

School inspection report

18 to 20 November and 3 December 2025

Cranford School

Moulsford
Wallingford
OX10 9HT

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 act in pupils' best interests by prioritising their physical and emotional wellbeing and their academic progress. Governors work closely with leaders and oversee effective leadership of the school. As a result, the Standards are met consistently.
2. Policies are reviewed regularly and implemented effectively. They are made accessible to parents via the school's website. At the beginning of the inspection, the attendance policy was not on the school's website, nor did it fully reflect statutory guidance, such as around the timings of registration. This was rectified before the end of the on-site inspection and the policy now meets requirements.
3. Leaders take a robust approach to risk assessment, including around safeguarding. They identify risks thoroughly and put effective control measures in place to mitigate them.
4. Teaching is effective. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. They plan learning well and develop supportive relationships with pupils. Teaching meets the aptitudes and needs of pupils, including children in the early years. Pupils make good progress throughout the school.
5. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. Pastoral teams, the learning support department and teaching staff work closely together to provide the right support. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.
6. Well-trained and proactive staff give carefully targeted help to pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Staff help pupils to access the curriculum and to develop their fluency in English. Pupils who speak EAL make good progress.
7. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums meet pupils' needs well. The PSHE curriculum supports pupils to develop understanding and appreciation of other cultures and faiths. This helps the school to be a respectful, tolerant and inclusive community where everyone is welcomed.
8. The school provides an extensive and diverse extra-curricular programme. Suitable activities are offered to pupils of all ages, throughout the school. The programme provides opportunities for pupils to experience leadership responsibilities and to develop their skills and interests.
9. A robust system is in place to track and monitor pupils' behaviour and any pastoral issues that arise. Suitable action is taken in response and pupils are provided with appropriate support. Pupils generally behave well in lessons and during less structured parts of the day. However, the behaviour policy is not always applied consistently in the senior school. Where this is the case, low-level disruption occurs in some lessons. This results in some pupils being less engaged with their learning, so that they make less progress than they could.
10. Pupils are taught how to contribute positively as citizens in British society. Principles, such as the rule of law and democracy, are embedded in the curriculum throughout the school.

11. Well-qualified and experienced early years staff educate the youngest children successfully, ensuring their wellbeing. Staff liaise closely with children's families and prepare them effectively for transition into the main school.
12. The school is well maintained and all necessary checks are carried out in a timely fashion. Robust health and safety practices, including about fire safety, protect the school and its community.
13. Safeguarding is managed well and staff are trained appropriately. There are effective and comprehensive systems in place for identifying and managing risks to pupils. Prompt and effective action is taken to protect pupils, when necessary.

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 systems to ensure that all required policies are updated promptly, in line with changes to statutory guidance, and made available on the school's website in a timely fashion
- ensure that the behaviour policy is always implemented consistently so that the small amount of low-level disruption in some classes in the senior school is eradicated.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

14. Leaders have skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles. They fulfil their responsibilities so that the school's aims and ethos are promoted and delivered effectively. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing. For example, they make links with external agencies to benefit pupils, such as to secure advice and support regarding pupils' special educational needs or about safeguarding issues.
15. Governors play an active part in the successes and development of the school. Regular visits, meetings, audits, evaluations and reports enable governors to assure themselves that the Standards are met consistently. Governors challenge and support leaders appropriately. They ensure that effective and timely action is taken to develop provision, where necessary.
16. Parents receive reports regularly about pupils' progress, attitudes and attainment. Other required information, including about the school's aims and ethos, is made available to parents, largely through its website. At the start of the inspection, the attendance policy did not fully reflect current requirements and was missing from the school's website. This was rectified before the end of the on-site inspection.
17. Leaders keep up to date with changes to legislation and guidance. They review and adjust policies accordingly. Leaders share policies with pupils and staff, as appropriate, so that they are known and understood.
18. Leaders review provision for any pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) annually. They provide local authorities with all the information they require regarding pupils' EHC plans, including about funding. The local authority is also informed when any pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition times.
19. Leaders fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Teaching is inclusive and does not discriminate between groups or individual pupils. A suitable and up-to-date accessibility plan is in place, which considers both access to the curriculum and the school's facilities.
20. Leaders know and understand current statutory guidance about the early years. They put suitable processes in place to ensure that all requirements are met consistently. They hold regular professional development meetings with staff to be sure that children's needs are met within a suitable and nurturing environment.
21. Complaints are managed appropriately and in a timely manner, with suitable records kept. Leaders review complaints they receive to establish whether there is anything that can be learned from them. Where this is the case, they make changes to improve and develop provision.
22. The risk management process is robust and comprehensive. Leaders have appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding so that they manage strategic, physical, situational and educational risks consistently and thoroughly. Leaders identify risks effectively, including those that are not immediately obvious, and put suitable measures in place to mitigate them. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and adjusted as necessary.

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

23. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

24. The curriculum, from the early years and throughout the rest of the school, is carefully designed to progressively develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. Schemes of work and lessons are well planned and resourced to meet pupils' needs. Pupils are engaged, supported and challenged so that they make good progress, are enthusiastic and are interested in their learning.
25. In the early years, children learn within a stimulating environment, both within the classroom and in the outdoor area. The curriculum is specifically designed to be engaging, balanced and appropriate to children's ages. The curriculum helps children to build knowledge and gain confidence. It also supports their acquisition of emotional, social, creative and physical skills. Teaching of early reading helps the children to understand the relationship between sounds and letters. Mathematics is taught through play, practical activities, stories and songs that help children explore numbers, patterns and shapes in a meaningful way.
26. The school's curriculum is well planned and engaging, enabling pupils to flourish and make good progress. It covers a suitable range of subjects including English, mathematics, computer science, history, art and design technology. The junior school uses a topic-based approach, with meaningful links made between subjects wherever possible. The programme is delivered effectively through skilled teaching and a supportive learning environment. The mathematics curriculum is well structured and progressive, building pupils' understanding from basic number concepts to complex reasoning skills. Pupils apply mathematical skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils use their knowledge about bar graphs in their investigative work in science.
27. The sixth-form curriculum is broad, challenging and tailored to pupils' academic interests and future goals. It offers a broad mix of subjects as well as enrichment opportunities. Teachers plan a variety of tasks that provide scope for reading and wider critical thinking, encouraging pupils to develop independent learning skills and subject knowledge. Pupils typically achieve above the national average at GCSE and A level in the majority of subjects.
28. Pupils are screened through literacy, reading and mathematics tests upon entry to the school, so that any additional needs are identified. Pupils who have SEND are provided with individual education plans, which are implemented effectively so that they can access the curriculum fully and achieve well. Plans are reviewed regularly in consultation with parents and pupils. Any required adjustments to plans are communicated efficiently to relevant staff. Pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.
29. Pupils who speak EAL are supported effectively. Lessons are tailored to pupils' proficiency levels and incorporate interactive activities, cultural content and meaningful language use. Pupils gain confidence, fluency and the ability to use English effectively in both academic and everyday contexts. As a result, pupils who speak EAL make good progress.
30. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Lessons are well planned and time is used effectively. A variety of well-chosen activities keep pupils engaged and on task. A range of good-quality classroom resources are used appropriately and are matched to pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment. This helps pupils to acquire knowledge and skills and to make good progress.

31. The school has an appropriate assessment framework in place to monitor pupils' progress. Staff check regularly how well pupils have understood and remembered what they have been taught. They use this information to identify where pupils require additional or different support. This helps pupils to make good progress. Pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on their progress and to identify their own areas for their further development. Teachers take pupils' ideas about their areas for development into account when planning lessons. This helps them to match learning closely to pupils' needs.
32. The school provides a breadth of extra-curricular opportunities including hockey, football, gymnastics, drama, chess, textiles and food technology. These enable pupils to develop a range of skills, work collaboratively and increase their knowledge in areas of their choice. All pupils are expected to take part in extra-curricular activities. These expectations are made clear and pupils take full advantage of the opportunities provided for them.

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

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

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

34. Leaders provide a broad and flexible curriculum that supports pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and encourages mutual trust. The school uses a well-chosen programme to teach pupils about characteristics such as race, disability and religion. Pupils learn about the importance of treating other people respectfully and fairly. Pupils learn to understand and celebrate the people and cultures that make up British society.
35. The school is non-denominational but has a Christian heritage. Pupils' spiritual and moral knowledge and understanding is developed through whole-school services, weekly themes reflecting the school's aims and ethos, and focused assemblies. Pupils' faiths are understood and supported. For instance, the school provides a prayer room for pupils to use, as required.
36. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective. They keep logs to record their thoughts on their progress and wellbeing. They have one-to-one goal-setting sessions with staff, where they discuss any personal and academic challenges. Pupils learn about emotional and mental health through a specific programme designed to provide them with strategies and support in this area. These activities result in pupils becoming more self-aware, with increasing self-esteem and self-confidence.
37. Personal, social, health and economic education is delivered effectively, covering a range of topics such as mental and physical health, relationships, personal safety, economic wellbeing and life skills. Teachers create a safe and supportive classroom environment for discussions and adapt content in response to current events. Pupils develop their knowledge, skills and resilience to thrive personally, socially and academically. They apply their learning to real-life situations.
38. Teachers deliver engaging physical education (PE) lessons. Starting in the early years, children develop their hand-eye co-ordination and movement skills through a carefully structured physical development programme. This develops as they progress through the school. The well-planned swimming programme emphasises the importance of confidence and safety in the water, especially for younger children. Pupils take part in a variety of activities such as dance, netball, rugby, hockey and sailing. These help them to keep fit, develop their sporting skills and gain confidence in applying techniques in game situations. The PE curriculum also supports pupils' mental wellbeing by helping them to develop resilience and form positive relationships.
39. The effective RSE programme adheres to statutory guidance. It builds topics progressively from simple to complex. This helps pupils to develop understanding of the nature and diversity of relationships, promoting positive attitudes and behaviours that prepare them for adult life.
40. Effective implementation of the anti-bullying policy supports pupils' wellbeing. Any issues are dealt with promptly and appropriately by staff. Pupils are taught about bullying through a variety of ways, such as the PSHE curriculum and assemblies. This equips pupils with the awareness, skills and confidence to protect themselves and others.
41. Pupils follow the school's rules well. They are respectful and considerate towards others. Behaviour in lessons is generally good throughout the school. However, there is some inconsistency in how the behaviour policy is applied in the senior school. As a result, there is a small amount of low-level

disruption in some lessons. Where this is the case, some pupils become less interested in their learning and make less progress as a result.

42. Staff in the early years give children clear guidance and act as positive role models. Children learn to be kind, polite and respectful towards adults and each other. Staff plan suitable activities that help children learn to manage their own feelings and emotions.
43. Health and safety procedures are clear and robust. Premises are clean and well maintained. Leaders use external audits by qualified contractors to assess health and safety provision and identify issues that need attention. These are acted on promptly. A suitable fire risk assessment is in place. Effective fire safety training is provided for staff and pupils take part in regular evacuation drills.
44. Suitable supervision of pupils is provided during the school day. Staff in the early years are deployed appropriately so that there are always sufficient adults for the number and age of children present.
45. At the beginning of the inspection, the attendance policy had not been updated in line with current statutory guidance. For example, it did not include the timings for registration or the correct codes. This was rectified during the inspection. The admission and attendance registers meet requirements. Absences are followed up appropriately and reported to the local authority as required.
46. Qualified practitioners provide suitable medical support for pupils who are injured or unwell whilst at school. Many staff, including those in the early years and junior school, hold paediatric first aid qualifications.

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

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

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

48. Leaders enable pupils to learn about the society in which they live and to develop their understanding of fundamental British values. For example, pupils develop an understanding of democratic processes through practical experiences, such as voting on their favourite snack in the early years or electing school council representatives in the senior school. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England.
49. From an early age, pupils are taught to show tolerance towards their peers and other people. The school's values are widely known and pupils are reminded about them regularly. Staff model respectful behaviour in their interactions with pupils and other adults. Respect and understanding towards people from different cultures is encouraged and expected. Pupils learn about religions and cultures through, for example, visits to places of worship. This encourages pupils to behave respectfully and celebrate the diversity in society.
50. Preparation for life in modern Britain is embedded across the curriculum, particularly in PSHE. Assemblies include learning about rights, responsibilities and civic participation. A knowledge of, and respect for, public institutions and services in England is facilitated by talks and visits from external speakers such as the police and fire brigade.
51. Pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility and there are many opportunities for leadership. For example, the school council has a direct impact on improving provision, such as creating additional clubs, increasing the number of water fountains and developing new social spaces in the senior school. Sixth-form pupils work with younger pupils during tutor times, helping them with academic subjects or extra-curricular activities. Older pupils run clubs for younger pupils and provide support for their drama productions.
52. Pupils make a positive contribution to their local community. For example, senior pupils volunteer at a hospital, make collections for the local foodbank and help out at care homes. Pupils organise and run events, such as bake sales, to raise money for their chosen charities.
53. Staff in the early years focus well on children's social development. They provide opportunities for children to play collaboratively, as appropriate to their age and stage of development, including when outdoors. Staff encourage children to communicate with one another, take turns and share resources. This helps children to be ready to move on to Year 1 when the time comes.
54. The school has a comprehensive careers programme. The programme is delivered through PSHE lessons and includes a range of activities such as a programme of talks, a careers fair, work experience and careers interviews. This, along with a one-to-one mentoring programme, provides a forum for pupils to discuss their next steps as they move through the school, ensuring that pupils are well supported in making choices about their futures.
55. Economic education is embedded into the curriculum at all stages of the school. Children in the early years begin to learn about how money works during role-play activities. In the junior school, pupils compare the costs of everyday items and discuss financial choices. In the senior school, discussions about topics such as ethical consumerism, as well as managing money and contracts, ensure that pupils leave school with a level of financial knowledge that will support them in the future.

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

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

57. Leaders create a robust safeguarding culture throughout the school. There is a clear and systematic approach that supports careful listening and the promotion of wellbeing. Leaders are aware of the contextual risks and challenges facing pupils beyond the school. They are proactive in taking measures to minimise risks to pupils and protect them from harm. Governors conduct regular reviews of safeguarding practice. The school's safeguarding policy is appropriate and follows up-to-date guidance.
58. Safeguarding procedures are well established and effective. Staff are vigilant and report any concerns about pupils sensitively and efficiently. Leaders work closely with external agencies, such as children's social care, as necessary. Leaders take suitable actions to ensure that pupils receive timely help when necessary.
59. Induction and training for staff, including for safeguarding leaders, is thorough, regular and in line with requirements. The training equips staff with the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to recognise and respond to concerns that arise.
60. Safeguarding procedures are known and understood by pupils. Trusted adults are always available for them to talk to. Pupils know they can share worries or concerns in a variety of ways, including anonymously. This helps pupils to feel safe and supported.
61. Pupils are taught ways to keep themselves safe through assemblies and PSHE lessons. For example, pupils learn about what to do in an emergency and about road safety. Pupils are taught about online safety and the risks associated with using the internet.
62. Leaders implement effective internet filtering and monitoring systems that safeguard online activities in the school. These systems are tested and externally audited regularly.
63. A thorough recruitment process is in place. All new staff and other adults are checked appropriately before they commence employment or engage with pupils. Records are carefully maintained and the single central record of pre-appointment checks meets requirements.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Cranford School
Department for Education number	931/6083
Registered early years number	123303
Registered charity number	280883
Address	Cranford School Moulsford Wallingford Oxfordshire OX10 9HT
Phone number	01491 651218
Email address	office@cranfordschool.co.uk
Website	www.cranfordschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Cranford School Trust
Chair	Mr Stuart Wallis
Headteacher	Dr James Raymond
Age range	2 to 18
Number of pupils	628
Date of previous inspection	29 November to 1 December 2022

Information about the school

65. Cranford School is a co-educational day school located in Wallingford, Oxfordshire. It was founded in 1931 and moved to the present site in 1954. The school consists of a junior school, senior school and sixth form, operating on a single site. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors.
66. There are 26 children in the early years comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
67. The school has identified 67 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
68. The school has identified a very small proportion of pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
69. The school states its aims are to provide a welcoming, happy and encouraging community, which offers a dynamic, opportunity-rich education, firmly based on traditional values and which draws out the natural potential of each child. The school states it aims to maintain an environment where pupils aspire to achieve excellent progress across all aspects of the curriculum, whilst ensuring pupils are happy, confident, motivated and with a self-belief characterised by curiosity, resilience and a spirit of collaboration. The school states it also seeks to deliver teaching and learning that is imaginative, vibrant and challenging, meeting the needs of all learners through a differentiated approach, whilst demanding high expectations and accountability for all.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

18 to 20 November and 3 December 2025

70. A team of 5 inspectors visited the school for two days. Two inspectors returned on 3 December to complete the inspection.

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
- 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

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