

School inspection report

13 to 15 February 2024

The Peterborough School

Thorpe Road

Peterborough

Cambridgeshire

PE3 6AP

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 are clear and determined in executing the school's aim to unlock the potential of every pupil. A balanced curriculum, themed assemblies, an extensive extra-curricular offer and supportive tutors promote core values of family, ambition, character and excellence (FACE). As a result, pupils are well rounded, self-confident and considerate of others.
2. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing through a supportive pastoral system with staff equipped with the necessary skills and training. Pupils are prepared well for life beyond school by teaching staff who know them well and through the enhanced personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum.
3. Pupils in the school feel safe, and respectful behaviour is rewarded. Pupils exhibit confidence and actively put into effect the principles of fairness, diversity and democracy.
4. Teachers provide constructive feedback. In most lessons, teachers provide targeted support and challenge to pupils, according to their needs.
5. A recently revised PSHE programme is enhancing pupils' emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. It is taught by a specialist teacher as a discretely timetabled subject. The PSHE curriculum goes beyond the statutory requirements so that pupils develop the knowledge and skills for life's challenges both at school and beyond.
6. The school provides a wide array of extra-curricular activities, including sports, creative, technological, and expressive pursuits. Pupils achieve success in sports, music, speech and drama, drama, and academic competitions at various levels.
7. The curriculum in the early years and in the prep school is enriched with experiences like outdoor education lessons, dance and music. Pupils in this section of the school benefit from shared facilities with the senior school.
8. Leaders take seriously the health and safety of the school community. Through the implementation of policies, risk assessments and practices pupils are aware of how to respond in the event of an emergency, such as on hearing the fire alarm. However, whilst leaders have considered the risks associated with an extensive site and have developed procedures to follow in the event of a lockdown, they have not yet practised these with pupils.

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 are challenged and supported appropriately in all lessons according to their needs
- ensure that pupils understand expectations and have practised the procedure for an emergency lockdown situation.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders work collaboratively and consistently to implement the school's aims. Pupils actively help others through initiatives such as promoting acts of kindness in Year 7. Leaders promote the school's core values of family, ambition, character and excellence (FACE) through regular reviews of practice, themed assemblies and a focus on PSHE education.
10. Leaders are highly experienced and have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively. Pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted through an effective pastoral system with leaders ensuring that staff have the necessary skills and training.
11. Leaders, governors and staff establish the tone for a respectful and inclusive culture within the school, modelling the standards expected from the entire school community.
12. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing in their decision-making, leading to a supportive transition into adulthood. Pupils are prepared well for life beyond school through a broad and balanced curriculum, extracurricular offerings, and a supportive pastoral programme.
13. Leaders communicate with parents effectively. Policies are on the website and pupil progress reports are provided termly. Leaders actively seek advice and support from external agencies, fostering positive, collaborative relationships with local safeguarding teams and community police officers.
14. Leaders and managers proactively approach the safeguarding and health and safety of pupils. Staff are trained in health and safety matters and assess risk appropriately. Through the school counsellor, a wide range of pupil issues, from emerging low-level concerns to potential harmful behaviours, are addressed swiftly.
15. Complaints are managed by leaders appropriately and comprehensively in accordance with the school's complaints policy.
16. Governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively and hold leaders to account at regular sub-committee meetings. Leaders submit termly reports for governor scrutiny and questioning. Governors undergo thorough training and, whilst designated governors have oversight of certain areas (such as safeguarding), governors appreciate that responsibilities lie with the board as a whole.
17. School policies and practice are in accordance with the Equality Act and pupils respect difference in others. This respect is developed in various ways, such as in the school's Allies Club and through the display of LGBTQ+ books in the senior library.
18. Staffing in the prep school is sufficient and supervision at key times such as drop-off, pickup, before- and after-school care and break times is thorough.
19. Leaders in the prep school rigorously monitor teaching, including through formal reviews, training reviews, pupil interviews and reviews of pupils' work and lessons. Training needs are identified and teachers sent on courses as necessary. Subject leaders enhance their pedagogy through links with similar schools and building relationships with local cluster groups.

20. Leaders foster a welcoming, family atmosphere, where pupils are well known as individuals and valued.

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. Through a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils gain knowledge and develop skills across a wide range of subjects.
23. Pupils make good progress due to the diverse range of teaching methods used in lessons, including hybrid digital learning, didactic teaching and a combination of individual and group work. They work collaboratively using note-taking apps and test their own learning through online quizzes. Teachers deliver constructive feedback in lessons that is responsive to pupils' differing learning needs and effectively guides pupils on areas for improvement.
24. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively and teaching adapted in response. Teachers' understanding of pupils' needs and individualised support in lessons means that the majority of pupils attain grades at GCSE and A level higher than those predicted from their assessed starting points.
25. Middle and senior leaders actively monitor pupils' progress. Pupils' prior attainment, including that of pupils who have SEND, is taken into account by teachers in their lesson planning. Teachers assess appropriately in order to respond to the understanding and needs of pupils in lessons, and a small number of pupils who have SEND receive support from in-class teaching assistants. As a result, the progress of pupils who have SEND is good. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make good progress on a par with their peers. Most lessons offer an appropriate level of challenge and support in response to pupils' needs. In a few lessons, where this is not the case, behaviour falls below the high standards expected.
26. In the prep school, there is a particular focus on English, mathematics and reading. Pupils make notable progress in handwriting and mathematics skills. They enjoy creative approaches to learning in lessons, such as when formulating manifestos in a Year 4 lesson on Moses and engaging in food technology activities in Year 1. They are engaged by problems such as testing which materials have the best sound-proofing qualities in a Year 4 science lesson. On the whole, marking and feedback in the prep school is thorough, contributing to the good progress made by pupils.
27. In the Reception class and the prep school, the broad curriculum is enriched with other experiences such as outdoor education, dance and music. The wide range of extra-curricular activities in the senior school, including sporting, creative, technological, and expressive pursuits, results in successful development of pupils' skills and experiences beyond the classroom.
28. Pupils participate in a broad range of extra-curricular events and activities. Teams and individuals achieve success in sports at district, county, regional and national level. Pupils succeed in music, speech and drama examinations, and prep and senior choirs perform at outside venues including local cathedrals and a local symphony hall. In addition, pupils achieve well in a range of academic competitions such as national mathematical challenges and national science awards.

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

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

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

30. Pupils are confident, polite and articulate. The school community takes pride in its inclusivity, respect for others, and overall warmth. Within this environment, pupils develop their self-understanding and an awareness of the world and people around them. The rapport between staff and pupils fosters mutual respect and pupils feel known and valued.
31. Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health and wellbeing and there is a skilled pastoral team. Regular and frequent meetings are held to discuss pupils' welfare. A school counsellor is available to support pupils who have not met the threshold for external mental health counselling or whose referral is delayed. Pupils can self-refer, enabling them to access support directly. A recent whole-school focus on mental health awareness has seen older pupils deliver assemblies on mental health and 12 pupils have trained as mental health first aiders.
32. Leaders provide numerous opportunities for pupil leadership, for example senior prefects in Year 13, subject-specific ambassadors, mental health mentors and house captains in both prep and senior schools. Pupils in these positions take their responsibilities seriously and take pride in acting as role models.
33. An effective rewards system recognises pupils' positive work and behaviour. Pupils behave respectfully both in and out of the classroom. Staff track behaviour meticulously, supported by a consistent approach to behaviour across all year groups. Leaders robustly address and resolve instances of unacceptable behaviour and bullying promptly and effectively. Pupils can report concerns through traditional face-to-face methods or through anonymous options such as online platforms or QR codes. The provision of 'here to help' cards that identify staff to whom pupils can turn reinforces support structures for pupils.
34. The school's pastoral structure and supportive ethos contribute to the nurture of the intellectual, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing of pupils.
35. The school's PSHE programme runs from Reception through to sixth form. It covers behaviour, bullying, and relationships and sex education (RSE) at appropriate ages. Leaders have recently introduced dedicated PSHE lessons into the curriculum, delivered by specialist staff in the senior school. Pupils' progress is tracked and leaders seek pupils' views on the effectiveness of this curriculum. These inform changes in its content and delivery. Economic education is included in the PSHE curriculum, with governors delivering some topics such as pupil finance to the sixth form. Pupils value the relevance of this teaching and learning as it develops their knowledge and skills for life in wider society.
36. Leaders prioritise pupils' safety and wellbeing, fostering an environment where pupils feel supported and can turn to staff for assistance. Fire drills are practised regularly so every pupil is aware of procedures. The school has a procedure in place for locking down the site in the event of an emergency but it has not yet been practised to ensure that pupils are aware of expectations.
37. In the prep school, the curriculum includes physical education (PE) and swimming. Extra-curricular activities such as music, drama, and dance are enjoyed by pupils. In their teaching of PSHE, staff reinforce the school's values and model the high expectations of behaviour for the pupils.

38. Pupils in the prep school benefit from sharing sports, music and theatrical facilities with the senior school. The sixth form benefit from their own dedicated area including a common room and study space conducive to independent learning.

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

39. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

40. Pupils are committed to volunteering within both the school and the local community. Year 12 pupils are actively involved in supporting various groups such as tennis clubs, local charity shops, acting as mentors for younger pupils in the prep school, and serving as prefects for Year 7 and 8. This commitment to volunteering fosters a sense of responsibility, community and support among the pupils.
41. The PSHE programme designed by leaders plays an important role in instilling values and life skills for pupils. Through it, pupils develop their understanding of the difference between right and wrong, the importance of respecting others, and how to behave responsibly. Leaders have designed a curriculum to promote the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils require for living in the wider world. As a result, pupils develop their understanding of matters such as personal safety, digital resilience, making safe financial decisions, and rights, rules and responsibilities when working with others. The PSHE programme promotes positive respect for other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics including sex, sexual orientation, race and religion. The curriculum throughout the school also includes financial education, so pupils leave the school in Year 13 with confidence in handling day-to-day economic matters. Pupils learn about payslips and taxes in Year 6 and, in Year 8, pupils in design technology have to design a waterproof house, considering the effectiveness of different materials and then cost their finished design.
42. Leaders provide a comprehensive and inclusive careers programme which prepares pupils for life beyond school. As they progress through the school, pupils receive accurate, up-to-date and timely careers guidance through lessons, assemblies, presentations, individual profiling and discussions. Pupils appreciate the advice and guidance they receive which enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of careers.
43. Democracy, respect and tolerance are promoted through various avenues, including through the school council in the prep school and the senior school's 'parliament'. Pupils are actively involved in decision-making processes and learn the value of participating in a democratic society. Pupils develop active citizenship and community involvement through initiatives such as charity fundraising, participation in church events, and collaboration with local services.
44. Diversity and inclusion are key focuses in the school, with lessons in religious studies and PSHE addressing protected characteristics and teaching about different religions. Groups such as the 'Allies Group' set up by staff to promote diversity and inclusion in the school are increasing pupils' understanding of different cultures and view points.
45. A school chaplain delivers weekly services. Pupils appreciate the inclusive nature of the services which are accessible by all.
46. Pupils value their contribution to the wider school community. The elected senior school parliament initiated the introduction of a non-denominational prayer room and changes to the uniform. Suggestions in the prep school are made through the school council and anonymous worry boxes.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

48. Leaders and governors have a robust commitment to safeguarding. They ensure that staff are well-trained and knowledgeable about procedures for handling disclosures and are confident in reporting concerns.
49. Robust safeguarding practices to protect pupils are facilitated by a skilled and experienced safeguarding team that responds effectively to incidents. Parental involvement is encouraged, with decisions taken that prioritise pupils' wellbeing. Timely consultations with external agencies contribute to appropriate safeguarding practices.
50. Health and safety policies are appropriate and their implementation effective.
51. Leaders implement sound recruitment practices, as a result of which all adults are appropriately checked before they begin working or volunteering at the school.
52. Pupils across the school confirm that they are confident to speak to teachers if need be and that they will be listened to. There are appropriate policies and procedures in place to educate pupils about staying safe online and appropriate filtering and monitoring of online access take place.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

The quality of the early years foundation stage in the registered early years provision

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

54. The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is good.
55. Leaders and managers plan the curriculum well and ensure that coverage is appropriate for all children in the setting, helping them to have a good start to their education. The curriculum supports the children's development in the areas of their learning and staff support children with additional needs well.
56. Staff ensure that they have a good understanding of what children know and can do before they start attending. For instance, the key person talks to parents to find out more about children's development. They then use this to inform planning. The progress children make relative to their starting points is good and they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
57. Staff promote children's personal and emotional development well and children consistently demonstrate that they feel safe, secure and happy. For example, as the youngest children arrive to start their day, staff provide a nutritious breakfast and use this opportunity to reassure and talk to them. Staff talk to children about family members, including who has dropped them off and who will pick them up. Relationships formed between children and their key person are strong and positive.
58. Leaders and managers have a good knowledge of the learning and development requirements. They demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement through self-evaluation and their clear vision. Leaders consult the staff team about their views for improvement during staff meetings and they use these to inform development plans.
59. Children's behaviour is good. Staff promote positive behaviour well and they are good role models for children. For example, they have clear expectations and give plenty of praise and encouragement, which boosts children's self-esteem.
60. All requirements for safeguarding and welfare have been met and are monitored by leaders and managers. Staff fulfil their responsibility to protect children in their care diligently.

Quality of education

61. The quality of education is good.
62. The broad and well-balanced curriculum that staff deliver meets statutory requirements. Staff aim to provide a wide range of experiences for children in the setting. For example, they enhance the curriculum with a range of off-site trips and outings, such as to the farm and the museum. These allow older children to experience the wider world. Younger children enjoy walks, such as in the wider school grounds, and to the nature garden, which helps to broaden their experience of the natural world.

63. Staff communicate effectively with children and promote language development well. They use songs and actions to communicate successfully with even the youngest children. Children hear and repeat words and phrases that are spoken to them and this increases their vocabulary. Staff readily share core books in a way that excites and engages children. For instance, younger children enjoy gathering to share their familiar book. They join in pointing at the pictures and babbling as the pages are turned.
64. Staff monitor children's progress carefully. For example, they observe children regularly and record their evaluations on each child's electronic learning journal. They compare children's progress against expected levels of development for their age to help them provide the most appropriate learning opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge.
65. Most staff understand the areas of learning that they teach and the way in which young children learn. They plan activities, which reflect the interest and stage of development of each child. For instance, older children are challenged to develop their small muscle skills, as they use tools to tap shapes into wooden boards. This helps to prepare their small muscles for their future writing. On occasion, however, staff are not fully effective in delivering the learning they have planned for the youngest children. This means that at times, they do not equally benefit from high-quality teaching.
66. The overall experiences that the children receive provide them with a solid foundation on which their future learning can be built.

Behaviour and attitudes

67. Behaviour and attitudes are good. Children show great enjoyment in their learning. On the whole, staff organise resources to ensure that they are accessible, so that children have opportunities to explore and make choices. For instance, toddlers enjoy making marks in the sand as they wheel vehicles along routes and older children initiate their own game with skittles. However, this approach is less evident in the outdoor area for the youngest children, where very few resources are available to stimulate, engage and support the planned learning.
68. Children show high levels of confidence in social situations. For example, they seek out their siblings and invite them into their play. They confidently engage with unfamiliar adults and show them what they are making.
69. Overall, children are active learners. They are motivated to join in a range of activities and demonstrate good levels of engagement. For example, when toddlers make pancakes, staff use instructional language and actions to support children to use real tools and implements to measure and mix the ingredients. Staff carefully plan a role-play activity to enable older children to reflect on their own experiences of visiting the hairdressers. Children make appointments, use related tools and equipment to best effect, and form a queue whilst waiting their turn.
70. Children demonstrate good behaviour and show respect for one another. They respond to gentle reminders from staff. Some children are supported to begin to understand and express their emotions, such as by relating them to colours and to a character in a book. This is helping them to begin to recognise their feelings and those of others.
71. Staff develop effective partnerships with parents. This helps staff to encourage regular attendance and promote routines and good habits for future learning. Parents are regularly welcomed into the

setting, such as for special events or to talk about their own jobs. Relationships among children, parents and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture.

Personal development

72. The personal development of children is good.
73. The effective care practices that staff employ promote the children's emotional security so that children feel happy and safe. Staff are comforting and reassuring to children and they meet their needs well. For instance, staff talk to parents regularly about children's routines and they are swift to accommodate any changes, such as in changing sleep patterns.
74. Children are encouraged to take risks in various activities, such as when older children learn to use wooden hammers and nails safely, and younger children negotiate steps to access the slide. Children are learning to manage risks, such as when younger children hold onto the rail when walking up and down stairs. Children are positively encouraged to be independent. From a young age, they learn to cut up their own fruit at snack times and pour their own drinks. Children sit very well during meal times, clearly enjoying the social experience. Staff provide healthy food each day and they ensure that food preferences and allergy needs are catered for appropriately.
75. Staff ensure that they teach children hygiene practices and that the personal needs of the children are met. Staff encourage children to understand the need for and importance of handwashing before eating and support those unable to do it independently. This gives children skills that they can go on to use at home.
76. Staff recognise and understand the risks of online safety. They raise awareness of this with parents, such as by organising workshops to advise on the risks associated with digital technology and how to keep their children safe online.
77. Staff are successful in preparing children for life in modern Britain by teaching them how to show respect, help each other and take responsibility for their actions. The celebration of cultural festivals is evident. For example, children read books about festivals in the calendar year and British values are actively embraced through everyday routines. For instance, children are encouraged to share, to listen to one another and make some choices.

Leadership and management

78. Leadership and management are good.
79. Leaders have high expectations of what all children can achieve. However, the monitoring of teaching is not fully effective in helping to ensure that high standards are maintained, such as in relation to the quality of learning experiences for the youngest children outdoors.
80. Staff are well qualified. Leaders use an effective system of supervision, which enables staff to discuss issues, including their own wellbeing, health and workload. Staff commented that they feel well supported and have someone they can go to if they have a concern or issue.
81. Leaders know the children well and respond quickly to their needs. For example, staff swiftly seek advice from professionals when needed, such as in relation to children's allergies, to ensure that

these are managed safely by staff. They similarly liaise with professionals, such as speech and language therapists, to support children's communication needs. They implement advice successfully and children make good progress in their development.

82. The setting has strong links with parents. In interviews with inspectors, parents reported that they are overwhelmingly appreciative of the care and education their children receive. They value the information they are given through the online platform of what their child is learning during their time at nursery.
83. The needs of the setting are well known and understood by governance, who provide strong oversight of the setting. For example, the designated governor for early years regularly visits the nursery and is fully involved in the development plan.
84. The recommendation from the previous inspection is met.

Safeguarding

85. Safeguarding is effective.
86. Safeguarding and health and safety are given the highest priority to keep children safe. Statutory duties are fully met, including those set out in the Equality Act 2010, those linked to safer recruitment, and the duties in relation to the Prevent strategy.
87. All staff give high priority to safeguarding and are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that they meet the requirements for safeguarding, welfare and learning and development. Training is regularly accessed by staff, ensuring they are fully up to date with legal requirements, for example safeguarding and paediatric first aid.

Recommended next steps

- Strengthen systems for staff monitoring and support to ensure consistent delivery of the curriculum for the youngest children.

The extent to which the school meets the requirements of the early years foundation stage

88. The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

School details

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| School | The Peterborough School |
| Department for Education number | 874/6000 |
| Registered early years number | EY285914 |
| Registered charity number | 269667 |
| Address | The Peterborough School Thorpe Road Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE3 6AP |
| Phone number | 01733 343357 |
| Email address | Office@tpschr.co.uk |
| Website | www.thepeterboroughschool.co.uk |
| Proprietor | Woodard Corporation |
| Chair | Mr Ken Craig |
| Headteacher | Mr Adrian Meadows |
| Age range | 0 – 20 |
| Number of pupils | 532 |
| Number of children in the early years registered setting | 91 |
| Date of previous inspection | 13 to 14 November 2019 |

Information about the school

89. The Peterborough School is a co-educational day school in Peterborough. It was founded in 1895 and moved to its present site in 1936. It was incorporated into the Woodard Corporation in 1974 and became a charitable trust in 1975. There is nursery and preparatory school on the same site as the senior school, all part of the Woodard Corporation.
90. Since the last inspection the school has expanded its nursery provision to provide for an additional 24 children under the age of 5 years (now 81 full-time equivalent places) and renovated its Reception classroom, creating a multi-floor learning environment. The school has invested in technology. Following a strategic review, the delivery of PSHE has been enhanced and incorporated within curriculum time.
91. There are 106 children under 5 years old in the early years, which includes 91 children in a separately registered co-educational setting for children aged from 6 weeks to 4 years.
92. The school has identified 64 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
93. English is an additional language for 78 pupils, most of whom are fluent and require no further support. Data used by the school have identified 36 pupils as being most able in its population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for an additional 46 pupils because of their special talents in music, drama, sport and art.
94. The school states its aims are to unlock the potential of each and every child, underpinned by instilling family values, inspiring every pupil to be ambitious, developing their individual character and striving for excellence in an enriching learning environment. The school has two main objectives: pupil learning and pupil wellbeing. In line with the tenets of the Woodard Corporation, it offers an experience of Anglican worship.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

13 to 15 February 2024

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

96. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and governor responsible for safeguarding
- 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

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

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For more information, please visit isi.net