ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

6 to 8 October 2026

Oakhyrst Grange School

160 Stanstead Road

Caterham

CR3 6AF

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 ensure an inclusive, caring and family-oriented community, where individuality is celebrated and diversity actively promoted. Governors, leaders and staff share a clear vision promoting the school values of aspiration, kindness, respect, responsibility, resilience, curiosity and independence. Leaders work in partnership with parents to create a sense of belonging. As a result, relationships between staff and pupils are good, allowing pupils to develop and grow.

2. Senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They work together effectively to set priorities, manage risks and ensure that the Standards and early years requirements are met. Governors use their knowledge of the school to challenge and support leaders, helping to ensure that decisions are informed and improvements are made where needed. However, some subject leaders do not monitor and evaluate the curriculum and teaching in their areas precisely. As a result, they do not always have an accurate understanding of how effectively pupils are learning and progressing, or where improvements are needed.

3. Leaders provide a vibrant, broad and balanced curriculum, enhanced by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils' needs and detailed assessment information to adapt teaching and provide appropriate support and challenge. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is well developed, with early identification and targeted support enabling pupils to make good progress from their starting points. Skilled teaching in the early years develops children's knowledge and skills effectively, particularly in early reading, writing and mathematics.

4. Leaders place a high priority on pupils' wellbeing and create a caring and supportive environment in which pupils feel safe, valued and confident to seek help. Positive relationships and clear expectations promote good behaviour. Incidents of bullying or unkindness are rare and addressed promptly and effectively. Pupils develop confidence and self-esteem, and their views are taken seriously. For example, the democratically elected school council has developed its own anti-bullying strategy, supported by staff.

5. Leaders foster a meaningful sense of community within the school and beyond. Pupils contribute positively to the wider community through charitable activities, local events and opportunities to build relationships with older generations. Through the eco-council, pupils develop an understanding of environmental responsibility and take an active role in promoting sustainability. The curriculum, visits and special events also develop pupils' financial literacy and understanding of the wider economy.

6. Leaders establish and maintain an effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff identify, report and respond promptly to safeguarding concerns. Leaders take appropriate action and work with external agencies when necessary. As a result, pupils are well protected and their safety and welfare are prioritised.

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 subject leaders' monitoring of the curriculum and teaching provides them with a more precise understanding of how well pupils learn and progress, and where improvements are needed.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They work with parents, pupils, staff and governors to review the quality of education and pupils' experiences, using their findings to set priorities for school development. They regularly review progress against these priorities and adjust their plans where necessary.

8. Leaders oversee the early years provision effectively, ensuring that the curriculum, staffing and learning environment meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS). They monitor the quality of teaching and children's development to identify where improvements are needed. Staff receive appropriate induction, training and professional support, enabling them to meet children's educational, physical, social and emotional needs.

9. Subject leaders are responsible for overseeing the curriculum in their areas. While this is effective in a range of subject areas, including English and mathematics, monitoring and evaluation are not consistently effective across subjects. As a result, leaders do not always identify where improvements are needed or ensure that pupils benefit from consistently effective teaching across the curriculum.

10. Governors provide effective oversight of the school and hold leaders to account for its performance. They undertake appropriate training and have clear areas of responsibility to support them in fulfilling their duties. Through regular visits, discussions with staff and pupils, and scrutiny of school information, they gather precise and accurate evidence about the effectiveness of leaders' work. Governors use this information to challenge and support leaders, identify priorities for improvement and ensure that leaders have the knowledge and skills for their role. They ensure that the Standards are met consistently.

11. Risk is assessed and managed appropriately. Detailed systems and record-keeping ensure that pupils are able to benefit from the school's facilities, on and off site. Leaders have developed a comprehensive risk register to identify wider and contextual risks to the school, including those related to health and those that are harder to identify. Leaders regularly review risk assessment processes to ensure that they are taking appropriate and timely action to minimise risk to pupils and staff.

12. Leaders maintain a positive and productive partnership between the school and parents. Parents receive regular reports about their child's progress, including guidance as to the next steps in pupils' learning and development. Alongside planned meetings, leaders and staff make themselves available for informal discussions, such as pupil drop-off or collection times, helping parents feel informed and involved in their children's education.

13. Leaders create and implement required policies effectively. They provide parents and external agencies with the required information and relevant policies as required by the Standards. They work with the local authority and other agencies effectively. For example, they ensure that information regarding pupils who join and leave at non-standard transition points is provided to the local authority. Leaders also provide information to the local authority related to pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including that related to funding and annual reviews.

14. Leaders maintain a complaints procedure that is available to parents and clearly explains how concerns and complaints are handled. Complaints are recorded and managed in accordance with the school's published policy, including the required timescales.

15. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and promote an inclusive school environment. They maintain an accessibility plan that identifies how they will improve access to the curriculum and physical environment. Leaders review the plan and take appropriate action to address barriers to participation.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the requirements for independent schools and the early years, developing pupils' knowledge and skills in age-appropriate ways. Pupils develop their mathematical, scientific and language skills alongside their knowledge and skills in creative and artistic subjects. Leaders invest in appropriate resources and specialist expertise to support effective teaching, for example by employing specialist staff to teach subjects such as personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE).

17. Leaders have designed an early years curriculum that builds children's knowledge and skills progressively across all areas of learning, with a clear emphasis on communication and language, phonics, early reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers use their knowledge of children's starting points and ongoing assessment to plan and adapt activities that provide appropriate support and challenge. Through carefully structured phonics teaching, children learn to recognise letters and sounds and apply this knowledge in their early reading and writing. Purposeful activities help children develop their mathematical understanding and fine motor skills. As a result, children make good progress from their starting points and develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed for the next stage of their education.

18. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan lessons that build on pupils' prior learning. They use appropriate resources and adapt their teaching to provide support and challenge for pupils from different starting points. Learning is brought to life through engaging activities and meaningful links between subjects. For example, pupils apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems and use scientific vocabulary accurately when exploring non-fiction texts. As a result, pupils develop their understanding and make connections between different areas of learning.

19. Teachers establish positive relationships and clear expectations that encourage pupils to approach learning with enthusiasm and confidence. Pupils engage readily in lessons, respond positively to challenge and take pride in their work. They are willing to contribute their ideas, explain their thinking and persevere when tasks are difficult. These positive attitudes help pupils make the most of the learning opportunities provided.

20. Senior leaders have established an assessment framework that enables teachers to monitor pupils' attainment and progress, identify gaps in their knowledge and plan appropriate next steps. Teachers use assessment information to adapt their teaching and provide feedback that helps pupils understand how to improve. Pupils respond positively to this feedback and apply it to their work. As a result, pupils build securely on their prior learning, develop their knowledge and skills and make good progress.

21. Leaders identify and assess the needs of pupils who have SEND and use this information to plan appropriate support. They review pupils' progress regularly and adjust provision where necessary. Teachers adapt their teaching through targeted support, scaffolding and additional opportunities to practise and consolidate learning. As a result, pupils with SEND are supported to access the curriculum, develop their knowledge and skills and make good progress from their starting points.

22. Teachers identify the language needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and adapt their teaching to help them understand and participate in lessons. Additional individual support helps pupils develop their English vocabulary, speaking, reading and writing skills. As their

confidence and proficiency in English grow, pupils are increasingly able to engage with the curriculum and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

23. Leaders supplement the formal curriculum with a range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, including educational visits, residentials, outdoor learning, current affairs, philosophy, debating and the Friday enrichment programme. Music provision is enriched through regular rehearsals and ensembles beyond lesson time, with pupils requesting to perform during assemblies. This range of opportunities broadens pupils' learning beyond the classroom and develops independence and confidence.

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

24. Leaders implement the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies effectively. Staff have high expectations and use positive approaches, adapting support to meet pupils' individual needs. Leaders work closely with parents and monitor behaviour records to identify patterns and address concerns promptly. Incidents of unkind behaviour or bullying are investigated thoroughly, with appropriate support provided to those involved. As a result, pupils behave well, positive relationships are established and the school provides a calm and supportive learning environment. Leaders have ensured that the school is a mobile-free environment with clear policies and procedures in place for staff and pupils.

25. Leaders in the early years place an emphasis on children's emotional and physical development. Staff help children recognise and manage their feelings, build confidence and develop positive relationships with others. Through a range of planned activities and opportunities for active play, children develop their balance, co-ordination and fine motor skills. As a result, children become increasingly independent, learn to manage their emotions and develop the physical skills and confidence needed for the next stage of their learning.

26. Leaders provide a broad physical education (PE) curriculum, supported by appropriate teaching, which enables pupils to develop their physical fitness, co-ordination and sporting skills. Pupils enjoy opportunities to participate in a wide range of physical activities, including swimming, outdoor play and competitive sports. Teachers adapt activities to meet pupils' individual needs, ensuring that pupils can participate and experience success. As a result, pupils develop their physical confidence, teamwork and understanding of the importance of an active and healthy lifestyle.

27. Leaders provide a well-planned and effectively taught PSHE curriculum that helps pupils develop the knowledge and skills they need to make informed choices, build healthy relationships and look after their wellbeing. Relationships education is taught in an age-appropriate way and in line with statutory requirements. Parents are consulted about the curriculum content.

28. Leaders promote pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health through positive relationships and a supportive school environment. Pupils feel confident seeking help when they are worried and know which adults they can turn to. Initiatives such as the wellbeing club and playground buddies provide additional opportunities for pupils to share concerns and support one another. Assemblies encourage pupils to reflect on their values, beliefs and the needs of others. Outdoor learning provides opportunities to appreciate the natural world and develop a sense of curiosity and wonder. Together, these experiences support pupils' spiritual and moral development and help them build confidence, self-esteem and consideration for others.

29. Leaders have effective arrangements in place to maintain a safe and healthy school environment. They ensure that buildings, facilities and equipment are well maintained and that potential risks are identified and managed appropriately. Risk assessments take account of a full range of health and safety considerations, including fire safety, pupils' individual needs and on and off-site activities. Staff supervise pupils appropriately throughout the school day, helping to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

30. Leaders maintain accurate admission and attendance records and have effective arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance. They identify and follow up any concerns promptly, working with parents and external agencies where necessary to support regular attendance. Pupils attend school regularly, and overall attendance is high.

31. Leaders have appropriate arrangements in place to provide first aid and care for pupils who become unwell or have an accident. Staff receive relevant first aid training, including paediatric first aid in the early years. Medicines are stored and administered safely, and clear procedures ensure that incidents are recorded and parents are informed when necessary.

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

32. Leaders utilise the school's values to develop pupils' social skills and help them to build positive relationships with others. Pupils describe the school as a 'family', with friendships and play extending across year groups. Leaders reinforce this deliberately through mixed-age activities, productions, house events and having older pupils act as playground buddies. Family-style lunches with pupils of different age groups eating their lunch with members of staff, enhances the strong sense of belonging and community.

33. Leaders in the early years actively promote the development of the youngest children's social skills. Teachers model polite language and encourage pupils to say please and thank you. Turn-taking and sharing are developed through carefully planned activities as well as during guided play. As a result, children interact positively with one another, and follow the example set by their teachers, such as praising classmates for their achievements and successes.

34. Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to take on responsibilities, influence school life and make a positive contribution to their community. For example, members of the eco-council promote sustainability by reviewing recycling arrangements and working with the parents' association on environmental projects. Pupil digital leaders help other pupils and parents to understand how to stay safe online. Pupils also learn about democracy and the importance of helping others in the wider community. For example, children in Reception visit a local care home through the school's 'Buxton buddies' programme. Pupils in Year 5 research and present different charities before the whole school votes on which charities to support.

35. Leaders promote an inclusive school community in which pupils learn to understand, respect and value differences between people. Through PSHE and their wider learning, pupils develop an understanding of fundamental British values, equality and people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010. They learn about different cultures and religions, developing an appreciation of the beliefs, traditions and customs of others. They explore the impact of prejudice and discrimination through learning about historical figures such as Alan Turing and Rosa Parks. Pupils also learn British Sign Language, helping them appreciate that people communicate in different ways and the importance of including everyone. As a result, pupils show respect for others, value differences and understand the importance of treating everyone fairly. They recognise that prejudice and discrimination can affect people's lives and appreciate the importance of ensuring that everyone feels included.

36. Leaders prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education and help them develop the confidence and independence they need for the future. As pupils move through the school, they have opportunities to explore their interests and aspirations, including through an annual careers week, which introduces them to a wide range of professions. In Years 5 and 6, pupils receive more focused preparation for moving to secondary school, including discussions about future schools and interview practice. Leaders provide additional, tailored support for pupils who have additional needs or those who may find the transition particularly challenging. Consequently, pupils are confident and well prepared for moving on.

37. Leaders help pupils understand the importance of democracy, rules and responsibilities in everyday life and wider society. Through PSHE lessons and opportunities to participate in school decisions,

pupils learn how democratic processes work and why it is important to listen to and respect different views. For example, pupils research and present charities before voting on which to support. Visits to places such as Parliament and participation in the school's 'junior citizen' programme further develop pupils' understanding of public institutions, the rule of law and their responsibilities as citizens.

38. Pupils develop age-appropriate economic and financial understanding. For example, PSHE lessons ensure that pupils learn about budgeting and develop an understanding of financial institutions. This is enhanced by carefully chosen enterprise activities, such as pupils in Year 6 developing products and selling them. This provides pupils with practical experience of managing money and develops their financial literacy and skills of entrepreneurship.

Safeguarding

39. Leaders and governors ensure that the school's safeguarding policy is comprehensive and implemented effectively. Leaders and governors' policy and practice reflect current statutory guidance. They ensure that there is a culture of vigilance in safeguarding pupils.

40. Leaders are trained appropriately and undertake their roles appropriately. They ensure that there are systems in place for identifying, recording and managing any safeguarding concerns promptly and effectively. They build positive relationships with parents and families, enabling them to ensure that pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing is well supported. Leaders manage any incidents that occur well. They work closely with external specialist organisations, including the local authority, to make referrals or to understand any local or national risks that could affect pupils' safety. They take timely and effective action to keep pupils safe.

41. Governors are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities. The safeguarding governor meets regularly with leaders, undertakes a range of activities and provides effective support and challenge to leaders. A range of safeguarding information is shared with the wider governing body for further review and scrutiny. As a result, governors provide vigilant oversight of safeguarding at the school and leaders' work.

42. Staff receive regular, high-quality training, ensuring they understand their responsibilities, recognise potential indicators of concern and use referral procedures appropriately. The leader with responsibility for safeguarding provides regular updates to staff, keeping their knowledge and skills up to date. As a result, staff recognise, respond to and report concerns, including low-level concerns about the behaviour of adults working with pupils

43. Leaders and staff responsible for recruitment are well trained in safer recruitment practices and follow thorough procedures to ensure that those appointed are suitable to work with children. All required pre-employment checks are completed before staff begin working at the school, and accurate records are maintained. These arrangements help to safeguard pupils and promote their wellbeing.

44. Leaders ensure that the curriculum teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils are confident using the internet and know what to do should they encounter anything that makes them uncomfortable. An internet filtering and monitoring system is in place and is checked regularly to ensure its effectiveness. Leaders monitor online activity and react swiftly to any alerts or concerns. Leaders and governors regularly review the school's approach to safety online, ensuring it remains effective.

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School details

School	Oakhyrst Grange School
Department for Education number	936/6139
Registered charity number	1211120
Address	Oakhyrst Grange School 160 Stanstead Road Caterham Surrey CR3 6AF
Phone number	01883 343344
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Website	www.oakhyrstgrangeschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Oakhyrst Grange School CIO
Chair	Mrs Pauline Clark
Headteacher	Mrs Gemma Mitchell
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	137
Date of previous inspection	28 to 30 November 2023

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Information about the school

45. Oakhyrst Grange School is an independent, co-educational day school in Caterham, Surrey. The school operates across a number of buildings located on one site. The school is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Trustees take on roles on the school's governing body. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher joined the school in September 2025.

46. There are 36 children in the early years, taught in one Pre-Reception and one Reception class.

47. The school has identified 10 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.

48. The school has identified eight pupils as speaking English as an additional language.

49. The school states its aims are to enable every child to fulfil their academic and personal potential by encouraging personal initiative and fostering a belief in their ability to succeed in all areas of school life. It states that it seeks to provide a broad and balanced academic and extra-curricular education that meets the individual learning needs of every pupil, while helping children develop strong personal values and an understanding and appreciation of different religious beliefs. The school aims to teach pupils the difference between right and wrong and to recognise the balance between rights and responsibilities. It also seeks to promote a caring and supportive community, encouraging respect for themselves, their peers, teachers and other adults, as well as a sense of responsibility towards the wider community. The school also states that it aims to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education, equipping them with the confidence, skills and independence to embrace future opportunities.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	6 to 8 October 2026

50. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

51. 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 including with staff and pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

52. 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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