

# School inspection report

Date 21 to 23 November 2023

## **Westonbirt School**

Westonbirt

Tetbury

Gloucestershire

GL8 8QG

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

## Contents

<b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS.....	4
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	6
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....</b>	<b>7</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	8
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	9
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>10</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	10
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>13</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor ensures that the school's senior leaders promote the wellbeing of pupils. The chair carries out his responsibilities effectively in supporting and monitoring the work of the leadership team, on behalf of the Wishford Schools group, assisted by a number of professional advisers. Leaders have a robust approach to assessing and then managing risk in all elements of the school.
2. The leaders monitor the achievement of pupils closely, monitoring and promoting good progress throughout the school. Pupils achieve results that exceed the expectations based upon their starting points.
3. Leaders promote a positive learning environment inside and outside the classroom, which encourages pupils to develop a focused attitude towards their learning. There are supportive relationships between pupils and teachers. In the pre-prep and prep schools, teachers provide helpful feedback and challenge pupils' thinking. In the senior school, this is typical of much teaching. However, at times, pupils' progress is less consistent because teachers' feedback is less helpful and teaching activities are not well matched to the abilities of the pupils.
4. The proprietor and school leaders ensure that the early years setting is well led and resourced. Children enjoy the carefully planned lessons delivered by the nurturing staff team and make good progress in all of their developmental areas.
5. There is an extensive extra-curricular programme, so that the pupils learn new skills and benefit from different experiences through these.
6. The school's leaders create an inclusive, collaborative and relaxed environment which develops pupils' self confidence and self-esteem and promotes the wellbeing of pupils.
7. The wellbeing of boarders has a high priority. The boarding houses are a homely, welcoming environment and boarders feel safe, secure and comfortable where their privacy is respected.
8. Leaders actively seek to listen to the views of pupils in order to promote their wellbeing. However, the impact of this is diminished as pupils are not sure what the school has done in the light of their ideas, and pupils are not always aware of the work of the various pupil councils.
9. There is a strong sense of community within the school. The school supports the promotion of British values through the curriculum, the assembly programme and special events. Pupils display a high level of respect towards each other, and also for the different cultures represented within their community.

## 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 pupils understand how their views are taken into account in leaders' decision making.
- Ensure that, in the senior school, teachers provide suitable challenge, so that pupils make consistently strong progress.
- In the senior school, ensure teachers consistently provide feedback that informs pupils how to improve their work.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The proprietor has a clear understanding of his responsibilities, aided by the support of professional advisors within the Wishford Schools group. He has weekly contact with the school and is careful to ensure that the school's leaders have the requisite skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively.
11. There are comprehensive policies in place to meet the wellbeing needs of pupils and the school's leaders ensure that they are implemented effectively. Leaders are held to account through the proprietor's close and effective monitoring of the school.
12. Both leaders and the proprietor share a clear vision of how the school will develop, building upon its aims. They plan effectively to implement any changes they identify. The wellbeing of the pupils is central to the school's approach. There is an effective level of self-evaluation in all areas of the school's structure. Consequently, pupils are able to develop to their potential, both in their academic studies and as young people ready to contribute to wider society.
13. The requirements of the Equality Act are met in full. Leaders are alert to pupils' needs and make suitable adjustments to help them access both the site and the curriculum.
14. Leaders in early years have high expectations for the Nursery team, regularly monitoring lessons to ensure staff identify suitable next steps in learning. Children's progress is watched carefully and any individual needs are identified and addressed.
15. The school's leaders are keen to listen to the views of pupils with the aim of improving provision and welfare. They have created different councils for pupils to express their ideas. However, pupils are not always aware of the work of the various pupil councils, nor how their suggestions contribute to the overall development process.
16. The proprietor works closely with the school's leaders to create a safe working environment for the whole school community. The processes to support health and safety are robust and comprehensive and are reviewed regularly by external advisers.
17. Leaders manage risk effectively in all aspects of the school, including a suitable strategic risk register in place. These arrangements are reviewed regularly by the proprietor and senior leaders. Activities both on and off the site are suitably risk assessed.
18. The proprietor conducts an annual review of safeguarding and monitors the procedures rigorously, ensuring that the school has effective arrangements. Leaders develop positive links with external agencies to support the safety of pupils.
19. There is a clear complaints process. The details of any complaints are recorded, including those for pupils who are boarders and for children in the early years, and complainants receive a response in line with the published timescales.
20. All relevant information is made available to parents, either on the website or by contacting the school directly. There are two full reports to parents annually, as well as discussion meetings which provide useful information on the progress of pupils.

## 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 plan an effective curriculum which meets the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils have a firm grounding in all key areas of linguistic development, mathematical understanding, science and technology, aesthetic and creative arts and physical education.
23. The school monitors pupils' progress closely. Results at GCSE, A level and BTEC show that senior pupils make good progress from their starting points through the school. Pupils often exceed their predicted grades. This same picture of positive achievement is true of pupils in the pre-prep and prep departments.
24. The special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) department provides valuable support and works hard to integrate these pupils fully in school life, so that these pupils also achieve results above those predicted for their starting points.
25. Leaders provide appropriate help for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), some of whom are only with the school for a short time. Nevertheless, these pupils also make good progress with their fluency in English.
26. The positive relationship between teachers and pupils creates an effective learning environment. Pupils want to learn and display a focused attitude in lessons. In the prep department, pupils are very enthusiastic in their learning. Teaching is carefully planned so that tasks match the ability of pupils. Skilful and encouraging questioning by teachers ensures that pupils are keen to answer and not afraid of failure.
27. Pupils in the senior school persevere when faced by challenging work. They are prepared to ask questions and seek support if required, thus developing their understanding. However, some teaching in the senior school is not well matched effectively to the abilities of pupils, limiting their progress.
28. Teachers in the early years demonstrate secure subject skills and know their pupils well. They tailor the learning to the needs of individual pupils, reviewing their progress regularly. The teaching is enhanced by the effective use of resources and the valuable support of teaching assistants. As a result, children make good progress, and almost all reach a good level of development by the end of Reception.
29. In both the prep and senior schools, the teaching demonstrates a high level of subject knowledge and utilises a range of methods and styles. They use humour appropriately to create a relaxed yet supportive and purposeful environment for learning. Teachers readily provide additional classes, online resources and revision exercises as well as individual support outside of lessons.
30. There is a clear framework for the assessment of pupils' progress throughout the school, so that pupils can see improvement in their work and understand their progress. Senior pupils often receive useful feedback on how to improve their work, but this is not always the case. Where feedback is more limited, pupils' progress is not as consistent.
31. The extensive co-curricular programme of activities provides a broad spectrum of learning opportunities ranging from bee keeping to the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Pupils develop many different skills from taking part in these activities and value the co-curricular provision highly valued.

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

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



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

33. The leaders provide a broad curriculum that meets the physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing needs of pupils. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a wide range of physical education activities, which help to boost their self-esteem. Pupils exhibit high levels of confidence, which is developed through the positive environment created by staff.
34. The well-planned use of the facilities of the school, including the effective use of the extensive grounds as learning spaces, supports the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children in the early years. Lessons take place regularly outside, taking full advantage of the potential for learning in an outdoor environment. Staff in the prep school provide positive encouragement, so that pupils apply themselves well. Pupils' independence and resilience are further enhanced by well-planned residential trips.
35. The positive atmosphere leaders create in the senior school creates an inclusive and collaborative environment for learning to take place. This encourages individual pupils to develop emotionally, morally and spiritually and enables them to feel confident and resilient in their work. Consequently, pupils are ambitious for their future. Leaders use assemblies in chapel to promote an atmosphere of spirituality and reflection amongst pupils.
36. There is a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) throughout the school. This covers all the required elements and prepares pupils well for later life. In the prep school, *Thinking Thursdays* and *Wellbeing Wednesdays* further promote pupils' emotional wellbeing and physical health through focused activities and themes, such as using an outdoor walk to extol the virtues of nature.
37. Leaders became aware that behaviour in school was not always as good as they would wish. They have introduced a more consistent approach to manage this, and behaviour has improved this year as a result. The sensible and mature behaviour both in lessons and around school reflects the positive and caring approach of the school's pastoral team. Bullying is rare and if it does occur, the school takes decisive and supportive action.
38. The wellbeing needs of boarders are well catered for, and leaders are careful to meet requirements. The boarding houses are a safe, homely, welcoming environment. Boarders' privacy is respected. Boarders have extensive opportunities to involve themselves in activities both on and off site. The food is of a suitable standard. A recent change in catering arrangements has produced an acknowledged improvement.
39. The proprietor and the school leaders ensure that the premises and accommodation provide a safe and healthy environment throughout the school. The estates team address any issue promptly. The health and safety arrangements, the provision for first aid and the fire safety procedures are all robust, in line with the comprehensive and detailed policies. Pupils are appropriately supervised, and the rotas drawn up by school leaders ensure the extensive site is fully monitored. The admission and attendance registers are maintained suitably, and the local authority is advised as required when pupils join or leave the school.

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

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

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

41. Pupils are prepared well for their later lives through well-planned human, social and economic education. The curriculum throughout the school enables pupils to learn about a diverse range of cultures.
42. Children in the early years display a good level of tolerance of each other and are excellent at waiting their turn in line and taking turns during activities. They are developing their independence successfully and are encouraged to think for themselves. Children help each other in their activities, and enjoy celebrating the results of their co-operative endeavours.
43. Leaders successfully create a sense of community, where pupils work well together and support each other. Pupils are proud that there is very little discrimination within the school community. Pupils fully understand the diversity of the world around them. The culture of the school is one of mutual respect for all. Teachers make effective use of opportunities to draw comparisons and introduce concepts of diversity, such as in a sixth form lesson on gender stereotypes.
44. Pupils display a high level of respect and tolerance towards each other. They learn about British values through both the curriculum and the assembly programme, and special events, such as the police coming into the school to talk about the law and drugs. Pupils have a clear understanding of themes of right and wrong. They appreciate the workings of democracy and society, through the curriculum and activities such as mock elections and their involvement in the Model United Nations.
45. A well-planned careers programme, with timetabled weekly lessons, involves pupils in making plans for their future. University places are not the only aspiration. Advice about other pathways is offered, such as a recent alternative routes day, with many different businesses in attendance. Personalised careers and higher education advice led by skilled, experienced professionals, prepare pupils well for the world beyond school, encouraging equality in the workplace through challenging gender stereotypes.
46. Pupils in the boarding houses are positive about how their communities help them to develop a greater awareness of each other's needs. The boarders in Year 13 are in a separate house, in nearby Tetbury and feel that they benefit from the greater independence this offers and is a valuable preparation for when they leave school.
47. The PSHE curriculum in the prep school develops pupils' understanding about a number of key themes of economic understanding, including budgeting wisely, paying taxes and how to determine affordability. An entrepreneurship day involves pupils from Year 6 in making and selling products, with the money going to charities. This makes them aware of different concepts of marketing and what makes a business successful. These financial themes are continued in the senior school, through the curriculum and as part of preparing sixth formers for leaving school.
48. Pupils become more aware of the outside world through participation in community activities. Staff award pupils 'character points' for positive behaviour and actions which contribute towards the school community. This is enthusiastically contested by pupils. House assemblies, chapel service and visiting speakers include themes on relevant modern issues, such as a recent talk by the police on substance abuse.

49. Leaders encourage pupils to be socially responsible through raising funds for charities. Pupils in the prep school support local food banks and contribute to the annual shoe box appeal, as well as supporting appeals such as one following an earthquake in Turkey. In the senior school, there is a global programme which resulted in a recent expedition to India to provide support for a school there. Many pupils participate in the community service element of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. Pupils in Year 10 help with a gymnastics club in the prep school, thus developing their sense of responsibility and helping to make the school a more open community. Consequently, pupils develop an understanding of the wider world and show a concern for supporting those in need.

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

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

## Safeguarding

51. The proprietor and the school's leaders ensure that arrangements to safeguard both boarding and day pupils are embedded in the school's daily practice. The school has a well-trained safeguarding team who have developed an effective working relationship with external agencies. The proprietor and a safeguarding adviser formally review and monitor the school's procedures regularly.
52. The written safeguarding policy is comprehensive, reflects the most recent guidance and is published on the school website.
53. All staff and volunteers receive suitable safeguarding training when they join the school, and this is updated at regular intervals. Those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities receive appropriate training. Records of training are carefully maintained. Staff understand the safeguarding procedures and know how to report a safeguarding concern. They are alert to the danger posed by extremism and child-on-child abuse.
54. Pupils understand how to keep safe online. There are suitable filtering and monitoring procedures in place.
55. Leaders respond promptly and appropriately when issues arise. Safeguarding concerns are recorded with care.
56. Safer recruitment checks are completed for the proprietor and all staff and volunteers, and a suitable central register of appointments is kept.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Westonbirt School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	916/6019
<b>Address</b>	Westonbirt Tetbury Gloucestershire GL8 8QG
<b>Phone number</b>	01666 880333
<b>Email address</b>	office@westonbirtschool.uk
<b>Website</b>	westonbirt.org
<b>Proprietor</b>	Westonbirt Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Sam Antrobus
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Natasha Dangerfield
<b>Age range</b>	2-19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	736
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	96
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 October 2022

## Information about the school

58. Westonbirt School is a co-educational day and boarding school, divided into nursery, prep, senior and sixth form sections. It is housed in a Victorian mansion, set in 210 acres of parkland. The school became part of the Wishford Schools group in 2018.
59. There are five boarding houses on site, two each for female and male pupils, with a co-educational boarding house for pupils in Year 13 in nearby Tetbury.
60. There are 59 children in the EYFS.
61. The school has identified 141 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language for 33 pupils.
63. The school states its mission is to provide a caring and inspirational learning environment that will support the development of each individual, intellectually, emotionally, morally and spiritually. Pupils will be prepared to compete, thrive and contribute as curious, creative and courageous citizens within an ever changing and increasingly challenging world.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

21 to 23 November 2023

64. A team of 7 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

65. 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 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 staff and pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)