well qualified in line with their roles. They ensure that pupils' wellbeing is prioritised. As all pupils board from the summer term in Year 6 onwards, boarding is central to the schools' culture. It is effective in promoting a sense of community. The boarding experience caters very well for pupils' social and emotional needs.

31. Leaders provide a range of sporting opportunities to promote enjoyment and to match pupils' aptitudes and interests in physical education (PE), games lessons and wider activities. Pupils develop skills in traditional team sports such as rugby, football and cricket but also in other sports such as swimming, polo and futsal.
32. Staff are effectively deployed to maintain the required ratios, so that pupils are well supervised in lessons, at breaktimes and during off-site activities and outings. Adults provide appropriate supervision and are responsive to pupils' needs.
33. The admission register and attendance records are suitably maintained. They are monitored appropriately in accordance with statutory guidance. Leaders work effectively with staff, parents and pupils to address any absenteeism or concerns. Local authorities are informed of any pupils leaving or joining the school at non-standard transition times.

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

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

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

35. The school's values of service, tenacity, achievement and growth (STAG) are shared effectively with pupils, parents and staff. The values are prominently displayed in classrooms. They form the basis of assemblies and chapel services and are well embedded in school life. In PSHE, for example, pupils learn about the importance of respect for those with different backgrounds, within the school and the wider community. Pupils celebrate European Day of Languages by inviting parents of different nationalities to speak about their cultures and languages. External speakers and engagement with external agencies, such as the police and fire brigade, are used effectively to promote such topics as personal safety, individual liberty and democracy. Boarding also contributes positively to the development of mutual respect as pupils learn how to live and work with each other effectively on a day-to-day basis. Consequently, pupils become confident and responsible young people.
36. Pupils learn to collaborate. They get on well with each other. Pupils across the school are encouraged and expected to work well in groups in lessons. Through committees, such as the eco committee, food committee and school council, pupils share their views and ideas to improve the school. Older pupils act as positive role models for their younger peers when taking responsibilities, for example, as prefects and house captains. The PSHE programme covers topics such as friendship and respect. This allows pupils to learn about the importance of supporting and encouraging each other. Consequently, pupils collaborate well and acquire well-developed social skills for their age.
37. Leaders are effective in developing pupils' awareness of potential careers. The school careers programme includes a range of speakers, often parents, who make presentations about their work in areas such as medicine, marketing, the civil service and journalism. Careers guidance is linked to International Women's Day, when pupils learn about career options from a broad range of female speakers. The local member of parliament has also visited the school to discuss his career and the role of democracy.
38. Teachers develop pupils' economic understanding effectively. Pupils learn about finance, including the origins of money, the move away from coins and notes, bank accounts, interest rates and savings.
39. Teachers enable pupils to serve the wider community through making links with local institutions and charities. A weekly charities club for pupils supports the school's choice and organisation of charity work. Pupils regularly visit local charities to see their work in action. Representatives from the charities speak to the school in assembly. All pupils participate in a charity walk around Windsor Great Park. Pupils in Year 8 undertake community work such as helping at local food banks, litter picking and assisting a charity supporting people who have a disability. These activities help pupils to develop a good understanding of the value of charity work and a sense of responsibility towards local communities.
40. Themes taught in PSHE lessons, such as the rule of law and the role of Parliament, are supplemented by work in other subjects, educational visits and information from visiting speakers. For example, pupils learn about the origins of democracy in Greek lessons and visit the Houses of Parliament. Pupils learn about, and develop an understanding of, different British institutions. They consider services and their impact on, and importance to, British life. Pupils are prepared effectively for responsibilities and opportunities in British society as a whole.

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

41. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

42. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Leaders and governors have a clear and effective safeguarding policy which is reviewed and updated regularly and available on the school's website. They make good use of external audits to ensure that rigorous procedures are in line with statutory requirements. Governors support those with safeguarding responsibilities. They monitor safeguarding arrangements effectively through termly safeguarding meetings, on-site visits and regular reviews of records. This ensures leaders and staff fulfil their responsibilities as required.
43. Staff with designated safeguarding responsibilities have appropriate and regular training. The safeguarding culture is well established across the school. All staff receive regularly updated safeguarding training from induction onwards, with routine checks on their understanding. This training includes appropriate information related to duties, policy and procedures to prevent radicalisation and extremism. Staff are vigilant. They understand what they need to do if they have a concern.
44. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities under the school's code of conduct. They understand the whistleblowing policy and the school's safeguarding processes, including those relating to allegations against staff. The relevant systems are used appropriately. The head keeps a log of any concerns and responds to issues quickly and effectively, including liaising with external agencies, when needed.
45. Safeguarding leaders respond effectively to any safeguarding concerns that are raised. They liaise well with external agencies, when required, to seek advice and refer safeguarding concerns. Records are detailed and thorough, with a clear rationale for actions taken. Leaders and staff understand the contextual safeguarding risks. They take effective action to mitigate them.
46. The school ensures that pupils, including boarders, are aware of how they can report any concerns. Safeguarding practices in the boarding houses include access to staff at all hours and the ability to contact home daily.
47. Leaders ensure that the pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. This includes online safety lessons in PSHE. These, together with an appropriate internet filtering system, contribute to supporting pupils' safety when online. Leaders use the information from filtering and monitoring systems to ensure that all online activity in school, during the day and evenings, is appropriate.
48. Leaders ensure that all recruitment checks are carried out and recorded in line with statutory requirements. The single central record (SCR) of appointments is well maintained. Leaders are appropriately trained in safer recruitment and take a key role in the recruitment of new staff.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Papplewick School
Department for Education number	868/6000
Registered charity number	309087
Address	Papplewick School Windsor Road Ascot Berkshire SL5 7LH
Phone number	01344 621488
Email address	schoolsec@papplewick.org.uk
Website	https://www.papplewick.org.uk
Proprietor	Papplewick Educational Trust
Chair	Mr Andrew Try
Headteacher	Mr Tom Bunbury
Age range	6 to 13
Number of pupils	209
Number of boarding pupils	89
Date of previous inspection	7 to 11 March 2022

Information about the school

50. Papplewick School is an independent day and boarding school located in Ascot, Berkshire. Founded in 1947, it operates as a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. It is registered as a single sex school for male pupils. The chair of governors was appointed in September 2023
51. Approximately 86 pupils are full-time boarders. Boarding is optional for those in the lower years and compulsory from the summer term of Year 6. All boarding accommodation is located on the school site.
52. The school has identified 72 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
53. The school has identified English as an additional language for 69 pupils.
54. The school states its aim is, to offer an outstanding all-round education and to enable its pupils to achieve their potential by ensuring they feel secure, confident and happy. It seeks to provide pupils with the broadest possible range of academic and extra-curricular experiences.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

4 to 6 March 2025

55. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

56. 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 of 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.

57. 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**.

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