

School inspection report

14 to 16 October 2025

St Christopher's School, Hove

33 New Church Road

Hove

East Sussex

BN3 4AD

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 and governors prioritise the wellbeing of pupils in all of the decisions they make. They have a clear vision for the school, demonstrating strategic oversight underpinned by comprehensive risk assessment. Governors are well informed and actively involved in evaluating what the school does well, identifying areas for improvement and setting priorities for future development. There is a determination to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
2. All statutory policies and relevant information are made available to parents as required. Governors ensure that safeguarding and health and safety requirements are implemented rigorously. Attendance and admissions are managed diligently in line with statutory requirements. The school has a suitable accessibility plan and fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010. A suitable complaints policy is in place, which is implemented appropriately.
3. Leaders provide a comprehensive curriculum that enables pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across the required areas of learning. Learning is well planned in the early years, with a wide range of indoor and outdoor learning experiences that support children's all-round development and learning. Children make rapid progress and are well prepared for the transition to Year 1.
4. A suitable framework for assessment is in place. By the time they leave the school, pupils make good progress from their starting points. They are well prepared to take examinations required to enter senior school. The vast majority gain access to their chosen schools. However, middle leaders lack strategic oversight of pupil outcomes across all subjects and year groups. Pupil progress is not tracked in sufficient detail to ensure that, where required, timely strategies for improvement are implemented consistently as pupils move through the school.
5. Additional needs are identified well in the early years, taking into account children's developmental stages. Highly effective intervention strategies are put in place, monitored and amended as required. Individual education plans (IEPs) for older pupils sometimes lack the precise detail needed to inform teaching effectively. Teachers do not always use IEPs effectively to adapt their practice so that the needs of all pupils are met consistently.
6. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are suitably assessed on entry to the school. A range of effective strategies is implemented in the early years, which supports children in rapidly becoming fluent in English. However, detailed plans to meet the needs of older pupils who speak EAL are not implemented consistently.
7. Personal, social and emotional development (PSED) in the early years and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) for older pupils are well planned, supporting pupils' understanding of personal wellbeing. Through physical education (PE), co-curricular activities and recreational opportunities, pupils develop and integrate the motor skills needed for successful learning. Pupils' spiritual awareness is well developed through exploration of beliefs, values and reflection on meaning beyond material concerns.
8. Pupils understand the importance of making positive choices for their wellbeing, including in relation to nutrition, sleep and recreation. Adults support a positive approach to behaviour management, including when supervising pupils outside of lessons. Consequently, pupils support the school rules, reject bullying, value rewards, understand the reasons for their behaviour and try to put things right.

9. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern British society. Careers provision in the upper school equips pupils with insight into the world of work. The school actively promotes core values such as democracy and tolerance of diverse faiths and beliefs. Pupils engage with one another thoughtfully and respectfully, creating a harmonious learning environment. Economic awareness and enterprise skills are developed through the PSHE curriculum and the Young Enterprise scheme. Leadership is nurtured across year groups. Pupils undertake a range of activities that benefit the school and the wider community. They are well supported in their transition to the next stage of education.
10. Safeguarding is a high priority throughout the school, rooted in clear policies and procedures within a culture of care. Governors provide comprehensive oversight of all aspects of safeguarding. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including online, through the curriculum and pastoral care system. Safeguarding leaders work effectively as a team, ensuring referrals are made without delay and that support is provided appropriately through a range of multi-agency links. Staff are well trained and confident in implementing safeguarding procedures, including how to report concerns about pupils or staff. Safer recruitment procedures are followed diligently. The required pre-employment checks are implemented and recorded accurately.

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

The proprietor and leaders should:

- develop the evaluative oversight of middle leaders in order to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress
- analyse and use data effectively to identify and implement appropriate strategies that support consistent progress across all subjects and year groups
- ensure that teaching takes account of precise information from individual education plans so that pupils with additional needs and those who speak English as an additional language make consistently good progress
- ensure pupils consistently receive feedback that enables them to be clear about their attainment and next steps for learning.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders and governors share a clear vision for the school. They are committed to meeting the Standards consistently. The school's values and aims are communicated effectively, ensuring that pupils experience an education that supports their wellbeing and achievements.
12. There is a suitable governance structure in place, with termly meetings of the main board and the compliance committee and an annual meeting of the education committee in the spring term. In addition, the executive head and chief operating and finance officer from Brighton College attend full board meetings. Governors are well informed about the school. They consistently maintain appropriate oversight through meetings with leaders, detailed reports, external evaluations and regular visits. Leaders and governors evaluate what the school does well, where improvements should be made and key priorities for future development. In-depth strategic risk assessment underpins decisions made to ensure the smooth operation and future of the school.
13. Appropriate staff appraisal and comprehensive training, including in all aspects of safeguarding, are implemented consistently. This ensures that staff and governors are informed about their statutory responsibilities and best practices. Consequently, they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to fulfil their roles effectively.
14. Leaders and governors monitor teaching and learning through learning walks, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of progress and attainment data. They have ensured that the curriculum is supported by a wide range of high-quality resources, including specialist facilities for art, science, physical education and the early years. Governors have overseen recent changes to the curriculum, including the introduction of new PSHE, mathematics and phonics schemes and the introduction of a new curriculum in Years 7 and 8 that is in line with other schools in the group. These strategic developments have enhanced curriculum coherence and progression pathways for pupils across all stages.
15. Leaders liaise as required with other agencies, including safeguarding partners, to ensure that pupils' needs are supported effectively. Leaders communicate appropriately with the local authority regarding education, health and care plan (EHC plan) reviews and the use of related funds.
16. Attendance and admissions are managed diligently in line with statutory requirements. There are efficient systems in place for tracking pupil absence and follow-up in liaison with parents. Governors ensure that the required pre-employment and health and safety checks are implemented rigorously and that appropriate risk assessments are in place, including for safeguarding. The school has a suitable accessibility plan, which includes adaptions to school information, the curriculum and physical accessibility to the premises. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.
17. Parents have access to a wide range of information through the school's well-maintained website and comprehensive newsletters. All of the required policies and information are provided or made available to parents. Governors and leaders ensure that policies are reviewed regularly, updated in line with statutory guidance, understood and implemented consistently. Parents receive reports throughout the academic year, which include grades, targets and attitudes to learning. Parents may also discuss their child's progress with teachers at the beginning and end of the year.
18. The school has a suitable complaints policy, which is implemented consistently. Leaders respond promptly to concerns raised by parents and pupils. The number of formal complaints received for

the previous year is made available as required. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken and the outcomes of the complaint.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The curriculum and timetable are suitably planned and comprehensively cover the required areas of learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of educational visits, such as a Year 2 trip to the Royal Pavilion Museum in Brighton, a Year 7 biology field trip and a Year 8 English and geography trip to Dorset.
21. The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 has recently been revised so as to be in line with other schools in the group. This means that all pupils in these year groups follow the same curriculum and are able to move between sets for English and mathematics, if appropriate. This revised curriculum provides greater opportunity for breadth and depth of study whilst still enabling successful preparation for entrance examinations and scholarships to a range of senior schools.
22. The curriculum in the early years is carefully planned to provide a rich, balanced foundation across all seven areas of learning. The development of each child is fostered through purposeful play, exploration and high-quality interactions with adults. Learning is greatly enhanced through the provision of engaging and meaningful indoor and outdoor contexts that reflect children's interests and experiences. Staff throughout the setting skilfully observe and respond to children's needs. They enable children to make connections in their learning, with clear progression to the next steps.
23. Leaders ensure that there is a consistent focus on the development of linguistic and mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding that supports pupils' learning in other subjects. Pupils express themselves clearly using an extensive vocabulary. As they move through the school, they engage confidently in increasingly sophisticated conversations, speaking and performing to others in a range of situations such as assemblies and presentations. Phonic skills are built systematically from Reception, enabling pupils to decode words by linking sounds to letters. Leaders develop pupils' fluency, comprehension and enjoyment of reading through guided reading and discussion of a wide range of texts.
24. The school has recently revised its mathematics curriculum, which has strengthened pupils' confidence in number, logical reasoning and problem-solving skills. Mathematical understanding is developed across the curriculum as well as in core lessons. For example, in science, pupils use data to create graphs and charts, measure variables and use formulae and, in geography, they analyse climate graphs and calculate scale and distance.
25. Leaders have implemented a suitable framework for assessment, including in the early years. Profile data at the end of Reception is managed in accordance with requirements. From Year 1, data is collated into a tracking system and analysed to evaluate pupil progress. However, data is not always analysed in sufficient detail to give a clear picture of progress from pupils' starting points. This means that timely strategies are not always implemented to ensure consistent progress. By the time they leave the school, the vast majority of pupils have made good progress in relation to their starting points.
26. In the early years, there is a focus on early identification of emerging additional needs, particularly those linked to children's developmental milestones. In collaboration with parents, leaders implement, monitor and adapt highly effective strategies so that children's needs are met at an early stage. Leaders responsible for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) ensure that the requirements in relation to EHC plans are met, including arranging an annual review with input from

parents and pupils. Information from school assessments and external professionals informs individual education plans, which are shared with all teaching staff. However, these plans do not always include specific strategies to address pupils' individual needs and teachers do not consistently use them to make precise adaptations to their teaching for pupils with additional needs.

27. The school suitably assesses the language level of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) when they enter the school. Early years staff warmly welcome and use the languages children speak at home, helping them to feel understood and proud of their heritage. They have a deep understanding of how to support children who are bilingual and multilingual. In liaison with parents, they scaffold children's language development using visual cues, gestures and systematic development of vocabulary, phonics and grammatical structures so that children quickly become confident and fluent in English. Planning for and monitoring of older pupils who speak EAL is less well developed, so that their needs are not always met consistently across the curriculum.
28. Subject leaders are highly knowledgeable in relation to their subjects. They ensure that suitable schemes of work are in place in line with the curriculum. However, their strategic oversight and monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment across all stages of the school are inconsistent. This means that timely interventions are not always implemented.
29. Teachers make effective use of a wide range of high-quality resources, including specialist facilities for science, art, music and sport. Pupils receive effective support in preparation for external examinations, including with notetaking and revision techniques and strategies to enhance memory and recall. Pupils take pride in their work and are keen to achieve highly. However, they do not always receive clear and consistent feedback so that they know what they have attained and what their next steps for learning are.
30. The school provides a wide range of co-curricular clubs and activities that are well attended and foster learning across the curriculum. They include dungeons and dragons, choir, football, gymnastics, French, chess, sewing, art and music.

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

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

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

32. The personal development and wellbeing of pupils are high priorities throughout the school, supporting the school's aims of taking responsibility, considering the welfare of others and developing as individuals through moral and spiritual exploration.
33. In the early years, PSED is prioritised, laying the foundations for wellbeing and learning. Children gain confidence and feel secure through the warm relationships they develop with the adults in the setting. Through play, routines and responsive adult interactions, children develop an understanding of their emotions and how to manage these independently.
34. Personal, social, health and economic education and RSE are carefully planned as a core subject across the curriculum and through assemblies. For example, in science, pupils learn about human biology and reproduction and, in English literature, they explore relationships, boundaries and consent. Teacher assessment is used effectively to evaluate pupils' knowledge and to inform planning. Topics raised by pupils are incorporated into the lessons in order to address their particular questions and needs. Pupils develop an understanding of the emotional and physical changes they will experience during puberty and a mature understanding of a range of topics including respect, online safety, friendship and healthy relationships.
35. Spirituality is fostered through the school's ethos, curriculum and assemblies. The importance of kindness is emphasised as being the foundation of the school community. Time is built into the school day for reflection on the non-material aspects of life, including love, joy, friendship and forgiveness. Religious education (RE) develops pupils' understanding of world faiths and the meaning of spirituality within different contexts.
36. Pupils develop a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be physically and mentally healthy. In the early years, children develop their balance and gross and fine motor skills through an extensive range of activities. Structured PE lessons, competitive games and a wide range of co-curricular activities support the physical development of older pupils, including opportunities to develop fitness, agility, hand-eye co-ordination and spatial awareness. At breaktimes, pupils are encouraged to play outdoors and engage in unstructured activities, which supports their physical development. Throughout the school, pupils are taught to make informed choices about healthy eating, balanced routines and the value of recreation and sleep.
37. The school's behaviour policy supports emotional wellbeing through a positive reinforcement approach, including house points, commendations and postcards home. Leaders consistently recognise positive behaviours such as politeness, turn-taking and effort. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of what constitutes bullying and why it is unacceptable. Staff implement a restorative approach to behaviour management, supporting pupils in understanding their behaviour and in taking steps to put things right. Staff effectively record rewards, sanctions and the positive and negative aspects of pupil behaviour. This enables leaders to monitor pupil behaviour throughout the school, identify trends and instigate support for pupils when required.
38. Effective deployment of staff ensures that pupils are well supervised during the school day, including in the early years, before and after school, at breaktimes and lunchtimes, during activities, on the

school minibus and when participating in school trips. Staff use these times effectively to model respectful interactions, develop positive relationships and promote thoughtful behaviour.

39. There are suitable facilities for the administration of first aid on both sites. More than the required number of first aiders have been trained, including in paediatric first aid in the early years. Medicines are stored securely and administered in line with school policy. Leaders maintain records meticulously in relation to accidents and the administration of medicines.
40. Leaders ensure the admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with statutory guidance. They monitor attendance diligently and put support in place without delay for pupils whose levels of absence cause concern. Leaders provide the local authority with timely information regarding any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition times.
41. The school premises are maintained to a high standard. Staff responsible for health and safety are suitably trained, knowledgeable and extremely diligent. They ensure that staff are well trained and that the required health and safety checks are carried out and recorded accurately, including for evacuation of the buildings. Staff report any health and safety concerns promptly. Leaders review records regularly to note any patterns and to ensure that appropriate and timely action is taken when required.

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

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

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

43. Adults in the early years setting model positive behaviours, enabling children to develop their social skills including listening to others, taking turns, sharing and resolving conflicts. Children learn to navigate social norms and to express themselves through group activities, storytelling and imaginative play. They develop an understanding of diversity and inclusion through a range of books, toys and displays that reflect a wide range of traditions.
44. Pupils are well prepared for life in British society, particularly through PSHE, assemblies and thought-provoking displays that promote the values of democracy, respect for all, individual liberty and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Teachers ensure that pupils are presented with a balanced political perspective and are supported in questioning sources, verifying facts and in recognising bias.
45. Pupils consistently demonstrate mutual respect. They socialise and communicate well with each other when working in groups during lessons, when participating in performances and during breaks and activities. They ensure everyone is included, sharing games, navigating social rules, co-operating and engaging in conversations that help them to build friendships.
46. The school actively promotes citizenship, including an understanding of key institutions and the rule of law. Assemblies, PSHE lessons and displays reinforce the school values of 'try hard, take care and be kind'. Through the school rules and leaders' administration of rewards and sanctions, pupils learn that laws exist to protect everyone and that actions have consequences.
47. Pupils develop leadership through roles such as head of school, heads of house, school council representatives, sport captains and wellbeing ambassadors. The eco-council promotes environmental awareness, which has led to the school achieving the Green Flag award. Pupils have successfully enabled the school community to reduce, reuse and recycle. A range of charities are supported through the house system, including support for the homeless and wildlife conservation. Pupils are proud of the way in which they fulfil their social responsibilities, appreciating that this helps them to make a positive difference to their community and beyond.
48. Pupils are given opportunities to develop economic awareness and enterprise skills through the PSHE curriculum and the Young Enterprise scheme in Year 8, which fosters financial literacy and entrepreneurship. Pupils learn to manage money, create products and donate profits to chosen charities, thus further promoting a sense of social responsibility.
49. Careers provision in the upper school is suitably planned. It focuses on building awareness of the world of work through careers week and engaging activities such as employer talks, workplace visits and curriculum links. Examples include sustainability careers in geography, diplomacy and translation in languages and careers in performance through music and drama. Pupils explore different career pathways and consider how their interests and strengths may relate to their future employment.
50. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education so that they are ready for their next year at school or to transfer to their next school. Children in Reception become very familiar with the main school through transition sessions and when they are dropped off at the main school

in the mornings. There is a carefully planned overlap from Reception to Year 1, with familiar routines, play-based learning and gradual increases in structure that support children's learning and personal development. Older pupils also take part in transition sessions, where they meet their new teacher and become familiar with their new environment. Leaders' close liaison with senior schools supports a smooth transition process for those leaving the school. Pupils appreciate the effective support and guidance they receive with regard to preparing for senior school entrance examinations and choosing their next school.

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

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

52. There is a well-established culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders effectively take into consideration the context of the school and the age and needs of the pupils. Staff demonstrate a high level of awareness and vigilance regarding the Prevent duty, consistently identifying and responding appropriately to potential risks.
53. The school's safeguarding policy reflects current statutory guidance. Safeguarding procedures are implemented consistently and effectively. Governors monitor all aspects of safeguarding comprehensively, including safeguarding records, recruitment records and staff files. They conduct a detailed annual review that follows the local authority partnership framework. Governors and leaders carefully consider the review in order to evaluate how well the school meets safeguarding requirements and to establish where improvements can be made.
54. There are suitable processes in place for responding to and recording any concerns about adults. Staff have an understanding of whistleblowing procedures and how to report and record any low-level concerns in relation to adults, including self-referrals.
55. From the early years onwards, pupils learn about how to keep safe, including online. Through age-appropriate stories, role play, circle time, computing lessons and discussions in PSHE and tutor time, they learn what to do if they are worried or concerned, including who their trusted adults are. They explore feelings, boundaries and safe choices, building the confidence to ask questions and to voice their opinions.
56. Members of the safeguarding team are trained to the required level. They work collaboratively as a team, ensuring that they communicate effectively through regular meetings. These include supervision meetings in the early years, where the specific needs of young children are considered carefully.
57. Safeguarding leaders ensure that staff and governors are well trained, including the completion of quizzes to check understanding. Through comprehensive induction for new staff, regular training and sharing of updates, they ensure that staff are well informed about all aspects of safeguarding. Consequently, staff are confident about actions to be taken if there are concerns about a pupil or if a pupil makes a disclosure. They record and report any issues diligently and promptly.
58. Members of the safeguarding team respond swiftly and appropriately whenever safeguarding concerns are raised, including undertaking or revising risk assessments. They maintain regular liaison with external safeguarding partners, such as the local authority and children's services. Safeguarding records are comprehensive and include a summary of the concern, how the concern was followed up and resolved and reasons for decisions made. Concerns are referred, when necessary, without delay.
59. A suitable filtering and monitoring system is in place to prevent pupils and adults accessing inappropriate information when using the internet. The system is tested regularly and monitored by safeguarding leaders. Members of the safeguarding team continuously monitor internet use and take appropriate action when they receive alerts, including discussion with staff, pupils and parents.
60. Safer recruitment procedures are securely in place. The school carries out all of the required pre-employment checks. The record of appointments and staff files are accurate and well organised.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

61. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	St Christopher's School, Hove
Department for Education number	846/6011
Registered charity number	307061
Address	St Christopher's School Hove 33 New Church Road Hove East Sussex BN3 4AD
Phone number	01273735404
Email address	office@stchristophershove.co.uk
Website	www.stchristophershove.org.uk
Proprietor	St Christopher's School Hove
Chair	Mr Adrian Underwood
Headteacher	Ms Elizabeth Lyle
Age range	4 to 13
Number of pupils	237
Date of previous inspection	3 October 2023

Information about the school

62. St Christopher's School is an independent co-educational day school. It is one of the Brighton College family of schools and is administered by its own board of governors. The school is divided into three sections: pre-prep for pupils from Reception to Year 3, middle school comprising Years 4 to 6 and upper school for Years 7 and 8. The Reception unit is located about a mile away, on the same site as the school's playing fields.
63. There are 20 children in the Reception year group. The children are divided into two classes with continuous access to all aspects of the provision, including the outside play area.
64. The school has identified 47 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
65. The school has identified English as an additional language for 36 pupils.
66. The school states that it aims for pupils to gain places at Brighton College or the senior school of their choice. It strives for pupils to learn the habits and rewards of hard work and careful study whilst enjoying, discovering and developing their own talents and interests through different curricular and non-curricular activities. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own actions and consider the welfare of others, to appreciate the value of self-discipline and high standards and to develop as individuals through moral and spiritual exploration.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	14 to 16 October 2025
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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 chair and the governor responsible for safeguarding
- 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.

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