

School inspection report

12 to 14 March 2024

Shrewsbury School

The Schools

Shrewsbury

Shropshire

SY3 7BA

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. Governors have an informed oversight of all areas of school life and ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities in meeting the regulatory requirements, including those in boarding. Leaders have a self-critical approach to their roles, have initiated a variety of methods for gathering evidence and identifying risk to pupils, and take prompt action when required.
2. Leaders have reshaped the school day to ensure that pupils can maintain a commitment to their studies and an extensive range of co-curricular activity, whilst allowing them sufficient free time. This is indicative of the way in which leaders promote the wellbeing of pupils.
3. The curriculum and co-curricular programme meet the needs and interests of pupils. The curriculum is structured to introduce pupils to new subject areas in Year 9, and to both preserve balance and allow specialism at GCSE and A level. In these years pupils are encouraged to follow courses alongside their main subject disciplines and hence maintain a board range of skills.
4. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and a sharp awareness of the prior attainment and potential of the pupils they teach. Teachers integrate the use of assessment data and information about the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) into the planning and delivery of lessons. Some teaching does not maintain pupils' interest when they have limited opportunities to activity engage in learning.
5. Leaders have completed a project exploring pupils' attitudes to those who are different to themselves. Consequently, pupils show persuasive levels of respect for those of different faiths, national background or gender to their own. Male and female pupils enjoy equal opportunity.
6. Leaders plan a curriculum that is effective in developing pupils' personal awareness, including their self-knowledge and self-esteem. Both day and boarding pupils identify boarding house staff as critical adults in providing support in their school lives.
7. The behaviour policy and anti-bullying strategy are understood by staff and pupils and are effective. Apart from a very small minority of Year 9 male pupils, pupils are well-behaved and bullying is rare.
8. Buildings and grounds are well maintained. Those responsible ensure that risks to pupils are minimised through the systematic detailed checks of health and safety and fire procedures. The security of pupils during the day and night is prioritised.
9. Pupils are kind and recognise the value of service to others. They are supportive in the boarding houses and appreciate the positive impact that those of different national and cultural backgrounds have on the school. The extent and sustained nature of pupils' contribution to external communities through the school's partnership and community engagement programme is a significant strength.
10. The 'Futures' programme provides careers education across the age groups. Pupils value the individualised advice they receive, and in guiding their decisions about university courses, degree apprenticeships and the world of work.
11. The personal development curriculum successfully deepens pupils' self-knowledge, includes issues pertinent to the age of pupils, and is enhanced by lectures and presentations in assembly, many of

which are delivered by senior pupils. Most pupils receive a grounding in the understanding of financial and economic issues, although this area is given little emphasis until Year 10.

12. Safeguarding arrangements are effective in promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders are especially mindful of the risk to boarders. Effective pastoral care ensures that pupils at risk of harm are quickly identified, and action taken. Safeguarding leaders liaise openly with external agencies and review the implementation of their procedures after any major incident.

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:

- strengthen the economic component of the personal development programme in Year 9 to enhance pupils' financial awareness
- continue ongoing work to ensure that teaching across all subjects consistently engages pupils' interest.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. The school's governance arrangements, and the experience of the governors themselves, result in an informed oversight of senior leaders. The full governing body delegates to specialists on sub-committees the gathering and evaluation of information to enable governors to check that leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities effectively and consistently. They undertake this through regular visits and audits of documentation. The approach of the governing body is both supportive and analytical and leads to robust monitoring of the effective implementation of the school's procedures.
14. Leaders have a detailed knowledge and proactive involvement in school life. Through direct observation, frequent discussion with house staff and a regular review of records, they ensure that the school's procedures are carried out effectively.
15. Senior, academic, pastoral and support team leaders have secure knowledge in their areas, and skilfully apply it. They are acutely aware of the aspirations of, opportunities for, and risks faced by pupils in a busy seven-day week boarding school. Pupils have a secure and consistent record of success in achieving places at university, in national competitions, in music and other fields. They contribute extensively to others beyond the school community. Hence the aims of the school are seen to work well in practice.
16. Leaders have created short-, medium- and long-term plans that mesh the school's curricular, co-curricular, and pastoral ambitions. Each is based on well evidenced self-evaluations of current practice and focuses on promoting each of the elements of the wellbeing of pupils. For example, to test one of the school's aims, leaders recently completed a project to review its approach to the encouragement of respect between pupils. As a result, some amendments have been made to the delivery and content of the curriculum.
17. Academic leaders have acted successfully to promote the use of both data and information about pupils who have SEND in lessons. Both are now embedded in teachers' planning.
18. Leaders have identified the need for teachers to engage pupils in all lessons and have started to reflect this in the content of professional development sessions.
19. The school website provides accessible and clear information for staff, pupils, and parents of both current and prospective pupils. This includes all the policies and documents required, including those relating to boarding.
20. Governors support safeguarding leaders in reviewing the implementation of arrangements after any major issues. Senior leaders maintain regular contact with the external agencies involved in any safeguarding issues. They contribute to multi-agency meetings, take advice and follow any guidance suggested.
21. Governors and senior leaders have a strategic approach to identifying and managing any risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing. Leaders limit the potential impact on boarders by providing secure, well-maintained accommodation, opportunities to exercise, and house staff with the experience and training to recognise in pupils the symptoms of emotional unsteadiness. They ensure such pupils are immediately supported.

22. Leaders have formulated systems of house and school councils through which the views of pupils can be expressed. Pupils' opinions have contributed to a reshaping of the school day, and changes in timings to allow greater discretionary periods for pupils. Boarders are encouraged to raise concerns informally and formally, and often these prompt changes in procedures.
23. The school's complaints procedure is in line with requirements. It encourages parents to share concerns with house staff or senior leaders. All concerns, including at the informal stage, are recorded centrally and reviewed by governors to identify any themes or patterns.
24. The school reports to the appropriate local authority any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times in the school year.
25. Leaders make appropriate adjustments for those with disabilities through an accessibility plan. They have strategies to enable any pupil with physical disability to board, and meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

27. Leaders provide a broad and extensive curriculum that encompasses all the required areas of learning. It is structured so that it successfully gives Year 9 pupils a width of new experience in their first year, whilst allowing them to build seamlessly on their previous knowledge. For example, pupils can study any two of French, German, Spanish and classical Greek at beginner, intermediate or advanced level. All pupils follow a digital skills curriculum, and they develop secure skills in this area during the year. The 'Foundation Fortnight' introduces new pupils to opportunities such as rowing, Eton fives and a range of other co-curricular activities and hence enables them to develop new skills from an early stage.
28. Academic leaders skilfully blend the need for Year 10 and 11 pupils to encounter a range of academic subjects whilst supporting specialisation. All pupils study all three sciences, at least one modern foreign language, but can select astronomy or ancient history as part of their portfolio. In parallel, pupils are encouraged to pursue an area of research in which they have a personal interest.
29. The sixth-form programme provides a flexibility of opportunities and ensures that the needs of pupils of all abilities and interests are met. Pupils study at least three A levels and can take an extended project qualification (EPQ), a 'Future Ready' course, or a leadership award. This incorporates a range of modules including qualifications accredited by the institute of leadership and management (ILM), digital skills, online courses, and virtual work experience. In addition, every pupil for the first two terms of each A-level year follows an "Academic Perspectives" course, researching an idea outside their A-level disciplines, for example philosophy and subversion or second wave feminism. This programme of activities is well structured and successfully provides pupils above compulsory school age with opportunities to develop skills needed for their futures.
30. The school's co-curricular programme, series of lectures and house competitions in, for example, debating, drama and music, develop a wide range of pupils' skills, particularly speaking and performance. Subject leaders encourage pupils to enter academic essay competitions, and many are successful. Pupils of all ages consistently reach the final rounds of Olympiads in mathematics or the sciences.
31. Leaders have devised a personal development curriculum which coherently meets the needs of the different ages and experiences. In the sixth form, this includes preparation for daily living skills and living independently, building on the competencies learnt in boarding houses. Although busy, boarders have a suitable amount of free time each day.
32. The investment in the stimulating environment and up-to-date resources means that pupils have an extensive choice of recreational and sporting activity. Leaders have ensured that there is equal opportunity for male and female pupils.
33. Academic leaders have successfully embedded a framework to evaluate the progress of individual pupils relative to their starting points. Further, those responsible provide detailed background about pupils who have SEND, including advice on how to support these needs in lessons. Teachers routinely use this information to ensure and reassure themselves that pupils fully understand new concepts. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress.

34. Pupils entering the school have a working command of English. However, some need support with technical language and idiom, and this is provided effectively by specialists in this area in pupils' first months at the school.
35. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this to elaborate and draw on a wide range of examples from their experience. Pupils value the depth and frequency of marking and feedback they receive. It is common in lessons for teachers to 'check-in' with pupils to ensure that they have understood. Almost all teachers thoughtfully choose a variety of teaching resources to underpin pupils' understanding. In this respect teaching is effective in that at GCSE typically over one half of examinations are graded 9 to 7, and at A level about three quarters A* to B. For most pupils, results are in line with others nationally with the same starting points.
36. In response to the previous inspection and leaders' own observations, professional development focuses on the impact teaching has on pupils' learning. In lessons teachers manage behaviour well. Pupils are typically attentive. In many lessons teachers stimulate interest with a varied range of approaches, provoking intellectual response, and allowing time for pupils to devise their own strategies in attempting problems. When opportunities allow, pupils are creative, for example in music, science, drama and art. They show high levels of self-motivation in their EPQ research or in pupil-published magazines such as *The Shrewsbury Economist*. However, in a few lessons teachers speak for a long time without maintaining pupils' interest and intervene before pupils have had an opportunity to formulate responses. In these lessons pupils quickly become disengaged.

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

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

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

38. The wide choice of curricular and co-curricular opportunities helps pupils to develop self-esteem and an awareness of their strengths. There are many examples, such as observational astronomy, taking part in Model United Nations debating, or rowing, in which pupils describe their confidence in discovering interests and talents for the first time. Pupils are assured of their potential in the calm explanations given by teachers in lessons, and this contributes to high aspirations. House staff, teachers and senior leaders use affirmative language that contributes to pupils' self-regard.
39. Leaders encourage all pupils to participate in a variety of activities. This is realised through a plethora of house competitions in for example debating, music and drama. Pupils have opportunities to practise and develop expertise across a wide range of physical activity, including team and individual sports. House staff are acutely aware that the balance between involvement and over-commitment is different for each pupil, and carefully ensure that equilibrium is achieved.
40. Leaders invested in a whole school project that focused on enhancing levels of respect that pupils show for those of diverse backgrounds, gender, national background or faith. The project confronted unconscious prejudice, and pupils' deep-rooted views. The success of the initiative is reflected in the balanced and proportionate language that pupils use to speak about contemporary issues, revealing an informed understanding and empathy towards others. Pupils take responsibility for their peers and themselves.
41. Curriculum leaders have created a personal development course that provides personal, emotional and health education at a level and depth appropriate for the age of pupils. This includes the mandatory content of relationships and sex education. As a result, pupils are well informed, and actively exemplify the learnt messages about lifestyle, diet and interactions with others. Pastoral leaders create forums in which issues affecting teenage health are further discussed. House and school councils have explored how the school might challenge and support pupils who vape and advise others who have difficulties sleeping regularly. Senior pupils led an effective assembly on the consequences on pupils' wellbeing of an overdependence on mobile telephones. Because leaders give a profile to health issues across and outside the curriculum, pupils are alert to the factors that affect their physical and emotional wellbeing.
42. Staff create opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual awareness, both inside and outside religious faith. Pupils value time for worship and for thought provided in Chapel. They are provoked to reason argument and, in houses, debate ethical or moral issues triggered by the content of services. Leaders have created a culture in which pupils can be forward looking but enjoy tradition.
43. The school's written behaviour policy sets down the tariffs for rewarding and sanctioning pupils. Leaders have created a culture in which praise is generously given and modestly received. For example, sixth formers spontaneously applauded, at some length, a cellist from a younger year group; and in a house meeting pupils celebrated a pupil's acceptance to a competitive drama course. These are typical examples. Senior leaders, pastoral staff and senior pupils work cohesively to maintain high standards of behaviour: for example, in confronting minor yet sustained immature behaviour of some Year 9 pupils when walking around the school.

44. Records of behaviour and incidents of bullying that have been identified are centrally recorded. Any trends are identified and addressed. Procedures to minimise bullying are successful in that incidents are infrequent, but when they do occur, pastoral support for both victims and perpetrators are effective.
45. The premises and accommodation in which pupils live and work are varied in style, age and complexity. Those responsible are vigilant in ensuring that buildings and grounds are maintained methodically and suitably. As result, not only does the school meet the requirements of health and safety and fire legislation, but it also provides a well maintained, stimulating and comfortable environment for pupils, including those who board. The wellbeing of pupils is consequently promoted. The health centre meets the needs of pupils who are sick. Adjustments are made for any pupil with a temporary disability.
46. Staff responsible are rigorous in completing admissions registers, and in seeking and supplying necessary information to the local authority when pupils join or leave the school. Attendance is accurately logged. The school's system records the whereabouts of all pupils during boarding time.

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

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

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

48. The school's curriculum cultivates pupils' human, social and economic knowledge. Pupils show respect and are tolerant. For example, in a busy school and boarding life, they allow each other space, both physical and in conversations and activities. They listen, quietly but attentively, to each other's views. They demonstrate high levels of trust.
49. The curriculum provides an insight into personal finance and economic issues. The personal development programme supports pupils in understanding, for example, budgets, tax and pensions. Sixth-form pupils debate wealth inequality and the relationship between productivity and the funding of public services. Whilst pupils have received a rounded economic education by the time they leave school, the Year 9 curriculum contributes little in this area.
50. The school's 'Futures department' provides appropriate careers advice at all ages. For example, business leaders present to Year 9 pupils about key skills, and Year 11 pupils are helped to find work experience. The development of skills such as teamwork, initiative, entrepreneurship and mentoring are threaded through the careers programme. From the time they start at the school, through careers guidance and by attending 'life experience' lectures, pupils are made aware of the range of possible careers available. As a result, former pupils are following an extensive assortment of courses, including in the armed services, medicine, music and finance. An increasing number of pupils secure places on degree apprenticeship schemes. Pupils value the advice they receive. Almost all achieve the grades needed for their first-choice university place.
51. Leaders have formulated an effective representative structure to gather and debate pupils' views, which as a result are well represented to senior leaders. Day and boarding pupils share suggestions with house representatives, and views are channelled through house meetings and then the school council. In reverse, senior leaders ask pupils to reflect on issues. These are focused on the wellbeing of pupils, for example the shape of the school day or potential over commitment by some pupils.
52. Through art, music, and drama opportunities leaders extend pupils' cultural insight. The provision in the curriculum to follow interests outside the examination curriculum helps pupils to both specialise and continue to develop broad skills. Regular lectures stimulate interest in politics, the arts, scientific research. Political views expressed by speakers are carefully balanced.
53. Pupils are kind to and support each other. Pupils put worth on the different cultural, national or religious backgrounds of others. The 'vertical family system' that exists in most houses identifies a subset in which senior pupils can be attentive and immediately responsive to its younger members. Pupils say that they feel valued but in different ways by the small group, the house, and the wider school. Pupils develop a convincing belief in the value of service.
54. The school's community involvement programme results in pupils developing skills while improving their understanding of economic disparity, and the importance of community. Through participation, which involves all pupils in the school, pupils learn from their active involvement in the programme, for example how to deal with tricky situations and the importance of safe spaces during childhood. Leaders have thought carefully about the wide range of partnership activities in which Shrewsbury pupils are engaged through the programme. As a result, pupils demonstrate and learn from, for example, supporting refugee children with homework, organising art, dance and sporting

events and running classes in science and music. Leaders take an inclusive approach, with all pupils involved so that the skills development opportunities, such as empathy, patience and selflessness, are embedded throughout the school community.

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

55. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

56. Safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively so that the wellbeing of both day pupils and boarders is promoted. Governors are trained in the approaches needed to evaluate the arrangements, including a review of records, discussions with staff, pupils, and visits to boarding houses. Hence, they maintain an informed oversight of the work of safeguarding leaders in effectively following procedures and protocols.
57. Staff receive frequent and detailed training, including the 'Prevent' duty. Leaders keep an accurate register of training provided and who has attended. The role of support staff in identifying potential risks to pupils in, for example, boarding houses or during co-curricular activities, is reflected in their bespoke training.
58. The safeguarding policy includes suitable definitions of abuse and has been reviewed effectively in line with latest statutory guidance. The reassurance that leaders give to staff means that they are confident to discuss or report any possible issue of concern. The school has devised its own effective record-keeping system. Records are up to date, thorough and show details of how concerns are followed up, notes of any action taken, decisions reached, and outcomes arrived at. They include a watch-list with internally defined levels of risk and need, which is reviewed weekly by safeguarding and other leaders. Pastoral care plans are put into place where appropriate. House staff have a prominent role in ensuring these are implemented for individual pupils to support their emotional and physical wellbeing.
59. Safeguarding leaders regularly interact with local safeguarding partners, including children's services and when necessary, the police. Leaders and staff seek immediate advice if necessary and understand their role in reporting any person to relevant regulatory bodies if required. The low-level concerns procedures work effectively. Staff report issues about which they feel uneasy. Governors work alongside leaders to self-critically review the implementation of procedures after any major incident. For example, the school has recently been re-evaluating its cyber monitoring and filtering systems.
60. Senior pupils are trained in basic safeguarding awareness. Pupils feel safe, including online. The school has confronted a reticence amongst some pupils to share concerns or anxieties by increasing opportunities for anonymous reporting. Pupils talk to school counsellors, house masters and mistresses, tutors and matrons, and hence feel listened to. House staff are vigilant in looking for signs of pupils in need, and particularly those who are at risk of becoming overcommitted because of the breadth of opportunities available. The school has replaced 'peer listeners' with 'peer educators', and these senior pupils are successful in adopting a more proactive role in advising and supporting younger pupils.
61. Recruitment checks are undertaken on governors, staff, volunteers and visiting speakers according to their role, and accurately recorded in a record of appointments. House staff have regard for ensuring that they test the suitability of guardians and mitigating risks in travel when going home.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

62. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Shrewsbury School
Department for Education number	893/6009
Registered charity number	528413
Address	Shrewsbury School The Schools Shrewsbury Shropshire SY3 7BA
Phone number	01743 280500
Email address	hm@shrewsbury.org.uk
Website	www.shrewsbury.org.uk
Proprietor	Governing Body of Shrewsbury School
Chair	Mr James Pitt
Headteacher	Mr Leo Winkley
Age range	12 to 18
Number of pupils	835
Number of boarding pupils	617
Date of previous inspection	22 to 23 January 2020

Information about the school

63. Shrewsbury School is an independent co-educational boarding and day school. The school is overseen by a board of governors and is a charitable trust.
64. There are 12 boarding houses, seven for male pupils and five for female pupils. Each of the houses is for both boarding and day pupils.
65. The school has identified 218 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. English is an additional language for 27 pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to educate and empower each individual to flourish in life and contribute positively to the world around them.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 March 2024

68. A team of eight 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 of 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.

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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For more information, please visit isi.net