

School inspection report

17 to 19 September 2024

Charterhouse

Godalming

Surrey

GU7 2DX

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

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The governing body maintains effective oversight of all aspects of school life. Governors are suitably trained. Leaders report to governors through a committee structure. The committees check routinely whether the school is achieving its aims and meeting the needs of pupils. Governors make sure that complaints are managed effectively. Their oversight of the quality of education is underpinned by first-hand knowledge as they are regular visitors to the school.
2. Pupils' welfare is well promoted in the busy boarding environment. Leaders fulfil their roles effectively, with a high degree of care and attention to pupils' needs. The implementation of the move to coeducation is complete. The school's new identity is emphasised appropriately alongside its heritage and traditions.
3. The effectiveness of policies and their implementation is audited regularly. Policy updates are typically actioned in a timely way. However, the recent statutory guidance on attendance was not followed up immediately. There was a delay in uploading the revised policy to the school's website.
4. The curriculum policy is consistent with the school's aims. A well-constructed curriculum typically meets pupils' needs, including for international pupils in a boarding environment. Pupils make good progress in line with their age and ability. They achieve well academically in public examinations.
5. A suitable assessment framework is in place. Pupils' progress is evaluated through results data analysis, scrutiny of pupils' work, lesson observations and learning walks. Pupils' learning surveys are used effectively to inform leaders' knowledge of the quality of provision across subjects. Checks ensure that pupils are meeting their learning objectives. Most teaching is well planned so that pupils make consistently good progress in all subjects. However, where planning is insufficiently focused on pupils' individual needs, this results in some uneven progress.
6. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are suitably supported. They achieve well because of the effective support that they receive from their teachers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) access specialist support as required. Many of these pupils are already fluent in English and so require only minimal additional support.
7. Pupils are confident and willing learners. They aspire to do well and engage positively in their lessons. These positive attitudes to learning are reflected in both their independent and collaborative ways of working. Staff support pupils' personal development effectively and in line with the school's caring culture. Pupils feel well supported in this inclusive community. Consequently, they are motivated to challenge themselves to reach their full potential.
8. Leaders have ensured that suitable programmes for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) have been reviewed and updated. Detailed schemes of work, alongside suitable staff training, ensure that the programmes are age appropriate. Leaders check that plans are implemented effectively through careful monitoring.
9. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of the curriculum are implemented effectively. The range of chapel services, assemblies and tutorials complement this well. Pupils' views, through action committees and boarding house forums, inform leaders' decision-making when changes are needed.

10. The co-curricular programme enhances pupils' educational experiences. This includes a range of artistic, sporting and cultural activities. High expectations are rooted in the ethos and values of the school community.
11. Pupils behave well and in accordance with school rules. A suitable anti-bullying strategy is in place and well supported, including by boarding staff. The culture of good and respectful behaviour is often modelled by senior pupils as monitors. Behaviour records and a disciplinary log are used to inform ongoing behaviour improvement actions.
12. The required safeguarding arrangements are fully implemented. The school's culture of safeguarding encompasses all aspects of boarding life. The systematic distribution of specific safeguarding roles reminds teams that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Regular reviews by leaders and governors ensure a programme of continuous improvement. Safeguarding practice is effective and routinely updated as required. Staff recruitment is well managed. A suitable register of pre-employment checks on new staff is in place.
13. The premises and site are well managed. This provides a safe environment for pupils and staff. The wellbeing centre and health centre contribute to the high-quality provision for pupils. Boarding house accommodation is refurbished as required and on a rolling programme. Health and safety arrangements are suitable and effective. Appropriate risk management measures are in place.

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:

- check that new statutory guidance is always followed up quickly so that any required website updates are acted on immediately
- ensure that all teaching is planned to match pupils' individual needs so that they make consistently good progress in all subjects.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

14. Pupils' wellbeing is prioritised. Governors are knowledgeable about the school. Consequently, they provide suitable oversight, challenge and support for leaders so that the quality of education continues to improve. Leaders and governors work closely together to steer the school's strategic direction. They check, through governors committee structures, that policies are reviewed and implemented as required and that the standards are met consistently. While policy updates are typically actioned quickly, there was a slight delay in following up the recent statutory guidance on attendance.
15. Boarding provision is well managed and effective. It offers a caring and supportive environment for pupils. Leaders check that boarders feel safe and secure. Pupils enjoy and appreciate their education, while benefitting from the wider opportunities on offer in the school.
16. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities in securing the quality of provision across the school. They are reflective in reviewing and evaluating systems and procedures to continue to meet pupils' needs. Pastoral leaders have a detailed understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and the importance of promoting pupils' welfare.
17. The school's aims and ethos are well promoted, both strategically and in daily school life. Assemblies and chapel services, dedicated PSHE lessons and initiatives, such as the whole school values week, contribute to the strong sense of school identity and community to which pupils belong.
18. Effective reinforcement of the school's values ensures that pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. They display kindness and respect to one another. Pupils enjoy good relationships with staff and being part of this well-led boarding community. They are proud of their school.
19. A wide range of information is provided on the school's website. Parents receive suitable information and updates, including regular informative reports about pupils' achievement and progress.
20. Any potential risks are well understood and appropriately managed. Risk assessments are in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors. Heads of house maintain risk assessments specific to the boarding accommodation. The school site and buildings are kept secure.
21. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with any complaints. Leaders ensure that they listen and respond to the feedback they receive. Consequently, they respond to complaints promptly and effectively.
22. Leaders and governors fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan is in place. Leaders make reasonable adjustments when required according to individual pupils' needs.

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

23. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

24. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is well designed and appropriately resourced. Emphasis is placed on pupils' broad educational experiences as well as their academic outcomes. Helpful feedback to pupils on their achievement enhances their progress further. Good practice in teaching and learning is identified through regular monitoring and shared between staff. While teaching overall is effective, some inconsistencies mean that occasionally, pupils do not make the consistently strong progress that they should. Planning for learning is not always sufficiently focused on individual pupils' needs. Where this happens, pupils do not learn as much as they could. Typically, teachers' planning and delivery provides a challenging and purposeful learning environment. Overall, pupils enjoy a positive educational experience.
25. Pupils are ambitious and well-motivated learners. They engage productively with their learning experiences and academic challenges. Pupils are supported to make informed choices between A-level studies and International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma courses for their sixth-form study.
26. Pupils know what they can do well and what they need to do to improve. Academic support, when required, is well implemented and effective. Helpful guidance, including the support from boarding house staff, contribute significantly to pupils' good progress in external examinations.
27. Regular checks on learning ensure that pupils achieve well. The assessment framework is carefully structured and implemented. Pupils know how well they are doing and parents are kept suitably informed. The academic management committee uses assessment information to ensure that pupils are on track. Staff follow departmental subject plans closely so that curriculum and learning aims are achieved as intended.
28. Pupils have well-developed linguistic and evaluation skills. In Year 9, for example, pupils used subject specific terminology when discussing voter turnout and mandate strength when learning about Brexit. In an A-level class, pupils demonstrated effective recall of facts. They collaborated well as they responded to a group discussion. Sixth-form pupils in an IB lesson showed good understanding of the topic content. They were articulate and thoughtful as they reflected on their progress grades. Pupils are confident and capable learners. Older pupils are adept at considering others' opinions in class discussion as they develop their understanding through debate and reflection.
29. The school offers an inclusive setting for pupils who have SEND or who speak EAL. Overall, these pupils are well supported. As a result, they make good progress. Well-chosen resources are targeted at specific needs. These needs are carefully assessed. Strong and effective links exist between SEND, EAL, boarding, pastoral and academic teams. This ensures cohesive support for pupils. Most pupils who speak EAL are fluent in their use of English and require little specific support.
30. Leaders encourage pupils to develop their creative skills and have the courage to pursue original ideas. The new art and design centre is a focal point for innovation. Pupils enjoy their theatrical experiences in drama. Their learning is enhanced further through sessions on lighting and staging.
31. Pupils enjoy participating in the wide range of activities available through an extensive weekly programme of clubs and societies. Some of these activities are pupil led. Pupils can pursue their interests and learn new skills. These range, for example, from robotics and green environmental initiatives in design and technology, to kinetic canvas and fashion and textiles in art. These are offered alongside chess, debating, history, nutrition and Amnesty International societies.

32. Sport is a key part of school life. Pupils are encouraged to be active and healthy. They participate in sports, including hockey, football, netball, cricket, tennis and athletics in the core sports programme. Other sports, such as badminton, basketball, swimming and tennis are popular choices. Pupils enjoy competitive fixtures as well as inter-house events and sport for recreation. The school seeks to instil a lifelong love of music in pupils. This includes through large and small ensembles, the school's symphony orchestra, as well as concert performances from the chamber orchestra, big band, rock band and choral society. Many pupils learn to play instruments during their time in school.
33. Leaders have integrated a programme of educational visits alongside the curriculum to enhance pupils' academic experiences further.

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

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

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

35. Pupils are supported to feel part of the school community. Through the 'We Belong' initiative, a plan which integrates equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), there is a clear commitment to securing individual pupils' success. A culture of shared values is actively promoted. Support and kindness towards others are expected of younger pupils and modelled by their older peers. The school community embraces and celebrates pupils from a diverse set of backgrounds and nationalities. The 'Unity' programme and pupils' participation in groups such as the African Caribbean society, South Asian society, Christian Union, Pride, and neurodiversity society further extend their appreciation of individual differences.
36. Leaders have developed a school culture in which every pupil is valued and is able to flourish academically and personally. A high standard of pastoral care equips pupils to lead fulfilled and purposeful lives by providing an all-round education based on Christian values. Day pupils and boarders benefit from similar experiences of school life. A strong house spirit, giving pupils a sense of belonging with peers in their house, engenders pupils' self-confidence. They have a voice in the school's 'listening framework' through regular surveys. Their contribution is valued by leaders and used appropriately to inform decision-making.
37. The wellbeing centre provides pupils with a quiet and safe space in which to access counselling or emotional support from trained staff. Leaders ensure that pupils' wellbeing is at the core of the school's pastoral care and that any mental health needs are well met.
38. Pupils' understanding of morality and spirituality is well supported. This reinforces the school's Christian values, while celebrating all faiths and religions. Senior pupils lead some chapel services, assemblies and PSHE sessions. This serves to embed the school's values and connect pupils of different ages through a whole-school approach.
39. Pupils are confident, polite, and articulate. They appreciate the support from academic and pastoral staff. Pupils are consistently well behaved and respectful of their peers and adults. Leaders communicate their expectations of behaviour effectively. Pupils are aware of the high standards set and work collaboratively to achieve them. There are very few incidents of bullying or unkind behaviour.
40. Pupils' physical health develops through the extensive range of sports, adventurous activities and outdoor programmes on offer. Participation in educational visits, the extensive outdoor education programme, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and combined cadet force are examples of how pupils' lives are enriched. Pupils experience leadership opportunities when working within teams. Many enjoy the designated activities weekends undertaking expeditions.
41. Pupils receive PSHE and RSE through timetabled weekly lessons. Relevant resources are well planned. External providers are used regularly to deliver specialist sessions for pupils. PSHE and RSE are assessed and pupils' progress is monitored. Pupils' feedback on their experience is gathered regularly to inform ongoing improvements. The PSHE and RSE curriculums are made available to parents.

42. Pupils' moral understanding is well developed. The spiritual side of school life centres around the chapel. Pupils engage in regular services and assemblies. Many of these are pupil led. Pupils' experiences are enhanced through the associated music, including choral society, evensong and the annual founder's service involving parents at the London Charterhouse, the site of the original school.
43. Premises and accommodation are maintained to a high standard. Health and safety arrangements are effective across the site. Leaders ensure comprehensive systems are in place regarding fire, health and safety and risk management. Pupils are supervised appropriately during the school day and in transit around the large site. This is also the case during less structured parts of the day and overnight in boarding houses.
44. Boarders feel safe in well-maintained house accommodation. They receive a thorough induction, assisted by senior pupils, settling quickly into the school routine. The strong loyalty and sense of belonging that pupils feel for their houses is palpable.
45. Suitable admissions and attendance procedures are in place. The local authority is informed appropriately by staff when pupils join or leave the school.
46. The health centre provides well-resourced facilities for those who are unwell or injured. Trained medical staff ensure that pupils are well cared for.

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

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

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

48. The school recognises and values its diverse and international community. Pupils treat each other with respect. They show tolerance and understanding of individual differences within and beyond school. Through PSHE lessons and the family structure in houses, pupils are encouraged to develop informed and respectful attitudes towards others. They socialise well together, for example, as they enjoy the new café. Its central location overlooking the cloisters is a friendly, sociable space.
49. The frequently pupil-led school societies provide leadership opportunities, alongside opportunities to develop mutual respect and wider cultural understanding between different pupil groups. Pupils recognise that societies play an important role in supporting those with protected characteristics, such as different faiths, and developing others' awareness of them.
50. Fundamental British values are well promoted through the thoughtfully designed curriculum, which facilitates pupils' personal development. Pupils collaborate with one another in a respectful way. They understand and respect British values. Displays in the busy library, and throughout the school, hold historical artefacts. They offer pupils interesting links between their modern school, its heritage and times past.
51. As part of their economic education a new business, leadership and entrepreneurship centre has been created. Here, pupils experience environments which prepare them for their university and professional pathways that lie ahead. Leaders have placed emphasis on the need for pupils to develop an understanding of financial literacy, including through the introduction of a business entrepreneurship diploma in the sixth form. Pupils value this opportunity.
52. Careers education is further developed through the school's new 'FutureU' programme. This ensures that pupils are prepared well to take the next steps. Pupils benefit from its emphasis on the development of transferrable skills, such as adaptability and self-awareness, an understanding of future workplaces and how to successfully access the job market. Links are made with alumni to broaden pupils' understanding of wider career pathways.
53. The international aspect of boarding life encourages pupils to integrate with peers from different nationalities. Boarding houses offer opportunities for positive, community-based interactions, where pupils demonstrate good social skills and a clear understanding of right and wrong.
54. Leaders encourage pupils' participation in community service and volunteering. This includes, for example, visits to local elderly people, primary schools and volunteering with local charities. Pupils value their involvement in opportunities that can make a difference to society. Links with the local community and further afield support their appreciation of charitable endeavour and prepare them for life beyond school.

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

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

Safeguarding

56. Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and governors with responsibility for safeguarding have suitable knowledge and skills to secure this. Information relating to safeguarding is provided to parents and is published on the school's website. Appropriate support is accessed through close working relationships with external partners. Risks are managed promptly.
57. The school's safeguarding culture is well established. All staff undertake necessary safeguarding training and receive regular updates. This is coupled with induction for new staff and training for volunteers. Training for governors ensures their effective safeguarding oversight. Governors meet regularly with the safeguarding team to check that pupils are safe.
58. The safeguarding policy is regularly reviewed. This reflects recent developments in statutory guidance, and is implemented robustly.
59. Staff are confident in managing safeguarding thresholds. Concerns are acted on appropriately. With suitable involvement of the safeguarding team, external referrals are made promptly to children's services, the local authority designated officer or the police. Staff with responsibility for safeguarding are highly vigilant. Their approach is both rigorous and sensitive.
60. Safeguarding processes involving boarding pupils are thorough and regularly evaluated. Their induction ensures that pupils settle into the school community quickly. Suitable support is accessible to boarders and the boarding provision provides a safe environment. An online system is available for pupils to report concerns. This allows timely support and intervention strategies to be put in place.
61. The recruitment policy is in line with statutory requirements. All pre-employment checks are completed. Leaders ensure the suitability of staff, governors and others involved in the boarding community. Checks are recorded on the single central record (SCR), which is well maintained and reviewed regularly.
62. Arrangements are in place to keep the school site and its boarding accommodation secure. The importance of online safety is emphasised so that pupils know how to stay safe. Pupils understand the school's mobile phone policy and the rationale behind its introduction.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Charterhouse
Department for Education number	936/6041
Registered charity number	312054
Address	Charterhouse Godalming Surrey GU7 2DX
Phone number	01483 291600
Email address	reception@charterhouse.org.uk
Website	www.charterhouse.org.uk
Proprietor	Governing body of Charterhouse
Chair	Mr Mark Bishop
Headteacher	Dr Alex Peterken
Age range	13 to 18
Number of pupils	998
Number of boarding pupils	893
Date of previous inspection	03 October 2022

Information about the school

64. Charterhouse is an independent boarding and day school, set in its own grounds, situated in Godalming. The school was founded in 1611 and moved to its current location in 1872. It became fully co-educational in September 2022. The school is a charitable company limited by guarantee, of which the governing body are trustees. A new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection, in March 2024.
65. Boarding pupils are accommodated in 13 single-sex and 2 mixed boarding houses, situated on the main school site. Boarders come mainly from the south east of England and from countries overseas.
66. The school has identified 326 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
67. There are 114 pupils who speak English as an additional language.
68. The school states its aim to equip pupils to lead fulfilled and purposeful lives by providing an all-round education based on Christian values. The school seeks to instil academic rigour, knowledge, skills and attitudes, personal values, a commitment to service, and awareness towards a balanced and well-informed approach to life.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

17 to 19 September 2024

69. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

70. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of tutorial 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
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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