

School inspection report

28 to 30 November 2023

Walthamstow Hall

Walthamstow Hall
Holly Bush Lane
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 3UL

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. Governors' oversight of the work of the leadership team ensures that senior leaders carry out their roles effectively in most areas of school life. Governors and leaders ensure that the school fulfils its aims, and the curriculum meets the needs of the pupils, including those in the early years. Leaders provide an extensive co-curricular programme which supports and fosters pupils' wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem.
2. However, the school does not meet all of the Standards because governors and leaders do not always ensure that the required recruitment checks on new staff are undertaken. Many aspects of safeguarding are secure. Recent staff appointments have been subject to the required checks. However, since the previous inspection, governors and school leaders have not always maintained an effective oversight of staff appointments.
3. Leaders are reflective in their self-evaluation of the school. In collaboration with the governing body, they prioritise and plan for future school improvements, with a focus on ensuring pupils' wellbeing.
4. Pupils achieve well at all stages of their education and make good progress in relation to their starting points. Leaders ensure individual support is provided for pupils. Pupils who have special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and effectively supported to make good progress.
5. Children in the early years make good progress because leaders provide a well-planned curriculum which reflects children's needs and interests.
6. Pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) receive effective support, so they make good progress in developing their fluency in English.
7. Leaders ensure that teaching is effective, and pupils receive helpful feedback which supports their progress. Pupils take pride in their work and by the time they leave the school, they have well developed knowledge and skills that prepare them for their next steps in life.
8. Leaders provide an extensive co-curricular and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, which supports pupils in other areas of their learning. Leaders recognise that there are always further opportunities to develop pupils' understanding, appreciation and respect of cultures that differ from their own.
9. A strong sense of community pervades the school. Pupils of all ages enjoy their time at school, behave well and are engaged in their learning.
10. Effective health and safety, risk assessment and fire procedures are in place for the school site and external trips and activities.
11. Pupils engage with the local community. They are widely involved in supporting both local, national, and international charities and take pride in their charitable endeavours.
12. Leaders' planned careers provision does not always reflect the interests and aspirations of all pupils.

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 board of governors must ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and
 - actively promote the wellbeing of pupils

by ensuring:

- a consistently effective oversight of safeguarding and recruitment processes.
- that adults are not allowed to commence employment until all necessary recruitment checks are in place.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the careers provision covers a wider range of options which reflect the interests and aspirations of pupils
- ensure pupils develop an awareness and understanding of a broad range of different cultures.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors regularly audit the implementation of the school's policies in order to promote pupils' wellbeing. They oversee aspects of school life in regular meetings with staff. In most areas they exercise appropriate oversight. However, governors and school leaders have not always followed the safer recruitment procedures.
14. Leaders have recently undertaken an analytical and detailed self-evaluation process which has identified many areas for improvement across the school. For example, leaders have begun the process of reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of pupils in the sixth form.
15. Leaders are aware of their responsibility to promote the welfare of their pupils. They have systems in place so that pupils can raise concerns. Staff understand how to identify pupils who might be in need or at risk of harm, and have developed effective links with external agencies and other safeguarding partners.
16. Governors and school leaders draw on a detailed policy to manage risk. Staff are well trained and have a clear understanding of how to assess, manage and mitigate risks. Policies and procedures are consistently applied for educational trips, health and safety and fire risk prevention. Leaders ensure that pupils also have an effective understanding of risks, such as those associated with online safety and help pupils to prepare for life as a young adult in modern society.
17. Concerns from parents are dealt with promptly and with sensitivity. Complaints are recorded and analysed by leaders to identify emerging patterns. All the required information is provided for parents, and pupils' progress is reported frequently through detailed and informative reports.
18. Leaders in the early years ensure that the setting provides a welcoming environment and that all requirements are met. Staff are appropriately deployed and know each child's skills and personality, so they can provide effective learning opportunities. A recently introduced online tracking system allows staff and parents to view information about children's progress and development. Staff are currently being trained to use this to improve planning and assess children's progress and behaviour. It also allows parents to support their children's learning at home.
19. Leaders understand their responsibility under the Equality Act. The school does not discriminate and makes reasonable adjustments for those pupils who have SEND, including ensuring they can access the full curriculum.

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

20. Standards relating to governance, leadership and management are not met. The school does not meet the related requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders across the school regularly review the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils and includes all the required elements as pupils move through the school. They have recently introduced changes, which have improved the tracking of individual pupils' progress. This allows leaders to monitor and quality assure the provision and provide effective support for teachers and pupils as required. As a result, pupils make good progress.
22. Results at A-level and GCSE for most pupils are above predictions based upon their starting points. Pupils who have SEND are identified and appropriately supported, and this ensures that they also make good or better progress. Pupils who have EAL receive effective individual support for this aspect of their learning. This enables them to make rapid progress with their understanding of and fluency in English.
23. Pupils achieve well across a range of subjects, including the sciences and creative arts. They have effective communication skills because leaders provide extensive opportunities to practise these in a range of contexts. Pupils who leave the school move on to a wide range of courses and destinations which reflect the broad curriculum and varied opportunities leaders provide to develop their aptitudes and interests.
24. In the junior school, pupils make good progress because teaching is effective and teachers encourage pupils to participate in lessons. Leaders create an ethos in which pupils believe that their abilities can grow through hard work, determination and practice. Pupils apply effective numeracy and literacy skills in a range of contexts, and they achieve consistently high results in selective entrance examinations.
25. Leaders in the early years ensure the curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. Teachers promote accurate letter formation and develop children's understanding of the sounds that make up words to underpin future progress in reading and writing. Curriculum planning is suitably adapted to meet pupils' interests and needs, including their physical development. Staff know the children well and work collaboratively to ensure that children almost always meet their expected goals. Leaders have recently introduced a monitoring system which helps to oversee and support pupils' progress and good behaviour.
26. Teaching engages pupils' interests through well-planned lessons in which time is well used and pupils are challenged to think deeply. Teachers encourage pupils to share and question each other's ideas and perceptions and hence further develop a range of views. For example, carefully targeted questioning in a classics lesson resulted in pupils developing a more sophisticated understanding of Roman culture.
27. Leaders provide teachers with regular training, linked to identified development priorities. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, and cater for the needs of pupils well. Pupils take pride in their work, enjoy learning, and actively support one another's learning in paired or group activities.
28. Across the school, leaders use standardised tests to establish clear starting points and monitor progress through regular assessments. Teachers use the information from these assessments to adapt their teaching to ensure that pupils build on prior knowledge. Feedback is provided to pupils so they have a clear understanding of the next steps to progress their learning and understanding.

29. Leaders have developed an extensive co-curricular programme which provides a wide range of activities for all pupils. Many pupils take part in the regular sports, drama and technology clubs, including the building of a solar panel car. Pupils are successful in competitions at both local and national level, as well as The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. In the junior school pupils attend a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, for example a musical tea concert, football practice and dance. Pupils are enthusiastic about these and other opportunities provided by the school, such as a range of trips and visits that widen and support pupils' educational experiences.

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

30. Pupils follow a comprehensive programme of study in PSHE, which includes appropriate provision for relationships and sex education (RSE). This is supported by planned assemblies, which focus on themes such as respect for diversity and the value of individuality. Leaders stress the importance of learning from mistakes. Pupils feel confident about contributing their thoughts and ideas.
31. Pupils are resilient, motivated learners, with a strong self-understanding. Leaders encourage pupils to 'do what they love'. Pupils recognise the need for balance between a desire to achieve and the need to carefully guard one's mental health and emotional wellbeing.
32. Leaders provide clear guidance to help pupils behave in accordance with school aims and ethos. Pupils demonstrate high standards of behaviour, and leaders encourage pupils to seek help and support if they have any friendship issues. There are effective systems in place for dealing with bullying incidents. Pupils organise and chair their own committees to help review and recommend to staff how to address potential behaviour issues and as well as broad range of other feedback.
33. Pupils have a well-developed spiritual and moral understanding, which is supported by a broad religious studies curriculum. Leaders encourage pupils to reflect on how they can support those in need of their help, and pupils respond positively to such opportunities.
34. Children in the early years develop a growing sense of self-confidence. Adults model their desired behaviours, and children respond well, learning the importance of following rules and treating those around them with respect and kindness.
35. Leaders have robust systems in place to ensure that the school facilities and outdoor learning environment are well maintained. Leaders systematically review health and safety procedures to limit potential risks, including those from fire. Suitable accommodation and procedures are in place for the care of pupils who are unwell or who require medical attention. Staff are regularly trained in first aid and leaders ensure that accurate and detailed records are kept of any medical incidents or consultations.
36. Leaders have developed effective systems to supervise pupils both on and off the site. Attendance and admissions registers are kept in line with requirements, and leaders follow up pupil absences promptly.
37. Pupils participate in a wide variety of sports and leaders actively encourage them to develop new interests and develop their skills and fitness. Lacrosse is a popular sport of the school and more recently leaders have introduced football and cricket to broaden the opportunities for the pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils of all ages understand the importance of physical fitness, and also recognise how activities can support their self-esteem and mental wellbeing.

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

38. Leaders successfully encourage pupils to show respect for others and to contribute to the local and wider community. They provide opportunities for pupils to debate and participate in discussions and decisions that directly affect pupils and the school community. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to show initiative and contribute positively to the lives of others through charitable endeavours, leadership positions and peer mentoring. Pupils display a mature knowledge and appreciation of values such as democracy, mutual respect and tolerance.
39. A high degree of mutual respect can be seen amongst pupils, and between pupils and staff. Both pupils and staff appreciate and value difference, and leaders actively develop pupils' understanding of diversity through the curriculum, assemblies, and school council. This supports their understanding and preparation for life in the wider world.
40. Leaders ensure that there are suitable opportunities for pupils to understand other cultures. For example, senior school pupils study the Gamelan music of Java and Bali. Through discussions with pupils, leaders recognise that they could broaden these opportunities to further develop pupils' understanding, appreciation and respect of cultures that differ from their own.
41. Pupils are prepared for life in British society. Values such as tolerance, democracy and individual liberty are actively promoted by leaders across the school and pupils develop their understanding including in discussions during PSHE lessons. Pupils link these closely to the school's aims of kindness and respect. Through activities such as choosing for their charity for the year, leaders develop pupils' understanding of the right to vote and the need to respect the views of others.
42. Leaders support pupils in planning their next steps in education and by informing them of possible career choices. Pupils are guided in their decisions through individual support sessions and are encouraged to research using a range of resources. Older pupils have the opportunity to gain work experience. The careers guidance which is given is adequate but somewhat limited and does not cover as broad a range of options for pupils as they might wish to investigate.
43. Pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of right and wrong, and respect for the rule of law and institutions. Leaders use pupil councils across the school as a conduit to allow pupils to express their views. Pupils see the impact of their decisions such as changes to menus and school uniform.
44. Children in the early years learn to take turns, to show patience with their peers and understand the importance of listening to others. Leaders reinforce positive behaviours and the importance of respecting others so they are well prepared for their next stage of learning.
45. Pupils gain financial awareness as they move through the school. They understand the value of money, and the need for financial prudence. They learn basic budgeting skills, and appreciate there are moral choices that can influence how money is spent.
46. Leaders across the school provide opportunities for pupils to contribute towards wider society. Pupils are proud of their charitable initiatives and their impact on the society in which they live. They understand that giving their time is as important as raising money.

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

47. Governors receive an annual update on safeguarding from leaders as well as other updates throughout the year. However, their oversight is not consistently effective as it has not always ensured that suitable recruitment practices are in place.
48. The school does not always follow its policy for safer recruitment. Recent appointments have been subject to the required checks. However, prior to this, some staff were recruited and began employment prior to completion of the required checks in place to ensure the safety of the pupils. This included employing staff without checking the list of those barred from working with children or seeking references from previous employers. Some staff files have no evidence to indicate that identity checks on staff have been carried out, as is required. The single central record provides an accurate record of the recruitment checks which have been undertaken.
49. Leaders ensure that staff receive safeguarding training to a level appropriate to their role when they join the school, supported through regular updates. Staff have a clear understanding as to when to report concerns and their responsibility in reporting low level concerns or allegations regarding staff members.
50. Leaders and staff identify issues at an early stage and give pupils the support that is needed. There are systems in place for staff to report safeguarding concerns when they arise. Leaders liaise with external agencies when required and make timely referrals to the local authority designated officer and children's services. Leaders of safeguarding regularly meet to review their response to concerns.
51. Pupils trust staff and feel able to share their concerns. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders have introduced filtering and monitoring systems to ensure the appropriate use of technology and to identify where children may be vulnerable and require support.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

52. The Standards relating to safeguarding and the suitability of staff are not met. In consequence, the school does not meet the related requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The relevant Standards not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
Part 8, paragraph 34(1)(a)(b) and (c)	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 – (a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently (b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and (c) actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

The relevant Standards are met.

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

The relevant Standards are met.

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

The relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

The relevant Standards are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b)	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that – (a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and (b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
Part 4, paragraph 18(2)(a), (2)(c)(i), (2)(d) and 18(3)	18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if – (a) no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act (c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person – (i) the person's identity (2)(d) the proprietor ensures that, where relevant to any such person, an enhanced criminal record check is made in respect of that person and an

	<p>enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained before or as soon as practicable after that person's appointment.</p> <p>18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) must be completed before a person's appointment.</p>
EYFS 3.7	<p>Providers must have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and to the 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales'. All schools are required to have regard to the government's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance, and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to refer to this guidance. If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means the local children's social care services and, in emergencies, the police.</p>
EYFS 3.9	<p>Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable to fulfil the requirements of their roles. Providers must have effective systems in place to ensure that practitioners, and any other person who may have regular contact with children (including those living or working on the premises), are suitable</p>

School details

School	Walthamstow Hall
Department for Education number	886/6054
Registered charity number	1058439
Address	Walthamstow Hall Holly Bush Lane Sevenoaks Kent TN13 3UL
Phone number	01732 451334
Email address	whoffice@whall.school
Website	walthamstow-hall.co.uk
Chair	Mrs Jayne Adams
Headteacher	Ms Louise Chamberlain
Age range	2–18
Number of pupils	529
Date of previous inspection	25–27 June 2019

Information about the school

53. Walthamstow Hall is an independent day school predominantly for female pupils, based on two separate sites in Sevenoaks, Kent. The nursery and pre-school became co-educational from August 2023. The junior school is located approximately a mile away from the senior school.
54. The school was founded in 1838 for the daughters of Christian missionaries and moved to its present site in 1882. It is an educational charity with a governing body operating as a board of trustees. Since the previous inspection, the school has a new headmistress, appointed in June 2023.
55. There are 30 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage comprising nursery, pre-school and Reception classes.
56. The school has identified 128 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No current pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. English is an additional language for eight pupils.
58. The school states that its aims are to provide a broad education, rich in opportunity, in a Christian setting that will foster confidence and prepare girls for challenging and fulfilling lives.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 28 to 30 November 2023

59. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection team was accompanied by a shadow team inspector.
60. 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 head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
 - discussions with pupils including those in the early years setting
 - visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
 - scrutiny of samples of pupils' work in conjunction with pupils and staff
 - scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.
61. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

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

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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