

School inspection report

3 to 5 December 2024

Kirkstone House School

1–6 Main Street

Baston

Peterborough

Cambridgeshire

PE6 9PA

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 have successfully developed an environment where pupils are known and feel supported emotionally and socially. However, the proprietors have limited oversight of aspects of school life and consequently not all Standards are met.
2. Arrangements for health and safety are not wholly effective. The proprietor does not maintain a sufficiently robust approach to health and safety or fire legislation. Inspectors found hazards, such as the unsafe storage of cleaning products and incorrect labelling of asbestos.
3. The proprietorial oversight of the premises and accommodation is not effective. External lighting is insufficient, and some classrooms are not maintained to an appropriate standard.
4. The recording of health and safety checks is not sufficiently robust. At the start of the inspection, there were errors in policies and other information provided to parents. These were subsequently rectified.
5. Leaders gather a range of data across various aspects of school life such as behaviour incidents, attendance and first aid provision. However, information is not analysed by the proprietors. This restricts the proprietors' ability to spot any emerging patterns or trends in order to take appropriate action.
6. Leaders have designed a curriculum that is carefully adapted to successfully meet pupils' diverse needs and interests. This ensures that pupils experience essential areas such as mathematical and linguistic activities, combined with an emphasis on building self-esteem and other important skills such as developing resilience. This helps pupils make progress and reflects the school's aim for pupils to be prepared for the next stage of their life.
7. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and a detailed awareness of pupils' aptitudes. They plan work carefully, providing interesting activities that pupils enjoy, and which inspire them. Pupils are motivated to learn because of the strategies that are adopted in most lessons, including the use of skilled learning support assistants. Most lessons maintain pupils' engagement. In some lessons teaching is less tailored to meet pupils needs, resulting in less consistent progress in these subjects.
8. Leaders have established a school culture where no one is an outsider and pupils are understood and valued. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, which includes relationships and sex education (RSE), has been carefully devised to ensure that pupils are prepared well for their future. Pupils behave well and are supported by caring staff who are skilful at adjusting expectations according to individual needs. High-quality interactions help to create an atmosphere of kindness and mutual respect.
9. Leaders and staff promote positive values through the curriculum, assemblies and daily interactions that focus on inclusivity and the uniqueness of the individual. As a result, pupils behave with care and consideration towards each other. Pupils demonstrate understanding of and respect for one another, for example when they talk knowledgeably about neurodiversity.
10. There is an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. Staff know pupils well, which helps them to quickly recognise any changes in mood or behaviour. Robust safeguarding systems are in place.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- the school complies with relevant health and safety laws ensuring that legionella and asbestos protocols are adhered to
- the school complies with the regulatory reform (Fire Safety) order 2005 by ensuring that there is suitable fire signage in the school and flammable materials are stored appropriately
- the premises are safe and well maintained, ensuring that all classrooms have appropriate heating, and access to the portacabins does not present a risk of tripping
- external lighting is sufficient for people to enter and leave the premises safely.

Recommended next steps

The proprietors should:

- ensure the content on the school's website available to parents contains correct and up-to-date information
- ensure that the needs of pupils with different levels of prior attainment are consistently met across all subjects
- develop the procedures for monitoring and reviewing all aspects of health and safety to ensure clear oversight and analysis of trends and patterns to better safeguard the welfare of pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Proprietors do not maintain an accurate oversight of school activity, and consequently the Standards are not consistently met. In several areas, for example health and safety, there is a lack of a coherent strategy for the implementation of policy, monitoring and review.
12. The proprietors of the school have regular discussions with the headteacher. They are committed to the success of the school and the realisation of the ethos that every individual counts. However, a lack of proprietorial knowledge of the Standards and support to school leaders has resulted in unmet Standards.
13. Leaders describe the school as a bridge between a mainstream school and one that caters specifically for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have devised a curriculum that enables pupils to achieve success academically and pastorally, providing effective support for their intellectual, emotional and social wellbeing. The curriculum is sufficiently flexible to allow courses to be adjusted to suit the needs of different pupils. This includes adding courses such as GCSE statistics for pupils with high prior attainment and widening the vocational offer for others.
14. Leaders work together on continual development and improvement. They make informed decisions as a result of open dialogue and detailed knowledge of the individual and wide-ranging additional needs of the pupils. This has resulted in recent initiatives being implemented such as increased numbers of support staff.
15. The school implements an appropriate accessibility plan and fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. This includes considering how access to buildings can be improved, ensuring that the curriculum is suitable and ensuring that information is presented in accessible formats.
16. Leaders liaise and collaborate with external agencies, such as children's services, effectively. They work closely and maintain a positive relationship with a wide range of services to ensure pupils are appropriately safeguarded and receive specialised educational support.
17. Parents receive suitable reports and regular updates regarding their children's progress and attainment across the subject range. Leaders ensure that the local authority receives the required information to understand the level of support given to pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and how funds are used.
18. Leaders are aware of the information that is required to be made available to parents, and it is provided through the website. However, at the start of the inspection, some information regarding the proprietor, and academic performance was not available on the website, and policies for the curriculum, for pupils who have SEND and for those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) were not up to date. This was rectified during the inspection.
19. Risks that may affect pupils' welfare, health and safety are appropriately identified and mitigated. Leaders are alert to particular risks linked to the vulnerability of some pupils. Mitigations include specialised support and strategies to equip pupils with the skills to keep themselves safe. All pupils have a 'passport' which contains detailed information reflecting their level of need and risk.

20. Staff engage in frequent communication with parents, enabling any concerns to be identified quickly and attended to. A suitable three-stage policy is implemented effectively. Records of complaints and low-level issues are carefully maintained and regularly analysed, allowing school leaders to identify patterns and act as necessary.

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

21. The standard relating to leadership, management and governance is not met, because the standards relating to health and safety, fire safety, premises and accommodation and external lighting are not met.

22. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders have created an appropriate curriculum that is suitably adapted to meet the variety of needs and range of abilities of pupils. It covers all the required areas of learning, whilst offering alternative study routes where appropriate, such as the option of taking a broader range of vocational BTEC courses, for example in hospitality. Leaders' commitment to providing a flexible curriculum supports pupils well. It enables them to experience success and make good academic progress from their various starting points.
24. Leaders have devised a clear system to record and check pupils' progress. They establish individual starting points quickly, and where applicable in conjunction with information from a pupil's EHC plan. This, together with ongoing assessment data and teachers' clear understanding of pupils' academic and emotional needs, enables staff to identify any gaps in learning and provide appropriate support. In the lower school, most feedback is immediate and verbal. In the senior school, learning support assistants use teachers' written and verbal feedback to embed learning and develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils proudly share their work, recognising that the individual guidance they receive helps to fill any gaps in learning, clarifies any misconceptions and supports them in moving on to the next step in their learning.
25. Leaders are aware that some pupils in the school have experienced periods of disruption to their education and they recognise that every pupil has a different profile of strengths and difficulties. To ensure all pupils are appropriately supported, every pupil in the school has a 'passport' detailing their individual needs and how best to provide for them. A range of strategies are used effectively, including adapting timetables, providing one-to-one support and careful use of practical resources. The well-qualified learning support team provides staff training and monitors pupils' targets, adjusting the 'passports' as necessary. Both the school and the appropriate local authority regularly review the impact of the support for pupils.
26. Leaders help pupils to gain suitable qualifications. Teachers and learning support assistants are skilled and supportive, fostering positive relationships and creating a nurturing environment that enables pupils to succeed. Pupils in Year 11 gain a range of qualifications that are well matched to their interests. These include GCSE examinations, as well as vocational courses and functional skills in mathematics and English.
27. Teachers plan work successfully because of their accurate knowledge of each pupil and an understanding of approaches that work well for pupils with various barriers to learning. They are adept at making explicit cross-curricular links so pupils have a context for their learning and can apply it to real life. For example, when rolling pastry in food technology, hearing that the shape is 'more like Iceland and less like Africa'. Teachers in the lower school use outdoor learning sessions to build resilience and develop skills such as teamwork. These opportunities to connect with nature help reduce pupils' anxieties and overcome some of their barriers to learning.
28. Teachers impart their secure subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects successfully. The best lessons are characterised by well-chosen resources, clear communication and pupils afforded the space and confidence to speak up and to listen to each other's ideas. In a few lessons, teaching does not engage pupils to the same extent, resulting in pupils losing interest in their learning. Leaders do not consistently monitor teaching and learning or provide opportunities to share best

practice. As a result, the quality of teaching is inconsistent across different subject areas, which has an impact upon pupils' progress.

29. Pupils enjoy an appropriate range of recreational activities such as chess, football, stitching and cookery clubs. Staff encourage pupils to pursue enrichment opportunities, which enable them to develop their social, creative and intellectual skills. Several pupils benefit from completing a national arts award or bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), developing expertise and interests in a range of different areas. Co-curricular activities are well attended and help pupils to develop practical skills and independence that benefit their learning and development.

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. The school's nurturing ethos, which focuses on knowing each individual well, supports pupils' personal and emotional development effectively. However, there is not a sufficiently robust proprietorial approach to the monitoring of the premises, health and safety or fire safety.
32. The proprietor does not demonstrate a robust commitment to fire safety. The school does not comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Whilst pupils know what to do in the event of a fire and practise where to assemble, there are several breaches of basic fire safety precautions. This includes a lack of clear fire signage, flammable material stored inappropriately and inconsistent record-keeping.
33. There is a lack of systematic monitoring of the school's implementation of its health and safety policy by the proprietor. This means that safe practice is not always being followed. For example, asbestos is not correctly labelled and substances and equipment that could potentially harm pupils are not locked away.
34. The proprietor has not ensured that the school's premises and accommodation meet the Standards. Pupils have access to areas that present a safety risk. For example, some rooms do not have heating and the steps up to portacabins are hazardous. Furthermore, external lighting around the school is inadequate, making it difficult to walk around after dark safely.
35. The school is a supportive environment where individuals feel respected. Pupils are encouraged to discover new interests. Tutor time provides opportunities for pupils to learn and practise strategies to build resilience, such as through role play. This provides the foundations for them to grow in confidence and for their self-esteem and self-knowledge flourish. Furthermore, pupils develop self-confidence through responsibilities such as becoming a prefect or monitor. Pupils in Year 11 use walkie-talkies maturely to call pupils to lunch, which prevents pupils from having to stand in a long queue.
36. Staff help pupils to understand a range of faiths in religious education (RE). Pupils begin to consider the differences and similarities between religions. Teachers use opportunities, including through assemblies, trips and the curriculum, to stress the importance of respecting differences in religions and beliefs. Pupils react positively to these opportunities.
37. There is a well-constructed PSHE programme in place that successfully supports the positive development of pupils' mental and emotional wellbeing. It develops pupils' understanding of themselves and an awareness of and respect for others. Pupils can describe the different protected characteristics, such as disability, religion and gender, and appreciate the importance of treating everyone fairly. An atmosphere of openness between staff and pupils helps pupils feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts, including any frustrations.
38. There is an appropriate programme of RSE, delivered in science lessons and during form time. Teachers tailor the content and delivery to meet the needs of pupils, as exemplified by their approach to teaching pupils about consent. Additional multi-agency days further support pupils to gain an understanding of a range of different issues, including what constitutes a healthy relationship.

39. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of their own needs and the difficulties faced by others, which can impact on their behaviour. Positive behaviour is developed through an atmosphere of openness, clear expectations and appropriate sanctions. Furthermore, supportive staff are readily on hand to deal with issues of misbehaviour quickly. Special rooms, including a sensory room in the lower school where pupils can take time to reflect and regulate their feelings, returning to their learning when ready, are well used. Incidents are recorded in detail, and any triggers or patterns are noted. This ensures that pupils get the further support they may need.
40. Leaders adopt a proactive approach to anti-bullying and pupils understand that bullying behaviour will be challenged. Older pupils take part in role play scenarios and have been involved in designing anti-bullying booklets to help them understand how their actions and words can be perceived. They are given the opportunity to reflect upon their behaviour and the consequences of their actions, in a nurturing environment, which enables personal development. This results in very few bullying issues, and any that do arise are dealt with appropriately.
41. There are opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of physical activities to promote their physical health. The emphasis in the curriculum is placed on fostering enjoyment, which results in a high level of participation. The physical education (PE) programme is successfully adapted to enable pupils with a range of physical and emotional needs to achieve success, develop confidence and enjoy being active. Occupational therapists provide specialist support as necessary, which teachers and support assistants incorporate into appropriate times of the day.
42. Staff carefully supervise pupils throughout the school day. Positive relationships and a high staff-to-pupil ratio help to reassure pupils and enable any incidents to be immediately addressed. Supervised quiet spaces are available for pupils who might find breaktimes overwhelming, providing some individuals with essential emotional support.
43. Pupils are well supported in attending school regularly. Attendance and admission procedures comply with recent government legislation. Registers and records are maintained accurately. Leaders track attendance rigorously, ensuring that absence is carefully monitored, and specific support is put in place where necessary. Leaders work closely with local authorities, and information regarding pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times is reported appropriately.
44. Suitably trained staff administer any required first aid or medication in a timely and appropriate manner. Medical facilities are clean, first aid kits are checked regularly, and equipment is in date. Pupils know where to go if they require medical assistance. Leaders oversee records to ensure they are alert to any developing patterns.

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

45. Standards are not met consistently in relation to health and safety, fire safety, premises and accommodation and external lighting.

46. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

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

47. The school's ethos supports an environment where pupils are valued, and their strengths and talents recognised. Pupils have a clear understanding that they live in a diverse world full of differences and are aware of the harm that can be caused by prejudice. Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect.
48. Leaders cultivate a secure sense of citizenship. Pupils learn about British values, and these are broadly understood by pupils who can explain how they are evident in school. Pupils vote for school prefects, and thus appreciate the democratic process and understand that any sanctions imposed are a form of rule of law. Pupils gain knowledge of criminal law and public institutions such as parliament. This is developed in lessons where pupils learn how to report a crime and how to help people who are victims, for example by providing descriptions to the police.
49. Teachers take opportunities to promote tolerance of different points of view and inculcate an understanding of right and wrong. Pupils enjoy discussions and listen well to each other. For example, older pupils debate the ethics of assisted dying in a functional skills English lesson. Pupils are supported in taking responsibility for their actions. Staff model appropriate actions, interacting with pupils in small numbers, challenging them when they misinterpret social cues and helping them to interpret the situation correctly.
50. The curriculum provides opportunities to widen pupils' cultural awareness and develop their social skills. This is supported by a house system which encourages pupils of different ages to mix. Staff often use practical activities to support learning. For example, in art, pupils create a poppy display, which helps them to understand and appreciate the significance of Remembrance Day. The pupil ambassador group build their social skills through training to show visitors around the school and talk to parents at open events. Pupils' insight is deepened through a range of visits such as a recent trip to a London theatre.
51. The curriculum is carefully planned to develop pupils' economic understanding. Lower school pupils learn the value of money and senior school pupils understand how bank accounts and savings work. The life skills programme provides opportunities for pupils to gain a practical economic education that will prepare them for life beyond school. Pupils are taught to navigate public transport, plan a shopping trip and organise social events. Pupils in Year 11 are encouraged to manage the fundraising for their prom each year. This develops their financial understanding and provides valuable opportunities to work collaboratively.
52. The school has a culture of service towards wider society. Pupils develop a commitment to helping those in need both in the local community and further afield. Pupils make bacon sandwiches twice a week which they sell to raise funds. Recently this has provided the money for pupils on hospitality courses to cater for a local Parkinson's support group lunch. The many links with the local community help to contextualise understanding and provide pupils with purpose in their learning, helping to facilitate skills for living in British society. Furthermore, the active DofE bronze award programme enables pupils to gain additional experience of service.
53. Leaders have devised a varied careers programme that prepares pupils successfully for their next stage in life. Younger pupils learn about the different options available and start to reflect on their

skills and achievements. Older pupils receive comprehensive careers guidance, aligned with nationally recognised benchmarks. They are supported in making informed choices about their future pathways. This includes access to external career fairs, impartial advice and opportunities to explore diverse options through work experience. Some pupils go on to study A levels, whilst others are offered places at sixth-form colleges or on apprenticeship schemes.

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. Suitable safeguarding policies and procedures have been established and are implemented sensitively to promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders make appropriate use of an advisor who provides clear oversight for safeguarding, including engaging in discussions as necessary and checking that appropriate action is taken when needed.
56. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are appropriately trained and are knowledgeable about their roles. They have a clear understanding of trends, needs and priorities, and are supported by a well-managed online system to log pastoral and safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding leaders recognise the risks that pupils who have SEND may face.
57. New staff receive effective induction training and ongoing support, and training is provided for established staff. This, together with external training such as for the 'Prevent' duty, means that staff are well prepared to identify safeguarding issues, including the threats posed by radicalisation and extremism. Staff report concerns without delay. They are confident in how to respond to any low-level concerns about adults. Contextual risks relating to children missing in education are considered carefully.
58. The safeguarding team works closely with six local authorities and other outside agencies. They understand the thresholds for referral to local authorities and when to seek advice, including for pupils who experience or have experienced school avoidance. Caring staff support these pupils very effectively.
59. Leaders have established effective communication channels for pupils to share concerns. Pupils understand how to raise any issues. Pupils identify how the school helps to keep them safe, including through immediate access to and support from staff who listen, care for and respect them individually. Pupils have regular conversations with a range of adults about their concerns. Staff respond appropriately when pupils raise concerns.
60. Pupils understand how to keep safe online. They learn about online safety in PSHE and computer lessons and multi-agency days. Internet usage is effectively monitored via a commercial filtering system which the safeguarding team responds to without delay.
61. All appropriate pre-employment and recruitment checks are made on adults before they encounter pupils. Records are systematically maintained and effectively monitored by school leaders.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

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

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.
ISSR Part 5, paragraph 27	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
27(b)	external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

School details

School	Kirkstone House School
Department for Education number	925/6017
Address	Kirkstone House School 1–6 Main Street Baston Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE6 9PA
Phone number	01778 560 350
Email address	info@kirkstonehouseschool.co.uk
Website	www.kirkstonehouseschool.co.uk
Proprietors	Mrs Beryl Wyman, Mr Edward George Wyman and Mr John William Robert Wyman
Headteacher	Mrs Corrine Jones
Age range	6 to 17
Number of pupils	108
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 3 December 2021

Information about the school

63. Kirkstone House School is a co-educational day school situated just outside Peterborough. The school is overseen by the three proprietors, with an advisor providing support and guidance for safeguarding. The school comprises two sections: lower school, for pupils aged from 6 to 11 years; and senior school, for pupils aged from 11 to 17 years. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed who joined the school in September 2024.
64. The school caters mainly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are 69 pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. The school has identified no pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
66. The school states its aims are to provide pupils with an education within a caring family environment which promotes kindness, tolerance and support from staff who know them well. Emphasis is placed on building high self-esteem and emotional resilience, in order that pupils achieve to the best of their ability and are prepared for the next stage of their life. The school's ethos is that 'the individual counts'.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

3 to 5 December 2024

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

68. 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 proprietor
- 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

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

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

For more information, please visit isi.net