

School inspection report

21 to 23 January 2025

The Shrubbery School

Walmley Ash Road

Sutton Coldfield

West Midlands

B76 1HY

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders have carried out a comprehensive review of teaching and learning as part of an ongoing strategic plan. Through regular scrutiny and adapting the plan's direction when needed, the proprietor and leaders ensure the school's continuous development.
2. The proprietor and leaders do not demonstrate effective oversight of safeguarding to promote pupils' wellbeing. Not all the required checks are completed prior to a person starting work at the school and pre-appointment safeguarding checks are not consistently accurately recorded on the single central record of appointments (SCR).
3. The school's attendance policy does not reflect current statutory guidance to ensure that an effective culture is established to promote regular attendance. Leaders have not updated the policy so that parents, staff and pupils have a full understanding of the required attendance procedures.
4. As a result, leaders do not demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge in order to fulfil their responsibilities and to ensure pupils' wellbeing.
5. A suitable curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to gain knowledge and increase their understanding across such areas as music, sport and art, including a core emphasis on English and mathematics. Pupils are well-prepared for senior school and for their lives beyond.
6. Leaders make purposeful use of assessment data to regularly monitor pupils' achievements over time. They adapt planning routinely to take into account pupils' varying learning needs. Pupils make good progress as a result. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan well-structured activities which enable pupils to acquire new skills and deepen their understanding.
7. Leaders in the early years set high expectations for children's learning and personal development. They encourage children's independence by offering reassurance and provide targeted activities linked to the children's interests. Children prosper achieve well as a result, notably in their speaking and early writing skills as well as through their social interaction with others.
8. As part of an appropriate personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum, pupils learn strategies for forming successful friendships and understanding their emotions. Trusting relationships with their teachers enable pupils to discuss their concerns openly and reflect maturely on the choices that they make. Pupils are well-behaved and respectful in their daily interactions.
9. Leaders organise a range of outings, visiting speakers and workshops to enable pupils to develop awareness of their responsibilities to society and each other. Pupils are well-prepared for their adult lives and display respect for those with different views and traditions from their own.
10. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff know how to identify the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff know how to any concerns they may have about the conduct of adults in school. Leaders do not ensure that training helps staff secure their knowledge of statutory safeguarding guidance as well as it could. This includes staff's understanding of relevant terminology.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

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

so that:

- attendance guidance is implemented in line with the latest statutory guidance
- all the required checks are carried out before a person starts work, including checks on prohibition from teaching and medical fitness
- all checks are recorded accurately on the single central record of appointments.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that safeguarding training enables all staff to be confident in their knowledge of statutory safeguarding guidance, including the use of relevant terminology.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders work closely with the proprietor across all areas of school life, including health and safety. Detailed reports, regular meetings and frequent visits enable the proprietor to keep updated on the work of the school.
12. Leaders operate a regular system of policy review with the proprietor. However, the school's attendance policy has not been updated to reflect the latest statutory guidance. As a result, parents, staff and pupils do not receive clear information about current absence protocol and the school's procedures. The proprietor and school leaders have not ensured that the arrangements for carrying out and recording pre-employment checks are sufficiently detailed and thorough. Leaders do not demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge in order to fulfil their responsibilities and to promote pupils' wellbeing.
13. Detailed risk assessments are in place. Leaders effectively identify risks relating to the school site, including the early years and outdoor provision. Leaders ensure that risk assessments are reviewed regularly so that they remain relevant. There is a clear procedure in place for carrying out risk assessments in relation to educational trips and off-site activities. Leaders ensure that risk assessments are completed in a timely way and are suitably thorough and are relevant to the context of the activity or provision.
14. The proprietor and leaders have set out a clear vision to support the school's continuing development. They evaluate its success regularly and adapt its direction accordingly. Following a comprehensive review of teaching and learning, leaders have introduced a range of measures, including new approaches to assessment and schemes of work in early reading, science, PSHE and mathematics. This reflects the school's commitment to ongoing improvement for pupils' outcomes. The implementation of new management information systems supports ease of access to pupils' information and thorough record-keeping.
15. Leaders in the early years provide regular opportunities for staff to pursue their training needs and reflect on their own practice. In collaboration with leaders, planning is subsequently adapted, when needed, so that children's ongoing needs are catered for.
16. Leaders deliver a varied assembly programme and plan themed workshops to support pupils' understanding of the school's aims. Leaders create a nurturing environment and form purposeful relationships with pupils. Pupils are at ease in their surroundings and trust that their concerns will be addressed by their teachers. As a result, pupils quickly grow in confidence and interact respectfully with their peers and teachers.
17. Leaders provide the required information to parents via the school's website, including contact details and a range of policies. Parents receive regular reports about their children's progress and achievements. Leaders share information about pupils' performance from the previous year to ensure that parents are kept updated.
18. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies, to seek specialist advice and guidance when required. This informs their ongoing practice when responding to situations that arise.

19. A range of procedures are appropriately implemented to manage any complaints. Concerns raised are addressed promptly and in line with the timeframes detailed in the school's complaints policy. Leaders reflect on any patterns arising so that appropriate action can be taken.
20. The proprietor and leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A detailed accessibility plan is kept under review. Leaders arrange for teachers to receive training, for example, in neurodiversity to support their classroom practice. Appropriate arrangements and adaptations, including specialist classroom resources, are in place so that all pupils have equal opportunities to access the school's curriculum, physical environment and school information.

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

21. Standards are not met with respect to the implementation of statutory guidance in relation to attendance and pre-employment checks. The proprietor and leaders do not demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge in order to fulfil their responsibilities and to promote pupils' wellbeing.
- 22. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders have designed a suitable curriculum so that pupils acquire scientific, aesthetic, creative and technological skills alongside a secure foundation in reading, writing and mathematics. A focus on public-speaking, discussion and debating enhances pupils' confidence in communication. Pupils are well-prepared for senior school. By the end of Year 6, they possess a relevant toolkit of skills for the next stage of education and their future lives.
24. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan lessons carefully to cater for pupils' prior attainment and learning needs. Pupils make good progress from their starting points as a result. Pupils achieve well in English, reading and mathematics by the end of Years 5 and 6 and progressively increase their vocabulary range and application each year. An emphasis on teaching subject-specialist terminology supports pupils' reading for understanding and enhances their written clarity and depth. Pupils are conscientious and focussed, eager to challenge their own thinking.
25. Following a comprehensive review of assessment, leaders have introduced new measures to monitor pupils' attainment over time, including in phonics, reading, mathematics and science. Leaders make effective use of data and respond quickly to adapt subject planning when needed. For example, a school-wide review of handwriting has resulted in improved writing outcomes for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Similarly, through the introduction of a new mathematics scheme and further planned opportunities to carry out experiments in science, older pupils demonstrate confidence and skill in tackling reasoning questions and interpreting information.
26. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points. Leaders carefully consider pupils' learning profiles and reflect how best to match pupils' needs to the different support pathways available. Additional sessions in mathematics and phonics run alongside groups designed to build pupils' confidence in social interaction. Sensory breaks and adapted workstations offer pupils strategies to develop their organisational skills and sustain focus. Pupils achieve well as a result.
27. Leaders in the early years set high expectations for children's language development so that children flourish as clear and confident communicators. Adults' creative use of stories, sentence modelling and repetition of new vocabulary enables children to introduce newly learnt language in their own conversations. For example, children readily qualify their comments with additional descriptive words to clarify their meaning. They use comparative language correctly in mathematics when sharing predictions of the capacities of different containers.
28. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are assessed on entry to the school to determine language fluency. They receive targeted support, when required. Resources, including an intensive phonics programme, picture cards, vocabulary banks and additional reading groups ensure that pupils make good progress in such areas as communication, understanding and writing.
29. Leaders regularly share information in meetings and reports about pupils' performance so that parents are kept updated.
30. Leaders provide a suitable programme of extra-curricular activities which complements pupils' classroom-based learning. After school activities, including netball and football, present opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their existing techniques, whilst off-site options such as in golf and parkour introduce pupils to new challenges and interests. Leaders arrange

educational visits to extend pupils' understanding of different subjects. For instance, in science, a visit to a planetarium and a tour of a marine habitat broadens pupils' learning linked to the solar system and the impact of plastic pollution on marine life.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. A new programme of study in PSHE, including relationships education, has recently been introduced and the content discussed with parents. Topics are designed to provide pupils with strategies for managing conflict, prioritising self-care and understanding the breadth of normal emotions. In this way, pupils are equipped to face personal challenges when they arise.
33. The school's attendance policy has not been updated to reflect the latest statutory guidance so that parents and pupils receive accurate information about the school's attendance protocol. Leaders' knowledge and understanding of recent statutory guidance is not secure. Leaders monitor pupils' absence to identify patterns and offer support, when required. The local authority is informed when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.
34. During assemblies, PSHE lessons, circle time and wellbeing sessions, leaders introduce ways for pupils to build resilience and increase self-esteem. Pupils are reflective in their comments and understand the importance of the choices they make.
35. Leaders arrange visits to places of religious and cultural interest to develop pupils' spiritual awareness. They prioritise pupils' emotional wellbeing by creating a nurturing environment. For example, in a designated breaktime space, pupils read, relax in conversation with friends and crochet. Teachers' use of 'Joy' jars in classrooms reinforces the importance of adopting a positive mindset.
36. Regular physical education (PE) and swimming lessons ensure that pupils remain physically fit and active. Lessons are well-structured and technique is clearly modelled. This enables pupils to deepen their understanding and skill level, for instance, when improving ball control whilst volleying in tennis.
37. In the early years, children enhance their physical development in regular PE lessons and outdoor activities. Children confidently navigate balance beams and practise coordination by travelling up and down stair blocks. Adults offer guidance and encouragement so that children build resilience when attempting new challenges.
38. Teachers set high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Badges, celebrating kindness and good manners, encourage pupils to make sensible choices. A clear behaviour policy is implemented and understood by pupils. Leaders respond promptly when behaviour falls below expected standards. As a result, pupils are well-behaved, courteous and considerate of others' needs. The issue of sanctions, including warnings and withdrawal of free time, is carefully monitored to address any trends arising.
39. An anti-bullying strategy has been effectively implemented. Incidents of bullying are rare and leaders are quick to offer support to all parties when incidents arise. Pupils trust that their teachers will address their concerns.
40. Supervision around school and at break time is suitable and staff are on hand to offer support, when needed. In the early years, an appropriate ratio of adults to children is consistently maintained.

41. Health and safety is regularly monitored by leaders and the proprietor and checks are routinely carried out. School buildings are well-maintained. Fire exits are clearly marked and timed fire drills take place regularly. Staff are suitably trained and respond swiftly when action is required. Comprehensive measures are in place to minimise the risk of fire.
42. Appropriate medical facilities cater for pupils who are unwell. Medication is securely stored and parents are informed promptly in the event of accident or illness. Staff training is regularly updated and suitably qualified adults support children in the early years during school hours and during offsite visits.
43. Leaders in the early years draw on their in-depth knowledge of the children to support their personal development. For example, conversations between adults and children are skilfully tailored to reflect the children's interests and needs and displays of photographs and vocabulary are referenced by adults to reinforce children's understanding of various emotions. Purposeful relationships with adults enable children to share their feelings and resolve any worries.

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

44. Standards are not met with regards to the implementation of statutory guidance in relation to attendance.
- 45. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

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

46. The curriculum enables pupils to develop social and financial awareness. In mathematics, for example, younger pupils increase their familiarity with monetary systems through problem solving with coins and calculating the correct change. Talks on finance and a banking workshop for older pupils informs them about credit cards, debt and mortgages so that pupils learn relevant decision-making skills in preparation for their future lives.
47. Leaders emphasise mutual respect in PSHE lessons and through their own actions and conversations. Subject leaders select topics and books thoughtfully to reflect a diverse society and an annual themed week raises pupils' awareness of neurodiversity and offers pupils support strategies. This enables pupils to understand and value individuality.
48. Leaders promote the celebration of festivals representing different world religions and opportunities for pupils to share their own cultural identity during class discussions. This enables pupils to hear a range of voices and views different from their own. Pupils are respectful and considerate of others' needs as a result.
49. Effective transition arrangements ensure that children in the early years settle quickly into the next stage of their learning. After school support and revision sessions enable older pupils to be well-prepared for the expectations of senior school.
50. Leaders regularly schedule speakers to introduce pupils to possible future career options. Talks spanning occupations in pathology, the Army and politics offer pupils relevant insights for their adult lives. Leaders' provision of careers education ensures that older pupils are confident in their understanding of future pathways and career options.
51. Pupils confidently distinguish between right and wrong. Through assemblies, debating club and current affairs programmes, leaders encourage pupils to consider moral and ethical dilemmas, for example, the causes of World War II. Pupils learn the rights of each child to be safe, to learn and to expect a certain standard of living. In this way, pupils understand how a system of rules creates a law-abiding society.
52. Pupils develop empathy and wider understanding of society through various leadership roles, including becoming a monitor or ambassador. Ambassadors from Nursery to Year 6 report back to their peers on areas such as playground bins, conserving electricity around school and charity book donations. This enables pupils to recognise their broader responsibilities to those around them.
53. Leaders plan regular events so that pupils engage actively with their local community. Activities such as litter picking, planting cherry trees and visiting allotments increase pupils' awareness of social responsibility. By fundraising for children's charities and for war veterans and singing at a residential care home for the elderly, pupils understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of others. Recycling projects and PSHE topics on the wider environment and energy conservation enable pupils to develop as responsible citizens.

54. As part of their PSHE lessons, pupils learn about the roles of the emergency services, most recently through a visit from the fire service and during a topic about real-life superheroes in the early years. Pupils subsequently learn how the different groups can support them in an emergency.
55. Leaders in the early years plan activities thoughtfully to support children's social development. For example, through role play activities centred around the home, children learn the dynamics of family relationships and caring for those younger than themselves. Adults model skills such as turn taking and careful listening effectively so that children become increasingly confident in forming successful friendships. Children demonstrate positive interactions with their friends and adults as a result.

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

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

Safeguarding

57. The proprietor and leaders do not maintain effective oversight of safeguarding in order to promote pupils' welfare. They have not identified that the school has not carried out all the required safer recruitment checks in line with current statutory guidance, including checks on prohibition from teaching orders and verifying medical fitness. Not all checks of staff appointments are recorded correctly on the school's single central record (SCR).
58. Safeguarding leaders liaise with various external safeguarding partners to seek advice and make referrals, when required. The school maintains detailed safeguarding records which are in accordance with current statutory guidance. When incidents arise, leaders scrutinise records for patterns to inform their decision-making. They manage any incidents promptly and sensitively.
59. Staff, including those new to the school, receive regular online and in-person safeguarding training, most recently in relation to the 'Prevent' duty. Staff know how to report low-level concerns. However, leaders have not ensured that staff are clear about the terminology used in the statutory safeguarding guidance in relation to low-level concerns. There is an appropriate safeguarding induction for members of staff who are new to the school.
60. Leaders implement a range of strategies so that pupils' access to inappropriate websites is limited. They carry out testing of filtering and monitoring systems and ensure that pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe online both in school and outside. Pupils understand how adopting avatars, reporting scams and responsible use of mobile devices help to protect them online. Leaders in the early years are vigilant about the safe use and storage of electronic devices.
61. Pupils are able to share concerns with their teachers. Regular access to a lunchtime hub and a wellbeing mentor reassures pupils that their voices are heard.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

62. Standards are not met with respect to staff suitability checks, the recording of checks on the SCR and the implementation of statutory attendance guidance.
- 63. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

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

Paragraph number	Standard
Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

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

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

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Safeguarding

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

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
7(a)	arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
7(b)	such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 18(2)	The standard in this paragraph is met if-
18(2)(b)	no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
18(2)(c)	the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person—
18(2)(c)(ii)	the person's medical fitness;
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 18(3)	The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 21(1)	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is

	applicable to the school in question.
ISSR Part 4, paragraph 21(3)	The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is—
21(3)(a)	in relation to each member of staff (“S”) appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether—
21(3)(a)(iii)	a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
21(3)(a)(v)	an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S;
21(3)(a)(vii)	a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
21(3)(b)	in relation to each member of staff (“S”), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.
EYFS 3.5	Providers must have and implement policies and procedures to keep children safe and meet EYFS requirements. Schools are not required to have separate policies to cover EYFS requirements provided the requirements are already met through an existing policy. Where providers are required to have policies and procedures as specified below, these policies and procedures should be recorded in writing. Policies and procedures should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant LSP.
EYFS 3.7	If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must immediately notify their local authority children's social care team, in line with local reporting procedures, and, in emergencies, the police. Providers must also take into account the government's statutory guidance ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ and ‘Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales’. All schools are required to have regard to the government's statutory guidance ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’, and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to read this guidance.
EYFS 3.9	Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable; they must have the relevant qualifications, training and have passed any required checks to fulfil their roles. Providers must take appropriate steps to verify qualifications, including in cases where physical evidence cannot be produced. Providers must also ensure that any person who may have regular contact with children (for example, someone living or working on the same premises the early years provision is provided), is suitable.
EYFS 3.13	Providers must tell staff that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings that may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting). Providers must not allow anyone whose suitability has not been checked, including through a criminal records check, to have unsupervised contact with children being cared for.
EYFS 3.14	Providers must record information about staff qualifications and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed (including the criminal records check reference number, the date a check was obtained and details of who at the setting obtained it).

School details

School	The Shrubby School
Department for Education number	330/6064
Address	The Shrubby School Walmley Ash Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands B76 1HY
Phone number	0121 351 1582
Email address	Info@shrubberschool.co.uk
Website	https://www.shrubberschool.com
Proprietor	Craig Johnson
Headteacher	Amanda Lees
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	105
Date of previous inspection	30 March to 1 April 2022

Information about the school

64. The Shrubbery School is an independent co-educational day school located in Sutton Coldfield on the outskirts of Birmingham. The school is owned and managed by a single proprietor.
65. There are 33 children in the early years comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
66. The school has identified 13 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are no pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
67. The school identifies a very small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
68. The school states its aims are to provide equal opportunities for all pupils in a safe, happy, and stimulating environment. It seeks to provide a curriculum which stimulates individual pupil progress through differentiation, and which combines the best of traditional and modern teaching. The school aims to build pupils' self-confidence, self-discipline and self-esteem and to establish positive links between home and school.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 January 2025

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

70. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assembly
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the proprietor
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

71. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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For more information, please visit isi.net