

School inspection report

7 to 9 November 2023

Cransley School

Belmont Hall

Belmont Lane

Northwich

CW9 6HN

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. Cransley School is a very happy and inclusive community in which individual talents can flourish and where everyone is treated equally. This is the result of planning by leaders but also their willingness to listen to the views of pupils and to consider initiatives brought forward by the pupil body. There is a notable sense of everyone working together, which enables pupils to both develop confidence and learn effectively.
2. Leaders are highly successful in their roles and responsibilities. They work as a team, supporting and challenging one another. The governors similarly fulfil their duties by challenging leaders as 'critical friends', holding them to account appropriately.
3. There is a suitably broad curriculum which stimulates and challenges pupils of all ages and abilities. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school and attain well at GCSE level. However, there is a notable difference in what is expected of pupils in Year 9 and in subsequent years. Some pupils find the higher demands of GCSE-level study, when compared with previous expectations, challenging. As a result, they feel less confident about their learning and independent working habits in the early stages of their exam courses.
4. Teaching and learning in areas such as relationships and sex education (RSE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are successful in preparing pupils for their adult lives. There is a suitable range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning and personal development.
5. Leaders are successful in their aim to 'nurture relationships' which are respectful and caring, which is the result of careful planning and consideration of pupil voice. Pupils demonstrate very well-developed self-awareness and a deep moral understanding. This is a significant strength of the school and underpins the success enjoyed by pupils of all ages. Leaders check for any unintended consequences arising from their actions in this area, such as potential lack of participation, and are constantly reflecting on how to improve further.
6. A key outcome of these positive relationships is the high standard of pupils' behaviour in the school. This is further encouraged by a behaviour management system which prioritises pupils learning to take responsibility for their actions. Pupils feel confident, happy and safe that they are in an environment where bullying is very rare and, when it occurs, it is dealt with effectively and promptly.
7. Leaders take their responsibilities regarding safeguarding seriously and they are diligent in fulfilling their duties. As a result, any child protection issues are addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

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:

- develop a more graduated approach to learning, where expectations of pupils are raised steadily over time, so that all pupils are well prepared for the level of work and independent study required for GCSE courses.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leadership at Cransley is both decisive and effective. Leaders listen and respond. They have a clear vision that provides tangible benefits to the school community such as the pastoral initiatives, the broadening of the subjects on offer and the further development of facilities. Staff, parents and pupils understand and appreciate leaders' vision.
9. Leaders have developed an effective and successful approach to the curriculum. They provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop skills, knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Teachers engage pupils successfully in lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic and persevere with their learning.
10. Leaders ensure that pupils are provided with a broad and thorough educational experience. The curriculum is reviewed regularly for strengths and areas for development. Each department conducts regular reviews to see whether and what adjustments need to be made to ensure that the provision in each department meets the pupils' needs well.
11. The school's ethos, and in particular that of 'nurturing relationships', flows through leaders' decision-making. It has a positive impact on the pastoral welfare and emotional wellbeing of pupils. It is highly successful in creating a cohesive and kind school community which provides a supportive and nurturing environment for pupils. As a result, pupils develop confidence and make good progress in their studies.
12. The governors ensure that leaders, who have the necessary skills and expertise, fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively. Governors exercise appropriate levels of oversight. As well as responding to the reports made to them by the leadership team, they also listen to other staff and pupils. Governors experience the culture of the school directly by making regular visits. The governors know the school well and are visible to the community, enabling them to be effective in their roles.
13. Governors have a clear understanding of the Standards. They monitor the maintenance of policies as well as their effectiveness in practice. Governors and leaders ensure that there is a suitably rigorous approach to risk management that promotes the safety and wellbeing of pupils. Governors assure themselves that necessary liaison takes place between leaders and outside agencies, so that pupils are kept safe.
14. The necessary information required by the Standards is shared or made available to parents. This includes a complaints procedure, which is followed appropriately, as required, as well as other policies that are readily accessible via the school's website. Regular reports, which are clear and insightful, inform parents of the progress their children are making.
15. Leaders understand and meet their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A suitable plan is in place to improve accessibility to the school and curriculum for pupils with disabilities. Pupils do not experience discrimination in the education they receive, and reasonable adjustments are made for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
16. The leadership team conducts ongoing evaluation of how successfully the school fulfils its aims, in line with its overarching ethos. Leaders listen intently to the views of pupils and parents and incorporate them in initiatives across the school to great effect.

17. Governors and leaders collaborate effectively in strategic planning. Together, they ensure that self-evaluation leads to positive change. As a result, parents have a high degree of trust in the governors and leaders of the school to make the right decisions for their children's education.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders plan a varied curriculum which covers a broad range of languages, mathematics, sciences, technology, and creative subjects. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their listening, literacy, numeracy and speaking skills, which strongly promote their academic and personal development as learners. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of pupils, as required. For example, the school offers individual science subjects and advanced mathematics at GCSE to more-able pupils, allowing them to make progress at the appropriate pace to achieve their potential.
19. Leaders regularly and effectively evaluate the quality of the education provided. They use this knowledge well to help pupils make good progress. Assessment information is discussed and data used to track the progress of individuals and cohorts. The staff respond extremely well to this leadership, and they work together with a common goal to ensure that pupils achieve well.
20. Pupils make good progress because of carefully planned teaching which takes account of pupils' individual needs, including those who have SEND. Leaders and teachers consider research findings about how pupils learn best before deciding which teaching strategies to adopt. Teachers receive regular training in how to support learning needs, and effective practice is shared between colleagues. As a result, the curriculum is delivered very well and teaching benefits all pupils.
21. Children in the early years work with independence and confidence, encouraged by positive relationships and an array of resources with which to learn. Children learn creative skills and develop fine motor skills, such as making poppies ahead of Remembrance Sunday, as well as counting conkers to develop their early mathematical skills. Children receive support to develop their reading and writing skills. They make good progress overall towards their early learning goals.
22. The engaging curriculum and teaching mean that pupils of all ages are engaged and enthused in their learning. Pupils' positive attitudes to their studies encourage them to make further progress.
23. Pupils take standardised tests at various stages of their school journey. The results are used alongside teachers' assessments of pupils' progress to check whether pupils have any additional needs and to review the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum. The proportion of pupils in Year 6 attaining at least in line with the expectations for their age in reading, writing and mathematics is above average.
24. Pupils often outperform their predicted grade expectations at GCSE. This is the result of pupils' hard work and the support and feedback of their teachers. This includes pupils who have SEND, many of whom make rapid progress. The assessment system, known as 'feedback, action, response', is highly effective in providing consistent feedback to pupils that helps them understand how to improve their work. This helps them to make further progress and adds greatly to their learning experience.
25. The 'spiral' curriculum, in which topics are revisited as pupils develop greater maturity, promotes consistency and continuity in approach and content throughout the school. Pupils in both junior and senior schools can work independently and in groups, and they listen intently to their teachers. The breadth and depth of learning increase as pupils get older, although expectations in Year 9, particularly regarding independent study, are not as high as they might be and accelerate more steeply in Year 10.

26. An effective and appropriate range of extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils of all ages covering sporting, aesthetic and intellectually stimulating endeavours. These have a positive impact on pupils' academic, creative and sporting development. The interests of pupils and staff are harnessed to develop new initiatives, such as a programme to design miniature racing cars.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

27. The ethos of 'nurturing relationships', one of the school's three over-arching statements of principle, translates into planned action, which has a clear and highly beneficial impact on the pupils, not only in terms of their progress and achievement but also their happiness and confidence.
28. Leaders' planning, in conjunction with the opportunities for pupils to express their views and to develop leadership skills, has accelerated and developed the culture of friendliness, warmth and mutual respect which transcends age, beliefs and ethnicity. Tolerance and respect are evident across the school, rooted in a firm belief in the power of collective responsibility for the community and embodied by positive behaviour. This, in turn, leads to there being very few behavioural incidents of note and virtually non-existent bullying. The school's approach to discipline is appreciated by pupils. They are encouraged to reflect on their own behaviour and to find positive ways to resolve conflicts, which leads to improved conduct. This has a positive impact on learning in the classroom as pupils know the expectations of them and appreciate why these exist.
29. The 'buddy system', largely led by pupils, is very effective. New pupils are given mentors several years older, and these relationships continue well past the early days of a pupil's life at the school. The buddy system has a very positive impact on pupils' confidence, in particular their ability to converse with peers of all ages. Recent initiatives, such as the 'house feast', instigated by senior pupils, further enhance the sense of friendship and working together across all year groups. Other planned opportunities, such as the sporting activities run by older pupils for the benefit of younger pupils, also contribute to the sense of community, again bringing different ages together.
30. Pupils are happy at school. Parents are similarly positive that their children are part of a welcoming and affirming community.
31. Pupils' personal, social and health education is further enhanced by the assembly programme. As well as talks delivered by staff and pupils, visiting speakers provide enhanced understanding of world cultures and events. Assemblies led by pupils, which help to develop their confidence and oracy skills, have charitable themes or are related to initiatives such as the 'house feast'. During the inspection, a Year 8 class presented to the whole school on the theme of shouting, which provoked a considered and reflective response from the pupils watching online from their classrooms. The youngest children in the early years are involved in many of the assemblies and recently led the school in a dance presentation.
32. Provision for relationships and sex education is effective. Pupils appreciate the experiences and opportunities to learn the skills they need to thrive and develop safely, including online. Training and support for those teaching the subject are appropriate. Pupils maturely discuss the content of this area of learning and the importance of what they have learned.
33. Leaders work diligently to ensure that the welfare of pupils is always paramount. They have a thorough appreciation of risk assessment and health and safety controls. The risk from fire is well understood and suitable precautions are in place, including training, external audits and regular checking of fire equipment.

34. The wellbeing hub is an effective feature of the school. The provision of appropriately trained and experienced staff to meet the emotional needs of pupils allows for early intervention and support for pupils to avoid welfare needs escalating.
35. Facilities and supervision are appropriate at all stages of the school, including the early years setting. There is plenty of outdoor space for recreation and physical education. Indoor learning spaces are suitably maintained and equipped. First aid is administered appropriately, as necessary. Pupil attendance is high but nevertheless monitored closely by administrative staff and leaders.
36. Physical education is inclusive, considering the needs of individuals while encouraging all pupils to participate and enjoy a healthy lifestyle. A wide range of sporting activities is offered through the taught curriculum, extra-curricular clubs and teams.
37. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school through the school council, eco council and house events, including charitable endeavours. The oldest pupils have the opportunity to give back to their community by, for example, running sports clubs for younger pupils or through the buddy system.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

38. The school's PSHE programme is appropriate. Lessons are delivered in a manner which engages pupils emotionally and cognitively. For example, pupils recently undertook a British citizenship test, as an academic exercise, leading to a thoughtful discussion about what being British really means in practice.
39. The curriculum includes awareness of and guidance on careers. Pupils and their parents find this helpful and supportive as they plan the next steps to post-16 education and beyond. This advice provided is impartial and reflects a growing appreciation of alternative pathways, including apprenticeships and work-based learning.
40. Economic awareness is developed across both curricular and extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils have recently learned about interest rates and borrowing, spending budgets and taxation. Pupils are aware of fundamental British values. They embrace and respect different nationalities and faiths, and celebrate diversity.
41. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to learn about and understand themselves, their community and society. They demonstrate their growing awareness and appreciation of responsibility, behaviour and tolerance. Pupils throughout the school benefit from visitors from various backgrounds and professions. Pupils go on trips which help them to learn about the wider world.
42. Pupils contribute positively to wider society, both through and beyond the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which is popular at the school, for example by volunteering at a food bank or in a residential home for the elderly. At any one time, there are a number of charitable projects being led predominantly by pupils. A recent decision to focus on a local charity led to a substantial sum being raised for a children's hospital in the region.
43. Pupils are made aware of political issues and perspectives with balance and objectivity. Recent examples include considering both positive and negative aspects of the leadership style of recent political leaders. Teachers maintain an appropriate neutrality when asked about current geopolitical issues. In English, pupils studying *An Inspector Calls* develop an appreciation of the author's political views without any value judgements being attached.
44. Pupils have a deep appreciation of right and wrong, and they accept responsibility for their behaviour in a most mature manner. They are well prepared for their next stage of life and the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. There is an appropriate culture of safeguarding. Staff are aware of the potential specific risks to pupils at the school. They understand that abuse can happen anywhere. Staff are vigilant, looking out for possible signs of abuse or neglect.
46. Records related to safeguarding are kept meticulously, and outside agencies are involved as appropriate. Referrals and communication are made in a timely manner. The school has an appropriate safeguarding and child protection policy and staff follow it thoroughly.
47. Leaders take care to ensure that safer recruitment practices are in place when appointing new staff. This includes undertaking all the appropriate pre-appointment checks, as well as an induction process within which safeguarding is central. A suitable record of staff appointments is maintained.
48. Appropriate training is provided to staff and governors. There is an awareness that safeguarding is the responsibility of all. The designated safeguarding lead and their team meet regularly and work proactively with pupils, parents and outside agencies. Governors exercise their oversight with diligence regarding pre-employment checks, monitoring the effectiveness of processes and ensuring that leaders are responding appropriately to matters of child protection.
49. Those pupils in the greatest need of support receive high levels of care. Pupils feel safe at school. Their learning about personal safety, both on and offline, helps them to be confident as they grow towards adulthood.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Cransley School
Department for Education number	896/6017
Registered charity number	506907
Address	Cransley School Belmont Hall Northwich CW9 6HN
Phone number	01606 891747
Email address	admin@cransleyschool.org.uk
Website	www.cransleyschool.com
Proprietor	Cransley School Ltd
Chair	Professor Darren Walter
Headteacher	Mr Richard Pollock
Age range	4 to 16
Number of pupils	257
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 May 2019

Information about the school

50. Cransley School is an independent co-educational day school situated near Northwich in West Cheshire. Originally a preparatory school for female pupils, it moved to its current location in 1977 and became fully co-educational in the senior school in 2014. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors.
51. The junior school includes an early years setting which accommodates children from age four. There are currently twelve children in the setting, in one Reception class.
52. The school has identified 86 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Ten pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
53. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
54. The school states that its aims are to seek excellence, to nurture relationships and to venture beyond.

Inspection details

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

56. Inspection activities included:

- discussions with teaching and support staff, the school's leadership and management, and members of the governing body
- discussions with pupils about their academic education, wellbeing and their experiences of school life
- scrutiny of pupils' work in collaboration with pupils and staff
- observations of teaching and learning across all year groups
- observations of a sample of extra-curricular activities
- collaborative lesson walks with senior leaders
- observations of registration time and assemblies
- tours of the school premises.

57. 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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