

School inspection report

26 to 28 November 2024

Epsom College

College Road

Epsom

Surrey

KT17 4JQ

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 carry out their responsibility to actively promote pupils' wellbeing across all aspects of the school's provision. The focus on treating pupils with equal consideration and respect enables pupils to grow in self-confidence and self-esteem, knowing that they are valued as individuals and can be themselves. Pupil's wellbeing is also enhanced by being part of a community in which the values of mutual respect, equality and inclusivity are paramount and communicated by leaders and staff.
2. Governors are effective in their oversight of the work of the school. They ensure that leaders have the skills and knowledge for their roles and that they implement effectively policies and procedures that actively promote pupils' academic and pastoral wellbeing.
3. Pupils achieve well at all stages of their education and make good progress in relation to their starting points. Attainment for the majority of pupils at GCSE, A level and BTEC is at a consistently high level. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or who speak English as an additional language (EAL) typically make good or rapid progress.
4. Teaching enables pupils to develop a positive attitude to all aspects of their learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of well-chosen strategies to enable pupils to make good progress overall. However, some teaching does not challenge or stretch pupils sufficiently to enable them to make good progress or develop their independent thinking as much as possible.
5. Leaders actively listen to the views of pupils, including boarders. Their consideration of pupils' views plays an important part in the ongoing process of self-evaluation and curriculum review.
6. The school enables pupils to develop their sense of social responsibility well. The school's service programme provides many opportunities for pupils to support others in the local community. Many older pupils willingly volunteer to act as peer mentors for those who are younger within the school community.
7. Boarding enables pupils to develop their social awareness well. They live in boarding houses in which collaboration, sharing and mutual support have a positive effect on their self-esteem and confidence.
8. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and implement the school's safeguarding procedures effectively. The school are proactive in identifying potentially vulnerable pupils who may need extra support. Leaders take prompt action when needed and liaise appropriately with external agencies.

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 all teaching extends and challenges pupils' thinking sufficiently to enable them to make consistently good progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of pupils in their detailed planning for the school's ongoing development. They have the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their responsibilities effectively which is enhanced by their consultation with stakeholders, such as through detailed parents' and pupils' surveys on a house-by-house basis. Such consultation enables leaders to understand and appreciate the effect of their decisions on the personal development of pupils. Changes that pupils have found beneficial, such as restructuring the evening timings in boarding houses, have been instigated as a result of leaders listening to pupils' ideas and opinions.
10. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders ensure that pupils are treated equally and that no aspects of the provision discriminate against any pupil or group of pupils. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place and regularly reviewed.
11. Governors maintain appropriate oversight of the work of school leaders and the effectiveness of the school's provision and procedures. They regularly visit the school to scrutinise records, meet with staff and listen to the views of pupils. This enables them to understand the impact of leader's decisions on the lives of pupils. Governors ensure that leaders have the relevant skills to carry out their roles so that policies are implemented effectively and pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted.
12. Leaders maintain close oversight of the development of pupils in all aspects of their learning. Through a planned schedule of lesson observations, departmental reviews and listening to the views of pupils, leaders are able to identify any areas of the curriculum which need development. This oversight also informs a comprehensive programme of professional development for teachers including opportunities to share effective classroom practice and carry out their own research to enhance pupils' learning.
13. Leaders in boarding know the pupils well and provide a supportive environment in which boarders wellbeing is prioritised. Leaders ensure that boarding staff work collaboratively to meet boarders' individual welfare needs. This helps support boarders' growth of self-confidence and self-esteem.
14. Leaders and staff implement the school's risk assessment policy effectively. Leaders have a clear understanding of how to mitigate against any potential harm to pupils' wellbeing and react rapidly when concerns are raised. Staff are well trained and produce suitable risk assessments that identify and manage potential risks to pupils, both inside and outside the school effectively. The risk assessment policy is implemented well across all aspects of school life, including educational trips, on-site vehicular movement, boarding houses and individual pupils' welfare.
15. Leaders liaise effectively with a range of external agencies such as safeguarding partners and external professionals who provide support for pupils who have SEND. Leaders also work closely with the local authority, including through informing them appropriately about the use of funding for pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
16. Leaders effectively manage any complaints that the school receives. They communicate constructively with parents within published timescales. Leaders keep detailed records of complaints submitted and any actions taken as a result of these.
17. The school regularly provides information to parents on the progress of their own children. All other required information is published on the school website or otherwise made available to parents.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders' in-depth understanding of the aptitudes of the pupils means that the curriculum is well planned and regularly reviewed to meet their needs. Pupils are able to study a suitable range of subjects. The subject content in schemes of work goes beyond national curriculum age-related expectation for pupils' learning. Subject specific schemes of work are planned effectively to enable clear progression in the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders review and adapt the curriculum and develop their training of teachers to ensure that teaching is effective and facilitates pupils' progress. The attainment of pupils at GCSE and A level is well above the national averages for independent school pupils taking the same examinations.
20. The curriculum provides considerable opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across traditional subject boundaries. All younger pupils take a course called 'Trivium' which enables them to develop public speaking, literary analysis and critical thinking. Pupils consistently show high levels of numeracy across a range of subjects, as illustrated by their detailed data analysis in geography and extensive use of algebra in physics. Pupils' creative and aesthetic skills are reflected in the many high-quality portfolios of work, for example, in art and photography. Opportunities, for pupils to develop their communication skills are extensive. Pupils consistently demonstrated their ability to debate, engage in wide ranging discussion and express their own ideas articulately.
21. Inspectors found that most teaching is effective. Most lessons are characterised by detailed lesson planning in which teachers build on pupils' prior knowledge to extend their understanding. Teachers have wide ranging subject knowledge, manage behaviour effectively, and are able to use an array of teaching strategies to develop pupils' learning successfully and enable them to make good progress overall. However, there is some inconsistency in the level of academic challenge, and this limits pupils' independent thinking and their progress at times.
22. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is enhanced by regular and constructive written or verbal feedback from teachers. Lessons are regularly planned to allow time for pupils to reflect on their learning and check their understanding. Pupils respond positively and are enabled to improve their work as a result of the individualised support from their teachers. Pupils are enabled to set their own ambitious targets for future achievement. This has a positive effect on their motivation to learn, self-awareness and self-confidence.
23. The boarding experience helps enhance pupils' learning and has a positive effect on their progress. This is because boarding tutors work closely with teachers so that effective support for boarders, when needed, is in place. Boarders maintain typically good progress in line with their peers.
24. Leaders have put in place an effective framework for assessment. Leaders and teachers use assessment data to understand the progress of pupils. Leaders are able to identify any patterns in this and put in place appropriate support for groups or individual pupils as needed. Academic, pastoral and wellbeing leaders work collaboratively to monitor the effectiveness of the support for pupils.
25. Subject teachers and learning support specialists work together to put in place appropriate support for pupils who have SEND. Teachers use pupils' learning profiles in their lesson planning to ensure that pupils are supported effectively. Some pupils receive additional support outside lessons. Consequently, pupils who have SEND make good or rapid progress from their starting points.

26. Pupils who speak EAL are given additional support for their English in lessons when needed. Older pupils who speak EAL receive specialist support to prepare them effectively for university English language assessments. As a result, pupils who speak EAL are able to access the curriculum and progress very well.
27. The co-curricular programme is extensive with many opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in sport, music, drama, academic enrichment and many different clubs and societies, often led by pupils. In addition, at some point in their school careers, all pupils play an active role in the Combined Cadet Force or The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme activities, which enable pupils to develop their leadership and teamwork skills. The overall activities programme provides pupils with opportunities to extend their learning, increase their resilience and build their self-confidence.

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

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

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

29. Leaders have developed a positive culture in which staff are proactive in developing the wellbeing of pupils. Housemasters, housemistresses, tutors and matrons take measures to understand the needs of the pupils in their house. They are trained to help pupils develop their resilience and self-awareness, which enables them to make their own decisions and deal positively with difficult situations. Pupils gain confidence knowing that individual support and guidance is available when needed. Boarding staff support boarders' self-esteem by recognising their achievements as individuals, such as their participation in house sport regardless of their ability.
30. Leaders have put in place a broad and balanced 'personal and social development' (PSD) programme which delivers personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE). PSD teaches pupils about themselves and their relationships with others. Pupils are enabled to meaningfully discuss issues such as taking risks, mindfulness, consent and positive masculinity. Discussions are characterised by mutual respect and a desire to listen to the views of others.
31. The physical education (PE) and associated sports programme is extensive and well planned. Pupils make good progress in developing a range of physical and sports-related skills as well as their overall physical fitness. Pupils learn how different training exercises build their strength, endurance and mental alertness for competitive sports. Pupils are able to play in a range of teams as well as individual sports such as squash and golf. Regardless of their ability, pupils are actively rewarded for their effort and participation which has a positive effect on their self-confidence and self-esteem.
32. Throughout the curriculum there is a focus on giving pupils opportunities to reflect not only on their learning but also on their personal development. Chapel supports the spiritual growth of pupils of all faiths or none. There are opportunities during the school week for pupils of different faiths to worship and consider their spiritual relationship to the world. Through PSD and subjects like religious studies, pupils are taught about different faiths and cultures enabling them to develop empathy for those with different beliefs to their own.
33. Pupils social awareness and sense of responsibility are enhanced by the many opportunities for pupil leadership in the school and house communities. Pupils are trained for their roles, such as prefects and peer mentors. This enables them to recognise the positive contribution they make to supporting others and helping them to have their voice heard.
34. Leaders implement appropriate behaviour and anti-bullying policies. Staff are trained effectively to identify signs of bullying and have an appropriate understanding of the thresholds for child-on-child abuse. Records are suitably maintained enabling leaders to identify any trends or patterns of behaviour. Leaders react swiftly when behavioural problems occur. They apply appropriate sanctions fairly and help pupils to reflect on the consequences of their actions.
35. The school premises and accommodation are maintained to provide a suitable environment for pupils, including through regular checks and servicing of equipment. Leaders ensure that the risk from fire is mitigated through detailed fire risk assessments which are reviewed regularly. Fire equipment is serviced appropriately, fire drills take place at least termly and evacuation routes are frequently checked. Staff regularly receive health and safety and fire safety training.

36. Boarding staff ensure that the health and welfare needs of boarders are met. The privacy of boarders is respected in well maintained houses that provide suitable accommodation. Suitable supervision levels are consistently maintained in the boarding houses. Boarders are able to contact a member of staff, including at night, if needed.
37. Suitable arrangements and medical accommodation are in place to care for pupils, including boarders, who become ill or are injured at the school. Appropriate numbers of staff are trained to administer first aid or medication.
38. The school's attendance and admission registers are accurately maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Attendance, including at lessons, is robustly monitored. Leaders inform the local authority of any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points, or are absent for substantial periods of time.

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

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

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

40. Leaders have established a school community which constantly promotes the school's values of kindness, integrity and ambition. Pupils are taught through assemblies, chapel talks, tutor discussions and the school's PSD programme how these values make a positive difference. Pupils consistently demonstrate kindness and mutual respect in the way that they support and encourage each other.
41. The school community is characterised by inclusivity and equal opportunity. Pupils learn about different cultures, faiths and world views. They understand the importance of listening to each other and respecting different perspectives to their own. The curriculum links ideas from pupils' academic work to wider social issues. For example, older pupils' study of *Frankenstein* is linked to an exploration of prejudice in society. Similarly, pupils in history relate ideas about the current cultural impact of immigration to events in the United States of America in the 1920s. Teachers facilitate discussions on such issues in a sensitive and impartial manner.
42. The PSD programme ensures that pupils are knowledgeable about the roles played in British Society by mutual respect, Parliament, how courts operate to enforce the rule of law and the democratic process. Pupils are taught how British democracy works and this is applied to their own elections, for example when choosing their house councils. They learn about equality and the damage that discrimination does to people in wider society and the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions including standing up for others and to represent their views. As a consequence, pupils develop their moral understanding and sense of right and wrong.
43. The school develops pupils' economic understanding effectively. The well-planned PSD curriculum enables pupils to gain insight into an extensive range of financial issues such as the difference between credit and debit cards, income tax, national insurance and student loans. Pupils are also able to develop their business acumen through, for example, the 'Young Enterprise' competition.
44. The school's wide ranging co-curricular programme provides opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution to the local community. The principle of serving others is embedded into the school culture. Time for volunteering is built into the weekly timetable. For example, pupils contribute to local primary schools, care homes and community gardening projects. Pupils are also actively involved in raising money for local and national charities, often through pupil-led initiatives. In school, many older pupils take on the responsibility of mentoring those in the younger groups. As a result, pupils develop a growing social awareness and sense of social responsibility as they mature.
45. Age-appropriate careers guidance is provided to pupils throughout the school. The PSD programme, supported by the work of tutors, careers fairs, and external speakers, enables pupils to understand the implications of subject choices in relation to different career and educational pathways and their entry requirements and expectations. Older pupils receive bespoke one-to-one guidance as they consider opportunities for work experience, gap years, apprenticeships and applications to higher education in the United Kingdom and internationally. The effective careers guidance prepares pupils well for the next stages of their education or employment.

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

46. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

47. Leaders have built a school culture in which safeguarding is embedded as the cornerstone of pupils' wellbeing. This is enhanced by the well-structured and highly visible safeguarding team. The school has a clear and appropriate safeguarding policy which is in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders ensure that staff understand the policy and that it is implemented effectively.
48. Safeguarding training is extensive and leaders ensure that staff have a clear understanding of current safeguarding requirements, including the importance of the early identification of pupils who may need additional support, and possible risks in the local community from radicalisation and extremism. Staff understand the importance of, and procedures for, reporting allegations, including low-level concerns, about adults working in the school. The safeguarding team receive appropriate training for their role.
49. Governors conduct a thorough annual review of the safeguarding policy and monitor its implementation through the work of the safeguarding and pastoral sub-committee. The designated safeguarding governor visits the school regularly to review the work of the safeguarding team.
50. The safeguarding and pastoral teams are integrated effectively and are proactive in identifying pupils whose wellbeing may be at risk. They provide appropriate support for individual pupils affected by any safeguarding issues, . The school responds swiftly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns, including child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment or sexual violence, that may arise, including through effective liaison with and, when required, referrals to, relevant external agencies. Leaders maintain detailed and appropriate safeguarding and child protection records.
51. The school have put in place an extensive range of adult contact points for pupils to share any concerns or worries, including anonymously. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Suitable filtering and monitoring of internet use are in place, and the safeguarding team receives regular reports. They respond quickly to any concerns about online activity.
52. All of the required safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, governors and contractors. This includes all staff, and their families, who live in the school's boarding accommodation. A suitable single central record of appointments records these checks accurately and staff files also appropriately record the suitability checks that have been completed.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Epsom College
Department for Education number	936/6030
Registered charity number	312046
Address	Epsom College College Road Epsom Surrey KT17 4JQ
Phone number	01372 821000
Email address	info@epsomcollege.org.uk
Website	https://www.epsomcollege.org.uk
Proprietor	Epsom College Ltd
Chair	Mr Alex Russell
Headteacher	Mr Mark Lascelles
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	1143
Number of boarding pupils	303
Date of previous inspection	15 November 2022

Information about the school

54. Epsom College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in Epsom, Surrey. The school consists of a lower and a senior school, which includes a sixth form. It is a Christian foundation, operating as a charitable company and limited by guarantee. The school is governed by a board of trustees who are appointed by the Council of the Royal Medical Foundation. The current chair of governors took up his position in October 2023 and the current head took up his post in September 2024.
55. Boarders are accommodated on the school site in two boarding houses for female pupils and three houses for male pupils. There is an additional house which accommodates both day and boarding female pupils.
56. The school has identified 252 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Very few pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. English is an additional language for 109 pupils.
58. The school states its aims are to enable pupils to develop an attachment to the life of the mind through the provision of exceptional academic, social, sporting and cultural opportunities in a safe, inspiring and supportive community. The school seeks to challenge pupils to develop their talents, broaden their interests and become confident in themselves, as well as being inclusive and appreciative of others. The school's values are kindness, integrity and ambition.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

26 to 28 November 2024

59. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

60. 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 governors
- discussions with the head, 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.

61. 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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