

School inspection report

1 to 3 October 2024

Sibford School

Sibford Ferris

Banbury

Oxfordshire

OX15 5QL

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. Leaders work collaboratively and adeptly together to provide an academic and pastoral education reflecting the ethos of the school. This ethos is based on the school's values of endeavour, respect, community and kindness. Leaders take into account the needs of the pupils and the views of parents, to prioritise the most important things that they need to do.
2. The proprietor body, through the school committee, has effective oversight of leaders' work. They offer guidance and challenge through meetings and reports with senior staff. They visit the school; they evaluate policies and their implementation and ensure that the insights provided by pupil and parent are used effectively. Governors in the school committee provide effective oversight of their areas of responsibility because they are skilled and knowledgeable. They ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met.
3. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare well planned lessons. In most lessons, pupils learn well, take pride in their work, and enjoy their learning. In these lessons, pupils extend their knowledge and their skills of reasoning and problem solving. Most teaching meets the individual needs of pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are ready to apply their learning in more complex ways. However, some teaching is not consistent in ensuring this support is available to pupils, and that these pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
4. Leaders in the early years ensure that the provision supports the development of the youngest children across a range of areas. Leaders and staff actively promote the wellbeing of children through the curriculum and their daily interactions. Staff are adept at supporting children to learn and apply new vocabulary and communicate effectively. Teaching is adapted to the needs and interests of children. Teachers use a varied and creative range of resources, in indoor and outdoor environments.
5. Pupils are considerate and inclusive in their interactions with each other. They understand the importance of rules to keep them safe and the reasons for sanctions. However, in the senior school low level disruption in some lessons in Years 7 to 9 disturbs learning for others. Some teachers do not deal with this low-level behaviour consistently effectively.
6. Pupils are taught to be responsible citizens in British society. They actively undertake roles and responsibilities in the school and wider community. They are well prepared to move onto their next stages of training, further education, or employment, because they are well supported by a comprehensive careers programme. Pupils start to consider their skills and interests from an early age so that during their time in school they make informed decisions about their future.
7. Safeguarding is given a high priority in the school. Leaders are proactive in creating a culture in which pupils feel safe emotionally and physically and are confident that any concern they have will be treated seriously and with empathy. The school committee, through the safeguarding governor, ensures that leaders are doing all they can to protect pupils.
8. Pupils who board are well cared for and fully supported to be positive role models for other pupils in the school and boarding house. Pupils who board are given a range of opportunities to take an active part in the decisions made about the boarding experience, including the activities on offer,

the routines of the day, and in its ongoing development. These opportunities enhance pupils' positive experience and develops their self-confidence to take part.

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 teachers in the senior school consistently employ strategies to address low level behaviour issues in a few lessons, thus supporting a more purposeful learning environment
- strengthen the strategies used by teachers to effectively adapt teaching to the needs of pupils, including those who are ready to apply their learning in more complex ways and those with SEND, so that pupils are supported to achieve their best possible outcomes.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders actively promote and prioritise the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders, including early years, create a nurturing environment that provides individualised attention to pupils. Leaders use a comprehensive, ambitious and well managed development plan. They work collaboratively to achieve the priorities laid out in the development plan. Leaders regularly evaluate their performance in the light of these aims, identifying where they could be more effective, and act in order to continually improve provision for pupils.
10. The proprietor body, through the school committee, has effective oversight through meetings, reports, school visits and the review of policies and their implementation. Governors have designated areas of responsibility which they report on at their regular meetings and oversee on visits to the school. They make sure that leaders are addressing the priorities identified on the school development plan and fulfil the requirements of the Standards.
11. The leadership of boarding supports the ethos of the school, providing a safe and supportive environment for boarders. Leaders fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively and act as caring role models for the boarders.
12. Leaders and the school committee possess appropriate knowledge and skills to effectively fulfil their duties and meet the requirements of the Standards. They ensure that all staff with responsibilities are appropriately trained and that their performance is subject to regular review. Regular professional development meetings foster collaboration among staff, allowing them to effectively address specific needs.
13. The pastoral team, under the effective leadership of those with designated safeguarding responsibilities are pro-active in their support of pupils and create an environment in which pupils feel safe and valued. The safeguarding governor is knowledgeable and experienced, in regular contact with the school and is informed of any safeguarding concerns or referrals.
14. The learning support department is managed and led by experienced staff who provide personalised support to enable the pupils in their care to flourish. The staff team are highly effective in communicating policies and procedures to other school staff.
15. School leaders both understand the effective management of risk and the importance of the understanding of risk management throughout the school. Staff receive training on how to identify and mitigate risk and comprehensive risk assessments are in place providing full coverage of the management of risk, including educational visits and in boarding.
16. The information required for parents and prospective parents is available on the website or in hard copy on request. Complaints are responded to in a timely manner and records kept of the outcome, actions taken and lessons to take forward. Boarders are aware of how to make a complaint, and their concerns are recorded separately, and acted on in a timely way. Leaders review learning from complaints and analyse the information looking for any trends that they need to address. This is all in line with the agreed complaints process and policy.
17. Leaders ensure that appropriate information is provided to the local authority related to pupils' provision where they are in receipt of an education, health and care (EHC) plan. This includes information related to pupils' learning and development, and that related to funding.

18. The school fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act. A suitable accessibility plan is in place which is reviewed regularly and updated. Leaders, through policies and procedures, embed a culture of inclusivity, respect and tolerance throughout the school.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The curriculum breadth supports pupils to develop their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, and technological skills. The curriculum is underpinned by the school's values and is reviewed collectively by staff. This regular review ensures that the curriculum is adapted to offer increasing learning opportunities to pupils. For example, 'the one curriculum' based on nature, food and nutrition, design and technology (DT) and horticulture has been introduced to develop further pupils' understanding of issues such as sustainability.
21. Teachers are well trained and have good subject knowledge in the subjects that they teach. They plan lessons which make use of a range of resources and technology. They provide detailed verbal and written feedback to pupils and ensure that pupils have time to understand and respond to this guidance. In the junior school, pupils in Years 4 to 6 benefit from the experience of specialist senior school staff teaching subjects such as modern foreign languages and science. Pupils take responsibility for their learning, make improvements and take pride in their work.
22. In the Nursery and Reception classes the curriculum is well planned. Leaders enhance their planning with their 'choosing boards' which gives children an opportunity to share their own interests and things that they would also like to learn about. Adults working with children know them well, and adapt activities to their needs and interests, especially to develop children's early language and communication skills. Adults monitor children's progress and consult well with parents about how children are faring. Children make full use of well-planned extensive facilities, indoors and outdoors. They particularly enjoy activities such as horticulture.
23. Leaders undertake a thorough range of checks on what pupils know and can do from when they first start at the school. In the Junior School, progress is monitored through online assessments and tracking against core objectives throughout the year. Most teachers use this information precisely to support pupils to transition from the Junior School to the Senior School. As they get older, leaders use ongoing assessment to track the progress of pupils. Leaders identify pupils who need extra help, and this targeted support is offered where appropriate. In the boarding house pupils are supported by academic staff during their supervised study sessions.
24. Most pupils of all ages are well supported to make effective progress and achieve a good range of qualifications in their chosen GCSE, A Level and BTEC National Diploma courses. The school's overarching annual results are usually above national averages across subjects. Many pupils develop their independent learning skills by undertaking additional qualification opportunities, such as Year 10 pupils who take the Higher Project Qualification and the extended project qualification (EPQ) in the sixth form where they have investigated such topics as the effects of interior design on mental health.
25. Most teachers are effective in supporting pupils' needs, including pupils with SEND, pupils who need extra help, and pupils who are ready to apply their learning in more complex ways. Many pupils are routinely challenged to extend their knowledge and their skills of reasoning and problem solving by a variety of tasks. However, some teachers do not identify and support pupils who need this help and these pupils find learning either too easy or too hard.
26. The school offers a variety of courses for pupils with English as a foreign language (EAL), depending upon their needs. This supports pupils to acquire their understanding of English quickly, to access

the curriculum, to succeed in acquiring qualifications alongside their peers and to go onto high quality post-16 and post-18 destinations.

27. Pupils are typically articulate, well-mannered and cooperative. However, in some lessons, low level disruption by a few pupils hinders the progress of others, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Where this happens, some teachers do not consistently establish classroom routines to ensure pupils focus on their learning and to manage transitions within a lesson. This leads to some wasted learning time.
28. Throughout the school pupils of all abilities thrive through the co-curricular offering, evidenced by the high numbers involved in matches, school plays and musicals and in the extensive programme of after school activities available. This wide range of activities enables pupils to develop their interests and self-confidence as well as widening their skills and knowledge. The enjoyment of music and art as seen in activities, productions, lessons and displays add to the development of a reflective culture in the school.
29. Reports ensure performance updates are provided to parents at regular intervals; reports contain relevant information, including target grades and suggestions for further improvement.

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. Leaders have established a well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationship and sex education (RSE) programme. PSHE, including RSE, is taught from the early years through lessons and in the daily meeting for worship. Vital issues affecting the school are discussed along with events which have had a positive impact on the world and religious festivals are celebrated. As they get older, these curriculums are adapted to keep pupils up to date with age related current issues in society, for example information related to county lines activity or the health issues related to vaping. These topics are delivered effectively by well trained staff. Parents are fully consulted over the content and the information about the topics to be taught each term.
32. Pupils, including children in the early years, access a range of exercise and sports through the physical education (PE) curriculum. This includes in extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils develop a range of skills, including those related to teamwork, and enhance their physical health. As they get older, the opportunities for sport and exercise continue to widen. Pupils take part in traditional team sports or choose from a variety of health-related activities such as use of the fitness room or participating in yoga.
33. The school's ethos of welcome and inclusion permeates every aspect of school life. There is a palpable sense of kindness, in interactions between pupils and modelled by their teachers. Pupils model the school's ethos and aims of collective stillness and reflection in assemblies, lessons and during social times. As a result, pupils behave well. They understand and appreciate the behaviour policy and the need for rules. In the junior school, pupils appreciate positive behaviour recognition through awards such as the courtesy badge.
34. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that any instances of bullying that might occur are taken seriously and handled appropriately. The individualised pastoral care supports pupils to reflect on their actions and learn from their mistakes.
35. Boarding staff prioritise boarders' health and wellbeing needs. Boarders access a range of high-quality provision including medical support, laundry facilities, a daily activity programme, weekend trips and activities, an induction programme for new boarders and security of personal possessions. Boarders are provided with good quality, nutritional meals, have access to drinks and snacks and the use of kitchen facilities. A statement of boarding principles and practice is made available to boarders and their families. Boarders, through a boarding committee, the 'collective', meet weekly and advocate improvements in the house, such as a recent initiative to reduce food waste.
36. The school premises and accommodation, including the boarding house, are properly maintained. Leaders fully understand and undertake appropriate checks on health and safety and fire precautions. The school committee has effective oversight of health and safety. A designated governor visits the school, tours the site and checks leaders' work. All health and safety requirements are in place through the effective implementation and understanding of the policies relating to health and safety and fire. This includes appropriate supervision of pupils and boarders, and a wide range of well-considered risk assessments.
37. Suitable arrangements and good accommodation are in place to care for pupils, including boarders, who are unwell or have additional medical needs. All staff receive regular first aid training and

robust risk assessment is used to identify and enhance first aid training for relevant staff, such as those with responsibility in early years and physical education staff. Medicines are stored appropriately and securely and data about health needs is regularly analysed.

38. The attendance and admissions registers are properly maintained. Staff quickly follow up on absences and robust systems are in place for pastoral and safeguarding support where appropriate. Staff are committed and diligent in their approach to supporting pupils' attendance. Leaders ensure that they report any pupils who arrive or leave the school other than at the beginning or end of the school year.

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. Pupils develop a thorough understanding of the importance of mutual respect and tolerance. The school's aims and ethos are reflected in the curriculum, in assemblies, tutorials and interactions between pupils and staff. Pupils work together, often in mixed aged groups, and discuss ideas freely. Talks in the weekly meetings, such as one from the sixth form on protected characteristics, further promote the school's ethos and values of the importance of respect for people of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles. The religious education (RE) and world views curriculum, provide pupils with a clear moral code and an understanding of the world faiths. This encourages pupils to understand that everyone has a voice, articulate their views, and develops their self-esteem and confidence.
41. Children in the early years develop their social skills and understanding of others in a range of ways, including by using a feelings board to explain how they feel at a point in time and discussing why they feel this way. They are encouraged to be kind to each other through taking turns, sharing toys, and through role play, such as helping someone with their shopping.
42. Pupils through PSHE lessons learn about important values such as law, democracy, and life in wider British society. They maturely discuss and debate important values, such as the role of British values, and whether they are pertinent to other cultures and countries. In the weekly meetings there is an active promotion of right from wrong, with pupils encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.
43. Teachers support pupils to understand the roles of, and respect for, different public services. The youngest children learn about the importance of the police, nurses and fire services. Pupils also visit local points of interest such as war graves and discuss the sacrifices of those that died in conflicts. Pupils are encouraged to further their learning, including through links to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
44. An extensive programme of careers education is provided to pupils of all ages. Using an online platform, pupils begin to develop an understanding of their interests and how these could develop into a career choice. Pupils are very well supported as they make decisions about their future, including post-16 and post-18 options such as the choice of apprenticeships, training, further education or employment. Pupils access effective guidance including through a careers team that answer pupils' questions and provide one-to-one support. Leaders systematically review the school's provision against the Gatsby benchmarks.
45. Pupils, including the youngest children, develop their understanding of economic wellbeing through a well-planned and delivered curriculum, including through the PSHE programme. For example, children in the early years develop their understanding through activities such as setting up a car wash together, washing bikes, and then discussing the costs involved. Pupils also gain further economic understanding through a well-considered range of extra-curricular events, including charity events.
46. Pupils enjoy working together in houses to raise funds for charity. In the senior school the focus is on contributing through active involvement in activities such as the accumulator challenge in aid of a local hospice and fundraising for local and international charities such as a local foodbank and a breast cancer charity. This develops the pupils understanding of the importance of individual effort.

Each year group in the junior school supports a chosen charity where pupils engage with the wider community and make a positive difference, in line with the ethos and values of the school.

47. Pupils and boarders have many opportunities to take on responsibility through leadership roles. Pupils develop an understanding of democracy in action, through elected roles such as that of house captain and election to the school council. Pupils use these responsibilities to act as role models for the wider school, for example, the school council is currently reviewing the behaviour policy for the school. Pupils enjoy various other opportunities for responsibility such as eco representatives and sports captains.

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

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

Safeguarding

49. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of pupils are comprehensive and effective. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding have the appropriate knowledge, skills and training. They carry out their roles effectively. They ensure that safeguarding policy and process is in line with the local arrangements and statutory guidance. Where needed, leaders seek timely advice and guidance from relevant external agencies. Records are meticulously kept and regularly reviewed to identify trends by staff and governors.
50. The proprietor, through the school committee, provides effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements. The school committee review regular reports, policies and visit the school, where they review safeguarding, bullying and behaviour logs. There is a named safeguarding governor who also provides additional advice and guidance and reviews leaders' work.
51. Staff receive annual update training in safeguarding, including in Prevent duty guidance. Training is updated weekly at the school's Friday focus meeting. Leaders check staff understanding of any new learning and that staff are confident to use this training. Staff are well trained, and report instances of concern appropriately. They appreciate the importance of reporting all concerns, no matter how seemingly small, as prescribed in the school's low-level concerns policy.
52. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. This is taught through the PSHE programme and computer science lessons. Leaders have appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place, to monitor online activity in the school.
53. Pupils, including boarders, feel safe and are confident that there is a trusted adult they can speak to, if they have any concerns. Pupils are confident in the different ways that they can report a concern, including through an online reporting system and an anonymous paper-based concern system. The range of internal and external support services available to pupils are well advertised on school notice boards and in the boarding house. Boarders know the role of the independent person and are confident that they have their contact details and could use these if they have any worries.
54. Appropriate safeguarding principles are followed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of boarders. Effective checks are made, including those relating to adults that live on the site, supervision, gender separation, and privacy. A full, well-considered range of risk assessments are in place for the full range of risks to protect boarders and staff.
55. Leaders ensure that the required checks are carried out on all adults prior to them working with children. The single central record of these checks is properly maintained.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Sibford School
Department for Education number	931/ 6005
Registered charity number	1068256
Address	Sibford School Sibford Ferris Banbury Oxfordshire OX15 5QL
Phone number	01295 781200
Email address	office@sibfordschool.co.uk
Website	http://sibfordschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Sibford School
Chair	Mr Stuart Fowler
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Evans
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	394
Number of boarding pupils	27
Date of previous inspection	26 May 2022

Information about the school

57. Sibford school is an independent co-educational school situated in a village near Banbury, Oxfordshire. It consists of a Junior School for pupils aged 3 to 11, and Senior School for pupils aged 11 to 18. The school has a Quaker ethos. The school is a charitable company. The school committee consists of governors who are trustees of the charity and directors of the company. The current headteachers took up her post in September 2023. There has also been a new chair of the proprietor body since the previous inspection.
58. The school accommodates full, weekly and occasional boarders from the age of 11 in a co-educational boarding house on the school site. There is a second boarding house that is currently under renovation and not in use during the time of the inspection.
59. There are 11 children in the early years. There is one Nursery and one Reception class.
60. The school has identified 125 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. English is an additional language for five pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to nurture ambitious learners who shape their worlds with their compassionate creative and questioning minds and to empower future generations who live adventurously in the world and take responsibility to improve it. The ethos of the school is based on the values of endeavour, respect, community and kindness.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

1 to 3 October 2024

63. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. 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 the safeguarding governor
- 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 with senior leaders
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

65. 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