

School inspection report

26 to 28 November 2024

Leighton Park School

Shinfield Road

Reading

Berkshire

RG2 7ED

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. Leadership, management and governance at the school reflect a strong commitment to pupils' wellbeing, Quaker values and academic excellence. Strategic decision making, robust safeguarding and effective policy implementation are complemented by appropriate oversight by governors.
2. Leaders deliver a broad, balanced curriculum tailored to pupils' needs. Proficient teaching, rigorous assessment, and strategies that are well-matched to pupils' needs, drive academic success. The co-curricular programmes enhance pupils' confidence and skills through a wide range of activities. Initiatives like the global perspectives curriculum and oakleaf diploma prepare pupils for future academic and professional challenges, fostering motivation and confidence.
3. Leaders ensure that teaching is effective and fosters creativity and confidence. There is some inconsistency in the application of questioning strategies to develop pupils' critical thinking skills..
4. Leaders nurture physical and mental health. The teaching of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, provision of sensory rooms, and co-curricular activities help to promote resilience. Robust pastoral care supports pupils' emotional wellbeing.
5. Leaders successfully prepare pupils to contribute meaningfully to society through teaching and pastoral care that consistently reflect the school values. Community service fosters pupils' personal growth. Projects such as literacy support and bicycle donations cultivate empathy and responsibility. They are examples of the school's values-led approach in action. This is a significant strength of the school.
6. Leaders promote social and economic wellbeing through Quaker values, community engagement and a balanced curriculum. The school's Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) programme, careers guidance and pupil leadership roles develop confident, empathetic and socially responsible pupils.
7. Boarders benefit from a well-maintained environment that fosters independence and supports wellbeing. Effective induction arrangements ease transitions, while regular meetings allow boarders to voice concerns and influence their boarding experience positively.
8. Safeguarding provision includes robust policies, proactive staff training and comprehensive systems, ensuring that pupils are supported and secure. Pupils benefit from clear reporting channels, online safety education and tailored safeguarding measures for boarders.

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 teachers use questioning strategies that consistently encourage pupils' critical thinking skills.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leadership at the school demonstrates a strong commitment to pupils' wellbeing, underpinned by the integration of Quaker values into all aspects of school life. This commitment is evident in the culture of mutual respect fostered across the community. Daily practices such as silent reflection during lunch and the organisation of 'collects' (assemblies) and meetings for worship create a calm and purposeful atmosphere, enhancing pupils' sense of belonging.
10. Leaders ensure the robust implementation of policies supporting health, safety and wellbeing. Fire safety measures, frequent fire drills and clear risk management strategies are in place, supported by oversight by governors to ensure compliance with the Standards. A comprehensive tracking system for academic progress demonstrates leaders' capacity to use data effectively to support pupils.
11. Governance plays an integral role in holding leaders accountable. Governors engage in monitoring activities, including performance reviews and complaint log evaluations. This collaborative approach reinforces the school's safeguarding culture.
12. The school's engagement with external agencies, such as the online pupil wellbeing programme and PSHE resources, enriches its provision, ensuring high-quality mental health and personal development support.
13. Leaders ensure that teaching aligns with the Quaker ethos, as demonstrated by the inclusion of sustainability in geography and the concept of respect in relation to modern foreign languages, meaning that the school's ethos is emphasised across the curriculum.
14. Boarding provision is managed with professionalism and care, supported by experienced staff who demonstrate a thorough knowledge of pupils' needs. Regular meetings and anonymous online reporting tools allow boarders to raise concerns, fostering a culture of trust and safety.
15. Leaders help to develop respectful relationships with pupils, and pupils understand that any form of discrimination will not be tolerated. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils its duty according to the Equality Act 2010. The school has an accessibility plan in place which is reviewed appropriately.
16. Leaders' encouragement of co-curricular participation means that pupils value learning both within and beyond the classroom. Clubs such as 'mediminds', for those interested in medicine, and the 'repair shop' reflect a commitment to nurturing creativity and individuality.
17. Leaders demonstrate responsiveness and adaptability. When concerns arise, for example, about the impact of flexi-boarding on full-time boarders, decisions are carefully evaluated to prioritise pupils' needs.
18. Effective handling of complaints ensures that parental concerns are addressed promptly.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum that caters effectively to the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. The breadth and choice provided by the curriculum, particularly at GCSE and sixth form, for example through options like dance and engineering, provide pathways that cater to individuals' interests and aspirations.
21. Leaders' strategic use of data ensures pupils are supported and challenged appropriately. Leaders reflect on the curriculum and its efficacy through subject audits and make changes where necessary in response. Academic outcomes are secure, particularly in how they reflect progress at GCSE.
22. Pupils make good progress across all curriculum areas. In mathematics, Year 8 pupils confidently solve geometric transformation problems, while Year 12 pupils apply calculus knowledge to practical scenarios. In science, Year 10 biology pupils show skill in detailed observation, such as plant stem analysis, and Year 9 pupils excel in fingerprint research projects, assessed using clear criteria. Similarly, technological literacy is promoted, with Year 9 pupils exploring artificial intelligence concepts and Year 11 engineering pupils applying coding to circuit design.
23. Teaching is purposeful, well-paced and incorporates effective methodologies. Pupils are mostly highly engaged and self-motivated. In English, pupils engage critically with diverse texts, including works that address significant historical and cultural issues such as resistance to oppression and human rights. The curriculum focuses on broadening pupils' perspectives and fosters thoughtful discussions.
24. In many lessons, the effective implementation of teaching strategies fosters pupils' independence and development. Pupils take initiative in their learning, demonstrate autonomy in completing tasks, and approach complex projects with confidence. However, in some areas, questioning strategies to encourage pupils' critical thinking skills were less consistently applied.
25. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported through a range of strategies such as seating plans and technological tools, guided by the individual learning centre. Pupils who have SEND make good progress, as exemplified in their success in global perspectives projects.
26. Leaders employ a rigorous assessment framework, using tailored feedback and regular self-evaluation to track progress. Teachers balance praise with constructive criticism, fostering an environment where pupils respond to feedback and refine their skills. In design and technology, Year 11 pupils' iterative processes in computer-aided design modelling exemplifies their development of skills in response to feedback.
27. A well-rounded co-curricular programme offers opportunities for personal growth. Sports activities, such as Year 7 and 8 basketball and national-level hockey, enhance physical skills and promote teamwork. Clubs in engineering, economics, creative writing and music foster discipline-specific skills, with pupil-led initiatives such as the new English literature club reflecting leaders' responsiveness to pupils' interests.
28. The creative curriculum encourages confidence and technical precision. Year 11 design and technology combines teaching with independent practice, while Year 13 art incorporates the

teaching of art history, enhancing pupils' critical thinking and contextual understanding, enabling them to draw inspiration from diverse artistic movements and deepen their creative practice.

29. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) develop their language skills quickly, supported by a comprehensive programme that celebrates multilingualism. Language lessons in Mandarin and German effectively combine speaking, listening and vocabulary development through varied activities, promoting high engagement.
30. Pupils gain knowledge and skills that prepare them for academic and professional success. A focus on critical thinking and ethical decision making is evident in initiatives such as the oakleaf diploma and service-learning programmes. Leaders foster global awareness, inspiring pupils to pursue international degrees.
31. A variety of activities are available to boarders at the weekend, and pupils' participation is high. Those who choose to stay in the house are well supervised and encouraged to use their time for socialising and recreational activity.

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

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

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

33. Leaders' commitment to developing pupils' communication skills and ability to sustain positive relationships fosters pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Pupils engage in open discussions during class, which helps them to think critically, articulate their ideas and take responsibility for their contributions.
34. Leaders have implemented a comprehensive relationships and sex education (RSE) and PSHE curriculum, supported by outside agencies and online platforms, which ensures age-appropriate guidance across all key stages. Form tutors deliver weekly one-hour sessions for consistent learning. Online resources and specialists provide diverse, expert-led content. As pupils make progress, lessons cover relevant topics tailored to their development, including mental health, substance abuse, online safety, sex and relationships, and life skills.
35. The school premises meet all health and safety requirements, with facilities such as the sensory room and wellbeing suite ensuring that physical and emotional needs are addressed. These spaces, created in response to pupils' feedback, provide opportunities for relaxation and support. Health and safety oversight is robust, with all staff trained in entry-level first aid and risk assessment protocols. Leaders ensure that appropriate fire safety measures are in place and fire drills are held regularly, including during boarding time.
36. Boarders have access to comfortable accommodation. Facilities such as secure storage, laundry services and access to kitchens promotes pupils' independence and wellbeing. Food provision is of a high quality, with a variety of nutritious meals and snacks available, contributing to pupils' positive physical and emotional health.
37. The physical education (PE) curriculum is designed to ensure high engagement, with pupils motivated to refine techniques and develop tactical strategies. Hockey lessons and extra-curricular clubs enable skilled players to excel in fixtures, while new pupils access tailored support to integrate into lessons and extra-curricular matches. Small-group teaching facilitates individualised feedback, allowing for focused skills development. Peer-led coaching fosters collaboration, while pupils' support for their peers, evident in lessons and informal settings, highlights a culture of teamwork.
38. Leaders work together with clearly defined roles to address pupils' pastoral needs, providing tailored support in tutor groups that strengthen relationships between tutors and pupils. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to resources to support their emotional wellbeing. The wellbeing suite, multisensory room and therapy dog are popular with pupils, who are able to access this provision to support their pastoral needs.
39. Pupils lead collects on mental health and food waste projects, developing their leadership and collaboration. These projects allow pupils to contribute meaningfully to their community and personal development.
40. Leaders establish clear behaviour expectations based on Quaker values, promoting respect and inclusivity, and reducing bullying. A well-defined behaviour policy and anti-bullying strategy ensure accountability, while a robust sanctions system addresses incidents swiftly.

41. The use of boarding meetings and online apps ensure that leaders seek pupils' feedback regularly. Boarders are able to share their views on the quality of boarding and ideas for improvements, and leaders are receptive and responsive to this.
42. A well-structured induction process for new boarders is in place, including a comprehensive pre-arrival programme where pupils and parents attend meetings and dinner in advance. New boarders are assigned mentors, provided with essential administrative details and supported by trained prefects, fostering trust, community cohesion and a smooth transition into boarding life.
43. Leaders balance academic and pastoral priorities. Pupils are supported well, with access to online programmes and regular mental health checks, ensuring comprehensive care. Leaders educate pupils to have the skills they need to overcome problems that may arise in terms of mental health. Initiatives such as 'girls on board', which explores friendship dynamics and challenges, and peer mentoring strengthen peer relationships and emotional wellbeing.
44. Leaders ensure that robust admissions and attendance policies are implemented with meticulous attention to detail, supporting pupils' academic and social development. Leaders report on pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points to the local authority.

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

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

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

46. Leaders at the school embed Quaker values of integrity, respect and kindness across all aspects of school life, fostering a strong sense of community and inclusion. Pupils are supported to develop empathy and compassion through co-curricular activities, leadership and mentoring roles.
47. The Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) programme is integral to the curriculum, encouraging pupils to take initiative in projects that benefit society. For example, the 'repair shop' club donates refurbished bicycles to community organisations. The CAS programme boosts pupils' self-esteem and confidence and helps to develop skills.
48. Leaders foster economic awareness through PSHE lessons, where pupils learn about practical life skills, such as managing taxes and loans. Outreach projects further enhance pupils' understanding of societal needs, with initiatives such as planning and running enrichment masterclasses for primary pupils. This builds a sense of responsibility, as demonstrated by pupils' enthusiastic participation and reflective discussions during house activities and assemblies.
49. Careers guidance is comprehensive and aligned to the Gatsby benchmarks. Pupils benefit from one-to-one advice, workshops and access to alumni networks. Initiatives such as the 'aspiring high' club prepare pupils for competitive university applications, while the oakleaf diploma combines practical life skills with ethical decision making, equipping pupils for future challenges.
50. Pupils demonstrate a well-developed understanding of equality and embrace diversity. The creation of a multi-faith prayer room, driven by pupils' initiative, reflects leaders' commitment to inclusivity and respect for all cultures and faiths. Assemblies, tutor discussions and curriculum choices, such as the inclusion of texts that highlight diverse perspectives, enable pupils to critically engage with societal issues.
51. Sixth formers actively support younger peers, fostering an atmosphere of trust and encouragement. Quaker values underpin a balanced approach to political issues, ensuring that pupils understand fundamental British values such as democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. Pupils have shown initiative in advocating for sustainability by voting to reduce meat consumption, reflecting their commitment to ethical responsibility.
52. Leaders' emphasis on community engagement has a tangible impact. Partnerships with over 25 local schools provide pupils with opportunities to lead workshops in music, art and dance, enhancing their creativity and cultural awareness. Events such as STEAMFest and green careers fairs draw participants from the wider community, broadening pupils' perspectives on global challenges.
53. Pupils are given dedicated time to pause, think, and reflect on themselves, their identity and their interactions with others, promoting self-awareness and empathy. The act of reflecting as a whole school fosters a sense of shared purpose, emphasising collective responsibility. During a meeting for worship, reflections from various cultural and religious traditions, such as readings from the Qur'an, broaden pupils' understanding and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. Topics such as courage, legacy, impact and helping others were discussed, encouraging pupils to think about their role in society and the importance of contributing positively to their communities.

54. The co-curricular programme bridges the gap between boarders and day pupils, giving them opportunities to eat and socialise together.

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. Leaders have robust systems, provide staff training and ensure adherence to clear protocols in terms of safeguarding. Safer recruitment practices, recorded comprehensively in the single central record, ensure the suitability of staff and other adults, with clear adherence to safeguarding statutory guidance.
57. Policies and procedures are rigorously applied. The school's safeguarding team ensures staff are well-equipped to address concerns. Training logs demonstrate comprehensive, timely updates reflecting the latest guidance. The training provides staff with practical examples of statutory guidance being applied, ensuring staff confidence in identifying and responding to safeguarding issues.
58. Leaders use online systems to report concerns, which allows information to be shared and trends to be identified over time. They maintain effective collaboration with external agencies to ensure that information is shared appropriately. Leaders are supported effectively by governors' oversight of safeguarding, which leads to continuous improvement.
59. Pupils know how to stay safe, including online, through regular PSHE sessions and the guidance of a dedicated online safety lead. Clear messaging and preventative measures, such as filtering and monitoring systems, along with awareness campaigns, allow pupils to navigate digital spaces responsibly.
60. Boarders are supported by tailored safeguarding measures, including independent listeners, an online reporting platform, and guardianship arrangements that address the specific needs of international pupils.
61. Pupils are comfortable seeking help from a wide network of trusted adults and peers.
62. Leaders engage with external partners such as the local authority designated officer (LADO) to ensure thorough responses to safeguarding challenges, including online risks and complex local issues. Regular reviews of incidents reflect a culture of accountability and improvement.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Leighton Park school
Department for Education number	870/6001
Registered charity number	309144
Address	Leighton Park School Shinfield Road Reading Berkshire RG2 7ED
Phone number	01189879600
Email address	info@leightonpark.com
Website	www.leightonpark.com
Proprietor	Leighton Park Trust
Chair	Eme Dean-Lewis
Headteacher	Matthew L. S. Judd
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	566
Number of boarding pupils	133
Date of previous inspection	23 to 26 November 2021

Information about the school

64. Leighton Park is an independent, co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between 11 and 18. It was founded in 1890 by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and is owned by Leighton Park Trust whose trustees are directors of the company and governors of the school. Alongside the day school, the school has three boarding houses, two of which are single-sex senior houses for male and female pupils respectively, and one of which is a co-educational junior boarding house.
65. In keeping with its Quaker values, the school aims to inspire achievement, with values, character and community, and to develop the qualities in young people that will help them to reach their greatest potential and become global change-makers of the future.
66. The school was routinely last inspected in November 2021.
67. Currently, 144 pupils receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
68. There are 133 pupils in the boarding houses.
69. English is an additional language for 144 pupils; 32 pupils receive additional support.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

26 to 28 November 2024

70. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

71. 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 headteacher, 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.

72. 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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