

School inspection report

15 to 17 October 2024

Alleyn's School

Townley Road

Dulwich

London

SE22 8SU

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. Strong leadership at all levels is highly effective in promoting pupils' wellbeing. Governors and leaders share a clearly articulated vision for the school, driven by its values and aims. Their decision making has resulted in a stimulating, secure and happy atmosphere in which pupils thrive and have opportunities to discover their individual talents and potential. An ambitious school development plan is the result of leaders' rigorous self-analysis of the school, thorough risk assessment and careful strategic planning.
2. The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of pupils. It combines tradition with innovation as it educates pupils for the modern world. Teachers plan lessons well with awareness of the needs and prior learning of pupils. They provide pupils with typically helpful feedback on their work, although in the junior school this feedback is not always precise enough to be as helpful as possible. Teaching is consistently ambitious and sets appropriate challenges for all. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve high levels of success in public examinations.
3. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, are typically well supported. They are encouraged to understand their own learning needs and to develop strategies that will best help them. Teachers, especially those in the junior school, adopt appropriate methods to provide support for these pupils. In the senior school, however, teaching does not always fully take into account the needs of some neurodiverse pupils.
4. Leaders place high emphasis on the importance of inclusivity and respect. These values are taught in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons and well understood by pupils. There is a well-planned programme for relationships and sex education (RSE). These elements of the curriculum help pupils to grow in self-knowledge and self-confidence.
5. Policies to encourage good behaviour and to deter bullying are actively promoted, effective and understood by pupils. Pupils are appropriately supervised throughout the day. Health and safety measures are thorough, ensuring a secure and pleasant physical environment. Support for the pupils' physical and mental health is well resourced and effective.
6. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum so that it reflects the reality of Britain's multi-cultural society. Pupils learn about diversity and the importance of mutual respect, democracy and individual liberty. Pupils develop a sense of personal responsibility. Large numbers are involved in charitable activities and the school's many outreach programmes. Leaders and staff enable pupils to make smooth transitions between different sections of the school. A well-planned, comprehensive careers programme prepares pupils well for the opportunities of adult life.
7. The culture of safeguarding is well embedded across the school. Staff are swift to report concerns to the team of leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders take prompt action as needed to support pupils affected by safeguarding issues.

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 feedback to junior school pupils is consistently clear and precise so that pupils understand how to improve their work further.

Material change request

8. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include extending its maximum capacity from 1450 to 1475 pupils. The additional pupils would be in the senior school.
 - Leaders have appointed additional staff and have redistributed senior leadership responsibilities to strengthen the safeguarding team. All heads of section and heads of year are trained to the same level as the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). The safeguarding team has the capacity to cater for the proposed maximum number of pupils.
 - Health and safety and fire safety arrangements are suitable. They are likely to remain so once the proposed material change takes place.
 - Pupils are appropriately supervised by staff at all times. There are appropriate numbers of teaching staff on duty throughout the day, including in the early years. The school employs sufficient staff to be able to supervise the proposed maximum number of pupils effectively.
 - Leaders implement a suitable risk assessment policy and procedures that cover all aspects of the school's provision. Leaders have carefully risk-assessed the potential impact on pupils and staff of the proposed increase in numbers. Areas which might become overcrowded outside lesson time have been identified and action taken to mitigate risk, for example by reorganising lunch arrangements. Measures are in place to review the effectiveness of the actions taken.
 - The recruitment processes are thorough and all required checks are carried out before individuals start work at the school. Additional staff appointed to support the proposed increase in the number of pupils have been subject to all required safer recruitment checks.

- Toilet provision has been refurbished and increased in the central part of the school. Additional classrooms have been created in the lower school, and the playground has been organised for different year groups. Classrooms have sufficient space and furnishing to accommodate slight increases in class sizes. The premises and accommodation are suitable and have the capacity to cater for the proposed maximum number of pupils.
 - Leaders have planned effectively for the proposed increase in capacity. For example, the roles and numbers of heads of year have been increased to ensure there is continued capacity for oversight of pupils' academic progress and pastoral welfare. Additional educational welfare officers and teachers have been recruited to ensure that there is no detriment to pupils' wellbeing by the increased numbers.
9. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leadership at all levels is proactive and effective. It is driven by shared values and a clearly articulated vision reflecting the school's ethos and aims. Leaders maintain a secure, stimulating and happy environment in which pupils of all ages are encouraged to discover and develop towards their potential.
11. Governors have appointed experienced leaders who have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities. They invest in ongoing training for school leaders to hone their professional skills and their understanding of their responsibilities. This supports governors and senior leaders in ensuring that all Standards are met.
12. Governors provide well-informed support and challenge for senior leaders. They are thorough in discharging their duty to oversee the effective implementation of school policies and procedures. They receive regular reports from senior leaders and are frequent visitors to the school.
13. Senior leaders are meticulous in their oversight. They regularly present governors with detailed and analytical information on all areas of school life. Leaders are rigorous in their monitoring of the success of current policies and procedures, making adjustments in the light of any issues that arise.
14. Leaders have an open, consultative approach to decision making. They use formal and informal forums to draw on opinions from the full range of the school community. This helps them assess the success of initiatives. Leaders are not complacent in their self-evaluation. They are alert to the possibility of there being individual pupils who have negative experiences and are proactive in developing pastoral structures aimed at ensuring that all pupils feel valued and heard.
15. Governors and leaders are rigorous in assessing any actual and potential risks of proposed actions. Effective action is taken in response to identified risk, as seen in their response to matters noted in the risk assessment relating to the proposed increase in numbers. Leaders are alert to the risks presented to pupils' wellbeing by the pressures of social media, and by the increased use of artificial intelligence to generate online material. The curriculum has been adapted to manage these risks.
16. Leaders contact other agencies including local authorities as necessary to support pupils' wellbeing. This has included seeking training in the 'Prevent' duty and in creating a cyber risk strategy.
17. Governors and school leaders are committed to the active promotion of diversity and inclusion in the school. Leaders at all levels make sure that decisions consider the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. There is an appropriate accessibility plan covering the required time period.
18. The school's website provides parents with all required information. Parents are given regular reports on their children's progress. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information relating to any pupils, including those who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, whom they fund.
19. Leaders have a suitable procedure for managing complaints. Formal and informal discussions with parents help leaders identify minor issues so that they can act before these escalate. The majority of concerns that arise are dealt with at an early stage. Governors are kept aware of any formal complaints and ensure that the policy is followed correctly in managing them.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The curriculum covers all the required areas, with subject content typically moving beyond national curriculum age related expectations. It combines traditional subjects with more modern disciplines in order to prepare pupils for an increasingly digital world. The breadth of choice of subjects available reflects the school's mantra of encouraging pupils to discover, 'All you can be'.
22. Support for pupils who have SEND is highly effective. Learning support staff advise teachers on the needs of these pupils. Junior school pupils are supported in class or in small groups. Short term targeted support is provided for senior pupils as required. This helps the pupils understand and manage their specific learning issues so that over time they no longer have as much need for additional support. Leaders' monitoring of the progress of pupils who have SEND is thorough. The support provided enables pupils who have SEND to make rapid progress from their individual starting points.
23. The school has appropriate strategies to provide pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) with additional support for their English, should this be required. At the time of the inspection, no pupils who speak EAL required such additional support.
24. Teaching across the school is stimulating and provides appropriate levels of challenge for pupils, including those with high prior attainment. Teachers use effective methods including clear explanation, group discussion and the encouragement of pupils to take control of their learning in open-ended and research-based tasks. For example, pupils studying the history of World War I select their own topic to research, such as individual battles, or life on the home front, while senior pupils develop their research skills in the 'Alleyn's Intelligence Quotient'(AiQ) programme. On occasion, teaching does not provide senior school pupils with neuro-diverse needs sufficient time to understand or complete a task. Teaching encourages pupils to think and learn for themselves and develop positive attitudes towards learning because it successfully stimulates their interest and builds on their prior achievement.
25. Teachers have good subject knowledge and understanding. They assess pupils' understanding regularly and provide them with typically useful feedback. On occasion, feedback given to junior school pupils is not sufficiently precise about how they can improve their work. Senior school pupils value feedback that has been clearly tied to assessment criteria and use this well to improve their performance.
26. Teachers explain expectations clearly so that pupils can succeed in complex tasks. They use online resources effectively to share comprehensive notes with pupils. Teachers utilise discussion well to strengthen pupils' learning, from discussions about number bonds in the early years to those about *Hamlet* in Year 13. Teachers manage classroom behaviour well, so that learning is not hampered. Teaching is conducted in a way that promotes the positive values of the school.
27. In junior and senior schools alike, pupils make good progress. Children in Reception enjoy a curriculum that is highly attuned to their individual needs. Teaching, which balances time for purposeful play with times of formal learning, ensures that the children are well prepared for the transition to Year 1. Teachers set high standards for pupils in Year 6 to prepare them well for tests preparatory for entry to senior schools. Results at GCSE and A level have been consistently high over

time. Almost all pupils aim for places at universities in Britain or overseas and are successful in winning places at their chosen institution.

28. The wide programme of co-curricular activities provides pupils with opportunities to develop their personal interests and skills to high levels. The programme includes various academic societies, sporting, service and creative clubs. Pupils' attendance at these is high and their engagement with the clubs and activities develops their skills and talents in their chosen areas.

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

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

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

30. Leaders make sure that pupils respect the uniqueness and worth of all people. This is supported in the curriculum and by the ethos of the school, through which pupils learn that everyone has the right to be treated with respect, regardless of differences such as age, disability, gender or ethnicity. Pupils learn about the unacceptability of discriminatory behaviour through themes such as Black history.
31. The curriculum encourages pupils' understanding of different belief systems. It teaches them to consider the difference between opinion and belief and to debate these respectfully. For example, in religious studies lessons, pupils explore philosophical ideas, such as whether a benevolent God could ever deliberately create a faulty world.
32. Leaders' commitment to caring for the emotional and mental wellbeing of pupils has resulted in the creation of a dedicated 'wellbeing hub'. The pastoral team includes non-teaching staff dedicated to promoting pupils' welfare. They provide sources of support when pupils are feeling pressured. They are also active in creating relaxing moments outside the classroom to support pupils' wellbeing.
33. Leaders encourage the growth of pupils' self-confidence and self-assurance by providing positive feedback on their achievements and opportunities for pupils to speak in front of large audiences, including assemblies. Pupils are encouraged to express their views and to understand that others have the right to think differently. They learn to be self-reflective and to develop accurate and positive self-awareness. Pupils speak thoughtfully and confidently when making presentations on topics of their own choice, such as cultural intelligence, understanding autism and what is great sportsmanship.
34. The curriculum and co-curricular programmes offer considerable opportunities for sport and physical activity. In PSHE lessons and form times pupils discuss the importance of exercise, healthy eating and sleep. They learn about the importance of seeking a healthy balance between work and relaxation in managing their school lives. Pupils develop their physical health and their skills with support from expert coaching. The many teams, for both male and female pupils, reach high standards, some becoming national champions in their specific sport
35. Leaders responsible for PSHE and RSE meet regularly so that there is a clear and well-structured programme running across the school. PSHE lessons help to build pupils' resilience and their understanding of safe internet usage. RSE lessons ensure that pupils have the information they need on matters such as puberty, contraception, consent and forming healthy relationships, so that they can make informed choices as they mature. Teaching is supported by occasional visiting speakers. The course is well resourced, and responsive to pupils' suggestions for improvement.
36. Leaders have established clear behavioural expectations and set clear sanctions which would result should behaviour fall short of these. The pupils' code of conduct is based on the school's values. Pupils understand the well-communicated school rules and respect these so that the overall atmosphere is positive and happy. Breaches are few and are managed by staff consistently and effectively. The anti-bullying measures are well understood and implemented appropriately by staff. As a result, unacceptable behaviour is minimised as much as possible.

37. Pupils are well supervised throughout the day. Staff are on duty in the school buildings and in the different outdoor areas during break. Children in Reception are always within sight and sound of adults.
38. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders rigorously follow up any absenteeism and inform the local authority whenever pupils join or leave the school outside normal transition times.
39. Premises and accommodation are clean and well maintained and security measures are robust. There are regular checks of all health and safety matters and swift action is taken as necessary. Arrangements for first aid are suitable and thorough, with trained nurses available in the wellbeing hub.
40. Fire prevention procedures are thorough. Fire evacuation drills are carried out as required. Fire risk assessments have been carried out for all building and actions taken to reduce any identified risk.

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

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

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

42. The curriculum promotes the school's aim of encouraging pupils to develop empathy and respect within a diverse community. Each academic department considers diversity and equality when drawing up schemes of work. For example, the geography department continually reviews schemes of work to make sure they are anti-racist and that perspectives of different countries on issues such as global inequality are considered. While marking Black History month, teachers focused pupils' thinking on the negative impact of prejudice on people's lives. Leaders consistently promote equality and rejection of bias based on race, belief or sexual orientation. Planned events beyond the classroom to promote understanding of other cultures have included talks from visitors on celebrations of different faiths and fashion shows drawing on different cultural traditions.
43. An equality and diversity panel composed of pupils, staff and governors meet to discuss how to promote inclusivity further. Staff provide support for pupil-led societies such as the feminist society, LGBT society and minority students union. These help further promote pupils' understanding and appreciation of British values, such as individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance.
44. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum for junior and senior pupils so that texts and topics reflect Britain's multi-cultural society. Texts studied in English lessons include authors of different nationalities including British, Pakistani and Nigerian. A senior school project focuses on how the experiences of marginalised groups have been represented in art. Such curricular choices mean that pupils of all ages are consistently encouraged to develop appreciation and empathic understanding of diverse societies and cultures.
45. Pupils' views are actively sought and have a direct impact on decisions affecting their school lives. Children in Reception vote for which story to choose and junior school pupils vote for charities to support. Sectional pupil councils make suggestions for changes affecting their part of the school. The recently introduced rewards system was created in consultation with pupils. These experiences of the democratic process help prepare pupils to be active participants in British society.
46. The PSHE programme ensures that pupils develop an understanding of British political and legal structures. PSHE also teaches them the importance of the law in creating a safe and harmonious society. Pupils' understanding is extended by visits from leading figures in legal and political fields. Leaders take care that there is balance when any political views are discussed.
47. Pupils develop a firm understanding of economic matters. This starts in Reception, where children manipulate coins as they play shops. Junior pupils learn how banks work. Pupils are responsible for managing the financial practicalities of organising a fund-raising event. Sixth-form pupils are well prepared for the financial realities of university life with information on student grants and budgeting.
48. There is a well-structured careers guidance programme for pupils in the senior school. This includes visits from representatives of different professions, careers fairs and work experience. Careers guidance provides pupils with up-to-date and impartial guidance covering the next stage of their lives, whether employment, or applying to university or for places on apprenticeships, art foundation course or at conservatoires.

49. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to contribute to the lives of others and develop their sense of social responsibility. They volunteer for leadership and responsibility roles within the school. In lessons pupils discuss issues of local and global concern, such as climate change and the UN's sustainability goals. Altruism is encouraged throughout the school. Large numbers of pupils are involved in community partnership activities such as supporting homeless charities, visiting the elderly in care homes or helping coaching pupils from local primary schools in a range of subjects.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Leaders implement rigorous procedures to safeguard pupils. All governors undertake safeguarding training. The designated governor meets regularly with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and members of the school's safeguarding team to provide support and maintain oversight. A rigorous safeguarding audit provides the basis for governors' formal annual review of policies and procedures and enables governors to have a clear understanding of how the school is managing any concerns. Governors undertake regular checks of the school's filtering and monitoring systems to ensure that they are robust.
52. Leaders have ensured that the DSL has the time and resources needed to focus on the safeguarding role. There are several senior members of staff in both the junior and the senior school nominated as deputy DSLs. The team of those trained to a high level in safeguarding includes the school nurse, and has been further extended to include all heads of house. This helps strengthen safeguarding awareness throughout the school so that concerns can be identified and managed swiftly. There are regular meetings of the pastoral teams to share concerns.
53. Policies for safeguarding are thorough and reflect current statutory guidance. The induction process for staff joining the school includes safeguarding. The DSL provides regular updates to all staff, so that they are confident in knowing what to do should they have reason to be worried about a pupil's wellbeing. Staff routinely share minor pastoral concerns with the safeguarding team, conscious that they may be part of a wider issue.
54. The DSL keeps records securely in an electronic system. Records include clear notes of meetings and decisions taken, along with the rationale for those decisions. The DSL maintains effective relationships with local agencies across London boroughs, approaching them for advice and referring safeguarding concerns to them when necessary. Leaders follow the advice received and act in the best interests of the pupils.
55. Pupils know that they can speak directly to staff or use an icon on the website to report concerns anonymously. They learn in PSHE lessons how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Procedures are in place to filter access to the internet and monitor its usage, alerting the DSL to any breaches.
56. Recruitment processes are rigorous and all required safer recruitment checks are completed before individuals are allowed to start work at the school. Regular meetings between administrative staff and the link governor check that all the necessary information is recorded accurately in the single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Alleyn's School
Department for Education number	210/6312
Registered charity number	1161864
Address	Townley Road Dulwich London SE22 8SU
Phone number	020 8557 1500
Email address	head@alleyns.org.uk
Website	http://www.alleyns.org.uk
Proprietor	Alleyn's School
Chair	Mrs Laura Malkin
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Lunnon
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	1451
Date of previous inspection	16 to 19 November 2021

Information about the school

58. Alleyn's School is an independent co-educational day school. Founded in 1619, it has occupied its current site in south east London since 1887. The school is overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, the junior school and senior school have been amalgamated under a single registration. The junior school has two sections: an infant section for pupils aged 4 to 7 years, and a junior section for pupils 7 to 11 years. The senior school is organised into three sections: Years 7 and 8 comprise the lower school, pupils in Years 9 to 11 comprise the middle school, and the upper school provides for sixth-form pupils.
59. There are 36 children in the early years, split into two Reception classes.
60. The school has identified 230 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. English is an additional language for 318 pupils.
62. The school states its aims are encapsulated in the phrase, "All we can be". The school aims to encourage pupils to be curious, courageous, intellectually rigorous, kind and ambitious. It intends for pupils to enjoy their learning in a diverse and caring community so that they develop empathy, creativity and leadership. The school seeks to encourage pupils to understand the importance of ethical as well as practical considerations as they reflect on their responsibilities to society.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

15 to 17 October 2024

63. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

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

65. 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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