

School inspection report

25 to 27 November

St Andrew's College Cambridge

St Andrew's College

13 Station Road

Cambridge

CB1 2JB

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 demonstrate a sustained commitment to placing pupils' welfare and academic achievement at the centre of the school's strategic direction. Pastoral, curriculum and boarding structures support pupils to make good progress and achieve well.
2. Governors provide challenge and oversight, ensuring that leaders have the skills and knowledge to undertake their roles. At the start of the inspection some routine inspection reports prior to 2022 were not available on the school's website. Additionally, the complaints policy did not include the number of formal complaints for the preceding academic year. Both issues were addressed during the inspection.
3. The curriculum is broad, balanced and highly responsive to pupils' different starting points. Bespoke pathways, well-structured foundation courses and carefully adapted programmes enable pupils to access learning effectively.
4. Teaching is purposeful and underpinned by teachers' good subject knowledge. Teachers assess pupils' skills and knowledge, and plan and adapt their lessons accordingly, so that teaching focuses on what pupils need to learn next. Regular assessments help teachers to track pupils' progress and make sure that pupils are challenged appropriately. Almost all pupils in the school speak English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils' development of the English language is embedded across the curriculum. This ensures that pupils develop their English-language skills with increasing confidence and independence.
5. Pupils demonstrate positive behaviour and engagement. Pupils benefit from a thoughtfully designed programme of enrichment and co-curricular activities. These experiences broaden pupils' horizons and deepen their intellectual curiosity. This contributes to their personal development and integration into the school and local community.
6. Admission and attendance procedures are effective. However, at the start of the inspection, the attendance policy did not include all required statutory information. This was rectified during the inspection.
7. Boarding provision is well organised. Boarders settle quickly because of a carefully planned induction programme, clear routines and positive relationships with house parents. They are supported well and benefit from a sense of belonging within the school community.
8. Pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) understanding well. Leadership roles, community projects and structured discussions teach them about responsibility, tolerance and active citizenship.
9. Governors and leaders adopt a proactive and strategic approach to risk management. This includes robust oversight of online safety, safer recruitment and safeguarding trends. Leaders' work is supported by regular training and governor scrutiny. This results in responsive and well-informed safeguarding arrangements.

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 all inspection reports are published on the school's website
- ensure that the complaints policy is kept up to date and includes the number of complaints for the preceding school year
- ensure that policies and practice relating to attendance align with, and consistently reflect, statutory guidance.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing. They have implemented systems that are both proactive and responsive to the needs of the school's international cohort. Each pupil's wellbeing needs are identified from the start, through the admission process. Senior leaders, house parents and admission staff collaborate to ensure pupils receive early support and continuity of care.
11. Governors maintain regular engagement with the school through visits, discussions and feedback mechanisms so that they can assure themselves that leaders' actions are effective. They provide leaders with appropriate support and challenge to ensure the fulfilment of the school's aims. Leaders present a united and consistent approach. Strategic decision-making is increasingly underpinned by their accurate self-evaluation and the systematic analysis of data.
12. The leadership of boarding is effective. Leaders implement coherent systems that support boarders' academic progress and personal development. Induction and guardianship arrangements are thorough. Safeguarding and conduct expectations for boarders are clear. A broad programme of activities and cultural celebrations supports their development. Boarders feel safe, supported and part of a cohesive community, in which they thrive academically, socially and personally.
13. Leaders provide staff with the training and guidance they need to develop their practice. Ongoing staff training supports the consistent use of agreed teaching approaches, particularly in relation to meeting the needs of pupils who speak EAL. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning through focused lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and staff. This gives leaders a secure understanding of the quality of education that pupils experience and the impact this has on their academic and personal outcomes.
14. Leaders use systems for gathering evidence, including pupil and parent surveys, pupil leadership structures and regular feedback from boarders, to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives. This clarifies the school's next steps for improvement and ensures effective action is taken. Leaders have developed a self-evaluation process that is increasingly reflective and tailored to the school's specific context. It enables leaders to refine provision and take a measured, strategic approach to school improvement.
15. Parents are provided with timely and relevant information about their child's progress through regular reports and formal communication. This keeps parents appropriately informed and helps them to support their child's progress.
16. Leaders generally provide the required information to parents of current and prospective pupils. However, at the beginning of the inspection, some of the routine inspection reports prior to 2022 were not published on the school's website. This was rectified during the inspection.
17. Leaders consult with external agencies, including the local authority when appropriate, to further support pupils' wellbeing. Currently, there are no pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) or for whom the school is in receipt of any state funding. Leaders know to provide the local authority with the required information if this changes.
18. The school's complaints policy is clear and comprehensive. It is easily accessible to parents via the school's website. Procedures for resolving concerns are well defined and followed in practice. Records of complaints are maintained appropriately and staff understand their responsibilities.

However, at the start of the inspection the policy did not include the number of formal complaints in the preceding school year. This was remedied during the inspection.

19. Leaders take a rigorous approach to managing risk. This supports pupils' safety and wellbeing through effective health and safety protocols, secure site management and proactive mental health provision. Pupils' emotional risks are mitigated through trusted adult relationships, established pastoral systems and responsive teaching that nurtures pupils' confidence, resilience and inclusion. Leaders have addressed the specific risks associated with boarders over the age of 18. Pupils' welfare and safety are rigorously maintained through risk assessments, targeted safeguarding training and physical separation in accommodation arranged according to age and sex.
20. There is an appropriate up-to-date accessibility plan in place to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum, the school and the boarding accommodation. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders and governors monitor provision to promote continued compliance.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders have established a rich and well-resourced curriculum that includes all required areas of learning. The curriculum is planned and taught to meet pupils' diverse needs and interests. Leaders ensure that programmes are adapted to pupils' prior attainment and English language acquisition. Varied academic pathways, including foundation courses, enable pupils to access learning that is closely matched to their needs and supports them to make consistently good progress.
23. Curriculum pathways offer varied assessment methods and practical learning opportunities to suit pupils' different learning profiles. Through their focused actions, leaders have established the school's distinctive ethos to provide bespoke learning pathways that are ambitious and prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education.
24. Leaders ensure that pupils are placed on suitable academic pathways through the careful use of assessments when pupils first join the school, regular assessments thereafter and ongoing reviews. This supports pupils, including the vast majority who speak EAL and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn successfully.
25. Assessment systems are rigorous and embedded across the school. Regular assessment points highlight what pupils have learned and identify their next steps. Alongside this, teachers offer detailed oral and written feedback that helps pupils to refine their understanding and improve their work. As a result, pupils are well prepared and achieve well in public examinations.
26. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use this effectively to plan lessons that challenge and engage, so that pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding securely. For example, in mathematics lessons, teachers' clear demonstrations support pupils to explain complex multi-step calculations with accuracy. During English lessons, teachers use targeted questions that guide pupils to refine their analytical writing. In chemistry lessons, teachers' detailed feedback on problem-solving ensures that pupils understand how to improve their responses.
27. Teaching promotes British values throughout the curriculum. Across subjects, including English, history, art and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), pupils learn about democracy and the rule of law. They are taught about different faiths and beliefs and consider a range of cultural perspectives. Pupils develop respect and tolerance for others.
28. The programme of academic enrichment and cultural events enhances pupils' learning and personal development. This includes subject-specific trips, visits to museums and galleries, and participation in national competitions. These opportunities deepen pupils' understanding, extend their experiences and nurture their intellectual curiosity. Pupils benefit from a varied programme of social, cultural and sporting activities, including participation in local sports leagues and opportunities to experience wider aspects of British culture. These activities support their successful integration into British society. Pupils learn to work with and support each other. They build teamwork skills which contribute to their wellbeing and personal development.
29. Systems for identifying and supporting pupils who have additional needs are increasingly embedded. Leaders identify pupils who have SEND quickly and put appropriate support in place. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND analyses assessment information regularly to check that pupils' targeted support enables them to learn effectively. Pupils who have SEND engage purposefully in their learning and make good progress.

30. Leaders ensure that pupils who speak EAL receive appropriate support to enable their full access to the curriculum. English language development is embedded with precision and consistency across the curriculum, with equal emphasis on developing pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Pupils increase their fluency and understanding, which allows them to access subject-specific content effectively. Pupils are encouraged to participate actively in lessons, with additional help to understand technical vocabulary. Pupils access subtitled content in lessons, where required. This structured support promotes pupils' confidence, engagement and motivation to communicate effectively in English. Pupils who speak EAL make good progress both academically and socially.
31. Leaders provide a broad range of co-curricular activities that promote pupils' development. The many planned opportunities include clubs in theology, filmography, business startup, sustainability and wellness, museum and gallery visits, external competitions and Olympiads. These experiences and events encourage pupils' intellectual, cultural and social development and help them to develop life skills such as teamwork and resilience.
32. Leaders provide a broad range of co-curricular and boarding activities that develop boarders' confidence and communication skills. Activities such as quiz nights, pumpkin carving and movie evenings support boarders' social engagement and wellbeing.

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

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

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

34. Leaders promote pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence effectively. The school's consistent focus on developing pupils' oracy and expanding their vocabulary enables pupils to communicate with growing fluency and accuracy. The regular opportunities for structured discussions and debate, supportive peer mentoring and pupil-led activities, further develop pupils' confidence and skills.
35. Pupils are taught relationships and sex education (RSE) through a well-planned PSHE curriculum. The curriculum teaches pupils about culture and identity, diversity and inclusion, sexual health and relationships, citizenship and health and wellbeing. Pupils are taught in appropriately organised groups, including single-sex groups where required. Teaching resources are selected to secure pupils' engagement and reinforce the legal and personal aspects of the content. Pupils develop informed, age-appropriate understanding and are confident to discuss these topics openly and with maturity.
36. The physical education (PE) curriculum is well planned and taught. This encourages pupils' physical development and understanding about teamwork. Pupils learn skills and techniques in a range of sports including football, basketball, badminton and volleyball. Pupils participate in sports clubs and fixtures with other schools. This provides further opportunities to develop their physical skills and broaden their interactions with others.
37. Pupils' behaviour is consistently positive during lessons and around the school. Pupils show respect towards others. Staff apply behaviour policies fairly and effectively, using clear systems for rewards and sanctions that are well understood by pupils. Leaders maintain thorough records of behaviour and bullying incidents. Pastoral staff respond promptly and appropriately to incidents, ensuring suitable support for all pupils involved.
38. The school site is well resourced. Buildings and boarders' accommodation are well maintained, with rigorous health and safety monitoring and regular fire practices, so that pupils benefit from a safe environment that supports their wellbeing and daily routines.
39. Medical and welfare arrangements are in place for pupils when they are injured or unwell. Staff are well trained and follow appropriate protocols for the storage and administration of medicines. Leaders monitor the school's medical policies and systems to ensure that they are followed consistently. House parents provide boarders with suitable medical oversight during evenings and at weekends so that boarders receive timely care and support when required.
40. Pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the school day. Staffing arrangements ensure that boarders are suitably supervised overnight and at weekends. When boarders first join the school, their wellbeing and welfare is supported through a week-long induction programme and familiarisation with the locality. Pupils are given walking tours of the city, shown where places of worship are and provided with health and safety information. Travel and guardianship arrangements are clearly established prior to admission. Required parental consent and regular communication between the school and guardians ensure pupils' continuity of care.

41. The school's admission and attendance registers are maintained fully and accurately. Pupils' attendance is monitored through robust systems. The senior attendance champion oversees the analysis of attendance data. Attendance trends and patterns are monitored and any concerns are followed up by key staff. The school notifies the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times.
42. Leaders ensure that the school's attendance policy is accessible on the school's website and communicated effectively to parents. However, when the inspection commenced the attendance policy did not contain some statutory information, such as the name of the senior attendance champion and the correct registration codes for staff to use. Leaders updated the policy to include both details during the inspection.
43. Leaders have established a system of pupil leadership through student governor and student council systems. This enables pupils to contribute appropriately to school decision-making. Student governors and members of the student council are appointed through a formal application and selection process. The student council meets regularly and operates in a structured manner, gathering views from pupils and communicating these to staff effectively. Pupils demonstrate commitment and maturity in their roles. Their contributions lead to tangible improvements, including amendments to supervised study arrangements and forthcoming changes to catering provision following whole-school consultation.
44. Leaders promote boarders' leadership skills. Pupil house representatives meet fortnightly. They learn how to hold and minute meetings, listen to other people's perspectives, respect their differences, form balanced views and raise issues as actions.

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

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

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

46. The school's curriculum promotes social and economic education aligned with the school's vision and values. During PSHE, history and English lessons, pupils explore cultural diversity and healthy relationships. As a result, pupils show mutual respect, tolerance and positive attitudes towards others.
47. Leaders ensure that respect, British values and cultural understanding are explicitly taught and consistently modelled by staff. PSHE lessons, tutor sessions, house parent guidance and open discussion platforms enable pupils to explore and appreciate cultural differences. Pupils consider different opinions sensitively and understand the expectations of modern British society.
48. Boarding provision effectively promotes equality, diversity and inclusion through a well-planned programme of cultural celebrations and pastoral support. As a result, boarders develop mutual respect, engage positively with those from different backgrounds and contribute to a cohesive and harmonious boarding community.
49. The curriculum enables pupils to develop a deep cultural, historical and social awareness. Subjects such as English, sociology and international relations enable pupils to examine real-world issues, financial literacy and diverse perspectives so that pupils acquire informed and balanced views and can apply their understanding to wider society.
50. Leaders provide comprehensive and personalised careers guidance. Specialist support, information-sharing meetings and preparation sessions enable pupils to be well informed and make appropriate choices about their future careers.
51. Economic education is comprehensive and effective. Pupils study finance in mathematics, business studies, economics and PSHE lessons. They explore real costs using practical examples, such as university expenses and budgeting. Pupils acquire relevant life skills to make financially responsible decisions that help prepare them for life beyond school.
52. Pupils learn to take responsibility through well-embedded leadership and teamworking opportunities, such as a local pupil forum and the 'Dukes Young Leaders' programme. These opportunities extend pupils' personal development and support them to build confidence, initiative and leadership skills. Pupils are well-equipped to take responsibility and apply these attributes effectively in their learning and wider lives.
53. Pupils show initiative and contribute positively to the local community and wider society. Pupils participate in a community outreach programme at a local secondary school where they take part in culture lessons with pupils from Year 7 and Year 8. This develops their confidence and communication skills. Pupils participate in social action projects, including supporting a local half marathon and litter picks. Pupil mentors support their peers during learning activities. Pupils in the sustainability club attend conferences, deliver speeches and introduce recycling initiatives to the local community.

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

54. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

55. Governors and leaders promote and sustain a positive safeguarding culture. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and that systems for reporting and monitoring concerns are clear and consistently applied. Leaders' and governors' oversight ensures that safeguarding expectations are embedded across all aspects of school life so that pupils' safety and welfare remain a priority.
56. Leaders take prompt and proportionate action in response to concerns. This includes liaising with external agencies where appropriate. Secure systems for recording low-level concerns and whistleblowing are understood by staff and followed closely.
57. Pupils demonstrate an age-appropriate understanding of keeping safe and know how to seek help when needed. They are confident in identifying trusted adults to approach for support. Pupils' induction when they join the school, alongside the PSHE curriculum, effectively reinforces the themes of personal safety, consent and appropriate boundaries so that pupils are equipped to make safe and informed decisions.
58. The school's internet filtering and monitoring systems are robust. These are used constructively to check pupils' online activity. Leaders' regular analysis of this enables them to identify any emerging trends. These are addressed quickly through specific teaching and reminders to pupils about safe internet use.
59. Safeguarding practice in boarding is secure. Staff show confidence and understanding regarding their responsibilities. Boarders benefit from access to an independent listener. Consideration is given to where boarders aged 19 and over are accommodated, with clear expectations regarding their conduct and boundaries.
60. All staff and governors receive suitable safeguarding training at the start of each academic year. Regular updates within weekly meetings and through termly staff training ensure that staff vigilance is maintained and reinforce key safeguarding messages. Training is adapted in response to pupils' needs. Safeguarding arrangements are implemented consistently so that pupils are protected and experience a secure and supportive environment.
61. Governors and leaders are alert to contextual safeguarding risks in the local area. Risk assessments are regularly updated to reflect any emerging concerns.
62. Leaders demonstrate secure and proactive management of safer recruitment, which contributes positively to the school's safeguarding culture. The single central record (SCR) of appointments is accurately maintained and routinely monitored. Leaders ensure that all required pre-appointment checks are completed in line with regulatory expectations. Oversight by the headteacher and governing body provides an additional layer of scrutiny. Regular review processes ensure that documentation remains current and compliant.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	St Andrew's College Cambridge
Department for Education number	873/6019
Address	St Andrew's College 13 Station Road Cambridge CB1 2JB
Phone number	01223 903048
Email address	registrations@standrewscambridge.co.uk
Website	www.standrewscambridge.co.uk
Proprietor	Dukes Education
Chair	Mr Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Mrs Annette Poulain
Age range	15 to 22
Number of pupils	114
Number of boarding pupils	95
Date of previous inspection	28 to 29 September 2022

Information about the school

64. St Andrew's College Cambridge is a co-educational day and boarding school located in central Cambridge. The school is part of the Dukes Education group. Members of this group make up the board of directors who provide governance for the school. The school educates mainly international pupils through pre-A level, A level and university foundation courses. The current headteacher took up her post in April 2025.
65. There are nine boarding houses based in Cambridge, within ten to fifteen minutes' walk of the school. Four boarding houses are for female pupils and six boarding houses are for male pupils.
66. The school has identified 11 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
67. The school has identified 113 pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
68. The school promotes a culture of high academic aspiration and personalised guidance. It aims to cultivate respect, integrity and responsibility, seeking to develop confident, independent learners who are well prepared for progression to competitive universities in the UK and internationally. The school places importance on pastoral care, the wellbeing of pupils living away from home and the creation of a diverse, inclusive community enriched by its international student body and central city setting.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

25 to 27 November

69. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

70. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

71. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

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