

School inspection report

3 October to 5 October 2023

St James Senior Boys' School

10 Church Road
Stanwell
Ashford
TW15 3DZ

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	4
Recommended next steps	4
Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance	5
Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation	6
Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	7
Section 4: Pupils’ social and economic education and contribution to society.....	9
Safeguarding.....	10
School details	11
Information about the school	12
Inspection details	12

Summary of inspection findings

1. Trustees, governors and school leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of the school's provision and areas for development as contained in their targeted improvement plan. However, leaders are in the initial stages of implementing this plan, for example in the steps they are taking to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.
2. Leaders plan the curriculum effectively and, therefore, all pupils receive a broad and varied educational experience. The curriculum is adapted to suit pupils' needs and effective support is provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
3. Pupils make good progress overall and develop expected skills, knowledge and understanding. At GCSE, pupils achieve in line with expectations for their ability, based upon their assessed starting points. Pupils with SEND make good progress overall because of the effective individual support they receive.
4. Teaching typically engages pupils in their learning. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. However, in some lessons teachers do not sufficiently adapt their teaching to the known needs of pupils gained from prior assessment. Leaders are only just beginning to address the recommendation from the previous inspection, which is to make consistent use of assessment data in planning teaching.
5. The physical education curriculum is successful in developing skills in many team sports. However, opportunities for pupils to develop physical skills in non-ball sports and activities are more limited.
6. Leaders successfully promote pupils' self-understanding through the philosophy of "unity", which is based upon opportunities for reflection. The personal, health, and social education (PHSE) programme includes age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) and successfully promotes mutual trust and respect. There is very little discriminatory language or behaviour.
7. Pupils accept responsibility for their own behaviour, guided by the clear expectations of the leadership team. The behaviour policy is applied consistently and effectively by staff and understood by pupils. Pupils are provided with effective individual support for their behaviour where needed. Pupils display high levels of co-operation, empathy and sympathy, readily acknowledging any wrongdoing and accepting of any sanctions. Incidents of bullying are rare.
8. Leaders provide suitable careers advice, guiding pupils effectively in their choice of training or university.
9. While pupils participate in some activities in the wider community, both leaders and pupils recognise that additional opportunities, for example to volunteer with local charitable bodies, would enhance the personal development of pupils.
10. Governors and school leaders have a strategic, comprehensive and inclusive approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing. This influences decisions at all levels, especially in relation to safeguarding and wider pastoral care.
11. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect the requirements of current guidance.

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:

- prioritise the implementation of existing plans to ensure that teachers' planning is fully informed by the needs and prior attainment of all pupils
- review the breadth of experience available in the physical education curriculum to support pupils' physical development
- increase the opportunities available for pupils to contribute to wider society outside the school.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders and governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors monitor key areas using evidence from documentation, visits to the school, meetings with staff and discussions with pupils. As a result, they have an informed oversight of areas such as safeguarding, recruitment, health and safety and behaviour.
13. Together, leaders and governors have drawn up a targeted improvement plan that accurately reflects development needs, particularly relating to matching teaching to the needs of all pupils. However, leaders have made only partial progress in implementing some aspects of this plan.
14. Leaders and managers fulfil their responsibilities so that the Standards are met. Policies to ensure the wellbeing of pupils are implemented effectively and understood by both staff and pupils. Overall pupils make good progress. The curriculum is adjusted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND, and they are provided with effective support.
15. The recommendation from the previous inspection that assessment data should be used in planning teaching is only just being addressed. Leaders have recently introduced processes to monitor and improve the effectiveness of teaching. Some teaching does not take into account strategies designed to support individual pupils in class.
16. Leaders successfully foster pupils' spiritual and emotional awareness alongside their academic and physical development. As a result of the school's philosophy, pupils are reflective and aware of their own strengths. They are tolerant and respectful towards others.
17. Governors and school leaders have a strategic, comprehensive and inclusive approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing. There is a strong risk management culture that influences decisions at all levels, especially in areas of safeguarding and pastoral care. For example, risk assessments show a suitable awareness of the needs of pupils with SEND, and the potential risks related to the behaviour of individuals or groups of pupils.
18. Reports to parents are detailed and allow them to understand their child's progress and attainment. Other information is made available as required. The school's complaints policy is implemented effectively. Records show that the parents who have used the policy have received rapid responses to their concerns. A regular review of any formal complaints is undertaken by the governors and, if appropriate, any actions taken and lessons learned.
19. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and meets the needs of those with SEND through a clear and detailed accessibility plan. Leaders have created effective links with other agencies, including local safeguarding partners and medical professionals. The school liaises closely with statutory and non-statutory bodies over issues that concern pupils' wellbeing.

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

All the relevant standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. Leaders plan the curriculum effectively and flexibly so that all pupils undertake a wide and varied programme of lessons and activities in a range of subjects. For example, in response to a recent review, leaders have increased provision at GCSE and A level for the creative arts, including introducing media studies.
21. Pupils enjoy particular success across the curriculum; for example, in modern foreign languages (showing fluency and good understanding of idiom and grammar), mathematics, English and photography. This is a result of the high expectations of teachers, and activities which are tailored to the abilities of pupils.
22. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of their subject matter. Their teaching methods and activities successfully engage and encourage pupils to apply intellectual effort. Teachers' have effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour if necessary. Leaders recognise the need for more systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and the analytical use of data to check pupil progress. This process has only recently begun, despite being identified as a need at the previous inspection.
23. At GCSE, pupils achieve in line with predictions based upon their assessed starting points. Some pupils in the sixth form achieve the grades necessary to progress to colleges and universities which have demanding entrance requirements.
24. The curriculum is suitably adapted for pupils with SEND. Individual learning profiles (ILPs) are drawn up by trained learning support staff in collaboration with the pupils. These clearly identify approaches that will support each pupil's progress. Examples involve changing the language of a question, drawing upon known strengths in aspects such as mental arithmetic, or providing adapted text. Learning support staff provide intervention sessions in response to individual needs. The content of these sessions is linked closely with work undertaken in lessons. However, in some lessons, teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of strategies included in the ILPs.
25. Leaders plan for a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Recreational activities enhance the development of pupils' emotional, social and creative skills. Activities such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme develop pupils' leadership and life skills.

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

All the relevant standards are met.

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

26. Leaders actively communicate the school's philosophy of unity. The 'pause' at the start and end of each lesson is a time when pupils are encouraged to connect with peace and stillness. Older pupils develop more sophisticated meditative techniques. Some pupils take the opportunity to cultivate and deepen these skills further outside school. As a result, pupils successfully develop their self-knowledge, esteem and confidence. The regular opportunities for physical activity and reflection support pupils' wellbeing. Pupils are notably self-reflective.
27. The physical education curriculum provides pupils with regular opportunities to participate in team sports, and school teams have achieved notable success in association football at national level. Teaching is effective in cultivating high-level skills in these areas. However, similar opportunities are not extended to develop individual physical skills in other sports and activities.
28. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme includes age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE). The PSHE topics evolve so that at each stage pupils are well prepared for their next steps. As a result, pupils show awareness of themselves and others and develop confidence and independence. Many start to develop a spiritual awareness. The perspective, balance and good sense exhibited by pupils is a result of leaders' well-conceived weave of ethos, example and curriculum content.
29. Leaders ensure schemes of work for PSHE and other subjects promote mutual trust and respect. Teachers are inclusive and understand different perspectives. Pupils recognise the importance of debating sensitive topics in PSHE and RSE, and they understand the need to listen to contrary opinions with respect and tolerance. There is very little discriminatory language or behaviour.
30. Teachers clearly articulate expectations of attitudes and behaviour, so that pupils are co-operative and show empathy and sympathy. Pupils are, for the most part, well behaved. Leaders seek the views of pupils on behavioural management strategies through the school council. This opportunity for input means that pupils are more accepting of sanctions. The anti-bullying strategies are effective in minimising bullying between pupils. There is little bullying at the school. Staff are well trained and deal quickly and effectively with any issues that occur.
31. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained. As a result, pupils are kept and feel safe. Precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Fire evacuation drills take place termly, and staff receive regular fire-safety training.
32. Close liaison between the leaders of safeguarding, SEND and medical care ensure that the wellbeing of individual pupils is addressed and monitored. The physical and mental health of all pupils involved in any incident is given a high priority.
33. Suitable arrangements and accommodation are in place to care for pupils who become unwell or who have specific medical needs. Staff receive regular training in first aid. Levels of supervision are appropriate for pupils' ages and needs.
34. Attendance and admission registers are properly maintained and stored.

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

All the relevant standards are met.

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

35. Leaders successfully encourage pupils to be respectful of other people through example, curriculum planning and emphasis on the school's ethos. Pupils are very aware of issues which impact the wider world, and the importance of playing a positive role in society. They understand that there are diverse economic and ethical views in areas such as climate change. The PSHE scheme of work includes elements of how to manage money so that pupils become financially aware in preparation for life after school.
36. The school philosophy imbues pupils with a sense of right and wrong. Pupils receive human, social and economic education which prepares them well for their future lives in British society and the wider world. Pupils show respect for other cultures and understand the importance of the rule of law and public institutions. Pupils develop positive relationships within their community, demonstrating social and cultural maturity.
37. Leaders ensure pupils develop moral and ethical values in line with the school's ethos. Pupils are both sympathetic and empathetic to the challenges others face, and readily support each other through buddy schemes.
38. Pupils' personal development and social awareness benefits from charitable fundraising activities and support for local environmental projects. These allow pupils to develop their leadership and organisational skills and to gain a greater understanding of the lives of others. However, both leaders and pupils recognise that opportunities for pupils to contribute to wider society are limited and more could be done to develop a strategy for pupils to make a wider and more significant contribution to society.
39. Pupils receive suitable careers advice. Pupils feel well informed and follow a wide variety of pathways when they leave school. There is effective support for pupils to make choices about their GCSE and A level options. Leaders invite external speakers, who introduce pupils to the world of work. In the sixth form, teachers provide advice on future careers, training and university entry. Pupils are also encouraged to undertake their own personal research on their chosen pathways.

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

All the relevant standards are met.

Safeguarding

40. Leaders and governors have established safeguarding arrangements that are implemented effectively to safeguard children, including those at risk and with identified needs. The culture of safeguarding is one of openness, sharing and early reporting of any possible issues.
41. Staff have a secure understanding of their responsibilities, including those related to child-on-child abuse and take appropriate action when necessary. Staff have an appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct, whistleblowing policy and safeguarding procedures and are confident about following them.
42. The safeguarding policy has been reviewed effectively in line with the latest statutory guidance. Staff listen to the views of individual pupils. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has recently taken up the role, and the handover has been effective in ensuring a continuity of support for pupils. Safeguarding records are detailed and maintained in line with statutory guidance. Training of the DSL, safeguarding team and other staff is up to date.
43. Pupils receive guidance on staying safe, including in relation to e-safety. Arrangements for the monitoring and filtering of online technology are effective.
44. The school engages closely with the relevant local safeguarding partners. The school understands its role in reporting any person to relevant regulatory bodies if circumstances require it.
45. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are in place, and checks are recorded on the single central record.
46. The designated governor with responsibility in this area has appropriate skills, experience and training and conducts a full annual audit of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant standards are met.

School details

School	St James Senior Boys' School
Department for Education number	936/6016
Address	Church Road Stanwell Ashford Surrey TW15 3DZ
Website	stjamesschools.co.uk/seniorboys
Proprietor	Independent Educational Association Ltd
Chair	Mr Jeremy Sinclair
Head	Mr David Brazier
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	384
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2019

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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