

School inspection report

5 to 7 March 2024

Wrekin College

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Wellington
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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. Leaders have undertaken extensive self-evaluation which covers all aspects of a pupil's life and experience in the school. They have created a clear vision for the school to improve provision and outcomes for pupils.
2. Governors understand their responsibilities. They maintain oversight of the effectiveness of leaders' actions through regular reports and interactions with staff and pupils. This ensures the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders, is a priority.
3. During lessons, teachers provide a positive environment, where pupils are encouraged to take an active role in their learning. Pupils regularly present their work or lead on solving a problem, which helps to embed learning. Teachers' secure subject knowledge helps pupils to learn subject-specific knowledge successfully.
4. Teaching and learning are a focus of development. Careers guidance for younger pupils is not as strong as the provision for older pupils, and leaders have identified the need to broaden the provision of careers education and guidance to younger pupils. They also plan to widen the curriculum for Years 7 and 8, which currently does not offer the same modern foreign language as the main feeder school, and increase the offer for sixth-form provision, which currently provides a limited number of options for pupils not wanting to take the available A-level subjects.
5. Leaders are strengthening the assessment and grading system, to be more helpful to parents and pupils. Information is set out more clearly for the year groups where the change has been made. Pupils' achievements and next steps are easier for pupils and their parents to understand.
6. The school's values and ethos provide a framework to develop pupils' spiritual and moral understanding. Pupils show awareness and respect for other cultures and faiths. The atmosphere around the campus is courteous and purposeful.
7. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy the opportunities and participation rates are high. They develop many personal skills including self-awareness and confidence in public speaking and performance.
8. Safeguarding is effective, including for those pupils who board. Staff receive appropriate training. However, leaders do not check that all staff have the same level of understanding of the training they receive. Leaders seek and use external advice, especially with regard to boarders' welfare and needs. Safeguarding records are kept up to date, but in a very few cases lack sufficient detail. For example, when a case is considered closed, final details have not always been included.

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:

- embed the revised curriculum for Years 7 and 8 and extend the options available to pupils in the sixth form to widen the educational provision and give pupils a broader experience
- develop the careers advice and guidance given to pupils, especially in the younger years, so that they feel prepared for the next stage of their education
- further develop the assessment grading system, to be more informative and helpful to both pupils and their parents
- ensure all staff, including support staff, have the same depth of knowledge and understanding of safeguarding as other staff in the school
- ensure that safeguarding records contain all required details in one place, to enable efficient review of the issues and the actions that have taken to safeguard pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors have systems and structures in place to assure themselves that the wellbeing of pupils is promoted. Governors know the effectiveness of the school's work through their oversight of school policies. They consider the regular reports they receive from the leadership team. Governors check what they have been told by visiting the school and through stakeholder surveys. This enables them to challenge leaders appropriately.
10. Leaders have appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Following a comprehensive self-evaluation, the new leadership team have created an ambitious vision for the school to improve the quality of education and meet pupils' welfare needs. Some improvements, such as further developing the careers advice and guidance to younger pupils, build upon the already successful practice for older pupils. In other areas, the planned changes are in response to pupils' academic needs, such as introducing further BTEC provision and broadening the curriculum for the younger aged pupils.
11. Leaders understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Staff promote respect for all people, regardless of difference. Consequently, pupils understand this concept and value the school's ethos. Pupils demonstrate respect for others in their behaviour during lessons, when participating in extra-curricular activities and in their boarding lives. A suitable accessibility plan is in place. Reasonable adjustments are made for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported through specialist teaching provision. Pupils are enabled to progress successfully to the next stage of their education.
12. Leaders respond in a timely manner to concerns and complaints from parents in line with a suitable policy. Leaders have published a clear complaints policy for pupils who can also make their views known through various committees and groups. A wide range of information is made available for parents and provided as required. Parents receive regular detailed reports on their child's progress.
13. Safeguarding arrangements are in place, including checks for the recruitment of staff. Staff training is appropriate and recorded on completion.
14. A knowledgeable and skilled team of staff fulfil the management of boarding. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Policies relating to boarding are effectively implemented. External advice is sought and actions taken where necessary, for example in the management of risk. This promotes the wellbeing of boarders.
15. Governors and leaders conduct regular reviews to satisfy themselves that compliance with relevant health and safety laws is secure. Staff understand their responsibilities regarding health and safety because appropriate training is in place. The involvement with relevant contractors, advisors and external authorities further strengthens health and safety arrangements. A programme of ongoing investment and refurbishment, including of the boarding houses supports the maintenance, repair and upkeep of facilities. Risk assessment is comprehensive and governors and leaders have clear oversight of the monitoring of risk assessment and management. Leaders provide an extensive extra-curricular programme for pupils to fulfil the school's aim to create a community in which all members feel valued and involved.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Leaders have developed effective curriculum plans which ensure that pupils have access to areas that are appropriate for their ages and aptitudes. Teachers use well-planned schemes of work to teach lessons that support pupils to make progress and achieve well. As part of the extensive self-evaluation, leaders acknowledged the need to widen the curriculum for the youngest pupils and recognise their prior learning, as the main feeder school offers different modern foreign languages. As a result, additional subjects are to be added to the curriculum, for example Spanish. Similarly, in the sixth form, although there are a few non A-level options for pupils, leaders have decided to increase the number of BTEC subjects offered, to support the interests and aptitudes of the pupils.
18. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use a range of teaching approaches to bring out the best in pupils. Lessons typically include opportunities for independent and creative work that engage pupils actively in their learning. Pupils demonstrate what they have learned through presentations or by leading discussions.
19. Pupils are taught in classrooms with subject-specific facilities and a wide range of resources. This supports teachers to teach their subjects well. In science and mathematics, teachers provide immediate feedback so pupils can consolidate their knowledge and understanding. In sport, music, art and design, high-quality facilities support pupils to explore their talents at all levels. The bespoke virtual learning environment contains curriculum information and resources, provided by subject staff, which gives pupils access to further resources and consolidation material. These are valuable aids to support pupils' progress and learning.
20. Pupils demonstrate high levels of linguistic competence through the consistent use of the target language in modern foreign language lessons. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to use their numeracy skills and apply them well across topics such as probability and Venn diagrams. Pupils communicate effectively and a culture of reading for pleasure is fostered including in library activities, such as the peer reading programme between lower school and sixth-form pupils. In English, pupils deliver well-written, empathetic speeches with verve and confidence. For example, Year 8 pupils discuss themes of religious discrimination while studying *The Merchant of Venice*.
21. The computer science curriculum includes teaching pupils coding and software development skills. This helps to equip pupils for the modern world. Pupils enjoy studying aesthetic and creative subjects, such as art and design. The curriculums in these subjects provide opportunities for pupils to realise their designs and produce results of a high standard including at GCSE and A level. Pupils are motivated to learn and engage enthusiastically in lessons.
22. Pupils benefit from an assessment grading system that offers regular feedback against set targets. Parents are regularly kept informed. Leaders are taking steps to refine the assessment system as it was found to be not helpful as possible to parents and pupils. Target grades are to be more accurate, realistic and readily understood by both pupils and parents. Teachers' feedback to pupils in lessons is supportive and informative. As a result, pupils' misconceptions are corrected immediately, which supports accurate learning and understanding. Written feedback also supports pupils' development where at its best, offers detailed guidance as to how to improve work. Pupils appreciate teachers' guidance in how to achieve success.

23. Leaders identify the additional needs of pupils who have SEND quickly. Pupils receive appropriate support in lessons and within the learning support department. This helps pupils who have SEND to make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and require support are identified when they join the school. Pupils receive extra tuition to develop their fluency. Teachers make reasonable adjustments so pupils learn successfully in their academic subjects.
24. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular recreational activities for pupils. These include debating, drama, music, art, library, dance, coding, chess and sport. Pupils are encouraged to participate in both competitive and recreational sports. They embrace the varied performing arts programme of choirs, ensembles, concerts and productions. Pupils achieve much success at local, regional and national level in both sporting and music competitions. The school offers a range of academic societies and house competitions. Pupils have a great deal of choice to develop their individual interests and talents to a greater depth.

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. Leaders provide a breadth of physical and extra-curricular activities. Pupils readily speak of the many opportunities the school's wider curriculum provides to support their personal and social development. For example, the Franklin society for the more able pupils, or the character and adventure training programme which supports involvement in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh Scheme (DofE). Pupils' physical health is promoted through the physical education curriculum and specifically in health-related exercise lessons. Competitive and non-competitive sport enhances the provision as well as providing suitable activities for boarding pupils.
27. The boarding community is welcoming, supportive and respectful. House assemblies, which cover themes such as equality, diversity and inclusion, further demonstrate the culture of respect for all. Pupils engage happily with the personal, social, health and economics (PSHE) programme and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum, which covers national guidance and topics such as the balance between healthy and unhealthy relationships. Pupils learn about different groups within society and the importance of mutual respect for others, including those who are different to themselves.
28. The comprehensive programme to support pupils' spiritual and moral development is promoted by the school's Christian ethos, for example in the sharing of beliefs in the regular chapel meetings. Teachers model positive attitudes and relationships in lessons. Pupils' personal development is further promoted through high-quality, individual feedback from teachers, tutors and house staff, who praise, support or challenge pupils as appropriate.
29. Pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing is supported through the school's wellbeing centre and a team of highly trained staff. Pupils learn strategies to promote their mental health. Younger pupils use the techniques they have been taught to support their personal wellbeing, such as mindfulness and finger breathing.
30. Some pupils have concerns regarding elements of other pupils' behaviour. Behaviour and bullying logs are detailed and up to date, and record the appropriate action that staff take to deal with misbehaviour. Recent initiatives, such as external speakers and tutor group discussions, have raised pupils' awareness of the impact of discriminatory language and behaviour on others. Pupils understand the need for equality and to use freedom of speech responsibly.
31. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. The prefect and house system enables pupils to undertake appropriate duties and responsibilities. Pupils are given the necessary training and support to carry out these roles successfully. Some Year 11 pupils would like more leadership roles and opportunities. They perceive that these are only available in the sixth form, despite the range of opportunities on offer.
32. Leaders have a well-informed understanding of health, safety and premises management. The required procedures are in place for all necessary areas including asbestos, gas, legionella and electrical testing and fire safety. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained to a standard such that, the health, safety and welfare of pupils including boarders is ensured.

33. At departmental level, a range of health, safety and compliance matters are managed effectively. Training is put in place where required, for example, staff preparing food have the necessary qualifications. Policies, practices and procedures for fire are documented and carried out consistently. Within boarding houses, the correct supervision ratios are maintained with appropriate methods in place to allow pupils to ask for help and support if needed. Admissions and attendance policies are followed and overseen by members of the school leadership team. School joiners and leavers at non-standard times are recorded correctly and reported appropriately to the local authority. Arrangements for the provision of first aid and medical care, including those for boarders, are appropriate.
34. Boarding requirements are well managed and clearly set out in policies and documents so that staff are suitably trained and aware of their responsibilities. Pupils are confident that their wellbeing is promoted and they have opportunities to contribute their ideas or express their concerns. Boarding houses are maintained to an appropriate standard and provide a safe, secure and comfortable living environment. Some pupils raised concerns regarding the quality and quantity of food particularly at lunchtimes. Leaders have responded by establishing a food committee to consider and act on matters that are raised. Many adaptations have been made as a result.

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. The well-developed PSHE and RSE programmes allow pupils to increase their understanding of issues such as prejudice, discrimination and abusive relationships. Topics such as community and human rights support pupils' understanding of their contribution to society. Various external agencies, including the local police, are invited to support certain topics such as driving and the law. The PSHE programme supports pupils to develop their life-skills including finances, budgeting and economic understanding. For example, in the sixth form an external life skills unit of work is completed regarding personal banking. This is further enhanced through popular initiatives to develop entrepreneurship, such as a competition to develop, market and sell a product or service.
37. Leaders have developed an extensive co-curricular programme that extends pupils' social and educational skills. The recently introduced Wrekin Involvement Award recognises those pupils involved in activities over and above the norm, reflecting the school's aims and ethos. The inter-house debating competitions are popular and enable pupils to research and debate on a wide range of social, political, economic and cultural topics, for example '*Can a man be a feminist?*', which further develops their skills.
38. Leaders ensure that boarding actively promotes preparation for life in modern Britain. Pupils from different nationalities and backgrounds learn to live with mutual respect in their respective houses. During chapel services, pupils give presentations to raise awareness about their different lives and religious practices, which results in a greater understanding of diverse cultures. Leaders encourage pupils to respect diversity and equality which is further supported through a range of pupil-led societies.
39. The current successful careers guidance and advice to the most senior pupils enables them to explore different pathways for higher education, apprenticeships or employment. This prepares them well for their next stage in life. Some younger year groups do not receive sufficient guidance and express concern about their future paths. As a result, they are not prepared for the next stage in their careers. Leaders are currently strengthening the careers education programme across the school.
40. There is an atmosphere of civility between pupils and across age groups. Behaviour around the school is polite and cordial. Pupils understand the concept of right and wrong, and their personal responsibility for the relationships in their community. British values are actively promoted in lessons, house and extra-curricular activities, as evidenced through discussions with pupils about their social and economic wellbeing.
41. Leaders ask pupils of different constituencies to vote in elections for prefects and committee leaders which promotes understanding of democracy. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to express their opinions in a range of committees and forums. They are proud they can effect change in the school, for example establishing a pop-up coffee shop or participating in discussions around school uniform. Older pupils such as the heads of school and houses, enjoy their additional responsibilities. They speak with pride about being Wrekinians and play their part in promoting the school's ethos.
42. The broad co-curricular programme promotes respect for law, institutions and services. Pupils can participate in CCF, DofE and various charitable activities. Pupils raise funds for charities through a

pupil-led committee with advice from staff. Each house proposes and selects a charity, some of which have a strong local or personal connection. Senior pupils develop their awareness of other cultures and social responsibility through extended community projects abroad. Other pupils volunteer regularly in local charity shops or take part in practical projects that support others.

43. Leaders actively provide opportunities for pupils to experience and be prepared for life in British society. Senior pupils speak positively about the initiative to live in a flat for a short period and budget for themselves. Exchanges and educational visits, for example the art visit to Florence and exchange trip to South Africa, enable pupils to recognise the responsibilities of adulthood.

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

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

Safeguarding

45. Governors and leaders implement a comprehensive safeguarding policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including pupils who board. Governors meet regularly with the safeguarding leads to assure themselves of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.
46. Leaders work effectively with external agencies. They make timely referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and, if necessary, the police. When incidents occur, they are managed well. In liaison with the local safeguarding partners, the school's policies regarding educational guardians and risk assessments for the more vulnerable pupils have recently been updated. These policies follow national guidelines to promote the health and wellbeing of these pupils. There is a clear system to identify the more vulnerable pupils in the school. Following the advice from external agencies, leaders have strengthened the steps to ensure pupils' needs are met when considering safeguarding matters. For example, medical records for overseas pupils are required before a pupil can be accepted into the school.
47. Safeguarding records are kept securely and used effectively to monitor individual pupils' needs and any resulting actions. Regular reviews of cases support this effectiveness. However, in a very small number of instances, relevant details regarding a pupil were not included in the central records, but held in separate files. This was remedied during the inspection.
48. Leaders ensure that staff undertake up-to-date statutory safeguarding training, as well as training relevant to specific roles, such as administering medicines. Leaders do not always monitor the effectiveness of the training, to ensure all staff have a secure and deep understanding. Governors and those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities receive appropriate training and understand their statutory duties.
49. Pupils are clear about who to go to if they have worries or a concern and there are methods of reporting concerns anonymously. Leaders take suitable action in relation to online filtering and monitoring to keep pupils safe, deploying specialist software to prevent inappropriate access and reviewing cases when alerted. Governors regularly review these arrangements. Pupils report that they feel safe physically, emotionally and when online. Boarders know where they can get support, such as the NSPCC, Childline and their independent listener.
50. Staff are trained to be confident in assessing and managing risks which includes consideration of potential safeguarding risks during activities and visits. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have a school safeguarding board which is an effective forum to raise any concerns. School prefects and peer mentors receive safeguarding training.
51. Leaders ensure that the required safeguarding checks are completed before adults begin working in the school. Recruitment panels are suitably trained in safer recruitment procedures. The record of appointments is accurate and details the checks that have been completed, with effective oversight from the chair and safeguarding governor.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Wrekin College
Department for Education number	894/6001
Registered charity number	528417
Address	Wrekin College Sutherland Road Wellington Telford Shropshire TF1 3BH
Phone number	01952265600
Email address	HeadMastersPA@wrekincollege.com
Website	www.wrekinoldhall.com
Chair	Mr Richard Pearson
Headteacher	Mr Toby Spence
Age range	11–19
Number of pupils	553
Number of boarding pupils	87
Date of previous inspection	24 November 2021

Information about the school

53. Wrekin College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. Founded in 1880 by Sir John Bayley, the college is a registered charity overseen by a board of governors who also have responsibility for Old Hall School, a preparatory school on the same site.
54. There are three all-age boarding houses, two for male pupils and one for female pupils.
55. The school has identified 129 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. English is an additional language for 83 pupils.
57. The school states its aims are to create a community in which all members feel valued and involved; to offer the highest quality of education in a co-educational environment, developing intellectual, physical, aesthetic, moral and spiritual qualities in the school's Christian tradition; to nurture interesting and balanced young people in a happy and challenging environment, enabling them to fulfil their potential and preparing them for the modern world, to develop in each pupil self-discipline, a clear sense of right and wrong, responsibility and sensitivity towards others and their views; to recognise and celebrate individual achievements; to instil a sense of pride in our traditions of good conduct, courtesy and appearance; to foster respect and care for our environment.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 March 2024

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

59. 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 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

60. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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For more information, please visit isi.net