

School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

Stover School

Stover

Newton Abbot

Devon

TQ12 6QG

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The school is a happy and busy community where school leaders promote an inclusive, and supportive environment where pupils feel valued and are well cared for. In this, school leaders are supported by governors, who know the school well and provide suitable oversight and challenge.
2. Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum, suited to their ages, abilities and needs. Teachers are knowledgeable and understand their pupils' strengths and challenges well. They prepare lessons carefully and provide effective teaching in both the prep and senior school. As a result, pupils make good progress. The extensive programme of co-curricular activities enhances pupils' learning and provides opportunities for them to acquire new interests and skills.
3. Leaders and teachers monitor and track pupils' progress in both the prep and the senior school but there is some inconsistency in the tracking systems used and their effectiveness. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well provided for by well trained and effective staff who give carefully targeted help.
4. Leaders ensure that the school is safe and well maintained, all necessary checks are carried out and the medical provision is suitable. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act. There is a suitable accessibility plan for the site but that for access to the curriculum lacks necessary details and was amended to include timescales during the inspection.
5. The aims of the school to nurture, challenge and inspire are clear to all pupils who respect one another and behave well. This is because pupils are expertly guided to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and be tolerant and respectful of people in their community. In the well-planned and comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme, pupils develop an awareness and understanding of themselves and others. They contribute to a variety of projects beyond school in their charitable and community endeavours.
6. Boarding is well organised and well led. Accommodation for boarders is comfortable and appropriate. Boarding staff are experienced and well trained. Boarders feel relaxed, happy and well cared for while at school.
7. Well-qualified and experienced staff successfully educate the youngest children in the early years setting, ensuring their wellbeing, liaising closely with their families and preparing them effectively for transition into the main school.
8. School leaders ensure that safeguarding is well managed, and staff are effectively trained. There is a comprehensive approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils through weekly pastoral, welfare and safeguarding meetings.

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:

- develop the effectiveness and consistency of the academic tracking system, and associated action plans, across the school to facilitate pupils' progress
- ensure that the accessibility plan for access to the curriculum includes all necessary elements.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders and governors have a clear strategy and vision for the future of the school, they understand what it does well, appreciate the challenges and regularly review areas for development to ensure that the needs of the pupils are met. Together, school leaders and governors actively promote pupils' wellbeing.
10. Governors visit the school regularly and carry out effective oversight of leaders' decision-making. They support and challenge senior leaders and meet with staff and pupils. Through a variety of committees, governors ensure that the Standards, including those outlined in the Equality Act, are met, although during the inspection the plan for access to the curriculum was amended to include timescales.
11. In the early years, the team of teachers and nursery staff is well managed so that the safety of the children is assured and they make good progress in their learning and development. Passionate and child-centred, leaders in the early years are knowledgeable and understand the requirements of individual children. Transition from the early years to the prep school is well managed.
12. In boarding, senior leaders understand the requirements necessary to create and maintain a safe and welcoming environment. Experienced boarding staff work closely with academic staff to help support and nurture the pupils. Consequently, boarders thrive and describe their boarding house as a 'home from home'.
13. School leaders and heads of academic departments assess the effectiveness of teaching by a variety of methods. For instance, they work with teaching staff to enable the sharing of effective skills in the classroom and to develop appropriate feedback strategies to encourage progress. Pupils' progress is fed back to parents in two written reports a year as well as at parents' evening.
14. All necessary information is available to parents, either on the website or on request from the school. Where a pupil is wholly or partly funded by a local authority, an annual account of income and relevant information is provided to the local authority. The school has a comprehensive complaints policy and procedures are carried out effectively as and when required. Health and safety procedures are rigorous and reviewed regularly with input from ongoing evaluations from all areas of the school site. This ensures that risks are understood and mitigated and policies are implemented effectively and consistently, resulting in a focus on continuous improvement for pupils' wellbeing.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum, suited to their ages, abilities and needs. Subject leaders devise suitable schemes of work in the prep and the senior school which reference the skills and knowledge to be gained. In the prep school pupils' linguistic skills are developed from an early age; Spanish is taught from Reception, French from Year 3 and German from Year 5. In these subjects and, in others such as physical education, younger pupils benefit from specialist teaching based in the senior school.
17. Pupils' creative and technological skills are well developed across all ages in a curriculum which includes music, drama, dance and art as well as food and nutrition and computer science. Teachers deliver these subjects effectively to younger pupils and consequently pupils achieve well and often go on to study creative subjects at GCSE and A level.
18. Results at GCSE and A level are above the national average and most pupils perform in line with or above predictions from their starting points. Where some academic departments did not achieve as well as expected in the latest set of results leaders have responded with departmental action plans, although these vary in effectiveness. Data tracking and monitoring of progress is in place in both the prep and senior schools though systems used are not yet fully developed or consistent across the whole school.
19. In the early years, teachers implement effective teaching strategies and consequently children develop their literacy, numeracy, communication and motor skills well. There are high levels of trust between children and adults. Children are highly engaged, have good listening skills and work well collaboratively when exploring their stimulating environment. Leaders monitor children carefully and put support in place promptly should additional needs emerge.
20. Knowledgeable staff provide effective teaching across the school. Teachers use a variety of techniques to transfer knowledge and skills to their pupils, questioning them effectively, explaining their responses as required and creating a positive learning environment. For instance, in science lessons teachers introduce individual and group experiments effectively and pupils discuss and reinforce each other's learning whilst carrying them out; in mathematics pupils ask pertinent questions of the teacher to clarify their understanding and assist their progress.
21. Lessons are well planned, and take account of pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment. Relevant feedback from their class teachers enables pupils to develop their learning skills. Older pupils put these skills to effective use when carrying out research for their extended project qualification. Pupils are proud of, and interested in, their work. They participate successfully in a range of academic competitions and challenges which help to enhance their academic experience.
22. The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language is supported by inputs such as glossaries and differentiated resources while key words are used in science with checks of understanding and usage
23. Specialist staff give individualised help to pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In the prep school, judicious use of teaching assistants also helps to ensure the good progress of these pupils. Across the whole school, pupils with such needs are quickly identified and detailed plans are produced to assist teachers in supporting them appropriately. As a result of the

school's effective provision, older pupils with additional needs achieve well at GCSE and beyond in relation to their starting points.

24. Senior leaders' aim to broaden pupils' experience as demonstrated in the extensive extra-curricular provision. The range of options helps pupils to develop a broad range of interests and skills from lace making and clay pigeon shooting to yoga and philosophy. Pupils enjoy themselves, mix with each other across year groups and have fun while they learn something new.

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

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

26. Pupils are supported by teachers who promote the development of pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. They feel valued because staff encourage them to strive to be the best that they can be. As a result, they develop resilience and can work towards long-term goals with confidence.
27. In PSHE lessons pupils are encouraged to develop greater self-awareness, but also to have a strong spiritual and moral understanding and an awareness of the needs of others. Pupils are taught about healthy personal relationships in sex and relationships education (RSE) and to 'think before you speak'. PSHE lessons include topics such as internet safety, wellbeing, mental health and misuse of drugs.
28. Assembly topics created around a theme for each week supplement the PSHE programme and allow participation by pupils in their delivery. Recent themes have included 'Living a balanced life' and 'Standing up for what is right'. Pupils are well informed and better prepared to cope with life's challenges. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of all members of their community recognising their common humanity and uniqueness as individuals.
29. Pupils are taught and expected to behave well, and they do so both in lessons and around the site. Supportive behaviour from older pupils, for instance in the boarding house, is instrumental in helping younger pupils understand and meet expectations. On the few occasions where behaviour falls short of this, the focus is on positive support. The wide group of staff involved in the wellbeing of pupils monitor individuals carefully, and promptly provide suitable support for pupils who may need it. Pupils and staff agree that the behaviour policy is fair. Bullying is rare and should it happen, it is promptly and appropriately dealt with.
30. In the prep school the Stover Hero Award is highly sought after. It is designed to recognise pupils who demonstrate the school's values of being caring, supportive, thoughtful, brave, respectful, honest, inclusive and kind at an exceptional level. The award is held in high regard by pupils, staff and parents and has had a significant impact upon the pupils' understanding of these values.
31. Pupils participate enthusiastically in PE and games; In this way they improve their physical wellbeing. This is further enhanced by provision such as the Combined Cadet Force, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and participation in outdoor activities such as the Ten Tors walk. The youngest children develop their physical confidence including by taking part in outdoor learning opportunities.
32. Boarding is well organised and staffed by well-trained and experienced individuals. There is a suitable induction programme for boarding pupils, who feel safe and are well cared for. The boarding house has a welcoming, family atmosphere with suitable provision for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Main meals for boarders are served in the school dining room. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family, access to a programme of activities, and they appreciate the support they receive from house staff. The boarding accommodation is well maintained and comfortable and meets the needs of the boarders who live there. Relationships between boarders within and across year groups are positive. There is a suitable system of prefects within boarding

33. There is a ten-year strategic plan in place to develop the premises which are effectively maintained. Fire procedures and infrastructure are appropriate and there are regular fire drills. All regular checks are carried out on services and installations. Traffic is well managed. The medical centre is suitable and there are large numbers of trained first aiders, including training in paediatric first aid for all those working in the early years. Boarders who are unwell are well looked after and supervised well. Attendance is monitored as required and procedures are in place to account for missing pupils. Leaders ensure that any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times are reported to the relevant local authority.
34. The school takes its responsibilities about mental health seriously. Provision through the wellbeing team of staff, which includes counsellors, mentors and mental health practitioners, ensures pupils are well supported. Individual pupils are encouraged to choose an adult who can support them. The pupils are aware of this, and they seek support when necessary.

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

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

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

36. Pupils are encouraged from a young age to accept responsibility for their behaviour. Similarly, they are encouraged to understand and respect everyone in the school community. Understanding the difference between right and wrong informs pupils' behaviour and helps them to develop an awareness and respect for civil and criminal law in England.
37. Leaders careful planning promotes pupils' human, social and economic education. There is a commitment to social education to broaden the pupils' experiences and prepare them for life beyond school. This is delivered within the PSHE programme and supplemented by assemblies on themes such as 'Being a responsible citizen' and 'Extraordinary people who have shaped our world'. To ensure that pupils understand economics and how to manage their finances all pupils study business studies in Year 9. Additionally, there is an age-appropriate finance module in PSHE in each year group including in the sixth form where it includes budgeting, loans and investments.
38. The aims and ethos of the school are clear to all pupils who benefit from being in a respectful and supportive environment. Cultural differences are discussed and embraced. In the prep school pupils acquire an appreciation of other cultures in their Spanish, French and German lessons and conversational topics in these lessons lead them towards considering how others live. Boarding helps develop pupils' social and cultural knowledge and understanding through developing relationships with pupils across year groups, and from different cultures.
39. Careers education forms part of the school's PSHE programme, and extended provision comes in the form of impartial advice, including careers days and presentations from parent volunteers. Pupils are encouraged and supported in organising work experience. PSHE curriculum time is devoted to discussing GCSE options in Year 9, A-level options in Year 11 and UCAS advice in Years 12. Younger pupils learn about different jobs through role play and visits from parents in a selection of jobs. Children in the early years and prep school pupils are encouraged to think about their next steps and staff help them prepare for the important transitions between settings, which are well managed.
40. The school encourages pupils to contribute to wider society by engaging with charitable activities, DofE volunteering, and through pupil groups such as the Green Team. This group coordinates activities locally such as beach cleans. Pupils recently reviewed the school's use of single-use plastic and helped to change habits and they have been instrumental in helping the school to achieve the Green Flag Award.
41. The school system for selection of the prefect team involves all staff and pupils. This, along with the election of pupils for council representatives, demonstrates the use of democracy in practice and prepares pupils for adult life in British society. Pupil leaders, including sports leaders, carry out their leadership roles effectively and transfer their knowledge and skills to younger pupils; this brings benefits both to the younger pupils and to the older pupils. Boarders actively contribute their views to the operation of boarding provision and the school acts on pupils' feedback when possible

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

42. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

43. Leaders ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare. There is a comprehensive and up-to-date safeguarding policy. Regular training of all staff and regular discussions with pupils across the school help to create an effective safeguarding culture. Should they have a safeguarding concern, pupils can list individuals that they would be happy talking to as well as other options available to them. These include clicking on an icon on the school website to express a concern or putting a note in one of the school-wide 'worry boxes'.
44. Safeguarding leaders take a comprehensive approach to identifying and managing the risk of harm to pupils through weekly wellbeing meetings involving relevant pastoral, health and safeguarding staff. As well as enabling staff to share concerns, and manage the risk to pupils' wellbeing, these meetings also lead to prompt, effective actions being taken to support pupils. Links between safeguarding leads and senior pastoral staff are close and collaborative.
45. The safeguarding team are all trained at the advanced level and they ensure that staff are appropriately inducted on appointment and that regular updates of safeguarding practice are delivered. The designated safeguarding governor effectively supports and challenges the safeguarding team and regularly updates the whole governing body. Safeguarding is a standing item on all governors meeting agendas and governors carry out a suitable annual review during which they interrogate both policy and practice. In this way they implement effective oversight.
46. School leaders demonstrate suitable knowledge in understanding threshold levels for referral and they refer concerns appropriately. They liaise appropriately with external agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
47. Pupils understand how to stay safe online and there are age-appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place throughout the school, including in the boarding house. Students do not use phones during the school day and in boarding, and house parents review pupils' mobile device activity regularly. In the boarding house there are sufficient staff supervising pupils outside teaching time, with at least one member of staff sleeping in the building each night.
48. Recruitment procedures are thorough and records are well kept showing that appropriate checks have been made before staff begin work at the school. These ensure the suitability of governors, staff and volunteers appointed at the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Stover School
Department for Education number	878/6014
Registered charity number	306712
Address	Stover School Stover Newton Abbot Devon TQ12 6QG
Phone number	01626 354505
Email address	schooloffice@stover.co.uk
Website	www.stover.co.uk
Proprietor	Stover School Association
Chair	Mr Stewart Killick
Headteacher	Mr Richard Notman
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	533
Number of boarding pupils	34
Date of previous inspection	14 to 16 January 2020

Information about the school

50. Stover school is an independent, coeducational day and boarding school for pupils ages 3 to 18 years located close to the town of Newton Abbot in Devon. A board of governors act as trustees for the school which is a registered charity. The school comprises four sections: an Early Years Foundation Stage, prep school, senior school and sixth form.
51. There is one boarding house situated in the school's main building which accommodates 34 male and female pupils aged between 13 and 18 years. There are 45 pupils in the early years of whom 30 are in the Nursery.
52. The school has identified 120 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are six pupils in the school who have an education, health and care plan.
53. English is an additional language for twelve pupils.
54. The school states that its aims are to provide education which nurtures, celebrates, challenges and inspires each pupil. The holistic approach combines a progressive research-based curriculum, with a resilient moral code based on sound family and Christian principles. The school aims to prepare confident and independent young people to adapt and succeed in an ever-changing world.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 April to 2 May 2024

55. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The on-site inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

56. 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
- visits to boarding house accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

57. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit isi.net