

School inspection report

10 to 12 June 2025

Summer Fields School

Mayfield Road

Oxford

Oxfordshire

OX2 7EN

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 promote an inclusive culture in the school where pupils and staff demonstrate mutual respect. Leaders know pupils well and actively promote their wellbeing by providing effective pastoral support alongside ambitious academic curriculum provision.
2. Governors oversee leadership of the school effectively by offering challenge and support. They ensure that policies and procedures are in place, and monitor the impact of provision on day pupils and boarders. Governors ensure that leaders of boarding houses, known as lodges, fulfil their responsibilities so that the Standards are met. Two policies did not have information required in the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for boarding schools. Leaders amended these policies during the inspection.
3. Leaders consistently emphasise the importance of promoting each pupil's individuality and provide an effective pastoral system which enables pupils to develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils are taught to value themselves as individuals as well as to appreciate others' strengths and interests. Throughout the academic and recreational curriculum, staff encourage each pupil to pursue their own interests, talents and ambitions. Consequently, pupils' self-knowledge and their consideration for others is particularly well developed. This individualised pastoral support has a highly positive impact on pupils' academic achievement and personal development and is a significant strength of the school.
4. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is well planned and adapted to follow pupils' interests as well as relevant and current events in the wider world. Throughout the school, including in the early years, curiosity is encouraged so that pupils ask questions, seek ways to deepen their knowledge and understanding and learn new skills. The curriculum is enriched through a wide range of extra-curricular and recreational activities including trips and visits. This ensures that pupils develop new interests and skills for life beyond school.
5. Teachers plan lessons that are interesting so that pupils are highly engaged in their learning. Lessons are adapted to suit pupils' needs, aptitudes and prior attainment. Teachers provide individualised feedback as well as self-reflection time for pupils so that pupils know what they do well and how to improve. As a result, pupils make good progress, achieve well in standardised tests and are highly successful at gaining entry to their choice of senior school.
6. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively in and out of lessons so that they make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported with appropriate resources to help them make good progress. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of pupils with higher prior attainment so that they progress well over time.
7. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum and the physical education (PE) curriculum are planned to teach pupils how to care for their mental and physical health. Pupils take part in a range of physical activities in school as well as in weekly games and matches. Through PSHE lessons and assemblies, leaders inculcate values in pupils so that they develop social and emotional skills to manage their lives in school and the wider world.
8. Leaders and managers ensure that health and safety procedures and policies are robust, records are well organised and premises are well maintained. Leaders ensure that boarding houses provide good

quality sleeping accommodation and suitable facilities. Staff provide care and comfort for day pupils and boarders to promote their health and wellbeing whilst also helping them to develop their skills of independence and responsibility.

9. Leaders have planned the school's behaviour policy around three principles which teach pupils to be courteous, to show care and consideration for others and to use common sense. Day and boarding pupils understand and follow the school's behaviour policy. Pupils behave well and when incidents do occur, they are dealt with effectively by staff.
10. Pupils understand what is right and wrong and develop balanced opinions through debates and discussions that are facilitated by staff. Pupils are taught a range of skills such as organisation, presentation and resilience as well as empathy and respect for others.
11. Safeguarding procedures are effective for day pupils and boarders. Safeguarding leaders ensure that staff are well trained so that they know how to recognise and report concerns. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and they are confident to report any concerns they have to trusted adults.

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 policies are consistently reviewed so that they contain all the information required by statutory guidance.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders actively promote a positive culture within the school, through the school's aims and ethos which emphasise confidence, independence, and care and consideration for others. Consequently, staff and pupils are respectful of one another and appreciate each other's individuality.
13. Governors oversee policies, provision and procedures at the school, ensuring that leaders fulfil their duties and responsibilities effectively so that the Standards are met. They meet regularly with leaders and visit the school to speak with pupils and staff and review documentation. Policies are reviewed regularly and are implemented effectively. However, two policies did not include information required by the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools. Leaders amended these during the inspection.
14. At all levels, including in the boarding houses and early years, leaders are reflective and seek the views of pupils and parents when planning to improve provision. Heads of department contribute effectively to the whole school's self-evaluation. They know what works well in their areas of responsibility and continually seek ways to improve practice.
15. Leaders of boarding houses are sensitive to the different needs of boarders, including cultural, religious and dietary needs. They foster an inclusive and homely environment in boarding houses. House parents know pupils' pastoral and academic needs well. Leaders undertake the necessary training in the management and practice of boarding so that the welfare of boarders is actively promoted.
16. In the early years, leaders provide staff with appropriate support to develop their practice and ensure that the needs of children in Reception are met. The environment and learning activities are well planned and enable children to develop in all required areas of learning.
17. The school's leaders have a strategic approach to risk management. They understand the risks which are present when pupils have high aspirations to succeed academically and in music and sport. They closely monitor additional activities pupils take part in and ensure they have time and support to catch up on missed lessons. Leaders help pupils to manage their busy lives effectively so that they can balance their academic and personal development. Leaders manage risks around the school premises and those associated with trips and visits effectively so that suitable mitigations are in place.
18. Leaders maintain close links with relevant local authorities, attending training, seeking advice and making referrals as required. On-going training and attendance at relevant conferences ensures that leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills appropriate to their roles. Effective links with senior schools ensure that pupils move on to schools which suit them.
19. Leaders ensure that required information is shared with parents, including through the school's website. They provide regular reports about pupils' academic and personal development so that parents are well informed about the progress and achievements of each child.
20. Leaders ensure that the complaints policy is implemented effectively. Processes and timescales are clearly outlined in the policy and followed accordingly so that parents are clear about the procedures and next steps. Thorough records are maintained and reviewed regularly with specific reference to boarding, as required by statutory guidance.

21. Leaders ensure that they meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by providing training for staff about the ways in which people are different from each other, including race, beliefs and disabilities. A suitable accessibility plan is in place and it is evaluated regularly so that pupils with additional needs have their needs met and can access the curriculum. Pupils are taught about the role of women in society and the importance of treating them with equity and respect.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders plan an ambitious and engaging curriculum for pupils across the school. They ensure that a clear progression of skills is matched to the needs, aptitudes, interests and prior attainment of pupils. Leaders plan the curriculum so that it has breadth and depth. This enables pupils to develop curiosity and interest in a range of current and relevant topics. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education and for life in British society.
24. Children in Reception and Year 1 learn the sounds that letters make and use this knowledge to help them read and write independently. Pupils across the school read a range of texts and develop their vocabulary as a result. Older pupils analyse and evaluate texts and use this to develop their own writing across the curriculum. Pupils are highly articulate and communicate confidently in discussions and drama lessons. Pupils across the school develop their linguistic skills in French, while also learning about French culture.
25. In mathematics, pupils acquire knowledge and develop skills which they apply when they calculate averages in geography or speed, using equations in science. They develop scientific skills through observations and discussions in practical investigations and they understand how developing skills in science is useful in real life. Older pupils understand the influences of Latin, Greek and classical civilisation in shaping the modern world. Pupils learn a range of digital skills such as managing spreadsheets and coding. They use these skills to research, record and organise their work effectively.
26. Pupils develop creative and aesthetic skills in music, developing an appreciation for composers and composing their own pieces of music, as well as achieving success in musical performance. In art, pupils' careful study of the work of renowned artists helps them to use a range of media and produce high-quality pieces of artwork, including ceramics. Pupils across the school learn how to use age-appropriate tools and machinery safely to gain skills in woodworking, whilst developing problem-solving skills.
27. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subjects they teach and use their subject knowledge to plan engaging lessons. They use good quality resources effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. They choose texts which stimulate curiosity, and plan trips and visits to provide real-life experiences. Teachers use effective questioning skills so that pupils are interested, engaged and think deeply. They develop positive relationships with pupils so that pupils are confident to ask questions and develop their own knowledge, skills and understanding.
28. The school has well-developed systems to track pupils' progress. Teachers use assessment information, as well as their knowledge of pupils, to plan teaching to match pupils' needs. They offer individual feedback so that pupils know what they do well and how to improve. Pupils reflect on their own learning and seek ways to improve their understanding or self-correct their work. They work alongside each other well, offering and accepting appraisal. Pupils are well motivated to spend time and effort in self-study. As a result, they make good progress and attain well in standardised tests and entrance examinations to senior schools.
29. Leaders ensure that pupils with higher prior attainment routinely access learning that is beyond their age and stage. Pupils who have SEND are supported through teaching that is carefully adapted to meet their needs so that they make good progress from their starting points.

30. Most pupils who speak EAL are proficient in English. Where required, they are provided with effective support in lessons and in their boarding houses so that they make good progress.
31. In the early years, children acquire communication and language skills particularly well for their age. They engage in conversations with each other and with skilled adults who help them to develop their vocabulary. Staff provide a stimulating and nurturing environment with well-planned activities and appropriate use of resources indoors and outdoors, including in a woodland area. Children develop their curiosity and explore different materials and substances that encourage them to use their senses and develop fine motor skills. Children make good progress in meeting their early learning goals.
32. Leaders ensure that pupils' performance is shared with their parents through regular reports and meetings with staff. They make efforts to accommodate parents who live overseas in these arrangements. In the pre-prep, daily dialogue between staff and parents ensures parents are aware of their child's progress.
33. Leaders encourage pupils to pursue their own interests and talents by choosing from an extensive range of recreational activities to develop their academic, physical, creative and social skills. Pupils choose from sports such as rugby, hockey and badminton, or activities such as croquet and dog walking. They relish trying out and pursuing activities to discover skills and interests which are new to them. Boarders enjoy recreational and team building activities at weekends such as bowling, laser tag and ice-skating.

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

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

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

35. Leaders promote an inclusive environment which is evident in pupils' interactions with each other and with adults. Pupils are taught to have respect for other people, regardless of culture, beliefs or ability, through a carefully planned PSHE curriculum and assemblies. Leaders carry out wellbeing surveys with pupils to gauge pupils' needs and adapt lessons accordingly. Pupils develop spiritual understanding through chapel services which reflect the Christian faith whilst also embracing other faiths represented in the school community and the wider world. They study a range of world religions to deepen their understanding and develop tolerance of different beliefs.
36. Leaders actively promote the development of pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Staff know pupils well and work closely with them to help them recognise and nurture areas in which they excel or apply effort to do well in other areas. Pupils are taught to value individuality in the classroom and beyond and celebrate each other's strengths with genuine consideration for each other. In Reception, children are encouraged to describe their feelings and recognise each other's differences, for instance through a collaborative fingerprint art project. Older pupils share personal areas of interest with others by preparing and delivering assemblies. This individualised approach has a highly positive impact on pupils' self-motivation, effort, and engagement and consequently, on their achievement and personal development.
37. Effective pastoral care is provided so that pupils manage their own high expectations. In the boarding houses, pupils are supported through an effective induction process. Day pupils and boarders in the prep section of the school have tutors who support pupils to manage their learning as well as personal development. Pupils understand the benefits and challenges of free time given to them and understand how this aids their mental health. They choose to use their breaktimes to practise sporting skills, complete work, design their own board games or play on equipment provided in the playground.
38. The PE and PSHE curriculums are well planned to teach pupils how to look after themselves physically and mentally. Pupils learn the benefits of eating nutritious food and of exercise. They learn techniques to manage their emotions and stress and know where they can seek help and support when needed. The PE curriculum ensures pupils learn a wide variety of sports and games and develop social skills such as turn-taking and teamwork. Pupils are taught relationships education or relationships and sex education (RSE) in age-appropriate ways. External speakers are invited in to develop knowledge and understanding for older pupils by giving talks on relationships, sex education and consent.
39. Children in the early years develop their social and emotional skills through well-planned activities. They are kind and considerate to one another and they develop an awareness of ways to identify and regulate their behaviour. In the woodland, they learn about the natural environment and how to care for it.
40. Leaders promote three principles of care and consideration for others, common sense and courtesy through their behaviour policy. Staff and pupils understand the school's rules and expectations, as well as the system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils throughout the school understand how to recognise and regulate their emotions. They behave well and are courteous and helpful to one

another and to adults. Bullying is rare and when incidents do occur, they are dealt with appropriately.

41. Health and safety procedures at the school are robust and are reviewed regularly by leaders and external specialists. Fire safety procedures, drills and checks and records of training are thorough. First aid arrangements and training requirements, including paediatric first aid, are suitable. Staff in the medical centre promote pupils' physical and mental health appropriately and communicate with parents of day pupils and boarders where necessary. Pupils are well supervised when they arrive at and leave school, at lunchtimes and in boarding houses.
42. A wide range of food and meals are provided to meet pupils' nutritional and dietary needs as well as religious requirements. Staff register pupils into the dining room at mealtimes to ensure that pupils' nutritional and dietary needs are met.
43. Premises, including boarding houses, are well maintained with suitable washing and toilet facilities. Leaders enable pupils to regard boarding houses as their home by allowing them to personalise their own space. Each house has a unique theme which encourages pupils to develop care and respect for their surroundings. Boarders contribute to shaping their boarding experience through suggestions made in committees. They enjoy a balance of scheduled and free time and develop independence by, for instance, shopping in local supermarkets at the weekends. Pupils enjoy evening snacks and weekend treats in common spaces whilst developing life skills to keep these areas clean and learning how to live with others.
44. Admission and attendance registers are kept systematically and follow statutory guidance. The school ensures that the local authority is provided with required information, including when pupils leave or join at non-standard times.

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

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

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

46. Leaders ensure that the curriculum actively promotes fundamental British values such as democracy, individual liberty, tolerance and the rule of law. Pupils practise democracy when voting for school council representatives. In a French lesson, they compare democratic systems in France and the United Kingdom. Pupils discuss how democracy has changed over time and how learning from the past can shape their thinking in history and in theology, philosophy and religion (TPR) lessons.
47. Pupils think critically when considering the ethics around breaking a law if you don't believe in it. They understand the difference between civil protests and civil disobedience. Pupils develop their understanding of freedom of speech while debating on topics such as whether under-sixteens should be allowed to vote or whether the monarchy should be abolished. Pupils are taught how to disagree agreeably and they show mutual respect when discussing events that take place in different countries. These discussions help them to develop an understanding of cultural sensitivities and form balanced opinions.
48. Subject leaders ensure that skills taught are transferrable across subjects, and they prepare pupils for life beyond school by teaching them research and presentation skills. Pupils in Year 6 complete a course in first aid which gives them the knowledge and ability to help others in need. Pupils consider current challenges in the modern world such as the impact of rising sea temperatures on sea creatures. They discuss actions required by their generation to improve sustainability. Through discussion in lessons, pupils learn the importance of taking responsibility for their actions, of acquiring self-discipline and of developing resilience.
49. In the early years and pre-prep, pupils learn the value of money through role play in mathematics lessons and when writing the value of English coins in French. The PSHE curriculum for older pupils teaches the advantages and disadvantages of different ways to pay for items, how to manage a budget and how to save for a cause. Older pupils demonstrate their understanding of the impact of tariffs on the economy and businesses in the United Kingdom and can make suggestions of ways to mitigate these. Pupils are taught about the impact of gambling addiction on mental health.
50. Leaders facilitate opportunities for pupils to support various charities, from the local food bank to schools abroad. Pupils make comparisons with their own lives and children in the wider world to understand how lives can be different. They listen to talks from charitable organisations to understand disabilities such as muscular dystrophy, and participate in events to raise money. The choir performs at a local hospice and members of a local care home are invited to tea and a musical performance. Pupils take pride in spending time with older people in the community or volunteering with reading and supporting younger pupils in the school.
51. Through the PSHE scheme of work pupils are encouraged to think about jobs and careers in age-appropriate ways. Guest speakers such as journalists, artists and authors are invited into the school to help pupils understand some of the possibilities for their future lives.
52. Pupils enthusiastically put themselves forward for leadership roles. Those elected or appointed are supported with induction, training and appropriate resources such as a booklet they can refer to. This enables them to develop confidence in responding to different situations when they perform their duties.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. Safeguarding arrangements are effective for day pupils and boarders. Governors provide oversight through regular reviews of safeguarding policy and procedures. Leaders submit an annual return to the local authority and governors every year. They undertake external audits of safeguarding procedures and act on recommendations made.
55. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibility have appropriate training. They attend conferences and workshops, including those organised by the local authority, to develop their knowledge and skills. The safeguarding team ensures that new staff have a thorough induction of safeguarding procedures at the school. They provide regular training and updates for staff including 'Prevent' duty training. Safeguarding records are detailed and include a written rationale for decisions and actions taken. They are kept confidentially and are reviewed regularly by leaders with safeguarding responsibilities.
56. Leaders maintain effective links with relevant external organisations as well as the local authority designated officer (LADO) and seek advice or make referrals where necessary. Staff are aware of expectations which are clearly outlined in the code of conduct and they know how to report concerns about an adult, including those which do not meet the harm threshold.
57. Pupils know who they can go to if they have a concern and they are confident to report these. Pupil diaries contain important information about safeguarding leaders and older pupils can use an online system to report concerns anonymously. In addition to adults in the school, house parents and the medical centre, boarders have the contact details of an independent listener.
58. Visitors to boarding houses are carefully monitored, with measures in place to ensure separate access for staff accommodation. A clear policy is implemented in the boarding houses so that pupils do not have access to mobile phones and have limited access to other devices.
59. Leaders ensure that there are robust internet filtering and monitoring systems in place. Leaders test these systems regularly to ensure that they are efficient. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online in lessons. Leaders are aware of risks from harmful content that pupils may come across when accessing social media sites. They work closely with parents and pupils to mitigate these risks and provide them with resources to support their understanding of developing trends and useful guidance.
60. Safer recruitment measures are in place and followed for the appointment of staff. Appropriate checks are made and recorded systematically on the single central record.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Summer Fields School
Department for Education number	931/6067
Registered charity number	309683
Address	Summer Fields School Mayfield Road Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 7EN
Phone number	01865 454433
Email address	office@summerfields.com
Website	www.summerfields.com
Proprietor	Summer Fields School Trust Limited
Chair	Mr Jeremy Rooth
Headteacher	Mr David Faber
Age range	4 to 13
Number of pupils	332
Number of boarding pupils	169
Date of previous inspection	14 to 17 June 2022

Information about the school

62. Summer Fields School is an independent day and boarding school in the city of Oxford. It is registered as a school for male pupils. The school was founded in 1864 on its present site and is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. The school consists of two sections: a pre-prep, for pupils aged from four to seven; and the prep school for those aged from eight to thirteen. Pupils may board from the age of eight.
63. There are 169 boarders who are allocated to one of six houses on the site, according to their age.
64. There are 11 children in the early years who are in one Reception class.
65. The school has identified 71 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. The school has identified English as an additional language for 37 pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to provide education of the highest quality, whether it be intellectual, moral, technical or physical. It seeks to instil a love of learning in pupils and endeavours to offer them the fullest opportunity to stretch the boundaries of their individual ability.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

10 to 12 June 2025

68. A team of 6 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

69. 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 headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

70. 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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