

School inspection report

12 to 14 November 2024

Eton College

Eton

Windsor

Berkshire

SL4 6DW

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. School leaders, supported by governors, understand and meet their responsibilities to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is prioritised in their decision making. Procedures and protocols are shaped around the best interests of the pupils. As a result, pupils are well provided for in their boarding school environment.
2. Governors and school leaders self-evaluate diligently and consider any potential risks inherent in any changes to the school's provision or procedures that they make. They regularly seek the views of pupils, parents and staff when implementing change.
3. The curriculum is broad and balanced and allows a wide choice of subjects for pupils. Subject leaders have devised schemes of work that plan effectively to both deepen and broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge, relate well to pupils and deliver lessons which engage and motivate pupils to learn. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning, make good progress and achieve success in public examinations.
4. Leaders actively promote a culture of kindness in the school and ensure that pupils behave well. Pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour and treat each other with respect. They learn and understand that discrimination is unacceptable in any form.
5. Pupils are well cared for in boarding houses which are well managed and provide consistency in their approach. The close liaison between residential staff and the safeguarding, wellbeing and health teams mean that pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing is effectively promoted.
6. Leaders have designed and developed an exceptionally flexible and broad co-curricular programme which allows pupils an extremely high degree of freedom and autonomy to develop their interests and passions. Pupils participate in, and often run, the very large range of activities. As a result, they develop the skills needed for their future lives and achieve success. This provision is a significant strength of the school.
7. The school has developed a suitable programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, known as 'SPHERE', which covers a wide range of topics designed to support pupils' wellbeing and development of citizenship. It includes relationships and sex education (RSE) which is delivered in an age-appropriate way. However, as the inclusion of this programme in the academic timetable is relatively new, more support by leaders is required to ensure high levels of engagement by pupils.
8. School leaders, overseen by governors, provide a suitable and well-maintained school environment. Systems in place to promote the health and welfare of the pupils are robust and effective.
9. There is a longstanding commitment to service in the school and pupils contribute time and energy to a wide variety of local community initiatives.
10. Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective and reflect current statutory guidance. These procedures are well understood by staff who are swift to report any concerns that they have.

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:

- Support the development of relationships and sex education to ensure that its delivery is sufficiently challenging and relevant for all pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Governors maintain effective and diligent oversight of the school's provision, policies and procedures to ensure that all Standards are met. They support school leaders to evaluate current practice carefully and develop strategies to evolve the school further. Leaders consult pupils, parents and staff through surveys to inform their decision making and bear in mind possible unintended consequences of any changes they make. Leaders promote pupils' wellbeing effectively and demonstrate the skills and knowledge required to carry out their responsibilities. They clearly articulate their approach towards meeting the school's aims and ethos.
12. Leaders consider carefully the risks associated with their decision making. Having placed RSE into the timetable, rather than in tutorial time, they are aware of the risk that not all staff who teach it may be confident to do so and are putting training in place for them. Leaders ensure that house masters and tutors monitor pupils' commitment to the co-curricular programme carefully, to assess whether they are over-loaded. Risk management is also effective for the school site, for school trips and visits and for pupils' welfare. Risks are carefully identified and suitable control measures put in place to mitigate any possible consequences.
13. There is effective leadership of boarding. Leaders prioritise training and appraisal of staff who care for boarders so that they have the knowledge and skills to carry out their roles. Consequently, boarding staff are well equipped to look after pupils effectively. Leaders ensure a consistency of approach across boarding houses.
14. Safeguarding leaders train staff effectively, maintain suitable connections with external agencies, keep appropriate records and provide many mechanisms for pupils to report any concerns to staff, including in boarding.
15. Academic leaders diligently monitor teaching and learning in the school and actively support teachers in their practice by undertaking learning walks, providing mentoring and promoting a research-based approach to teaching. They check that teaching results in pupils who engage well in their learning, make good progress and achieve success in their public examinations.
16. Leaders ensure close communication between academic and pastoral staff so that an understanding of each pupil can inform any action taken to support their academic progress, while maintaining their mental health. House masters, tutors and dames promote the overall welfare of each pupil effectively. In this they are well supported by senior pastoral and safeguarding staff.
17. School leaders, governors, staff and senior pupils actively promote a culture of kindness across the school. All opportunities are taken to reinforce this, whether in assemblies, in the chapel or succinctly on small cards provided for pupils about expectations of behaviour. As a result, pupils behave well and respect each other.
18. Leaders ensure that parents receive regular reports about their child's progress and that relevant information is provided for them on the website. The large school site is spread throughout the town and there are suitable security measures in place to keep pupils safe as they move around from lessons to boarding houses and to sports fields. Leaders and governors operate an effective complaints procedure, and an appropriate log of any formal complaints is kept.

19. Leaders ensure that they meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The accessibility plan is detailed and includes effective actions to enable pupils to access both the physical environment of the school and the curriculum.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The curriculum enables pupils to learn across a wide range of subjects. It is flexible so that, for instance, sixth-form pupils can choose any subjects they wish, such as combining ancient Greek with mathematics or languages with science. Throughout the school the curriculum balances academic, creative and technological subjects. Language choices are varied and include Chinese, Russian and a variety of European languages as well as Latin and Greek.
22. Academic leaders ensure effective delivery of the curriculum through comprehensive planning which is effectively implemented not only through well-structured schemes of work, but also through targeted extension activities and thematic projects.
23. There is a sustained focus throughout the curriculum on oracy, speaking, listening and literacy. For instance, teachers of English elicit detailed oral comparisons of *Hamlet* and *The Duchess of Malfi* from sixth-form pupils and give Year 10 pupils options of unusual verbs to use when analysing a Shakespeare sonnet. Consequently, pupils speak confidently in class and in the many societies they attend, where they express articulate opinions and listen to others attentively. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to develop these skills further, such as in the foreign languages poetry declamation competition, the emphasis on reading for pleasure, and the opportunities provided to listen to a variety of visiting speakers.
24. Typically, teaching is well planned, demonstrates high levels of knowledge and is based on recent pedagogical research. Leaders support staff to teach effectively through learning walks, mentoring of new teachers and team teaching. In lessons, teachers encourage curiosity and promote lively discussion so that pupils have confidence to challenge ideas presented to them and ask perceptive questions. Teachers regularly make connections between subjects, such as when linking the study of classics with the politics of today, or when making connections between science, religion and philosophy. As a result, pupils learn to think synoptically around and beyond the task at hand.
25. Leaders also actively promote the development of pupils' creativity. Teaching in these areas is knowledgeable, very well resourced and well targeted to pupils' interests and skill levels. As a result, pupils create original and sophisticated art and design technology (DT) work, explore the world of dramatic performance and technical theatre skills and develop their musical skills to a very high standard across a diverse range of genres.
26. Senior pupils achieve high levels of attainment in public examinations, and almost all move on to universities with high entrance requirements in the UK, Europe and the USA. Senior leaders and heads of departments track the progress of pupils in a variety of different ways and provide effective support for any pupil who is not meeting expectations. The tutor system, based in houses, provides effective holistic support across both academic and pastoral aspects of school life, to the benefit of the pupils.
27. The school offers effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), identifying their learning needs early and putting in place targeted and appropriate support. Teachers plan their lessons to meet these pupils' needs and put in place strategies to support them. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.

28. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are almost always fluent in English when they arrive. Bespoke support, such as the provision of glossaries, is available if it is necessary, and such support ensures that pupils develop their language skills rapidly.
29. Alongside the academic programme, the school offers an exceptionally broad and interesting enrichment programme. It includes academic societies, lectures, competitive team sports and those for leisure, as well as creative and cultural activities. A feature of the provision is that it extends into the evenings and weekends thus enabling pupils to pursue some activities regularly but also to attend a wide variety of workshops and lectures within and beyond school. Attending lectures from a wide range of public figures and being able to question them builds confidence and understanding in the pupils. In many activities, relative beginners often work alongside those with advanced skills in a spirit of close co-operation. As a result, pupils quickly acquire new skills. Often, pupils take the initiative in creating new societies and thus build skills of teamwork across age groups. In many cases pupils achieve outcomes of extremely high quality in their chosen activities.

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

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

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

31. School leaders and governors place the wellbeing of pupils at the centre of their provision and seek to develop self-confidence, integrity, perseverance, tolerance and enthusiasm in all. They provide structures across the school which support this aim. These include supportive boarding communities, effectively managed by a house master and a dame, tutors who look after pupils' pastoral welfare, and a 'wellbeing centre' which provides a range of support services such as professional counselling. As a result, pupils are well looked after and supported effectively to develop resilience.
32. The programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) known as SPHERE, is instrumental in helping pupils to develop skills for life as they explore how to maintain their mental health and sense of wellbeing. The recently expanded programme covers meaningful topics such as citizenship as well as those of identity, relationships and the issues of wider society. The programme includes RSE, which contains appropriate content, such as different types of relationships and the issue of consent. It is delivered by teaching staff and supported by sessions run by visiting speakers. However, the delivery of RSE is not always sufficiently challenging and relevant to ensure that pupils develop their understanding in this area as effectively as possible.
33. Physical education (PE) is provided through timetabled lessons and through an extensive programme of sports opportunities which is inclusive and ensures expert coaching for pupils of all abilities. Teachers and coaches encourage pupils to choose activities which suit them. As a result, pupils develop their skills to a high level in a wide variety of both team and individual sports. They learn the importance of maintaining their physical health and an understanding of how physical activity can help support their mental health as well.
34. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to explore the spiritual dimension of life, whether in chapel and assemblies, which are often pupil-led, or in their taught divinity curriculum which includes the study of a wide range of faiths and spiritual perspectives. Staff encourage pupils to think deeply and explore their inner selves in order to develop spiritual awareness. Engagement with philosophical ideas from different cultural backgrounds and experiences of music making, theatre and art all help pupils to develop their spiritual understanding.
35. The effective communication of high behavioural expectations leads to pupils displaying high standards of respect and tolerance towards each other. Standards of behaviour are uniformly high in lessons, in boarding houses, in recreational areas and in the locality of the school. Expectations of how pupils should behave are made very clear to them and as a result pupils take responsibility for their behaviour. Sanctions used for poor behaviour are fair and proportionate and the school rewards pupils for actions which are supportive of others. Bullying incidents are rare but, should they occur, they are responded to promptly and appropriately.
36. Boarding houses are positive and coherent communities where trusting relationships between pupils and staff promote the wellbeing of the pupils. This is because residential staff including house masters, dames and their assistants, know their pupils well and act effectively as a team to support them. Boarding practice is consistent across the houses and pupils are well cared for. This helps pupils new to the school, and to the UK, to settle in quickly. The houses are secure, well maintained

and provide suitable accommodation for the pupils. Pupils are effectively supervised in boarding and throughout the school day. All boarding requirements are met.

37. School premises and accommodation are well maintained and provide a suitable environment that meets all the requirements of health and safety legislation, including those for fire safety. Regular checks and maintenance are carried out and recorded methodically. First aid procedures and those for the medical care of boarders are effective. Health centre staff are well trained and experienced and there are suitable arrangements for overnight care when pupils are unwell.
38. The school has a suitable admissions and attendance procedure which meets the requirements of current statutory guidance. The school informs the local authority of any pupils who join or leave at non-standard times.

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

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

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

40. The SPHERE programme educates pupils effectively about issues of inclusion and diversity. For example, sessions on misogyny, on British values, such as respect for the rule of law, and on prejudice and discrimination, lead to serious and nuanced debate among pupils in their lessons and beyond.
41. The school develops pupils' understanding of right and wrong effectively. Pupils consider a range of moral conundrums and ethical dilemmas in their SPHERE lessons. Pupils develop their thinking about how morality shapes societies in different contexts through access to a wide variety of visiting speakers of many political persuasions, whom they question diligently and with confidence. Thus, pupils gain understanding of democracy and the features of civic society in England. Leaders ensure that there is a balance in the views presented to pupils so that, for instance, contrasting views of the Middle East are presented in consecutive sessions.
42. School and house leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills, including those of leadership. Senior pupils are effective role models and those with prefect responsibilities are chosen for their qualities of kindness, their ability to relate to others and their integrity. Younger pupils are confident in their relationships with them and houses encourage cross-year friendships by, for instance, organising house events such as plays and concerts. Senior pupils help deliver the SPHERE programme to Year 9 and pupils in this year group appreciate the input of those closer to them in age.
43. Teamwork and collaboration feature in lessons, in societies and charitable initiatives organised by pupils, in sports teams and in activities such as the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Through the school's partnership programme with other schools, pupils have opportunities to mix with pupils from elsewhere and to combine their talents towards a common goal such as that of working in a positive way to help counter climate change. Such engagement helps to prepare pupils for life in British society.
44. School leaders have ensured that careers education is comprehensive and relevant. Younger pupils begin with sessions on employability where they develop their own career profiles. As pupils move up through the school, support becomes more individualised and related to psychometric testing. Staff provide impartial advice which includes a wide range of possible career choices. Support for university applications is individual and carefully targeted to each pupil's needs. Visiting speakers help to inform pupils of the choices they can make. Recent initiatives by careers leaders have broadened the scope of careers advice to include, for instance, guidance about degree apprenticeships and opportunities for direct employment.
45. Effective economic education is included in the SPHERE programme for each year group. Pupils learn about managing money and budgeting, how to open a bank account and the value of everyday items in a weekly shop. Those who study economics in the sixth form discuss matters such as how economic concepts are relevant to society and the impact of Brexit on investment in Britain. In mathematics pupils develop high levels of numeracy which assist them when managing money as they take part in charity fund-raising initiatives or when running a society.

46. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their sense of responsibility towards others. Through the community engagement programme pupils support local institutions. For instance, they visit care homes and a local mental health charity, help maintain a local cemetery and a wildlife area, work in charity shops and assist with reading in local schools. Experience gained in a wide variety of charities helps pupils to understand the challenges faced by many people today and motivates them to support others.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

48. Safeguarding is effective. Leaders demonstrate the knowledge and skills to make sure that practice is appropriate, and governors provide effective oversight of policies and procedures. Safeguarding information is available on the school's website so that parents are well informed. The school maintains close and regular contact with local safeguarding partners.
49. Safeguarding leaders identify risks of harm to pupils, hold regular meetings with pastoral staff in boarding and those managing behaviour and keep effective records of any pupils of concern. They respond promptly to any concerns raised and put the necessary support in place. They make referrals to relevant external agencies appropriately, including with regard to any incidents of child-on-child abuse or harmful sexual behaviour. Safeguarding staff assess risks to any pupils of concern effectively and ensure continued monitoring and support.
50. There is an effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff are appropriately trained on induction and receive regular updates, including about risks associated with extremism and radicalisation and the 'Prevent' duty. The safeguarding team receive training at an advanced level suitable for their role, as do governors and members of the leadership team.
51. Governors receive annual detailed reports of safeguarding and question the safeguarding leaders to keep themselves informed of any patterns in the type and frequency of concerns and the nature of the school's responses to these. They are frequent visitors to the school and talk to pupils and staff regularly about safeguarding.
52. Staff understand the procedures for reporting any concerns they have about adults who work with the pupils, and they do so diligently. A suitable log of low-level concerns is kept.
53. Pupils are well educated about online risks and there are suitable systems in place to filter and monitor the school's provision. Pupils' online activity is regularly checked.
54. The school ensures that all necessary recruitment checks on staff, governors and volunteers are carried out before they take up their appointments. The single central record of appointments documents these checks accurately and is regularly checked by both the headteacher and the safeguarding governor.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Eton College
Department for Education number	868/6016
Registered charity number	1139086
Address	Eton College Eton Windsor Berkshire SL4 6DW
Phone number	01753 370100
Email address	enquiries@etoncollege.org.uk
Website	http://www.etoncollege.com
Proprietor	The Provost and Fellows of Eton College
Provost	Sir Nicholas Coleridge
Headteacher	Mr Simon Henderson
Acting Headteacher	Mr Paul Williams
Age range	12 to 19
Number of pupils	1345
Number of boarding pupils	1345
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 3 December 2021

Information about the school

56. Eton College is an independent school registered as a single-sex boarding school for male pupils. Founded in 1440 by King Henry VI to provide free education for 70 poor scholars, it is located close to Windsor in the county of Berkshire. The school's governing body comprises the provost, the vice-provost and ten fellows. The provost acts as the chair of governors.
57. All pupils board in one of the 25 boarding houses situated throughout the town, each overseen by a house master and a dame.
58. The school has identified 375 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for five pupils.
60. The school states its primary purpose is to draw out the best of young people's talents and to enable them to flourish and make a positive impact on others through the course of a healthy, happy and fulfilling life.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 November 2024

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

62. 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 Provost and the Vice-Provost
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to learning support areas and facilities for physical education
- visit to the health and wellbeing centre
- 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.

63. 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