

School inspection report

Date 27 to 29 February 2024

Solefield School

Solefields Road

Sevenoaks

Kent

TN13 1PH

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 and leaders collaborate with the school community to gather their views on the school's performance, enabling effective self-evaluation. They recognize the importance of risk management and communicate effectively with parents to smooth the management of changes within the school.
2. Leaders provide and make available relevant information to parents. However, some amendments to the information provided to parents and to the complaints policy were required to bring these fully into alignment with the Standards.
3. Leaders and staff effectively implement a broad curriculum and co-curriculum in line with the school ethos of inclusivity for all. Staff cultivate positive relationships between pupils and teachers, and plan lessons well, contributing to pupils making good progress from their starting points. Children in the early years benefit from a well-structured curriculum. Through this, they learn in a well-managed, supportive environment, acquiring the key skills and knowledge necessary to become successful learners.
4. Subject leaders maintain oversight of their respective subjects. They track pupils' attainment against identified criteria and use this information to inform planning. However, consistency across subjects is lacking, which reduces leaders' ability to determine a comprehensive picture of the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
5. Leaders prioritise the mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils, ensuring that a variety of effective support systems are in place to enable pupils to receive the help they need. They actively promote positive behaviour and effectively address any incidents of bullying. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school.
6. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life. Pupils respond positively to these initiatives and feel that their voices are both heard and valued.
7. British values are an integral part of the curriculum and the school environment. The curriculum promotes pupils' cultural understanding and tolerance towards others. This is supported by the school's equality, diversity, and inclusion committee, which celebrates individuality and cultural differences. Pupils demonstrate tolerance and acceptance towards others.
8. The opportunities provided by leaders for pupils to develop their economic understanding are limited, as the economic curriculum is not fully integrated throughout the school.
9. Governors and senior leaders maintain suitable oversight of all safeguarding arrangements. Those with designated lead responsibilities and other staff receive appropriate training and demonstrate the relevant skills to fulfil their roles. Pupils are aware of different avenues through which they can raise a concern.

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 all policies and the information provided to parents fully reflect the requirements of the Standards
- ensure that tracking and monitoring is consistent across teaching and learning in all subjects in order to make any improvements
- ensure economic education is provided consistently to pupils throughout the school.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors receive reports from senior leaders and review evidence appropriately to verify that the Standards are being met. Governors regularly visit the school and engage with staff to gain first-hand insight into the school's operations, in order to promote alignment with its aims and values. Leaders collaborate with the school community during school self-evaluation, actively involving parents and pupils through regular surveys to gather their perspectives on the school's performance. Through this inclusive approach, leaders develop a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.
11. Governors demonstrate a secure understanding of risk management and reflect effectively when implementing change, including consideration of potential unintended consequences. They are attentive to situational risks, responding appropriately when required. Leaders and governors encourage and maintain accessibility to parents, facilitating their understanding of the views of the community and good communication between school and parents. This open approach has supported the smooth implementation of significant changes over the past year, including reducing the age of entry and transitioning to a co-educational model.
12. Leaders have established a variety of appropriate policies and oversee their effective implementation. They collaborate with other agencies as needed and review the accessibility plan so that the curriculum and other aspects of provision are accessible to all pupil groups.
13. Leaders actively promote pupils' mental health and wellbeing by providing effective support within the school and collaborating with appropriate specialist services. This focus on pupils' wellbeing promotes their aims for pupils to be happy and have a sense of self-worth.
14. Governors place a high value on safeguarding arrangements and maintain effective oversight of the measures in place to safeguard pupils. Staff are trained on the prevention of bullying and the effective implementation of the behaviour policy. Pupils are educated on what to do should bullying occur.
15. Leaders record and address complaints promptly and effectively. Governors and senior leaders review any complaints to consider any lessons that can be learned and take appropriate action. Some adjustments to the complaints policy and other provision of information to parents were required to comply with the Standards. These were promptly rectified during the inspection and made available to parents on the school website. Leaders provide regular reports to parents. A suitable accessibility plan is maintained, reviewed and effectively implemented.
16. In the early years, the curriculum is appropriately structured, taking into account the children's interests, so they make good progress. The curriculum in the prep school is suitable and stimulates pupils' interest, including, for older pupils, by extending opportunities for personal research and interests. However, planning for pupils' economic understanding is not fully embedded in the curriculum throughout the school and as a result pupils' progress in this area is less consistent.
17. Leaders offer many opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school community, fostering pupils' developing understanding of service and social responsibility. Pupils feel well supported by adults who know them personally and actively encourage their participation in school activities.

18. Leaders responsible for health and safety implement effective risk assessments. They prioritise the welfare of pupils and promptly address any identified risks, remaining vigilant to potential hazards. When necessary, leaders make appropriate adjustments for both staff and pupils.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The curriculum is wide-ranging and includes chess and judo for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and Latin for older pupils. To support pupils' learning further, leaders have implemented an enquiring minds curriculum and a scholarship curriculum, both of which older pupils follow in accordance with the school ethos of inclusion for all. They provide opportunities for pupils to undertake independent research and follow an area of interest, regardless of whether they ultimately sit for a senior school scholarship. Pupils also benefit from regular opportunities to participate in music, art and drama. Through these programmes, pupils develop skills for lifelong learning.
21. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and effectively cultivate a positive and inclusive classroom environment. Pupils acquire knowledge and make progress, unafraid of making mistakes. Lessons are well planned and are suitably linked to prior learning. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress in their English language acquisition and are able to effectively access the curriculum. Typically, teachers employ suitable learning activities although in some lessons progress is slower when activities are not fully aligned to pupils' needs, resulting in a few pupils losing focus. Teaching provides appropriate targeted support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils demonstrate secure information and technology (ICT) skills. They are competent coders and use applications well to support their learning.
22. The curriculum along with opportunities for debating and external writing competitions provide pupils with a range of activities to support their language acquisition. Pupils are articulate communicators and speak confidently, expressing their views clearly. Teachers in the early years model language appropriately, encouraging children to share ideas, collaborate effectively, and develop their vocabulary and language skills. Older pupils speak confidently in different contexts, have well-developed literacy skills, and effectively employ a variety of linguistic techniques in their writing.
23. Children in the early years develop their numeracy and understanding of number well as a result of teaching that sets high expectations and uses carefully planned activities to engage children in their learning. As pupils advance through the school, they acquire a secure knowledge and understanding of increasingly complex mathematical concepts. They demonstrate the ability to apply their mathematical skills to new situations and effectively solve increasingly complex problems. For example, older pupils apply their knowledge of angles to solve problems involving unfamiliar geometrical shapes.
24. Subject leaders track pupils' attainment and progress within their respective subjects. When utilised well, this data informs leaders about both individual attainment and progress, as well as how groups of pupils perform, enabling leaders to review and adjust the curriculum accordingly. However, inconsistencies exist in the quality of information on pupils' attainment and progress gathered and used across different subject areas. This impacts leaders' ability to have a comprehensive overview of the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
25. Pupils attain well for their age and make good progress from their starting points. Teachers plan appropriate activities and use teaching assistants well to support pupils who have SEND, enabling them to make progress in line with their peers and feel proud of their achievements.

26. Through a suitable range of activities, children in the early years initiate their learning and their curiosity is stimulated. They develop collaborative skills and independence. Teachers use digital tools appropriately for ongoing assessment and employ start- and end-of-year assessments to monitor progress.
27. There is a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme which is valued by both pupils and parents. The variety of clubs provides pupils with opportunities to explore new hobbies or sports, enjoy recreational time together, or enhance their skills within activities they are already familiar with.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. There is wide-ranging provision to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing, including teaching them to understand their emotions. Support is provided in a variety of ways including through the school's wellbeing dogs, wellbeing lessons and hubs, which offer a calm space for pupils to have a quiet time or talk with trained counsellors. Staff with relevant skills oversee pupils' personal development, including their physical health, mental health, wellbeing, and development of personal coping strategies. As a result, pupils learn to understand their emotions and are well supported.
30. Leaders have developed a suitable relationships, sex, and health education (RSHE) curriculum that incorporates personal and health education. This is effectively implemented, empowering pupils to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. The RSHE curriculum provides pupils with opportunities for self-reflection. Consequently, pupils gain a greater understanding of themselves and their individuality as well as developing positive attitudes towards themselves and others. Supportive relationships between class teachers and pupils are nurtured from a young age. Teachers build strong connections with pupils throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate politeness and thoughtfulness and confidently engage with adults.
31. Pupils develop their personal health and physical education through an effective physical education and games programme delivered by specialist staff. In line with the school ethos, for year groups where inter-school matches are arranged all pupils participate. The wide range of team and individual sports offered enables pupils to find a sporting activity that suits them.
32. Through the religious education and theology, philosophy, and religion curriculum, pupils explore and gain knowledge and understanding of the major faiths and beliefs. Learning enrichment includes visiting places of worship, providing pupils with deeper insights into the practices of different faiths. This is further supported by whole school activities such as a languages day. Pupils consider moral and ethical themes, for instance, human stewardship of the world and welcoming refugees. By considering such questions, pupils reflect and develop their understanding of how beliefs and values can impact on actions.
33. Leaders implement the behaviour policy effectively. Pupils behave well and understand the effect their actions may have on others. Kindness is seen as important and pupils give kindness awards to each other. Pupils' behaviour aligns with the school's core values of valuing oneself and others. Pupils are encouraged to resolve disputes themselves, with the understanding that staff are available to support them when needed. Leaders and teachers take proactive measures to manage poor behaviour or incidents of bullying. They maintain suitable records, analyse them, and take appropriate action to minimise any future occurrences.
34. Pupils' health and safety has a high priority within the school. Leaders place an emphasis on the importance of conducting risk assessments as part of normal practice and are alert to specific risks for pupils. The premises and accommodation are suitably maintained, fostering an environment conducive to learning and promoting a respectful community.
35. Adults maintain consistent supervision across the school and establish appropriate arrangements for pupils who may sustain injuries, become unwell, or have specific medical needs. First aid is promptly

administered when needed. The admission register is effectively managed and administered and accurate records are maintained and appropriately reported upon.

36. In the early years, teaching fosters the development of positive attitudes among children. Teachers maintain high expectations and create a nurturing environment where children feel secure. Starting in the early years, leaders have effectively implemented a social-emotional curriculum that teaches children how to self-regulate and understand their emotions. This continues throughout the school.
37. Staff expect older pupils to set a good example for others, and they fulfil this expectation. Senior pupils serve as prefects and hold various leadership roles. They demonstrate a strong commitment to their responsibilities, provide valuable support to the school community and serve as positive role models to younger pupils.

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

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

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

39. Leaders successfully promote social and cultural understanding among pupils. They place much emphasis on mutual respect and the individuality of all pupils. The active Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee organise events to raise awareness of diversity, which promote mutual respect and celebrate the individuality of all people.
40. Pupils are actively engaged in activities that foster their understanding of the world beyond the school reflecting their aim to value the world. Through initiatives led by the charity committee, pupils participate and are successful in fundraising for both regional and national charities. School leaders facilitate meaningful interactions with the local community, such as children in the early years and the chamber choir visiting a local residential home and pupils taking part in litter picking within the locality.
41. The school's curriculum includes a careers programme aimed at preparing pupils for their future endeavours. Visiting speakers from various professions share insights about their fields of work, providing exposure to different career paths. Older pupils consider the skills and attributes needed for various careers, helping them understand the requirements of different professions. They reflect on their interests, strengths, and aspirations to inform their subject choices at senior school and future career paths. Pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education, including moving to their senior school.
42. The mathematics curriculum offers some opportunities for pupils to develop their economic understanding. For example, younger children learn about different coins, while Year 6 pupils engage in a programme aimed at broadening their understanding of finances. Additionally, there are a few co-curricular activities that support pupils' economic literacy. However, as economic education is not systematically integrated throughout the school, these opportunities are currently limited in scope and number. Leaders have recently initiated the introduction of a resilience award that includes a structured economic programme, although this is still in the process of establishment.
43. Through the curriculum, pupils explore the world around them and learn about different cultures. The languages curriculum, while fostering language acquisition, also provides opportunities for pupils to consider ancient and modern cultures. The enquiring minds curriculum offers opportunities for pupils to investigate relevant topics in greater depth and from various perspectives. For instance, pupils effectively explore current issues such as stewardship and the world. Consequently, pupils develop an understanding of social responsibility and accept that others may have a different perspective from their own.
44. The importance of inclusivity and upholding British values are recognised throughout the school. For example, the art curriculum has been adapted to include female artists and artists from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Leaders effectively promote British values through the social aspects of the RSHE curriculum, including the significance of rules in modern society. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of right and wrong and recognise the importance of adhering to rules and guidelines, contributing to a positive and respectful school environment where pupils feel safe and valued.
45. There are various committees in which pupils can actively engage, deepening their understanding of democratic principles and processes. Through their participation, pupils take on roles as

representatives, help organise events, and advocate for positive changes within the school community. This active involvement fosters a sense of responsibility and empowerment among pupils, promoting a collaborative and inclusive school environment where pupil voices are heard and respected.

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

46. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

47. Staff with safeguarding lead responsibilities undergo appropriate training and demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge. They understand the centrality of their role in child protection procedures. Leaders and staff maintain vigilance and recognise the potential for different forms of abuse. Leaders understand local authority thresholds and know whom to contact when reporting concerns or seeking advice. They collaborate effectively with external agencies to provide suitable support for pupils.
48. Senior leaders with recruitment responsibilities undergo appropriate training in safer recruitment practices, so that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to comply with requirements. Leaders ensure that pre-appointment safeguarding checks are undertaken and recorded appropriately and in a timely manner. The single central register (SCR) is suitably maintained. Senior leaders and governors monitor and oversee these processes appropriately.
49. Suitable measures are in place to manage risk. Newly appointed staff receive suitable safeguarding training. All staff are supported by regular updates to stay informed about relevant policies and procedures. Pupils are aware of the different ways they can raise concerns, including the option to do so anonymously.
50. The school's internet filtering systems are regularly reviewed and monitored. This includes external auditing and regular testing of the system to verify its effectiveness. Age-appropriate teaching during computing lessons equips pupils with the skills and knowledge to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.
51. Governors undertake regular safeguarding training, equipping them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and understanding to fulfil their roles effectively. They actively review and monitor the different aspects of safeguarding on a regular basis, including conducting an annual audit to check whether the school is meeting regulatory standards.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Solefield School
Department for Education number	886/6038
Registered charity number	293466
Address	Solefield School Solefields Road Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1PH
Phone number	01732 452142
Email address	office@solefieldschool.org
Website	www.solefieldschool.org
Proprietor	Solefield School Educational Trust Limited
Chair	Mr Robert Clewley
Headteacher	Mrs Helen McClure
Age range	3 to 13
Number of pupils	147
Date of previous inspection	3 to 5 December 2019

Information about the school

53. Solefield is an independent day school located in Sevenoaks, Kent. The school consists of a pre-school, pre-prep from Reception to Year 2 and a prep school from Year 3 to Year 8.
54. The school is an educational trust administered by a governing body. Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a new headteacher. In 2023 the school extended its age range to admit children from the age of 3. Since January 2024 the school admits female pupils between the ages of 3 and 7. It is intended that, as they and other female pupils who join them progress through the school, it will become fully co-educational.
55. The early years comprises of two classes, a pre-school for children aged 3 to 4, and a Reception class.
56. The school has identified 49 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
57. English is an additional language for a very small proportion of pupils.
58. The school aims to nurture kind, honest, gentle young adults with excellent manners, a strong sense of integrity, emotional literacy and resilience. Its main priority is to care for the emotional wellbeing of each child and nurture their unique talents and interests. The school aims to instil a moral purpose and sense of responsibility through its core values: 'Value yourself. Value others. Value our world.'

Inspection details

Inspection dates

27 to 29 February 2024

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

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 and other governors
- Discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- Discussions with pupils
- Visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- Scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- 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**.

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