

# School inspection report

29 April to 1 May 2025

## **Rugby School**

Lawrence Sheriff Street

Rugby

Warwickshire

CV22 5EH

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. Pupils and staff know and understand the values of the school and put them into practice in their daily lives. Leaders have established a cohesive community across the school while also enabling boarding houses to develop their individual character and identity. This inspires pupils' loyalty and pride. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour which are clear to pupils, who treat each other and staff with respect.
2. Boarding accommodation is of good quality. Houses are secure and comfortable. Boarders are well cared for by house staff and teachers. Staff are appropriately trained and understand pupils' needs.
3. The school's co-curricular programme enables pupils to participate at all levels. This includes pupils who have developed their skills to a high level as well as those just starting to form an interest or skill in a wide range of activities. Through the co-curricular programme, pupils also develop their understanding of the importance of working together to support the local community and society as a whole. This is a significant strength of the school.
4. Pupils make good progress across the full range of subjects that they study. Teachers plan lessons well and take into account pupils' prior learning and attainment. In many lessons, teachers support pupils' understanding and learning with well-considered questions which prompt pupils to think carefully, deepen their understanding and develop their ideas. However, this approach is not consistently well developed across the school. This means that in some lessons, pupils do not deepen their understanding as well as they could.
5. Leaders work effectively with external agencies. They seek advice to inform their decisions and make prompt referrals to the police and children's services where necessary.
6. Staff are well trained. They are vigilant and act quickly to support pupils who are in need of additional help and guidance. Leaders and staff monitor pupils' progress carefully to ensure early identification of those in need of support.
7. The approach of leaders to the management of risk is comprehensive. Mitigation measures are identified and effectively implemented to help ensure pupils and staff are safe.
8. Governors are frequent visitors to the school. They provide support and challenge to leaders and hold them effectively to account for their work. Governors speak with staff and pupils to deepen their understanding of what life is like for pupils at the school. Governors ensure that school policies and procedures, including safeguarding arrangements, are robustly implemented.
9. Staff are well trained to support the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are supported effectively in lessons so that they can make good progress and achieve well.

## 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 in lessons teachers use questioning consistently well to deepen pupils' thinking and develop their ideas.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors maintain appropriate oversight of leaders' work. A range of governor sub-committees focus on specific areas of responsibility. These committees receive detailed and focused reports from leaders containing relevant information. Governors scrutinise these reports diligently and report to the full board on the impact of leaders' work. Governors also visit the school frequently to see boarding houses in operation and listen to the views of pupils and staff.
11. Leaders' development planning and review is informed by the views of pupils, parents and staff. Leaders carefully consider potential risks associated with any changes they propose. Leaders ensure that suitable policies are in place and updated as required. Leaders monitor their implementation to help ensure that policies and procedures are effective in promoting the wellbeing of pupils.
12. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan is in place which leaders implement effectively. Pupils who have SEND receive the support they need to access the full curriculum and the full range of co-curricular activities.
13. Leaders' approach to the management of risk is systematic, and practice is consistent across the school. Leaders carefully identify risks and ensure that suitable control measures are in place to reduce risks to pupils and members of the school community. Leaders review risk assessments at suitable intervals to ensure they remain effective and that risks are suitably managed.
14. Leaders ensure that a suitable complaints policy is in place and that any complaints are resolved in a timely manner. Clear records are maintained which allow leaders to easily recognise and respond to any trends or patterns in complaints, including those related to boarding provision and complaints raised by pupils or parents.
15. Liaison with external agencies is both effective and timely. Leaders inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.
16. Boarding is led by well-trained and dedicated staff who understand the needs of boarders and take effective steps to ensure boarders are helped and supported and feel safe at school.
17. Governors ensure that leaders have appropriate skills and understanding so that the Standards are consistently met.
18. Parents receive regular and detailed written reports on their child's attainment and progress. The required information is made available to parents on the school website.

### 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 have designed a curriculum that covers all the key areas and is flexible to meet the needs of pupils. The wide range of subjects that pupils are able to select at GCSE, which include subjects such as Ancient Greek and computing, alongside English, mathematics, science, humanities and the arts, help pupils develop and explore their academic interests in breadth and depth. Leaders have implemented a sixth-form curriculum which allows pupils to choose either to focus on a small number specific subjects or to maintain a broader portfolio of study.
21. The choices that leaders have enabled pupils to make to shape their own curriculum helps to keep pupils motivated and supports them to make good progress. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and scrutinise data carefully to help inform future planning. The co-curricular programme allows pupils to maintain their interest in subjects they may have chosen not to follow as part of their examinations.
22. Pupils engage keenly in their work and make good progress. They are ambitious in their learning and readily ask questions to further their understanding and extend their knowledge. Pupils learn to think critically and carefully. Pupils communicate with clarity and confidence. Teachers' secure subject knowledge enables them to plan and adapt lessons well.
23. In lessons, staff make good use of time and use a range of resources of suitable quality to help deepen pupils' understanding. Pupils respond well to written and oral feedback, which is specific and detailed and helps pupils clearly understand what they need to do in order to improve their work.
24. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding and prompt further deep thinking with carefully constructed questions that help pupils develop their understanding and gain new knowledge. However, this approach is not fully developed across the teaching of all subjects. In some lessons, teachers' questioning does not enable pupils to develop their ideas and deepen their conceptual understanding as well as they could.
25. Staff receive suitable training on how to adapt their teaching to best support pupils who have SEND. The needs of pupils are identified promptly, and strategies are developed and used by teachers to help pupils who have SEND to make good progress.
26. Leaders have implemented an appropriate system to assess pupils' progress. The data gathered by these assessments is frequently scrutinised and discussed by leaders to identify and support pupils who are in need of additional help at an early stage.
27. Boarders are well supported in their work by teachers who understand their needs. Frequent formal discussions between academic and pastoral staff mean that the data gathered by assessment is scrutinised carefully and pupils' needs are identified at an early stage.
28. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported effectively within lessons to develop their subject-specific vocabulary and understanding of technical terminology. Leaders review the effectiveness of strategies to support pupils' English language development so that they make good progress across the full range of subjects that they study.

29. The co-curricular programme enables pupils to develop their skills and interests in areas of their choice, including sport, music and drama, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and a wide range of clubs and societies, all of which have a pupil leader who is usually a member of the sixth form. This helps older pupils develop their leadership and organisational skills and supports communication between staff and pupil participants.
30. The co-curricular provision is inclusive and supports both pupils who are performing at the highest level and those who are just starting to develop their skills. Leaders have also chosen timings for activities that make it as easy as possible for day pupils to become fully involved. The co-curricular programme allows pupils to develop skills of teamwork and collaboration as well as infusing a sense of ambition and promoting their self-esteem. As the programme also includes elements of service, it helps pupils understand the importance of supporting the community and broadening their perspectives.

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

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

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

32. Relationships between pupils and staff are mutually respectful and warm. Staff have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. This is well understood by pupils who behave well and treat each other with understanding and respect. Leaders deal with rare incidents of serious misbehaviour promptly and appropriately. Pupils are notably loyal to their houses and the co-curricular programme ensures that pupils from different houses mix with others routinely, which contributes to the development of a cohesive school community.
33. The school's anti-bullying policy is effectively implemented by leaders. Staff are vigilant and alert to the signs of bullying and discriminatory behaviour and act quickly to resolve situations when they occur. Lessons in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education help pupils to develop a keen awareness of what constitutes bullying. Pupils understand that they are active in helping to ensure steps are taken to prevent and respond to potential bullying. Leaders ensure that pupils get the help and support they need.
34. Medical support for pupils is put in place promptly by well-trained and supportive staff in suitable accommodation. Liaison with boarding house staff is effective in ensuring pupils' needs are met throughout the day and at night.
35. Leaders give careful consideration to boarding accommodation in order to create a secure and comfortable 'home from home'. Boarders receive a comprehensive induction when they join the school. They continue to receive ongoing care and support from dedicated staff who are well trained and know and understand boarders' evolving needs. Boarders are able to get prompt and helpful assistance from staff during the night if required.
36. The opinions of boarders are regularly sought, and leaders make adjustments to help improve boarders' experiences. Boarders are able to access help and support with their academic work in boarding time from teachers and from older pupils who are trained in mentoring.
37. Prefects are well prepared for their role and are allocated suitable duties, which they carry out with supervision and effective support from staff. Prefects help to gather pupils' views and opinions and share these with leaders to help improve the experience of pupils across the school.
38. The school site is well maintained. Health and safety and fire prevention policies are implemented consistently well and are effective in helping to keep pupils safe at all times of the day and at night. Pupils and boarders know the action to take in the event of a fire as a consequence of the frequent drills that take place, including late at night and in the early morning.
39. The PSHE curriculum is well planned and, together with the physical education curriculum, helps pupils understand how to stay healthy. Staff are suitably trained to teach the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum and to enable pupils to discuss sensitive topics openly and thoughtfully. Leaders have considered carefully which aspects of the curriculum should be delivered by appropriate external speakers and seek the views of pupils to ensure that the curriculum is responsive to pupils' needs as well as local and national events. Parents are kept well informed of what is being taught in RSE and are able to access the same visiting speaker events as their children.



Parents also have access to additional speakers to help support their understanding of their child's needs and experiences.

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

**40. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

41. Pupils learn to think critically and empathetically about the wider world. The PSHE curriculum and assemblies help pupils to prepare for life in British society and gain an understanding of the role of public services and institutions. The curriculum supports pupils well to understand democratic values and how to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils' understanding of the importance of the democratic process is also developed through participation in elections for pupil leadership positions. Leaders ensure that diversity is celebrated through the curriculum. Inclusive chapel services are accessible to pupils of all faiths and none, while also reflecting the school's Christian foundation, helping pupils to understand and respect different beliefs and traditions.
42. Pupils are well supported by the school's carefully planned careers programme to understand the variety of choices available when they leave school and are helped to make the right decision for their future. Pupils receive guidance from careers talks delivered both by older pupils and former pupils, alongside individualised one-to-one and small-group sessions which support pupils as they explore both their selection of subjects and career aims.
43. Leaders review lessons, schemes of work and the material presented by visiting speakers to ensure that pupils are presented with balanced views and perspectives.
44. Pupils speak with eloquence and understanding about issues of equality and inclusion and value the benefits of the supportive house communities. Pupil-led clubs and societies represent the views and experiences of different groups of pupils and are open to all pupils to attend. In combination with the PSHE curriculum, these societies help pupils to develop a keen sense of respect and understanding of each other's views and to value individual differences across the school community.
45. Pupils' participation in Rugby360, the school's service programme, helps pupils identify opportunities to support others in the local community. Pupils can select activities that align with their interests and possible career choices. These range from supporting reading in local schools to helping in foodbanks, charity shops and care homes. Pupils assess for themselves the success of their service activity and reflect on what they have learned and what skills they have developed as a result. Pupils are also active in their support for local and national charities, raising both funds and awareness. This allows pupils to gain a range of experiences, which helps develop empathy and understanding as well as developing a broader perspective of the locality.
46. Pupils are taught about mortgages, taxation and the advantages and disadvantages of cryptocurrencies through the PSHE curriculum. The curriculum also helps pupils to develop their understanding of the management of personal finances and financial literacy.

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

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

## Safeguarding

48. The safeguarding policy is in line with statutory requirements and is effectively implemented by leaders to help safeguard pupils at all times. The governing body maintains rigorous oversight of safeguarding arrangements, receiving termly updates from the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) which detail key information such as the number and category of referrals to external agencies, training for staff and trends in online safety incidents. Governors also conduct a thorough annual review of safeguarding. Governors are diligent in verifying the information they are given by leaders by speaking with pupils and staff.
49. Staff are well trained to identify the signs of potential abuse and exploitation. They know how to report safeguarding concerns, and they do this promptly. Staff also understand the additional vulnerability of boarders living away from home. Staff are vigilant and alert to signs that pupils may require additional help and support.
50. The safeguarding team are well trained. They have identified the evolving contextual risks to pupils and take suitable action to control and monitor these. The safeguarding team liaise with staff to ensure that pupils' needs are understood and that pupils receive the help and support they need. Leaders ensure that referrals to external agencies such as children's services and the police are made without delay. Leaders work effectively with these agencies to help protect and support pupils. Safeguarding records are detailed and held securely. Where there are ongoing concerns about the welfare of individual pupils, comprehensive risk assessments are made, shared with appropriate staff and effectively implemented.
51. Staff are well trained to identify the signs of radicalisation and understand how to report any concerns. Leaders understand the risks of radicalisation and ensure that appropriate measures are in place to minimise this risk. The school's internet has suitable monitoring and filtering in place and leaders take prompt action when inappropriate online activity is detected. Leaders also ensure that online systems are frequently tested to check that they remain effective in protecting all members of the school community.
52. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to identify concerns about the behaviour of adults working in the school. Any concerns are reported quickly to senior leaders who ensure that suitable, detailed records are kept. Leaders work effectively with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), seeking advice where required and taking prompt action.
53. The required checks on staff, governors and volunteers are carried out before they start work in the school and are suitably recorded in a single central record of appointments (SCR), which is monitored by governors.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Rugby School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	937/6010
<b>Registered charity number</b>	528752
<b>Address</b>	Rugby School Lawrence Sheriff Street Rugby Warwickshire CV22 5EH
<b>Phone number</b>	01788 556216
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@rugbyschool.net
<b>Website</b>	www.rugbyschool.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	The governing body of Rugby School
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Nick Bacon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Gareth Parker-Jones
<b>Age range</b>	13 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	867
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	641
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 to 16 September 2022

## Information about the school

55. Rugby School is a co-educational boarding and day school located in Rugby, Warwickshire. It is overseen by a governing body and run as a charitable trust. Since the last inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed in March 2024.
56. There are thirteen boarding houses and two day houses. Seven of the boarding houses are for male pupils and six for female pupils. All boarding houses are close to the centre of the school.
57. The school has identified 172 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
58. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 133 pupils.
59. The school states its aims are to encourage pupils to develop their own individual skills and talents in a school which values service to the community and where tolerance and understanding are taught.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

29 April to 1 May 2025

60. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

61. 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
- observation of mealtimes including those for boarders
- 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.

62. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)