

School inspection report

Date 6 to 8 February 2024

Woodhouse Grove School

Apperley Bridge

West Yorkshire

BD10 0NR

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. The proprietor, through the work of local governors, ensures that leaders possess the necessary expertise to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Governors work well with leaders and provide appropriate support and challenge. Leaders evaluate the quality of provision regularly and use this information to plan the school's future development. Leaders and governors ensure that pupils are well-equipped to succeed at each stage of their education.
2. The school's Christian ethos and values are at the heart of school life and shape the work of leaders. Leaders act as positive role models. Warm interactions between staff and pupils foster mutual respect, which leads to productive working relationships in the classrooms. The strong house system, and the various leadership roles that pupils take on, helps pupils to know each other well. Pupils are loyal to one another and take great pride in their school.
3. The early years setting is safe and caring. The carefully planned environment interests children and encourages them to enjoy their learning. Children develop strong communication and language skills. They are supported effectively by staff so that they grow intellectually and emotionally whilst also developing their creative, social and physical skills.
4. Teaching enables pupils to make good progress across all stages of their education. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. Well-adapted teaching ensures that pupils who have SEND achieve in line with their peers. However, in the senior school, teaching and lesson planning does not always enable pupils to use their learning skills to stretch and challenge their thinking appropriately in lessons. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and teachers provide high-quality feedback to pupils which pupils use well to improve their learning. Variability exists across subjects in how effective the use of achievement and tracking data is. Leaders do not always use data consistently and effectively to enhance the level of support and challenge provided for pupils.
5. A comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme teaches pupils necessary life skills in age-appropriate ways, and prepares them well for future life. As pupils grow, they deepen their self-understanding and learn to stand up for what they believe. Pupils are compassionate and embrace the differences between people. Through a variety of volunteering and charitable opportunities, pupils willingly give of their time to help those in need.
6. Boarders are well cared for and the accommodation provided is welcoming and homely. Effective systems are in place for boarders to express their views and leaders listen and respond appropriately. Boarding enriches the culture of the school as boarders and day pupils mix seamlessly together.
7. Safeguarding practices are robust. Pupils, including boarders, are happy in school and feel safe. Pupils are well cared for by pastoral staff, who know pupils well as individuals and support their needs.
8. Separate complaints policies are in place for the junior school and senior school. A three-stage process is implemented appropriately and suitable records kept. Some amendments to the junior school policy were required during the inspection to ensure that it reflected the school's practice.

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 tracking and assessment data is used consistently to best inform pupil progress
- strengthen senior school lesson planning to ensure that there is consistently sufficient challenge for pupils
- ensure that the complaints policy accurately reflects the school's practice and appropriate procedures.

Material change request

9. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include an increase in capacity from 1120 to 1180 pupils. The proposal intends to fill spaces in current classes and does not affect the capacity in boarding.
10. The school has appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including boarders. The school complies with relevant health and safety legislation, including fire safety. Procedures for monitoring and oversight of health and safety are robust.
11. The supervision of pupils is appropriate, including in the early years. There is a suitable risk assessment policy in place and when identified, risks are mitigated swiftly. Procedures for ensuring the suitability of staff, supply staff and governors are rigorous.
12. The premises and accommodation are spacious and sufficient for the proposed increase in numbers. A new sixth-form centre has recently opened, which has increased the number of available classrooms in the senior school.
13. The recent appointment of three non-teaching pastoral support leaders has increased the capacity of the pastoral team, giving leaders additional capacity to manage the increase in pupil numbers. Consequently, it is likely that the standards will continue to be met.
14. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

15. Governors, on behalf of the proprietor, provide effective oversight of leaders' work and quality assurance processes are robust. Governors visit the school regularly to observe practices and speak with staff and pupils. Governors are well informed about the workings of the school and take a keen interest in pupils' wellbeing. Governors know and uphold their statutory responsibilities. They have strong working relationships with senior leaders and provide appropriate support and challenge to them. Governors are fully involved in developing and monitoring the school's improvement plans.
16. Leaders and governors evaluate all aspects of the school's work regularly and accurately. They use the findings from their evaluation effectively to identify the most important priorities for improving the school. Regular use of surveys to canvas pupils', staff and parents' views is an important factor in the school's self-evaluation process. For example, following a recent survey about bullying, leaders identified a need for an increase in pastoral provision and included this in the school improvement plan. The subsequent appointment of three new pastoral support leaders has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.
17. Leaders at all levels display strong knowledge and skills and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. As a result, policies are effectively implemented. Leaders have pupils at the forefront of their thinking and actively promote pupils' wellbeing through their daily work. Links with external agencies regarding the safeguarding of pupils for example are apt and efficient. The school's ethos and aims are promoted well by leaders. This helps pupils to develop into well-rounded young people who show respect for others and embrace and celebrate the differences between people.
18. Complaints are managed appropriately and detailed records are kept. Leaders collaborate positively with parents to solve any issues that arise so that very few formal complaints are received. Separate complaints policies are in place for the junior school and senior school. Whilst the senior school policy has a clear three stage process, the junior school policy did not. This did not reflect the practice in the junior school, however, as a three-stage process was in place. Therefore, the junior school policy was amended during the inspection to accurately reflect current practice. Information is made available to parents as required, including regular written reports about their child's progress and attainment.
19. A thorough process is in place for managing risks relating to educational and boarding activities, the safeguarding of pupils, the school premises and accommodation and wider health and safety. Risk assessments are comprehensive and systematically reviewed. Leaders and governors are proactive in monitoring any concerns that are raised and check for unintended consequences that may arise as a result of the mitigating actions they take.
20. Leaders understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place which ensures that all pupil groups are catered for effectively. Suitable adjustments are made to the curriculum or the physical environment, as required.

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. A broad and balanced curriculum is in place, which is adapted to meet pupils' needs. This enables pupils to develop knowledge, skills and understanding, appropriate to their age, across all areas of learning. Leaders' flexible approach to curriculum management, for example, by modifying the sixth form subject offer to incorporate a number of different pathways to align with pupils' needs, enables pupils to develop interests and build on their strengths as they progress through the school. Pupils are well motivated, eagerly embrace new learning and are well prepared for future life.
23. Opportunities for pupils to learn about the fundamental British values of respect, tolerance, democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law are included throughout the curriculum. Supporting pupils to understand and celebrate diversity is integral to the work of the school. By providing a curriculum which promotes diversity and inclusion, leaders ensure that equality of opportunity is endorsed and teaching does not discriminate against pupils.
24. The emphasis on the development of computing skills from an early age ensures that pupils are proficient in their use of information and communication technology (ICT). The focus on mastering techniques within mathematics ensures that pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum. The extensive creative arts and design technology (DT) provision equips pupils with the skills and confidence to take on ambitious creative projects. For example, Year 9 pupils showed advanced drawing and design techniques when making a child's desk based on a mythical theme.
25. Knowledgeable teachers equip pupils to become inquisitive and curious learners. Pupils work hard and think for themselves, which helps them to make good progress. Attainment is strong and pupils achieve well at GCSE and A level, and in BTEC qualifications. Children in the early years make good progress and achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception.
26. Provision for pupils who have SEND is strong. Pupils have individual support plans that focus well on their specific needs. The curriculum and the way it is delivered is adapted accordingly. Specialist language support is provided for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). This helps them to make strong progress so that they achieve in line with their peers.
27. Early years staff provide children with a range of stimulating activities, which are well planned according to their individual needs. As a result, children show enjoyment in their learning and persevere for long periods of time. Staff ask carefully chosen questions that help children to think critically and develop strong language and communication skills.
28. In the junior school, well-planned teaching provides appropriate stretch and challenge for pupils which helps to develop pupils' independent thinking from a young age. In the senior school, however, teaching is sometimes less effective in stretching pupils. In a few lessons, planning does not always enable pupils to use their learning skills to challenge themselves appropriately and pupils' independent thinking skills are not extended fully. Senior leaders have made some changes, such as creating new leadership roles that are focused on developing teaching and learning strategies, including for stretch and challenge, but it is too soon to see the impact of these changes.
29. Leaders regularly review the impact of the teaching and learning and adapt methodology accordingly. For example, in the junior school, a review of pupils' literacy skill development led to changes being made to the scheme of work in English with a greater focus put on language development and its application to creative writing. This has led to pupils using high-quality

vocabulary more effectively within their writing. The recent whole school focus on the development of pupils' oracy skills has improved the quality of pupils' verbal responses. Pupils articulate their thoughts well and use subject specific terminology accurately.

30. A suitable assessment framework is in place which informs teaching, identifies weaknesses in understanding and enables pupils to make progress. Marking of pupils' work is thorough and teachers provide feedback to pupils that is of a high quality. Pupils respond positively and use the feedback to improve their work, which results in improved learning. There is variability in how effective the use of achievement and tracking data is. This results in a lack of consistency between subjects in how data is used to enhance the level of support and challenge to pupils' learning.
31. The comprehensive co-curricular programme includes a variety of recreational activities. An extensive range of sports, music and drama activities contrast with clubs such as computer coding, chess, debating and gardening. The school's own 'Grove Award' and super-curricular programme extend pupils' thinking further by encouraging participation in wider academic enrichment activities. A variety of trips, within the UK and abroad, are offered. This variety of co-curricular provision motivates pupils to actively engage in and embrace new experiences.

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

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

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

33. An effective PSHE curriculum, including provision for relationships and sex education (RSE), is in place which actively promotes pupils' wellbeing. Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of the topics covered and are mindful of how to form safe and healthy relationships.
34. Through the religious education (RE) curriculum and wider work of the school chaplain, pupils grow to develop a strong spiritual understanding, centred around the school's Christian ethos. Pupils learn to appreciate wider issues of social morality, for example, through English, as pupils develop their moral understanding vicariously through their study of the literature and their consideration of characters' actions.
35. Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. The school recently regained a national wellbeing award in recognition of its provision and practice. Pastoral provision is strong and wellbeing support staff are readily available to help pupils in need of support. Both school sites have a dedicated wellbeing centre, with sixth-form pupils playing a part in helping to run sessions for younger pupils. Pastoral staff know pupils well and this helps pupils to trust the adults around them. Pupils are confident to speak out about things that concern them. They grow to develop high levels of self-knowledge and self-esteem.
36. The school prioritises the promotion of physical activity. A comprehensive physical education (PE) programme is in place, supported by extensive and wide-ranging sports facilities. Pupils' engagement in physical activity is monitored effectively so that pupils have equality of opportunity to represent the school in competitive sport. Pupils respond well to this and see physical activity as essential for good health and building resilience. Boarders embrace the physical enrichment programme on offer particularly keenly, which helps them to keep physically and mentally fit.
37. Leaders ensure that, from a young age, pupils take responsibility for their own actions. If pupils make the wrong choice, time is given for them to reflect on what the right choice would be. Behaviour is managed consistently and pupils respond positively to this. A range of suitable sanctions are used appropriately. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is mature and respectful and pupils move around school in a calm and orderly way. However, some comments in the pre-inspection surveys indicate that in the senior school there are a few pockets of misbehaviour outside of lessons that can affect other pupils' wellbeing. Leaders are aware of this and have put extra provision in place to address the issue, through the appointment of new pastoral support leaders and the use of technology to monitor social spaces. These measures have resulted in a change to pupils' behaviours and senior leaders continue to monitor behaviour carefully. Bullying is rare and if it does occur it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.
38. All required health and safety legislation is adhered to. The premises are well maintained, providing a safe environment for pupils. Accommodation in the boarding houses is of a good quality. Systems in place to effectively manage fire safety are robust. First aid is administered swiftly by a team of appropriately trained staff including qualified school nurses.
39. A suitable admissions and attendance register is kept. Pupils' attendance is monitored effectively, and any absences are followed up on promptly. Pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the day, including during boarding time.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

41. Pupils are well prepared for life in British society, by the provision of a PSHE curriculum and a variety of co-curricular activities which actively promote British values. For example, pupils learn about democracy through debating clubs, mock trial competitions and the democratic election of school councillors. Pupils grow to develop respect for democracy, the law, public institutions and other people's views and beliefs.
42. Through the promotion of the school's ethos and values, pupils develop a mature and well-developed understanding of right and wrong. Staff offer guidance, act as positive role models and have high expectations regarding acceptable conduct. From a young age, pupils learn the importance of following rules and understand that actions have consequences. Pupils are guided towards being kind and respectful towards others. They recognise that their actions can affect the wellbeing of others.
43. As part of the school's rich and diverse curriculum, pupils learn about the differences between people and experience a range of cultural traditions. This helps pupils to develop respect for others and celebrate the diverse nature of society. For example, through book choices in the library and themes covered in drama, pupils learn about human and social differences and grow to appreciate that everyone is equal in humanity, whatever their race, gender, faith or beliefs.
44. Leaders foster strong links with the local community and this enables pupils to embrace opportunities for regular volunteering and charitable giving. Pupils support a local food bank, collect for local refugees, and volunteer in nursing homes and primary schools. Pupils regularly raise money for a range of good causes through, for example, house cake sales and music events. Pupils show generosity towards others and develop a sense of purpose and a strong understanding of other people's needs.
45. Pupils have a range of opportunities to take on leadership roles in school including by becoming school council representatives, house captains, prefects and wellbeing mentors. Through these roles, pupils develop empathy for others as they work together and hone their leadership skills. The well-embedded house system helps pupils to forge strong relationships with their peers. Day pupils and boarders work together seamlessly and socialise well. Many co-curricular activities, for example, climbing club, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the 'Grove Singers', develop pupils' trust in working together. This helps pupils to build strong social bonds with their peers.
46. The school's comprehensive careers guidance programme is supported by specialist staff. An open-minded approach is encouraged, reflected in the broad range of post-18 destinations pupils progress on to. These include a wide range of universities and further education establishments, apprenticeships and direct employment. Personalised support ensures that pupils are well served in preparing for their future. Pupils are ambitious for themselves. They understand how learning and working hard will help them to get a good job when they are older.
47. Pupils' economic understanding is developed from an early age by the broad economic education that is delivered effectively through a range of subjects, including PSHE. Finance is offered as a level 3 qualification in the sixth form. Economic understanding is further developed through planned curricular and cross-curricular activities. For example, in design technology, pupils are required to

budget and carry out a cost analysis on the profitability of designing and creating a product. Pupils show age-appropriate monetary awareness and sixth-form pupils are well prepared for managing their future personal finances.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place which fulfil statutory requirements and promote the welfare of pupils, including boarders. Safeguarding practices are thorough and concerns raised are acted upon swiftly. Designated safeguarding leaders, including in the early years, are appropriately trained and work well with external partnerships and agencies. Referrals to children's services and the local authority designated officer are made in a timely manner. Leaders ensure that monitoring and filtering systems are robust so that pupils are kept safe when working online.
50. A suitable safeguarding induction programme is in place for staff, volunteers and governors. Regular safeguarding update training is prioritised by leaders. As a result, staff are well versed in safeguarding procedures, including how to correctly self-refer or report a safeguarding concern about another adult. Staff have a fully developed understanding of how to recognise, respond to and report safeguarding concerns, which ensures that pupils are protected from harm.
51. Extensive supervision by duty staff helps to ensure that the boarding environment is safe. Boarders are further safeguarded by the active and effective role of the independent listener.
52. The PSHE programme equips pupils with the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils know how to seek help and advice from the range of support options available, such as through the wellbeing hub. Warm relationships ensure that teachers are approachable and supportive. Pupils are confident that if they have a concern, they can find someone to talk to and they will be listened to and taken seriously. Pupils value how the pastoral system is there for them when in need and how staff act swiftly when issues occur. Pupils, including boarders, are happy and feel safe at school.
53. Leaders and governors ensure that safer recruitment procedures are robust. All required pre-employment checks are conducted in a timely fashion. A single central register of appointments is kept appropriately and monitored effectively by senior leaders and governors.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Woodhouse Grove School
Department for Education number	383/6113
Registered charity number	1142794
Address	Woodhouse Grove School Apperley Bridge Bradford West Yorkshire BD10 0NR
Phone number	01132 502477
Email address	enquiries@woodhousegrove.co.uk
Website	woodhousegrove.co.uk
Proprietor	Methodist Independent Schools Trust
Chair	Mr Alan Wintersgill
Headteacher	Mr James Lockwood
Age range	2 to 19
Number of pupils	1074
Number of boarding pupils	54
Date of previous inspection	29 to 30 January 2020

Information about the school

55. Woodhouse Grove School is a co-educational day and boarding school in West Yorkshire. The school comprises a senior school, which includes a sixth form, and a junior school situated on a site close by. It is owned and administered by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) who delegate authority to a local board of governors. Since the previous inspection a new sixth-form centre has been built.
56. Boarders are accommodated in two houses, one for male pupils and one for female pupils, on the senior school site.
57. There are 100 children in the early years comprising three Nursery classes and one Reception class.
58. The school has identified 196 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for 36 pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to realise the full potential of every individual pupil by promoting academic excellence, encouraging self-discovery and fostering high standards of conduct and social responsibility. The objective is that each pupil grows to be the best that they can be, is fully prepared for the world they will encounter when they leave school, and develops strong levels of integrity, loyalty and commitment whilst upholding the school's Grovian values and Christian heritage.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

6 to 8 February 2024

61. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. 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.

63. 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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