

# School inspection report

12 to 14 March 2024

## **St Swithun's School**

Alresford Road

Winchester

Hampshire

SO21 1HA

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.....	6
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	8
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	10
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>11</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	12
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>13</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	13
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>16</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors carry out their responsibilities effectively in supporting and monitoring the work of the leadership team. They ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities have the expertise and skills to actively promote pupils' wellbeing.
2. Accurate self-evaluation is integral to leaders' effective approach to strategic development and quality assurance; consequently, the school provides an education that is matched to pupils' aspirations and abilities.
3. The curriculum is wide-ranging. The extra-curricular activities programme is both extensive and well attended. It has a positive impact on pupils' development of new knowledge and skills.
4. Pupils are excited to learn and so engage fully in lessons. They achieve well at all stages of their education and make good progress from their starting points. The early years curriculum is well led. The children make good progress towards their early learning goals (ELGs) including, for example, in their listening and communication skills, concept of number and physical development.
5. Governors ensure that the school's policies are implemented effectively. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. Well-established links with external agencies ensure the safety and wellbeing of day pupils and boarders. Staff training in child protection, including that for the designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) and other members of the safeguarding team, is regular and in line with requirements. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep safe, including when online.
6. The school's inclusive culture reflects an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance. There is a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education to support pupils' development of healthy and respectful relationships. It includes age-appropriate relationships education in the preparatory school and relationships and sex education (RSE) in the senior school.
7. Boarding accommodation is very well maintained. Boarders' health and wellbeing needs are met effectively. Younger boarders, however, do not always feel that their views are heard and responded to in a timely manner by leaders.
8. Leaders and governors have a robust approach to managing risk so that pupils' wellbeing is protected. All safer recruitment checks are completed for new staff. However, leaders' oversight is not always sufficient to mitigate occasional errors. During the inspection it was necessary to ensure verification of some references.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- develop a consistent approach to responding to boarders' views across all boarding houses
- ensure that there is an effective system of oversight for safer recruitment checks so that the verification of references is assured.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors are actively involved in school life and work collaboratively with school leaders to ensure that the Standards are met. Governors are well informed about the school's work, development and performance through self-evaluation and reports presented at governors' committees and meetings with senior leaders. This leads to development that is responsive to pupils' emerging needs and interests.
10. There is a robust approach to the management of health and safety and suitable arrangements for mitigating risk. Buildings, including the boarding houses, are maintained, and refurbished regularly. This creates a high-quality, well-resourced, and safe environment for day pupils and boarders.
11. Supervision arrangements are suitable and well managed. Staffing ratios in the early years meet requirements.
12. The promotion of pupils' wellbeing across the preparatory school, the senior school and early years is ensured through a tailored PSHE programme and the teaching of 'Positive Education', a bespoke programme delivered by knowledgeable and well-trained staff. Further wellbeing support is available from professionals including nurses, counsellors and psychologists.
13. Leaders aim to develop confident young people who are courageous in their learning. Fulfilment of this aim is evident in lessons, as well as in pupils' behaviour and achievement as they transition through the school.
14. Leaders offer a curriculum that is wide-ranging and balanced. Teachers' planning and understanding of pupils' learning needs ensure that pupils gain knowledge and retain it. Pupils have access to extensive recreational and sporting activities. Engagement in these activities across the school is very high.
15. The school provides appropriate information for parents on their child's academic progress through reporting and parent-teacher meetings. Leaders are readily accessible to parents, by email for international parents of boarders, and in person for parents of day and boarding pupils.
16. The anti-bullying policy is well understood by staff and pupils. It is applied consistently and effectively in preventing incidents of bullying. On the few occasions that bullying incidents occur, they are managed promptly and according to the school's policy. Children in the early years learn to get on with each other and how to manage their emotions.
17. A well-planned careers programme, in the preparatory school and beyond, encourages pupils to consider their strengths and interests for the future. It includes impartial advice from external providers. In the senior school the programme follows Gatsby principles and equips pupils with the skills and knowledge to make informed choices about their next steps in education and careers.
18. Links with local safeguarding partners and other agencies are well established and effective. The safeguarding team is prompt in seeking advice and referring onwards where there are concerns about the welfare of a child. Staff receive regular training on how to keep pupils safe, online and in their interactions with their peers and adults.

19. Leaders record complaints appropriately and respond in line with the school's complaints policy and published timeframes.
20. Leaders understand and fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan details adjustments for groups of pupils including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The plan is regularly reviewed.

### **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. Pupils develop the knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum areas in early years, the preparatory school and the senior school to make good progress from their starting points. Leaders place an emphasis on making learning fun and meaningful. Learning is characterised by the creative effort of confident, self-motivated, pupils who are highly proactive in their learning facilitated by teaching that provides consistent stretch and challenge.
23. The majority of the children attain the ELGs by the end of Reception. They communicate effectively, regulate their behaviour and demonstrate well developed fine and gross motor skills. Pupils achieve highly in national tests and at GCSE and A level. They are well prepared for public examinations.
24. Pupils' experience of the curriculum is enhanced through the range of complementary studies on offer. Extended projects, for example, provide additional academic challenge for pupils alongside a weekly enrichment programme of 'stretch' lessons. Many pupils go on to study at universities with demanding entry requirements in the UK and abroad.
25. Effective monitoring of pupils' progress informs teachers' curriculum planning and teaching. Strategies used by teachers helped pupils to think deeply about their learning. Pupils track their own progress and work towards clearly defined and aspirational curriculum and personal targets set by skilled and knowledgeable teachers. In the early years, children's learning is assessed through teacher discussion and observation. Follow up actions are put in place to develop each child's learning and to facilitate good progress.
26. Pupils' mathematical competency develops rapidly as they progress through the school. This is underpinned by a well-planned curriculum that enables pupils to apply their learning effectively to real life situations, as they gain confidence in problem-solving. Children in the early years can count beyond 10 and discuss the meaning of tens and hundreds.
27. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to focus on music and the performing arts. Their performances are characterised by skill, commitment and enthusiasm. The specialist facilities and well-resourced departments, for example, in sport, science and art, contribute to the pupils' enjoyment of learning and their wider personal development.
28. Enrichment activities are embedded across the school and are subject specific and cross-curricular. They extend pupils' learning and knowledge. For example, in the study of astronomy, ethics and political issues and in the 'stories for thinking' activity in Year 7 in which an extract from *Wind in the Willows* led to questions about whether animals feel pain and how we interact with our environment.
29. Boarders and day pupils are enthusiastic about the programme of after-school, evening, and weekend activities. These activities, which develop a range of physical skills, include, for example, social events, lacrosse, music, golf, dance, climbing and horse riding. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) supports the development of pupils' leadership and life skills.
30. The children in the early years acquire good communication and writing skills due to the frequency and the quality of literacy teaching. They listen attentively to teacher-led activities and are confident to share ideas with each other. For example, during a reading about planting a sunflower they explain what they hear using vocabulary and actions that confirm their understanding. Children's

understanding of the world is seen, for example, in their enthusiasm for naming the roots, leaves and seeds of a bean plant and in talking about their trip to an arboretum.

31. Teaching ensures no pupil is discriminated against. Planning for pupils with SEND is personalised and pupil led. Recommendations to teachers from the pupils themselves about the support that they need are incorporated in 'pupil passports' and shared with staff. Pupils with SEND make progress in line with their peers, as reflected in pupils' work and examination outcomes.
32. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive help with their written and spoken English which supports their access to the curriculum. They make good progress and attain academically above age-related expectations.

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

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



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

34. The well-planned PSHE curriculum is strengthened through a cross-curricular approach, which includes relationships education in the preparatory school and RSE in the senior school. The programmes of study incorporate assessment and take account of pupils' feedback. This ensures that the content meets statutory requirements and answers pupils' questions.
35. Pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour and respect towards each other, reflecting school-wide expectations and pupils' understanding of the hierarchy of rewards and sanctions. Pupils know who they can turn to for support and guidance if they were to experience unkindness or bullying. In the early years, the children learn how to monitor their own feelings and start to take personal responsibility for their actions. They have a clear understanding of right from wrong.
36. The curriculum and the assemblies programme provides opportunities for pupils to broaden their thinking. Pupils understand deeper issues such as morality and cultural diversity. In the senior school, the pupil led 'diversity team' regularly presents topics in assemblies on, for example, Black history, faith, neurodiversity and racism reflecting pupils' awareness of individual differences. Senior school pupils have access to a QR code to raise topics for debate on equality, diversity and inclusion.
37. Pupils' sense of spirituality is developed through the well-planned religious education (RE) curriculum, philosophy lessons and access to the multi-faith chapel room, help pupils explore the role that beliefs and values play in society.
38. There are many effective avenues through which leaders listen and are able to respond to pupils' views including the use of surveys, boarders' forums and daily interactions with pupils. They are proactive in responding to pupils' suggestions, for example, the additional fifteen minutes of mobile phone usage for Year 7 boarders, at their request, and the improvement to breakfast following a food forum meeting. However, boarders occasionally express dissatisfaction that some of their views do not receive a response from leaders.
39. Pupils in the preparatory school enjoy a range of opportunities to take on leadership roles through pupil councils and the 'pupil parliament'. Pupil leaders in the senior school include, for example, heads of school, forum leads and heads of house. Some pupils regularly act as advocates for the whole-pupil community further developing their involvement and understanding of leadership.
40. Pupils learn about living healthily. Pupils join sports teams in large numbers and take part in many individual activities across the range of competitive programmes. Pupils have the confidence and self-knowledge to drive their own extra-curricular participation. For example, adjusting their regular running schedule on the running track because of their participation in a half marathon, or in following a detailed plan in the swimming pool as part of their wider weekly training programme.
41. The children develop fine and gross motor skills in early years through physical education and play. For example, they ride bikes energetically and explore the mud kitchen and sand pit. The children are adept at using child-friendly tools such as paint brushes and hammers.
42. Staff receive regular training in paediatric first aid and professionals visit the early years to talk to the children about dental hygiene. There is a medical centre for senior school pupils who become

unwell during the day, a medical room for prep school pupils and first aid facilities during the night for boarders. Suitable recording of medical details and the administering of first aid ensure that the wellbeing of individual pupils is addressed and monitored.

43. Health and safety policies, procedures and records are regularly reviewed. Across the school, in early years and the boarding houses, there is suitable supervision and a culture of risk mitigation. Appropriate training and precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Personal evacuation plans are drawn up for pupils with individual needs.
44. The boarding houses provide a welcoming and comfortable environment. Boarders have suitable privacy and security for their personal possessions. All boarders are provided with good-quality meals and have access to facilities for preparing their own food and snacks.
45. The attendance and admission registers are properly maintained and stored. Any absences are followed up promptly. The school informs the local authority of pupils who leave and join at non-standard transition points.

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

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

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

47. Pupils' social, economic and cultural development is well integrated. For example, economic education is incorporated into the PSHE curriculum and other subject areas. In preparatory school mathematics, pupils explore budgeting pocket money and the use of numeracy in everyday tasks. In the senior school pupils learn how to manage their finances beyond school including an understanding of savings, loans, mortgages, pensions, consumer graphs and investments. The Year 10 enterprise club's 'tycoon challenge' and Year 9 enterprise day involve pupils demonstrating their knowledge of financial responsibility.
48. Pupils develop their cultural awareness across the curriculum. Pupils have respect for other cultures and faiths. They share their own cultural traditions, for example, through events such as Culture Week and in wider learning across the curriculum. This includes in their language studies, PSHE and in learning about different art and music genres.
49. Older pupils benefit from a well-planned careers programme which follows the Gatsby principles. It considers individual interests and includes impartial advice from external providers. This, combined with a well-managed work experience programme and extensive careers advice, provides pupils with suitable guidance on future pathways. Talks by visiting speakers include the NHS, army, universities, leaders in human resources and lawyers. Pupils appreciate the importance of starting to learn about the workplace at an early age. In the preparatory school, they enjoy matching their interests and strengths to careers. The transitions, from preparatory to senior school, GCSE to A level and university applications to universities, are also covered meaning that pupils are confident in navigating these changes and experience a coherent curriculum with a high degree of continuity.
50. The curriculum promotes respect and tolerance, preparing pupils for life in British society. Children in the early years begin learning the practicalities of democracy, for example, by taking votes for the activities that they would like to do in their outdoor learning area. In politics in the senior school, pupils study legislation, human rights, equalities, and freedom of information. In Latin, they discuss the role of women in society.
51. Pupils accept responsibility for their actions and respect each other. This has a positive impact on their engagement in lessons. For example, in a musical activity pupils' attitude to learning ensured they were progressing with their individual parts and were supporting each other to bring together a high-quality band performance of 'teenage dirtbag'.
52. Pupils contribute to the wider community such as cooking for a local shelter, listening to reading in local primary schools, visiting old people's homes, hosting an annual picnic for the residents of the local women's refuge and supporting riding for the disabled. They raise funds each year for charities nominated and chosen by the pupils to support communities.
53. The boarding experience enables the pupils to develop their independence and social skills by living together in a supportive, cohesive, house environment. Boarders understand how co-operation and compromise enables social responsibility.

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

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

## Safeguarding

55. The safeguarding policy reflects statutory guidance and is implemented effectively across the early years, preparatory and senior day and boarding contexts. It is available to staff, parents and pupils on the school website.
56. The DSLs in the preparatory and senior school have established effective links with local safeguarding partners. They follow the correct reporting procedures to the local authority designated officer (LADO) when there are concerns or contextual risks. The DSLs are supported by five deputies including an early years deputy DSL. This ensures that staff have access to the appropriately qualified and trained safeguarding team across the school during the day and in boarding.
57. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable. They understand how to recognise, manage and report a safeguarding concern, and are aware of the expectation of their conduct. They know how to use the whistleblowing policy to report an allegation or low-level concern.
58. Pupils, both day and boarding, know how to recognise abuse, bullying and inappropriate behaviour. Pupils use an anonymous reporting channel and the psychologist, counsellor, chaplain, and those staff trained in emotional and social skills as sources of emotional support. There is a close working liaison between the leaders of safeguarding, SEND, boarding and medical care.
59. Staff know the safeguarding thresholds for behaviour and bullying incidents. They record and monitor events using an online platform. Trends are evaluated and preventative action is taken as necessary.
60. A robust internet filtering system monitors online activity and the use of technology by staff and pupils. When alerts occur, they are promptly reviewed by members of the safeguarding team. There is guidance for the appropriate use of mobile phones and cameras, including in early years. Suitable e-safety guidance is implemented across the school to ensure that pupils know how to stay safe online.
61. Leaders are trained in safer recruitment procedures. They understand the requirement for checks on adults who work with pupils. These are accurately recorded on a single central register. Within a robust system of recruitment checks, an error linked to the verification of information for all references occurred. This was rectified during the inspection.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	St Swithun's School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	850/6038
<b>Registered charity number</b>	307335
<b>Address</b>	St Swithun's School Alresford Road Winchester Hampshire SO21 1HA
<b>Phone number</b>	01962 835700
<b>Email address</b>	office@stswithuns.com
<b>Website</b>	www.stswithuns.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	St Swithun's School (Winchester)
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Alison McClure
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Jane Gandee
<b>Age range</b>	3 - 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	744
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	222
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 – 23 January 2020

## Information about the school

63. St Swithun's School is an independent day and boarding school for pupils aged 3 to 18 years. It has a co-educational preschool and is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils aged 4 to 18. The preparatory school, for pupils from age 4 to 11, and the senior school, for pupils aged from 11 to 18, have their own headteachers, but the headmistress of the senior school has overall responsibility. The school was founded in 1884 and is a charity governed by its trustees.
64. The school offers weekly and full boarding options accommodated in six residential houses.
65. There are currently 50 children in the early years, which comprises one Nursery class and two Reception classes.
66. The school has identified 74 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autistic spectrum disorder, all these pupils receive additional support. Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
67. English is an additional language for 135 pupils.
68. The school states its aims are to ensure pupils are courageous, compassionate, committed and self-confident young women who develop a love of learning, a sense of humour and a moral compass based on Christian values.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

12 to 14 March 2024

69. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

70. 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 other governors
- Discussions with the headmistress, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- Discussions with pupils and staff
- 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
- Scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school

71. 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)**.

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

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

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