

School inspection report

20 to 22 February 2024

St Hilary's School

Holloway Hill

Godalming

Surrey

GU7 1RZ

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
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders are effective in their roles because they have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and know how to plan ongoing school development. They successfully deliver initiatives and carefully consider how the education they provide for pupils could be further improved. They listen to and act upon the views put forward by pupils who feel respected and valued.
2. Governors assure themselves that leaders are fulfilling their duties through monitoring and observing as well as speaking to staff and pupils. They check leaders' development and implementation of policies, procedures for keeping pupils safe, and promotion of learning in a suitable environment.
3. Leaders have clear strategies for pupil wellbeing and positive behaviour. They involve the pupils in this so that the school community works together, for example through actively promoting strategies which prevent bullying. Pupils understand and exemplify the school's values. They know to treat people with respect and dignity. Pupils demonstrate high levels of empathy, and the buddy system enables pupils to develop positive relationships across all ages.
4. Pupils in the school, including children in the early years, experience a broad curriculum which motivates them to enjoy their learning. They make good progress from their starting points because their teachers are knowledgeable and teach them how to know more, understand better and improve.
5. In most lessons, teachers plan carefully and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all learners. In these lessons, pupils enjoy learning, make good progress and behaviour is of a high standard. However, in some lessons, teachers' planning fails to fully engage pupils and is not matched as effectively to their needs and abilities. As a result, in these lessons pupils' behaviour is not as good and this has a negative impact on their learning.
6. A broad range of recreational, sporting, creative and intellectual activities and extension opportunities is provided during, before and after the school day. This enables pupils to discover and develop their talents in a wide variety of pursuits.
7. Pupils are well prepared to meet the challenges of their next stages of education and for life beyond. They appreciate the opportunities and experiences provided for them by their school.

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 the quality of teaching is consistent so that pupils apply themselves, learn well and meet the school's behaviour expectations in all lessons.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders promote pupils' wellbeing. They listen carefully to the views of pupils by creating opportunities to present their opinions on how the school could improve. They take these ideas seriously and implement changes as a result, which pupils appreciate. Leaders are accessible to pupils and engage in activities such as reading with them. As a result, the school provides a warm, safe and caring environment that enables pupils to thrive.
9. Leaders are experienced and knowledgeable. They demonstrate the skills necessary to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including the appropriate deployment of teachers and teaching assistants to meet the needs of pupils. Leaders in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) provide a suitable curriculum and learning opportunities so that individual needs are met.
10. Leaders encourage the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning. They facilitate this through peer observation and the sharing of good practice through an established programme of learning walks. However, further work is required to ensure that all pupils consistently receive teaching which promotes their learning, engages them fully and encourages positive behaviour in the classroom.
11. Leaders communicate clearly and regularly with staff and parents. They develop, monitor and implement policies effectively so that staff understand and follow them. Leaders show that they understand and manage risk, taking appropriate steps to minimise the risk of harm, for example on school trips. Any complaints are recorded, responded to swiftly and resolved appropriately. Leaders provide information to parents and prospective parents via the website. Parents receive detailed reports to inform them about their children's progress at school. Where children have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, the relevant information is shared with the local authority. Leaders monitor that record keeping, for recruitment, managing safeguarding or bullying incidents, is appropriately thorough. They liaise with external agencies as needed, for example if they have a safeguarding concern.
12. Governors assure themselves that leaders are effective in their work, and therefore that the standards and regulations are being met. They do this by monitoring in school, speaking directly to staff and pupils, as well as by interrogating and discussing reports presented by leaders. Governors ensure that, between them, they have a range of relevant experience in order to effectively support and challenge leaders. Individual governors focus on particular areas of interest or expertise, such as wellbeing, or diversity and inclusion, meaning that they contribute to the overall development of the school.
13. The school meets its requirements under the Equality Act. Education at the school is accessible to children with a range of additional needs. Leaders check that suitable accessibility plans are in place. For example, teachers wear devices to assist children with hearing loss and appropriate accommodation and support is provided to children using a wheelchair. Pupils requiring such assistance are proactively involved in the ongoing development of the school's facilities, which demonstrates that they are a valued part of the school community.

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

14. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders plan an appropriately varied curriculum. Pupils develop core linguistic and mathematical skills, and engage in learning about science, music, French, art and technology. The curriculum is broadened by additional activities and subjects at various ages such as chess, martial arts and philosophy. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils of all ages, needs and abilities.
16. Teachers use their expertise to help pupils to make progress. Many lessons are well-planned and engage pupils in their learning. In these lessons teachers adapt resources to meet individual needs, particularly for those children with SEND, as well as providing stretch and challenge for the most able. In some lessons, however, teachers do not plan and adapt learning sufficiently to the needs of pupils. This means that some pupils find the work set too easy or too difficult. Some activities do not engage pupils with appropriate pace. Consequently, in these lessons, pupils are less engaged and at times their behaviour falls below the high standard in other lessons which, in turn, impedes their learning.
17. Pupils make good progress, evidently enjoy their work and demonstrate positive behaviour. Children in the early years develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across the seven areas of learning of the EYFS. They demonstrate good progress with their phonics through an appropriate scheme which also promotes reading across the school. Children have a rich vocabulary, as a result of their teachers' modelling and positive reinforcement.
18. Older pupils also make good progress from their starting points. For example, in English lessons pupils demonstrate understanding of complex grammatical conventions, and in mathematics they measure, calculate and are challenged to understand the constancy of pi. Year 3 pupils confidently use software to put data into a table and create graphs, which they then manipulate and adapt.
19. Pupils identified as most able are provided with extra support which encourages them to achieve highly. Pupils who have SEND enjoy thorough support for their learning from the leader of provision for their needs, the team of learning support assistants and the teachers who plan and deliver their lessons.
20. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported, with additional resources to help them to access their learning. For example, pupils use a pictorial resource bank using a tablet computer whilst studying the life of Anne Frank, and access online translation tools.
21. Leaders monitor pupils' progress through a programme of assessments which enables them to intervene when necessary to provide additional support. Pupils consolidate their understanding through well-chosen homework tasks, which also help older pupils to become more confident with assessments. Teachers help pupils to improve their learning and make progress by giving clear feedback.
22. Pupils are encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills independently, for example in a topic on activism, in history where pupils make bread at home to a Tudor recipe, and studying a planet of their choice. Pupils in a technology club programme movements in robotic vehicles they have constructed.

23. Pupils benefit from a wide array of extra-curricular activities during, before and after the school day. This allows them to further develop interests and talents, as well as encouraging them to discover new pursuits such as skateboarding or magic.

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

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

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

25. Leaders plan a physical education curriculum which includes space and resources for pupils to develop skills in a wide range of team and individual sports. They are expected to demonstrate fair play and a respect for the rules and referee. Teachers have suitable expertise which they use to provide an extensive programme of matches against other schools. Pupils take part in tournaments across the country in an array of sporting disciplines. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and develop an appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.
26. Leaders have created a diverse and inclusive curriculum. Pupils learn about a range of significant individuals from different periods in history. Teachers also facilitate opportunities for pupils with disabilities to lead assemblies, presentations, and parts of lessons; for example, explaining how cochlear implants work in a science lesson. These experiences foster positive attitudes of mutual respect among pupils.
27. Teachers encourage pupils to take pride in their work, as evidenced in the high-quality work which many pupils produce in art and the collaborative play of children in the early years who demonstrate both kindness and confidence. They persevere even when a task is challenging, because their teachers praise and encourage them. As a result of these initiatives and actions, pupils develop confidence and self-respect.
28. Leaders promote a culture of understanding and openness about wellbeing and mental health. They train pupils as wellbeing ambassadors, provide emotional literacy support materials, and wellbeing lessons in Year 6. These measures encourage pupils to monitor and improve their own sense of wellbeing. The whole staff meet weekly to discuss pupil welfare which enables all staff to monitor any pupil who may need additional support. Additional resources such as 'worry monsters' make it easy for pupils to share concerns anonymously.
29. Relationships education is strongly linked to the school values, which the children understand well. They learn about personal safety, including being safe online, and appreciate its importance. Pupils learn about their bodies, and how they change, in a manner appropriate for their age.
30. The school council, which is led by pupils, has introduced a number of successful initiatives. These include uniform amendments, the use of sign language in assemblies and around the school, and additions to the menu. There is also an eco-council, which promotes sustainability. Pupils bring other initiatives to the school leaders, who then enable and encourage them to bring their ideas to fruition, for example a talent show. Pupils also contribute to and deliver assemblies on subjects including charities, topical themes and areas of personal interest.
31. Leaders expect pupils to behave well through a clearly articulated behaviour system and anti-bullying strategy. Behaviour outside the classroom is very good and pupils understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions. Staff supervise pupils appropriately, whether in lessons or during recreational times. They are vigilant in monitoring the various recreational areas. Pupils recognise the value of the school's buddy system which pairs pupils and children from various year groups. An important part of the anti-bullying strategy has been the appointment of anti-bullying ambassadors. This programme has encouraged the entire school community to be alert to potential unkindness and helped to develop a sense of responsibility for one another's wellbeing. As a result, there are

few incidents of unkindness or bullying. Pupils and their parents appreciate the focus on positive and caring behaviour.

32. Staff monitor attendance closely. Leaders know the reason for any pupil absence and follow up any concerns in order to promote pupils' wellbeing. Attendance is high. Children are well looked after if they are unwell or have an accident, and parents are informed promptly. Medicines are stored and administered appropriately. Suitable steps are taken to ensure that the school site is as safe as possible, and sensible precautions are taken in areas such as the science laboratory. Fire equipment is checked regularly and drills are completed so that pupils know what to do in an emergency. Staff are trained in these areas to manage any incidents with confidence.

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

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

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

34. Leaders have developed a curriculum where pupils learn about a range of social and economic topics. In the early years, pupils learn through role play by counting money, and buying and selling in shops. Older pupils compete to see whose shop can make the most profit selling goods to other pupils and develop an understanding of discounting to achieve greater sales. They learn about savings and differing levels of taxation, and calculate how much tax would be paid by certain professions having researched their average salaries. Pupils appreciate the understanding this gives them for their lives ahead.
35. Teachers respond to current affairs by using opportunities in the curriculum to sensitively approach key issues. For example, discussion of a fictional historical story about child refugees draws on pupils' knowledge of modern conflicts. Similarly, in philosophy lessons, pupils consider broad themes and think deeply. Staff plan opportunities for pupils to celebrate a range of different festivals and traditions throughout the year, giving pupils an appreciation of the range of different cultures within British society. Pupils also develop a further appreciation of other cultures and contexts in the wider world through communication and partnership work with schools in Africa. These experiences help pupils to develop a range of skills, such as empathy, which they apply across the wider curriculum.
36. Teachers guide pupils on careers, academic pathways and next steps. Pupils learn about the academic qualifications needed for certain careers, enabling them to feel prepared for secondary school. Leaders organise a programme of visitors from various professions to speak to pupils about their work. Planning for children's next steps in the early years and for pupils in Years 1 and 2 mean that they have timetabled sessions with their next teachers which helps to pupils to feel more confident about their transition as they move through the school.
37. Opportunities for pupils to develop responsibility and independence are planned well throughout the school. Pupils, including children in the early years, are able to distinguish right from wrong and reflect on how they might make different choices. This is reinforced by an emphasis on school values and modelling of these by teachers. Pupils are given increased levels of responsibility as they progress through the school, for example, Year 6 pupils make formal applications for leadership positions. Pupils learn how to buy train tickets, navigate the streets and railway safely and shop independently. As a result, they feel well prepared for the next stage of their education and future lives in society.
38. Pupils are given opportunities to engage with the local, and wider community. Pupils take part in intergenerational activities with a local care home, where they play games with residents as well as teaching them sign language. Year 6 pupils present an art exhibition to which members of the wider local community are invited. Pupils also raise money and awareness for local, national and international charities. These activities help pupils to understand how they can make a positive contribution to the lives of others in society.
39. Pupils develop an appropriate understanding of and respect for laws, democratic institutions, and public services. This is facilitated through assemblies, presentations and visits. Pupils participate regularly in the democratic process by voting in elections to the school council. They see how important and effective this body is in initiating positive change, so they are eager to take part. As a

result, pupils further develop a keen sense of how they can grow to be contributing, active members of society.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

41. Pupils are kept safe at school through the effective implementation of thorough and appropriate policies and procedures, which leaders monitor and update as required.
42. Safer recruitment practices are robust, with measures taken to ensure that all employees are appropriate to work with children. Leaders implement induction and training processes and share key information with staff, so that all staff understand the latest statutory guidance. Leaders and staff understand that they are responsible for reporting concerns and leaders articulate a clear message of “it could happen here”. Staff understand how to log these and all safeguarding concerns in detail. Staff understand the risks posed by radicalism and extremism. Leaders and staff liaise with external agencies for advice or action as required and in line with regulatory expectations.
43. Pupils are taught to share concerns. This includes children in the early years, who are encouraged to use ‘our five’ to articulate those trusted adults with whom they can share concerns. Leaders and teachers reinforce this through assemblies and the curriculum, so that pupils always know that they can talk to someone if they are worried or upset.
44. Pupils demonstrate that they understand the importance of staying safe online. Suitably rigorous filtering and monitoring arrangements are in place to protect pupils when online, whether at school or using their school device at home. These measures demonstrate that leaders have planned to mitigate the risk of harm in introducing personal tablet computers for pupils. Arrangements are in place regarding the site to minimise risk of harm during the school day.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

45. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	St Hilary's School
Department for Education number	936/6042
Registered charity number	312056
Address	St Hilary's School Holloway Hill Godalming Surrey GU7 1RZ
Phone number	01483 416551
Email address	secretary@sthilarysschool.com
Website	www.sthilarysschool.com
Proprietor	St Hilarys School Trust Ltd
Chair	Richard Thompson
Headteacher	Jane Whittingham
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	266
Date of previous inspection	2 to 3 October 2019

Information about the school

46. St Hilary's School is a co-educational day school located in Godalming, Surrey. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors.
47. The Pre-Prep department includes 99 children in the Early Years comprising two Nursery classes, two Kindergarten classes and two Reception classes.
48. The school has identified 54 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Nine pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
49. English is an additional language for 19 pupils.
50. The school states its aims are to provide an outstanding all round education; to equip pupils with the qualities and skills required in schools and beyond; to recognise and utilise all pupils' talents, whether academic, musical, sporting or other; to ensure that all children, whatever their ability, achieve their full potential; to develop in children a real thirst for learning; to transmit strong, traditional, moral values based on the school's family ethos, and to provide a warm, safe and caring environment that enables all children to thrive.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

20 to 22 February 2024

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

52. 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.

53. 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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