

School inspection report

12 to 14 November 2024

Shebbear College

Shebbear

Beaworthy

Devon

EX21 5HJ

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

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietorial body maintains effective oversight of school life, and governors and members of the advisory body are suitably trained. They monitor the work of the school to ensure that the Standards are met consistently, thereby supporting pupils' education, personal development and emotional wellbeing.
2. Senior leaders have initiated a comprehensive self-evaluation and report to the governors through a clear management structure. Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school based on the school community's ethos and values.
3. The effectiveness of policies and their implementation is audited regularly. Policy updates are actioned in a timely way. However, the school had not published all inspection reports since 2015 on the school website. This was rectified during the course of the inspection.
4. The curriculum policy is consistent with the school's aims. A carefully constructed curriculum typically meets pupils' needs, including for international pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). However, information about the curriculum is not easily accessible for parents in different phases in the school.
5. Leaders in the early years have designed and implemented a curriculum that supports children to learn effectively and make good progress across all areas of learning. Staff deliver planned learning and also follow children's interests, capturing opportunities to challenge their thinking and develop their problem-solving skills.
6. Lessons across the prep and senior schools are typically well planned. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and they deliver engaging activities, which contribute to pupils' high levels of focus in lessons. However, on occasion, planning is less effectively matched to the prior attainment of pupils, and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the prep school is not fully embedded. This means that the progress some pupils make is less consistent.
7. Pupils' welfare is well promoted in the boarding environment. Boarding leaders focus on nurturing boarders' emotional wellbeing. For example, boarders know whom they can go to should they have a concern. They are effectively supported in their studies and in their personal development by house staff and house prefects.
8. The school implements a clear and effective behaviour policy with a focus on pupils taking responsibility for their behaviour. Conversations and restorative approaches are used effectively by teachers and bullying is rare. Pupils demonstrate kindness and consideration towards others.
9. Pupils are made aware of life and the world of work beyond school. The school supports them in considering the wide range of opportunities available to them for their future. Pupils receive suitable assistance and guidance in preparing for external examinations.
10. The relationships education in the prep school, and relationships and sex education (RSE) in the senior school, contain age-appropriate content and are thoughtfully and effectively delivered. Alongside the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum, this helps to promote pupils' emotional wellbeing and prepare them for life beyond the school.

11. Leaders facilitate pupils' contribution to society both locally and internationally through opportunities for fundraising and volunteering. Pupils respect differences between people and develop a clear sense of social awareness and responsibility.
12. There is an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. Staff are suitably trained and know how to respond to safeguarding concerns. Safer recruitment procedures are followed diligently, and the required pre-employment checks are completed and recorded accurately.

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

The proprietor should:

- strengthen the oversight of planning for all pupils with high prior attainment, and provision for pupils who have SEND in the prep school, to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress
- improve oversight of information published on the school website so that the required inspection reports are shared and parents with pupils in different phases receive the same information about the curriculum.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. The Inspired Learning Group (ILG) took ownership of the school early in 2024. Governors and advisors from ILG actively engage with the school, providing suitable support and challenge to leaders. This enables leaders to fulfil their responsibilities effectively whilst promoting the aims and ethos of the school.
14. Leaders and governors reflect carefully on all aspects of the school's provision. They regularly meet to evaluate the provision and identify future priorities. They feed these into action plans for improvement and have recently implemented their aim to introduce new key roles of heads of faculty throughout the school.
15. Health and safety are well managed. Checks and policies are up to date and effective risk assessments are in place. The school premises and accommodation, including the boarding houses, are well maintained.
16. Leaders know the children at the school well and have their personal development and wellbeing at heart. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably skilled and knowledgeable. Senior staff, including those in the early years, work effectively with local authorities and other external agencies to seek guidance. This helps them to prioritise and promote the welfare of pupils and boarders. They similarly report the use of funding for pupils who have education, health and care (EHC) plans.
17. Boarding leaders oversee and guide highly effective house arrangements that strongly support boarders as individuals and as a multi-national community. For example, staff facilitate opportunities for boarders to cook their own food, including overseas boarders cooking national dishes for the whole house. Boarding accommodation is well appointed and comfortable. Leaders implement a well-considered programme of weekend activities and visits.
18. Along with the required policies and information clearly displayed on the website, parents receive regular reports on their child's academic progress. However, information about the prep school curriculum is not easily accessible to keep parents well informed. All inspection reports from 2015 were published on the website during the course of the inspection.
19. The school has a clear complaints policy. Concerns raised are managed in a timely way and clear records are kept. Due regard is paid by leaders to the Equality Act 2010, with an accessibility plan that considers adjustments needed for pupils.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders have designed a well-balanced curriculum, providing coverage of all required areas. However, the quality of oversight of teachers' planning varies in different phases of the school. This leads to some inconsistencies in the quality of planning in the prep and senior schools. For example, teachers do not fully consider the range of pupils' needs and levels of prior attainment. Progress made by some pupils with high prior attainment across the school, and by pupils with SEND in the prep school, is inconsistent as a result.
22. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They use active questioning to inspire discussions and promote enjoyment during lessons. Relationships between staff and pupils in lessons are open, relaxed and respectful, and pupils are highly engaged, attentive and well behaved.
23. Suitable assessment frameworks are in place and used effectively by teachers. The feedback that pupils receive helps them to understand what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Parents receive detailed and timely reports on their child's progress throughout the year.
24. The curriculum for children in the early years offers opportunities for them to explore and be curious about their world. Children develop their language and communication skills through adult-led and child-initiated activities. Teacher observations and assessment are used to plan future activities and identify areas where further input is needed. Together with an effective system of tracking, development across the core skills of literacy and mathematics is effectively supported.
- Many pupils at the school who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are proficient in English and can access the curriculum. For those that need further development, effective specialist support is in place.
25. The school provides a comprehensive co-curricular programme. This provides opportunities for enrichment, skills development and physical challenge. For example, pupils are able to participate in activities such as outdoor pursuits, sport, cookery, drama and fitness. This allows them to access activities that are well matched to their interests, aptitudes and needs.
26. Boarders enjoy access to the school's facilities during evenings and at weekends. This facilitates their creative, social and physical development. Discussion between boarders and house staff means that house trips are, where possible, tailored to the wishes of the pupils. Regular trips to local towns to visit the cinema, go bowling and shopping give boarders opportunities for recreation and for their social and emotional abilities to mature outside the school environment.

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

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

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

28. Leaders have effectively implemented a revised PSHE programme. This is delivered by experienced and well-trained staff. A responsive approach to relationships education in the prep school and RSE in the senior school ensures that pupils learn about the importance of respect, inclusivity and understanding differences in others, including protected characteristics, through contexts relevant to them. Lessons on mental health, wellbeing and specialist-led sessions on relationships help pupils to develop self-knowledge and self-awareness, reflecting the supportive environment and ethos of the school.
29. Through weekly assemblies in the chapel and the wider work of the chaplain and pastoral leads, pupils develop their sense of social morality and spiritual understanding. This is grounded in the school's Christian heritage.
30. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements are embedded in the taught curriculum and activity programmes for day pupils and boarders. This is complimented by a range of chapel services, assemblies and tutorials, which help pupils better understand and reflect on issues of ethics in the context of their own lives.
31. Pupils take responsibility for their behaviour and are given time to reflect on and talk through wrong decisions they have made. Positive behaviour is promoted, and staff apply a range of suitable sanctions and rewards fairly and consistently when needed. Leaders have successfully managed a shift of emphasis towards a more restorative approach to the resolution of pastoral and discipline issues.
32. Bullying is rare, but when incidents do occur, they are dealt with by staff quickly and effectively in line with the school's anti-bullying policy. Clear records of behaviour and bullying incidents are maintained. Pupils are clear that bullying of any kind, including online, is not right and should not be tolerated.
33. Physical activities and creative pastimes beyond the classroom are a central part of life at the school and participation rates are high. Sports facilities are extensive and a further range of activities such as riding, indoor tennis and surfing are available all year round through the co-curricular programme. There is high pupil uptake of opportunities to participate in both competitive and individual sports. Pupils value the quality and breadth of the co-curricular enrichment activities on offer, which promote their physical and emotional development.
34. Early years children develop their personal, physical and emotional capabilities through activities such as gymnastics, dance and physical education (PE). They express themselves in art by experimenting with colour and materials, and during circle time by talking about their feelings and how to manage them.
35. There is a clear commitment to the support and promotion of pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing at the school. The Health and Wellbeing Centre is a key focal point of the school's strategy to support both mental and physical health, and serves as a space where day pupils and boarders can go when they feel the need for some support or more specialist provision. Additionally, staff

mental health first aiders and trained sixth-form 'mental health champions' promote awareness and are able to offer further guidance and support.

36. The large site and buildings are well maintained and relevant health and safety legislation, checks and training are adhered to. Boarding accommodation has recently been refurbished to a high standard. This provides a comfortable and welcoming environment for boarders. Suitable medical facilities and procedures are in place to care for day pupils and boarders. Fire safety arrangements are externally assessed and evacuation drills are completed, including during boarding time.
37. Pupils in the prep school enjoy a range of leadership opportunities. Sixth-form prefects form the 'sanctuary team' and perform various supervisory and organisational roles, appropriate for their age and skills, across the school and in the boarding houses. Complementing the role of staff, they are trained in safeguarding, and many are mental health champions who support the younger pupils in the boarding houses in developing their confidence.
38. Democratically elected class representatives in the prep school, and sanctuary team sixth formers in the senior school, convene and chair the prep and senior school councils respectively. Pupils raise issues to take before school leaders for consideration, which is effective in bringing about positive changes, such as the installation of basketball hoops and the refurbishment of the all-weather pitch.
39. Across the prep and senior schools, sufficient staff are deployed at key times so that pupils are effectively supervised and routines embedded. Admissions and attendance registers are correctly completed. The school reports pupils who leave and join at non-standard transition points to the local authority in a timely manner.

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. Leaders and staff promote mutual respect and inclusivity through assemblies, the PSHE and RSE programme, and by emphasising the school's specific aims of developing compassion and courtesy. These values are firmly embedded and are seen in the pupils' positive interactions with each other, staff and visitors. From the prep school through to senior levels, activities such as participation in societies such as Model United Nations and the LGBT society, through to fundraising for a community defibrillator for a local charity, show the effectiveness of the school's efforts to develop understanding and respect for others and to encourage social responsibility.
42. The curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities further reflect the school's aims by fostering a sense of community and instilling a strong moral framework. Through the school council elections, assemblies, and societies such as the Model United Nations, pupils learn about democracy, human rights and inclusivity. The importance of British values such as democracy, tolerance and liberty are reinforced through events, such as the marking of Remembrance Day throughout the school.
43. Pupils are consistently taught to take responsibility for their behaviour and to respect others. From Reception onwards, pupils are encouraged to share their ideas and listen to others. They are introduced to concepts of fairness, compromise and respect for the views of others. A consistent approach to expectations around behaviour, in conjunction with the example set by leaders and staff, means that pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong and can relate this to the importance of the rule of law.
44. Pupils are aware of the range of different political viewpoints. For example, they learnt about this during the recent mock general election held at the school. The school ensures that a balanced perspective is maintained in this regard.
45. In both prep and senior schools, pupils actively take on leadership roles and responsibilities that contribute to the school and the wider community. Fundraising and volunteering support causes such as local food banks, a hospice and several other charities. Pupils represent their peers on the school council, mentor younger pupils and help drive school environmental and sustainability initiatives. For example, pupils contributed to the installation of solar panels and a biomass digester. Pupils also work overseas in partnership programmes to support communities with conservation projects. The wide range of projects foster a strong sense of service, and promote empathy and local and global social responsibility.
46. Pupils in the prep school are taught about money and introduced to the principles of good financial habits. Economic understanding is developed in the senior school through PSHE and as part of the school's 'horizons' careers programme. Through a combination of online commercial programmes, internal talks, higher education trips and visits from a range of guest speakers, the careers department provides comprehensive, impartial advice to pupils. This helps them to prepare to make choices about the next stage of their education, such as GCSE or A-level choices, or alternative choices beyond school. Pupils feel the guidance they receive allows them to make informed choices about their future.

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. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibility ensure that the school's safeguarding culture is robust. Governors and leaders meet regularly with the safeguarding lead and deputies to provide constructive challenge and further promote pupils' welfare by encouraging re-evaluation and identification of lessons to be learned.
49. Thorough and effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. Concerns and actions taken are recorded clearly in detail and acted upon promptly. Well-trained safeguarding leaders work effectively with the local authority designated officers (LADO) and other external agencies to ensure timely responses to incidents.
50. The safeguarding policy is suitable, available to parents on the website, and meets the latest statutory guidance. It is implemented effectively, and successfully strengthens the school's predominant ethos of care for children and pupils.
51. Safeguarding has a high profile and is well embedded across the school community, with the safeguarding committee attended by representatives from all teaching and non-teaching sections of the school.
52. Staff are thoroughly trained in safeguarding and are aware of the need to report any concerns they may have, encouraged by leaders' cultivation of a 'safe place' culture across the school. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) produces and disseminates weekly highlights of safeguarding information to all staff and runs additional scenario-based training half-termly to maintain and sharpen awareness of the latest national trends and contextual risks.
53. Staff have a firm understanding of expectations and how to report concerns. Suitable mechanisms are in place to respond to allegations against staff, including any low-level concerns.
54. A thorough programme of supervision duties across both the day school and the boarding houses creates a safe and vigilant environment. Day and boarding pupils of all ages are happy and feel safe at school.
55. Leaders operate a thorough system of recording and classification of safeguarding and pastoral concerns that allows trends and possible connections between incidents to be analysed and tracked. As a result, school routines and responses can be tailored to address current concerns and so better support pupils' wellbeing and safety needs.
56. Leaders of the PSHE and RSE programmes in the prep and senior schools respond quickly to current trends and concerns and adapt curriculum content accordingly, equipping pupils with current, age-appropriate knowledge, including about issues around consent and harmful sexual behaviours.
57. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online, and they know how to follow procedures to keep themselves safe in school. Due to the supportive and secure relationships between staff and pupils, pupils are confident to report concerns to adults they feel they can trust.
58. Online safety is well developed. Advanced monitoring and filtering systems are in place to keep pupils safe. Anonymous reporting systems allow pupils to raise concerns or issues with safeguarding leaders.

59. Leaders are suitably trained in safer recruitment and ensure that pre-employment checks on new staff meet all statutory requirements. The single central record is clear and maintained well. It is overseen effectively by the governing group.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

60. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Shebbear College
Department for Education number	878/6031
Address	Shebbear Beaworthy Devon EX21 5HJ
Phone number	01489 282000
Email address	info@shebbearcollege.co.uk
Website	www.shebbearcollege.co.uk
Proprietor	Inspired Learning Group (UK) Ltd
Chair	Justin Spanswick
Headteacher	Mr Charlie Jenkins
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	252
Number of boarding pupils	28
Date of previous inspection	28 September to 1 October 2021

Information about the school

61. Shebbear College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated on an 85-acre site in north Devon. Founded in 1841, it was until recently a member of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust. In April 2024, ownership of the school transferred to Inspired Learning Group (UK) Limited.
62. The school has two sections, a prep school (including the early years foundation stage), and a senior school. The early-years provision comprises one Reception class for five children aged four to five years.
63. The school has two boarding houses situated within the main school building, a mixed house for pupils aged 12 to 15 years, and a further mixed house for older pupils aged 15 to 18 years.
64. The school has identified 45 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. English is an additional language for 20 pupils.
66. Within an environment permeated by Christian values, the school's aims are based on six core values of confidence, courage, courtesy, creativity, compassion and curiosity. The school seeks to encourage pupils to discover these qualities in themselves, allowing them to grow in mind, body and spirit, and to understand pupils as individuals to enable them to be the very best they can be, academically, socially and morally.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 November 2024

67. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. 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 safeguarding governor and with a governor of the advisory board
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders 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.

69. 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

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