

School inspection report

28 to 30 November 2023

Hurstpierpoint College

College Lane

Hurstpierpoint

Hassocks

West Sussex

BN6 9JS

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 managers have a clear vision for the school. They have created a curriculum which enables pupils, in the words of the school's motto, to 'work hard, do good and engage'.
2. The governing body, together with the leaders and managers, evaluate the school's effectiveness regularly and agree key aims for improvement each year. This self-evaluation helps ensure that health and safety practice at the school and in the boarding houses meets required standards. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and in line with statutory guidance.
3. Adults' expectations of pupils' behaviour are high. Pupils present as happy and confident young people. Classroom routines are clear and consistent. Pupils are motivated to uphold the school's core values. Senior leaders celebrate desirable characteristics of behaviour through weekly assemblies and awarding 'Hurst Challenge' badges in the Senior Prep school.
4. The balance of free time and directed time means that there is sometimes little time for recreation and relaxation. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are short and pupils are expected to participate in extra-curricular activities every day during these times. Some pupils find this challenging.
5. Senior leaders and managers set high expectations and aspirations for pupils from the first day they start at the school. The curriculum is challenging and well-matched to pupils' needs and interests. This is a significant strength of the school. Teaching of the curriculum is effective, as a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points year on year.
6. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme enables pupils to develop a clear understanding of key areas such as consent, staying safe online and healthy relationships. However, the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is less well developed. Although adequate, the programme is not as helpful and relevant to older pupils as it could be.
7. Leaders and managers provide the opportunity for pupils to interact with the local community and expand their horizons further through the service programme. Leaders organise weekly sessions at the school farm to allow pupils to gain greater awareness of a sustainable production chain for locally sourced produce.

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 and governors should ensure that the:

- RSE programme is very closely matched to pupils' needs, including for the older pupils in the school, so that it is as helpful and relevant as possible.
- school day is well balanced so that pupils have sufficient time for relaxation and recreation alongside their lessons and participation in the extra-curricular programme.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors and leaders have relevant knowledge and skills which enable them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders evaluate the school's effectiveness robustly and accurately, which helps them to define a clear vision for the school's future development. Leaders are successful in ensuring that the school meets its aims and actively promotes the wellbeing of pupils. This is reflected in the delivery of the academic programme which, supported by extra-curricular activities, enables pupils to experience a highly effective all-round education. Pupils' use of the extensive facilities, such as theatre hall, the swimming pool, the school farm and numerous sports pitches help them to benefit educationally and socially from the range of activities provided.
9. Governors and senior leaders regularly review the policies and procedures relating to boarding, to ensure they are suitable. They check that staff understand boarding policies fully and implement them effectively. Leaders closely monitor the effectiveness of the boarding provision, including by checking the thoroughness of record-keeping, to ensure that it addresses boarders' physical and emotional needs and supports their wellbeing.
10. The appropriate information is made available through a comprehensive parent handbook, which is available on the school website. The handbook is reviewed annually by the senior leadership team, in advance of the new academic year, to ensure that it contains up-to-date information. Any complaints are responded to diligently, following the timescale set out in the school's complaints policy.
11. Leaders make decisions about any adjustments to provision in response to observations and trends. Such decisions have a positive impact on the wellbeing of pupils. For example, leaders' have strengthened the school's promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion, which has enhanced the school's inclusive environment.
12. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The education provided by the school does not discriminate and makes reasonable adjustments for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that a suitable accessibility strategy is in place and is reviewed regularly. There is a plan in place to increase understanding of the benefits of diversity, and support of individuals and groups across the school.
13. Senior leaders and governors undertake a strategic and comprehensive identification, assessment and management of risk. This is effective in ensuring that risks are mitigated well. For example, their scrutiny of the risk assessment related to crossing a road led to the development of a comprehensive traffic and pedestrian management plan.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

14. Leaders plan the curriculum effectively. Teaching is tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. Assessment information is used to record, measure and analyse pupils' performance and to develop suitable schemes of work across the curriculum for all year groups.
15. There are detailed and well-structured lesson plans in all subjects. These are delivered by expert teachers who enable pupils to successfully grow their knowledge and skills. Teachers use suitable resources and a range of activities to capture pupils' interests and engage them in their learning. Teachers have an acute awareness of all pupils' learning needs and ensure that they are met well in most areas of provision.
16. The school's own teacher training programme, 'Teach Hurst', has helped leaders to raise teaching standards. The programme consists of building classroom experience, knowledge and pedagogy through observation and class teaching. Throughout the programme teachers work closely with mentors to build confidence in skills, knowledge and pedagogy. This is achieved through observations, phased class teaching, and bespoke training sessions.
17. Teachers check how well pupils have understood new learning. They provide the right support to ensure that any misconceptions are tackled quickly. Pupils learn how to evaluate their work effectively. Teachers provide pupils with helpful and supportive feedback on their work, using a consistent approach. Pupils understand the feedback they are given and it helps them to improve their work and make better progress.
18. Pupils are given aspirational targets, known as 'challenge grades', to encourage them to attain as highly as possible. Pupils of all abilities compare their academic progress to their 'challenge grades' regularly. They believe that these grades are achievable and work closely with teachers to do so. Pupils' progress is reviewed each half term, in consultation with their parents.
19. In the early years, communication and language skills are well developed. A wide range of resources, experiences and teaching strategies are used effectively to enhance and develop children's skills. For example, children are taught about the relationship between letters and sounds, step by step, in a way that interests and encourages them. Staff read to children frequently, sharing a wide range of stories and books about interesting topics. This helps children to develop an early love of reading.
20. Leaders have developed an extensive co-curricular programme that extends pupils' social and educational skills. The school's provision of co-curricular activities, for example Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and music, dance and drama, supports the school's aim to provide pupils with a worthwhile and enjoyable education.
21. All groups of pupils achieve well at GCSE and A level in relation to their starting points. Pupils are focused and engaged in lessons. All departments provide pupils with helpful extension work and remedial work when needed. Teachers build effective professional relationships with pupils, which create a classroom atmosphere conducive to high-level learning. This is particularly the case in the sixth form, where dialogue between pupils and teachers is often academically sophisticated.
22. Pupils who have SEND receive personalised support, including one-to-one assistance and additional library study sessions. This tailored approach promotes independence and helps pupils to make good academic progress. Pupils feel well supported by both subject teachers and SEND specialists.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

23. The school provides effective pastoral care and support. Leaders have developed an effective PSHE curriculum which enables pupils to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. The curriculum enables pupils to learn about different groups in society and encourages mutual respect for other people, particularly in relation to characteristics such as age, religion, disability and sexual orientation.
24. Leaders recognise that RSE is an area that needs to be developed further to ensure that older pupils consistently find the learning helpful and relevant. Pupils' perception of the significance of RSE is also affected by the infrequency of the sessions when pupils can learn in this area.
25. Pupils recognise the attributes of healthy relationships. The school supports them in their learning and in their personal development. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, both mentally and physically. School leaders facilitate the safe, responsible, respectful, and positive use of technology to support teaching and learning, to increase achievement and to prepare pupils for the risks and opportunities of today's and tomorrow's digital world and to thrive online.
26. The PSHE curriculum has a level of flexibility so that it can be adapted to focus on any emerging needs, such as friendships issues. Lessons in PSHE help pupils to develop a keen awareness of bullying and its impact. They learn about what an individual should do if they witness bullying, are a victim of bullying or if they suspect someone has been bullied. As a result, bullying happens very rarely. When it does occur, staff deal with it promptly and effectively.
27. Pupils thrive on the challenge, structure, discipline and opportunities provided by the school. They appreciate the pastoral care they receive, the facilities and the choices they have at school. Pupils are aware of how to behave well. They recognise the attributes of healthy relationships and feel the school supports them in their personal development.
28. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to express their views and opinions, as well as to raise concerns. Pupils have access to a range of staff 'listeners' who are always available for them to talk to. These are signposted in boarding and day houses, lessons and around the school. Pupils, particularly boarders, take advantage of the effective formal and informal systems in place. These range from one-to-one chats with matrons to discussions of whole school issues addressed by leaders in assemblies.
29. There is a broad and varied menu prepared every day to meet individual pupils' dietary needs, including those with medical or religious requirements.
30. Pupils actively contribute to their school community through various means. This includes older pupils assisting younger pupils and participating in fundraising activities. The role of 'pupil guardians' in offering support to their peers fosters a sense of responsibility. Pupils value this role as it helps them develop important skills, such as empathy and active listening, and ensures that they feel supported in the school community.

31. Children in the early years develop a sense of shared responsibility, including by taking turns to look after a class teddy bear during weekends and holidays. The house structure strengthens the feeling of community for both day and boarding pupils.
32. The school premises and accommodation contain suitable facilities and are maintained to an appropriate standard. The health and safety policy is implemented effectively. Leaders take sensible precautions to reduce the risk from fire. For example, fire drills take place every term and the fire risk assessment is reviewed regularly. Suitably trained staff provide first aid. The attendance and admissions registers are suitably maintained.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

33. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, such as individual liberty, and to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils appreciate the need for a system of rules to be in place which everyone follows. Leaders are effective in their positive promotion of issues around equality and diversity. The school provides an inclusive environment. Talks by external speakers and discussions enhance pupils' understanding of inappropriate language and power dynamics. Pupils understand the importance of diversity and being part of a community that is tolerant and respectful. The school's ethos and pupils' attitudes are tolerant, respectful and inclusive.
34. Leaders have developed suitable careers provision to provide opportunities for pupils. In the sixth form, pupils have access to careers guidance, in addition work experience and specific information relating to particular professions such as medical, dentistry and veterinarian career paths and opportunities overseas. The school also offers guidance for pupils on apprenticeships and alternative further education opportunities. The PSHE programme assists pupils in developing their life-skills, including their economic understanding. Pupils are given opportunities to undertake lifeguarding training and work towards gaining the necessary qualifications to secure employment working at the school pool.
35. Leaders ensure that the pupil leadership programme provides a range of opportunities for older pupils to develop leadership skills and independence. These include mentoring younger pupils, meeting visitors and taking them on tours around the site, and supporting the day-to-day routines of the school. Pupils also develop leadership skills well through their engagement in pupil-led clubs, the CCF programme and pupil-directed drama performances. These opportunities prepare pupils well for life beyond school. Pupils demonstrate an appreciation for the natural world, and an awareness of a more sustainable production chain for locally sourced produce, through weekly work on the school farm.
36. Pupils have opportunities to make valuable contributions to the wider community. For example, Year 11 pupils develop and demonstrate collaboration and empathy skills in their positive support for visiting pupils from a local school. Pupils contribute keenly to fundraising activities, for a range of local and national causes. Pupils take part in a regular trip to Zambia where a group of senior and pupils in the sixth form help to support an orphanage project.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

37. There are suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils, including those in the early years, boarding and the sixth form. Leaders work effectively with external agencies when the need arises. The school makes timely referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and the police, where appropriate.
38. Safer recruitment procedures are followed. A suitable record of pre-appointment checks is maintained. Leaders and governors oversee these checks regularly and effectively. The school has appropriate arrangements for responding to safeguarding concerns about adults, should any arise.
39. Pupils feel safe and secure at school. Safeguarding concerns are responded to swiftly. Robust monitoring processes are in place to safeguard pupils' wellbeing and the school provides effective support for pupils affected by safeguarding issues. Leaders ensure that there are adults that pupils can turn to if there is anything they are concerned about. Leaders also provide effective mechanisms for pupils to report concerns anonymously.
40. Pupils develop their understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are aware of procedures to follow should they have a concern. Governors check that suitable filtering and monitoring of internet usage are in place.
41. Governors maintain suitable oversight of the schools' safeguarding policies and procedures. They check regularly that these are implemented effectively.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Hurstpierpoint College
Department for Education number	938/6206
Registered charity number	1076498
Address	Hurstpierpoint College College Lane Hurstpierpoint Hassocks West Sussex BN6 9JS
Phone number	01273 833636
Email address	info@hppc.co.uk
Website	www.hppc.co.uk
Proprietor	Hurstpierpoint College Ltd
Chair	Mr Anthony Jarvis
Principal	Mr Tim Manly
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	1289
Number of boarding pupils	455
Date of previous inspection	22 June 2022

Information about the school

42. Hurstpierpoint College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, West Sussex. It is overseen by a board of governors who represent the proprietary body.
43. There are six single-sex boarding houses and a mixed hall of residence for Upper Sixth Form pupils, all situated on the main school site. Pupils can board from Year 9.
44. There are 13 children in the early years comprising one Reception class.
45. The school has identified 546 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
46. English is an additional language for five pupils.
47. The school states that its aim is that every pupil experiences an outstanding all-round education that prepares them for life. It seeks to ensure that the academic potential of every pupil is realised, to develop every pupil as an individual, and to provide all pupils with a worthwhile and enjoyable education.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 to 30 November 2023

48. A team of 9 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

49. Inspection activities included:

- observations of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observations of registration periods
- observations of a sample of extra-curricular activities
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- tours of the school premises
- visits to the boarding houses, accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of pupils' work, in collaboration with pupils and staff
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

50. 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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