

School inspection report

17 to 19 October 2023

Hemdean House School

Hemdean Road
Caversham
RG4 7SD

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

Contents

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

Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors and leaders have developed effective policies and strategies, which are fully implemented to create a school culture of tolerance and respect aligned to the school's aims. The number of governors on the governing body is increasing, which enables additional oversight and provides further support and challenge to school leaders in accordance with the school development plan.
2. Leaders make pupil wellbeing a priority. Staff use their detailed knowledge of pupils to implement effective provision which meets the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe, valued and supported in their education.
3. Pupils benefit from access to a broad and inclusive curriculum. Leaders deploy resources effectively and as a result, pupils make good progress and achieve their learning outcomes. Pupils who have additional needs receive targeted support from their teachers and make good progress from their starting points. Pupils appreciate access to the extensive after-school club provision and attendance and participation rates are high, helping pupils to develop self-awareness and self-confidence.
4. Leaders ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place so that pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are promoted. However, some policies on the school website were not up to date. Leaders' review of site safety and health and safety requirements is inconsistent resulting in minor oversights, which were corrected during the inspection process.
5. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school. They engage with their local community and develop an understanding of important values such as democracy which are embedded in the curriculum and within daily school activity. Pupils are highly engaged with the new character curriculum in which they learn values that will prepare them for their next steps in education and help them to be responsible global citizens.
6. Leaders have ensured that effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in line with the requirements of the latest statutory advice. Minor administrative errors, which had been identified by leaders prior to the inspection, were corrected by leaders during the inspection.

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 establish a system of regular review of health and safety risk assessment and should ensure that school policies are routinely updated on the school website.
- Leaders must ensure that there is close monitoring of processes for recording recruitment checks so that all records continue to be maintained effectively.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders, with governor oversight, keep the school's ethos of respect, consideration and tolerance for others at the forefront of their strategic decision-making. Leaders use their skills and knowledge effectively to engage in evaluative self-reflection and actively promote pupils' wellbeing by valuing every pupil.
8. Leaders, through a range of initiatives, ensure that pupil wellbeing and inclusion are core tenets of the school's development plan and self-reflection process. Leaders have implemented successful strategies to support pupils' emotional literacy and have developed an effective character education curriculum. Leaders have launched a pastoral pupil survey cycle, underpinning their strategic focus on wellbeing throughout the school. Pupils, therefore, feel included and valued as members of their school community.
9. Leaders have up-to-date knowledge of their responsibilities and ensure that school policies are implemented effectively. Leaders engage with external agencies and contractors to ensure that staff are suitably trained and have comprehensive and relevant knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
10. Parents can access useful information about school life easily from the school website or directly from the school. However, at the time of inspection, some policies had not yet been updated on the school website.
11. Leaders use their detailed knowledge of pupils to quickly identify pupils' needs and provide early help. Records are well kept which helps teachers to implement strategies so that pupils can overcome barriers to their learning. Leaders promote inclusive attitudes through emphasising fundamental British values in development plans and curriculum documents which teachers fully implement in the classroom. A clear and effective accessibility plan is implemented and monitored. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.
12. Leaders ensure that comprehensive risk assessments are in place for site security, fire and extra-curricular activities. Leaders have developed a culture where risk and its mitigation is acted on by staff. However, regular and dynamic review of site safety as required in the school policy is not embedded.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

13. Leaders' planning and self-evaluation ensure that the curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and is carefully matched to meet the needs of pupils. Teachers make effective use of resources, including using outdoor learning for example, to enable children in Reception to develop their fine and gross motor skills and to meet the early learning goals.
14. Pupils make good progress because their teachers have the appropriate skills and use assessment data effectively to inform their planning and to support pupils individually. Teachers routinely reflect on and evaluate their lessons so that subsequent lessons are adapted to maintain pupils' progress. This approach ensures that teachers manage class time and pupil behaviour well and that pupils achieve their learning outcomes.
15. Teachers use a range of strategies to support pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Some pupils need minimal support and can write independently while other pupils receive appropriate support to develop their writing with writing frames and word mats. Consequently, pupils who speak EAL make good progress.
16. Teachers have a secure understanding of special educational needs (SEND) and use support strategies developed by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), so that learning outcomes are aspirational for pupils.
17. In addition to timetabled outdoor learning activities, pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports clubs and termly outings for each year group. In line with school aims, leaders organise a yearly residential trip for all pupils from Year 1 upwards. Parents and pupils are appreciative of the rich choice of activities available at the school.

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

18. Leaders promote relationships education and pupils' physical health through the well-planned and appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum and through the science curriculum. Pupils from an early age learn about the importance of being healthy; for example, children in the early years understand how to maintain their oral hygiene. Pupils' physical health is supported by weekly timetabled physical education (PE) lessons and leaders have ensured that additional on-site PE has been timetabled while the local pool is being refurbished.
19. Pupils are happy and confident in school because of the effective and embedded strategies in place to support pupils with their mental health and wellbeing. Staff deliver individual, high-quality interventions which guide behaviour choices that pupils make so that pupils develop their ability to self-regulate. Pupils therefore consistently behave with respect and consideration for others.
20. Pupils are additionally supported by the school's emotional literacy support assistant who deliver a programme of emotional regulation. This begins with 'colour monsters' in Reception and develops towards an emotions chart in the later years. As a result, pupils are able to apply the skills they learn to overcome physical and emotional obstacles independently and when working collaboratively, for example, during outdoor activities in the forest.
21. Pupils feel safe in school and feel treated fairly. Bullying at the school is rare and pupils, parents and staff trust leaders to deal effectively with any incidents should they arise. Pupils know and support one another across the school through the successful buddy system. For example, Year 6 buddies, write and then read their picture book stories to children in Reception. Pupils can easily identify a friend to play with in the playground because daily playground buddies wear a 'buddy' hat.
22. Leaders ensure that pupils are closely involved in the development of school values through the new character curriculum. Values initially shared by Year 6 pupils in assembly and already established include kindness, resilience and positivity. Pupils enjoy opportunities to discuss character education and they appreciate the grounding they receive at school in becoming tolerant and empathetic members of the school and wider community.
23. Pupils play in designated areas and are supervised by well-trained staff who provide continuous and effective supervision throughout the school day. Children are well behaved because they understand the clear rules and routines implemented by staff at the school.
24. Leaders ensure that the school site is secure and regulatory health and safety checks, including termly fire drills are conducted regularly. Appropriate fire prevention measures are in place and monitored by external contractors. However, there was a delay in addressing two of the action points suggested by the external contractor and this was swiftly rectified by leaders during the inspection.
25. Leaders promote high attendance through maintaining effective communication with parents and ensure that any unexplained absence is promptly followed up. In line with local authority procedure, leaders ensure that all destination schools are confirmed, so that children are not missing from education.

26. Appropriate school facilities provide accessible first aid support across the site. Staff undertake annual training in first aid and there are paediatric first aiders in school. The first aid register is appropriately kept and includes concise details of any pupils with medical needs, including allergens. Leaders regularly analyse logs of any accidents that take place and take action where trends or patterns are identified.

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

27. Leaders provide several opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles in school and listen with interest to pupils' views.
28. Pupils work collaboratively to care for and celebrate their school environment and the wider world. The work of the pupil led eco-council across the school has resulted in the school achieving local and national awards for their work on the environment and biodiversity.
29. Pupils steadily develop their sense of responsibility as future British citizens as they move through the school. For example, children in Reception regularly vote with counting cubes and older pupils work together to create their own class charter. The elected school council confidently engage with the local community, recently interviewing their local Member of Parliament (MP) and delivering a presentation to the local authority on introducing traffic safety measures outside the school gates.
30. Leaders ensure that learning about British values is embedded in the curriculum; for example, pupils learn about the loss of liberty experienced by child evacuees during World War 2 and this links to discussions about the current risks and dangers to liberty experienced by some groups.
31. Leaders ensure that there are regular planned opportunities for pupils to take part in charitable work. For example, Year 6 pupils delivered a harvest collection to the local food bank.
32. Pupils learn about respect for others, regardless of difference through the assembly programme and the planned curriculum in religious education and PSHE. This helps pupils to appreciate opportunities to learn together and do so harmoniously, for example, using teamwork to build structures in outdoor learning sessions. Regular events celebrating diversity, such as a programme of assemblies, are routine and embedded within the language and awareness of both staff and pupils.
33. Leaders have designed an effective transition support and financial management curriculum which helps to prepare pupils for their next steps. Older pupils are further supported for transition to senior school by the practical advice they receive from alumni of the school.

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

34. Governors and leaders work together to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in line with current statutory guidance. The chair of governors conducts an annual safeguarding audit in line with guidance from the local safeguarding partner and the Headteacher ensures that any recommendations are swiftly implemented. This creates a self-reflective and effective culture of safeguarding in the school.
35. All staff receive appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding training. The safeguarding team complete additional in-person training with the local safeguarding partners and so are aware of contextual risk in the local area. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) works closely with the local authority designated officer (LADO) and leaders manage low level concerns appropriately.
36. Staff and pupils are confident to share any safeguarding concerns with school leaders in line with the school's safeguarding policy and trust that these concerns would be dealt with seriously.
37. Pupils learn about how to stay safe online when in school or at home, through PSHE lessons. Leaders implement an appropriate online filtering and monitoring system in school, with an additional level of in-person monitoring taking place during lessons in the dedicated ICT suite.
38. Leaders ensure that staff recruitment checks are carried out appropriately with the chair of governors adding additional oversight. However, prior to the inspection process, leaders had identified some minor administrative errors in the recording process which were rectified during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Hemdean House School
Department for Education number	870/6003
Registered early years	N/A
Registered charity number	309146
Address	Hemdean Road Caversham RG4 7SD
Website	www.hemdeanhouse.co.uk
Proprietor	The governing body Hemdean House School Limited
Chair	Mrs Sue Manser
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Chalmers
Age range	4 to 11
Number of pupils	43
Date of previous inspection	13th September 2019

Information about the school

39. Hemdean House School is a non-selective, co-educational day school in Caversham, Berkshire. Pupils can join the school from Reception (aged 4) to Year 6 (aged 11). The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors.
40. There are 3 three children in the early years, all within one Reception class.
41. The school has identified 17 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
42. English is an additional language for 21 pupils.
43. The school states that its aims are to:
- enable pupils to fulfil their full academic potential
 - foster an enjoyment of work through the curriculum and extra-curricular provision
 - build pupils' confidence and self-esteem
 - encourage consideration and respect for others
 - teach the value of self-discipline

Inspection details

Inspection dates 17th – 19th October 2023

44. A team of three inspectors visited the school for 2 and half days.
45. Inspection activities included:
- observations of lessons, activities and the school environment
 - discussions with senior leaders, staff and pupils
 - scrutiny of policies, planning, displays and pupils' work.
46. 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

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://www.isi.net)