

School inspection report

25 to 27 February 2025

Stormont School

The Causeway

Potters Bar

Hertfordshire

EN6 5HA

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	5
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	5
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	7
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	9
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....	10
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	11
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	12
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	13
SAFEGUARDING	14
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	14
SCHOOL DETAILS	15
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	16
INSPECTION DETAILS	17

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders provide an inclusive and nurturing environment where pupils are supported and challenged according to their individual needs. Leaders are diligent in listening and responding to the views of parents and pupils in order to improve pupils' learning experiences and outcomes. They establish appropriate links with external agencies, with due regard to statutory guidance, to ensure that Standards are met.
2. Governors oversee the school effectively, sharing their expertise across the associated schools in order to actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. They ensure that checks, particularly with regard to safeguarding and health and safety, are stringent. The attendance policy and some previous inspection reports were not available at the start of the inspection, but this was rectified during the inspection.
3. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is enriched with opportunities for pupils to apply knowledge and skills and deepen understanding. Pupils make links between areas of learning and are challenged to think critically. In Reception, children learn through playing and exploring in an environment which promotes curiosity. Pupils develop skills for the future through a well-planned curriculum and a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' enjoyment of learning is evident in the way they engage in lessons, ask questions and communicate their learning.
4. Teachers know individual pupils well and work with them to encourage independence and responsibility from Reception to Year 6. In lessons, and in their work, pupils receive specific feedback to help them improve their work and make good progress. Pupils are taught to be reflective, check their own work and learn from mistakes.
5. Pupils' attainment and progress is measured in different ways and analysed regularly by leaders. There is inconsistent progress between year groups. Leaders use information from assessments to adapt the curriculum. However, the impact on outcomes is not yet as effective as it might be.
6. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported by the learning support they receive in, and out of lessons. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points.
7. Most pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are proficient in English. The school identifies their needs systematically and provides targeted support where necessary. These pupils make good progress in language development and consequently, make good progress in other curriculum areas.
8. Health and safety procedures are highly effective, with regular checks and suitable training for staff. Premises are well maintained to provide a safe learning environment. In the early years, children have access to a suitable learning environment, including an outdoor area, to develop their physical and social skills.
9. Pupils behave well and are respectful and polite in interactions with peers and adults. They follow school rules and are highly motivated. Pupils enjoy learning, work hard, think hard and demonstrate resilience and perseverance.

10. Leaders provide a range of opportunities within the curriculum to enable pupils to develop skills to prepare them for the future. They establish and maintain links with parents, the local community and local schools in order to offer a range of engaging learning experiences for pupils. As a result, pupils learn, first-hand, about a wide range of careers and the skills required to be successful. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their education.
11. The school's safeguarding arrangements are reviewed by governors and leaders through internal and external audits. Leaders ensure that all staff are well equipped to promote the wellbeing of pupils through regular and effective training and effectively implemented safeguarding procedures. Pupils are aware of, and take up, the different avenues available to them to share a concern.

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 all the required information is consistently made available to parents
- develop the use of information from assessments so that pupils make more consistent progress across year groups.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Governors provide effective oversight of the school. They ensure that leaders have appropriate knowledge and skills, including through shared expertise from within the group of associated schools, so that Standards are met. Policies are implemented effectively by leaders. Governors have begun the process of reviewing policies to reflect the ethos and practice of the group of schools.
13. Leaders provide an environment where pupils and staff interact with each other with respect and kindness. They ensure that pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted through the school's values which are closely linked to British values. Pupils follow rules and are motivated to learn. Leaders seek ways to equip pupils with skills for life, in keeping with their aims and ethos.
14. Most of the required information and school policies are made available to parents via the school website. Records of how funding is allocated for pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan are made available and shared with the local authority. However, some previous inspection reports were not shared. This was rectified by leaders during the inspection.
15. Leaders are reflective and take action to improve outcomes for pupils. For instance, they have successfully raised the profile of skills development for pupils, including critical thinking and independent learning skills. Leaders monitor teaching and learning, providing support where necessary to improve planning and teaching strategies. Pupils are curious and questioning; they explore and find things out for themselves. They develop a range of skills to prepare them for their next steps in education and for life in Britain.
16. Parents are well informed about the progress their child makes and are involved in their learning. Leaders invite and include parents' views through working parties, for instance, to develop reporting systems. Termly reports are detailed and there are regular parent teacher meetings. Workshops, videos, booklets and helpful tips on online platforms, enable parents to support pupils in their learning. Additional meetings at key transition points are organised, where appropriate. In Reception, work is shared with parents online, and parents are invited to events such as 'stay and play'. Staff and leaders are accessible at the beginning and end of the day for informal meetings.
17. Leaders listen to pupils' views through regular surveys, an active school council and meetings with the headteacher. Leaders involve pupils in making decisions such as about how money raised by the parents' association could be spent. Leaders have responded to suggestions to improve lunch menus, sports kit and playtimes.
18. In the early years, leaders provide staff with appropriate and helpful support to develop their professional practice. Staff enable children to develop engagement and independence, whilst ensuring children's safeguarding and overall wellbeing. There are appropriate ratios of staff to children and well-planned activities which enable children to develop in all required areas of learning.
19. Subject leaders are knowledgeable about their subjects and ensure that progression of skills is well developed. They plan opportunities to extend learning beyond the curriculum through trips and visits to deepen pupils' learning.
20. Leaders demonstrate a good awareness and understanding of risk management. They identify potential hazards and develop clear protocols to ensure the safety of pupils. Risk assessments for

trips are detailed and they are checked and updated regularly. Leaders work closely with relevant external agencies to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is promoted. For instance, the learning support department works with relevant experts to identify and support pupils' needs.

21. The complaints policy is effectively implemented. Complaints are recorded systematically and resolved quickly, with due regard to processes and timescales outlined in the policy.
22. Leaders ensure that they fulfil their duties under the Equality Act 2010. They provide an inclusive environment where all pupils, regardless of need, can access education through an appropriate accessibility plan. Leaders are mindful of raising the ambition of female pupils in typically male-dominated industries. They invite in female engineers and racing car drivers to inspire pupils. Pupils learn sports skills in football, netball, cricket and tennis and take part in inter-school competitions and events with male pupils in local schools.

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 is broad and balanced with clear progression of knowledge and skills. It is reviewed regularly by leaders and adapted to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils. The curriculum is enriched with a range of opportunities to develop pupils' thinking, helping to prepare them for the future. Pupils are supported to achieve well in entrance examinations required by schools of their choice.
25. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this to plan engaging and meaningful lessons for pupils. Topics are linked seamlessly so that pupils develop skills across different subjects. For instance, pupils develop skills in digital art and use their literacy skills to write about what they learn in science workshops. Children in Reception write number sentences about the spots they draw on ladybirds' wings. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. This enables pupils to ask questions, take risks in their learning and attempt challenges without fear of failure. Teachers structure lessons carefully so that they include appropriate support and challenge matched to prior attainment, as well as choice.
26. The school's marking and feedback policy is highly effective. Teachers provide clear next steps and this helps pupils to develop an understanding of what they need to do to improve. Feedback mechanisms include written and verbal comments, peer reviews and colour-coded pens. These help pupils to reflect on their learning, self-correct and make good progress.
27. Teachers have well-developed knowledge about individual pupils. They use a range of assessment information to adapt planning and learning for individuals and groups of pupils. Information from newly introduced assessments indicates inconsistent progress across year groups. Leaders have begun to use this information to modify the curriculum or plan support but the data, so far, indicates variable outcomes.
28. Pupils across the school are articulate and have well-developed speaking and listening skills. These are enhanced through drama lessons and opportunities to discuss and collaborate in lessons. All pupils in Years 3 and 5 prepare for the English Speaking Board examination. This further develops pupils' self-confidence in public speaking. Children in Reception develop communication and language skills throughout the day, including through their interactions in 'play and learn' activities.
29. Children in Reception use their knowledge of letters and sounds to pick out rhyming words when listening to stories and when writing independently. Literacy skills are developed through the use of a range of appropriate texts throughout the school. Pupils enjoy reading. They analyse authors' use of language and apply these techniques in their own writing. Pupils develop their linguistic skills in French, making use of their vocabulary books to help them read and write.
30. Pupils apply numeracy skills confidently in mathematics lessons and in other subjects such as science. Science lessons promote investigative learning with clear progression in scientific skills and vocabulary. Pupils are challenged to apply what they learn to make links with real life.
31. Technological skills are integrated across the curriculum. Children in Reception use devices to develop photo stories. Older pupils research information to support their learning in topics such as humanities. Pupils' aesthetic development is evident in high-quality artwork such as painting, embroidery and pottery. In music lessons, pupils enjoy singing and understand how pitch is related to sound.

32. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND provides training and support for staff. Teachers ensure that pupils who have SEND are appropriately challenged with learning activities matched closely to their needs. Pupils make good progress as they are well supported by adults who use carefully adapted success criteria and suitable resources.
33. Most pupils who speak EAL have a high proficiency in English and are challenged and supported according to their individual needs. Where required, visual aids and pre-teaching of vocabulary, enable pupils to access the curriculum and make good progress.
34. In Reception, leaders ensure that the learning environment promotes children's curiosity, creativity and imagination. Staff have positive relationships with pupils and engage them in conversations to develop their knowledge and understanding and their communication skills. Leaders ensure that well-resourced indoor and outdoor areas in Reception enable children to play, explore and find things out for themselves. For instance, they observe insects in water and examine their features using magnifying glasses. Children develop their gross motor skills on suitable outdoor playground equipment.
35. Leaders provide a wide programme of activities for pupils across a broad range of physical and creative activities. Consequently, pupils develop their skills in a range of sporting clubs from gymnastics and tennis to fencing and trampolining. Younger pupils develop their creativity and imagination in story time and art clubs. Older pupils enjoy cookery lessons where they learn about nutrition and hygiene. Pupils improve their touch-typing skills or learn Spanish in lunch time clubs.

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

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

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

37. Pupils across the school behave well and act responsibly. Teachers actively promote persistence, resilience and participation in both academic and extra-curricular activities. Across the school, pupils take pride in their work and present their work well.
38. The school's admission and attendance registers are well maintained and monitored effectively by leaders. Leaders report pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points to the local authority. Close communication with parents and rewards for pupils have resulted in improved attendance. Leaders follow statutory guidance related to attendance. However, the attendance policy was not made available. This was rectified during the inspection.
39. Pupils understand the importance of respect for different religions and humanism in religious education (RE) lessons. Speakers from different faiths deepen pupils' knowledge at assemblies. Pupils are taught how to understand neurodiversity. Children in Reception learn how they are individual and how families can be different.
40. Physical education (PE) is integral to the school's curriculum, with a focus on safety and wellbeing. Teachers have a sound knowledge of pupils and support them to participate in ways that suit their prior attainment. For instance, older pupils develop their self-confidence as they are encouraged to tackle more challenging equipment in gymnastics. Younger pupils demonstrate complex ball skills to their peers which helps to raise their self-esteem. There is a clear emphasis on promoting healthy eating, hydration and overall physical and mental wellbeing.
41. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is delivered effectively through lessons, form time, circle time and themed assemblies. Topics such as 'Healthy Me' teach pupils how to look after their physical and mental health in age-appropriate ways. PSHE lessons enable pupils to reflect on their own experiences when discussing friendships, which develops their self-awareness. Older pupils learn about the benefits of meditating before tests. Children in Reception learn about ways to calm themselves, for instance, by listening to music.
42. The relationships and health education programme ensures pupils understand the importance of friendships, healthy relationships and respecting people's boundaries. Pupils learn about their bodies and how they develop in age-appropriate science lessons. Older pupils learn about the physical as well as psychological effects that drugs can have.
43. The school has an effective and consistently followed behaviour policy which promotes good behaviour across the school. Staff receive training on aspects of behaviour management which enables them to better support the pupils' wellbeing. They are trained to identify the reasons behind the pupils' behaviour. They focus on swift, positive reinforcement and rewards and effective sanctions.
44. There is an effective anti-bullying policy in place which actively prevents and minimises bullying. Anti-bullying ambassadors are trained to help other pupils by effectively listening to all those involved and making fair decisions. The ambassadors initiate ways for pupils to support each other during playtimes and thus help pupils to develop socially.

45. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to take on roles of responsibility such as head girl, house captains and school council representatives. In addition, monitors for every subject work closely with heads of department to develop initiatives to improve learning. For instance, information technology prefects prepare and deliver a presentation on how to recognise online scams. Library prefects organise story time in Year 1 and make suggestions for books to be added to the library. Staff in Reception support children in organising their belongings and developing their sense of responsibility through 'busy work' each morning.
46. Leaders ensure there is a thorough health and safety policy with clear lines of delegation of duties to staff and suitable training. As a result, staff have secure knowledge and appropriate skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and consistently. The school complies with relevant health and safety laws and checks are carried out regularly. Record keeping is systematic.
47. The school's premises are well maintained, providing a safe physical environment for pupils. Systems are in place to ensure that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by appropriately qualified and trained staff. Leaders emphasise the importance of vigilant supervision and as a result staff actively engage with pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Leaders and staff welcome and supervise pupils when they arrive and when they leave school. Children in Reception are closely supervised by suitably qualified staff in their daily routines.

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

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

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

49. Leaders ensure that pupils develop a good understanding of human and social skills through a rich and varied curriculum. Carefully planned weekly themes help pupils to develop a deeper understanding of skills such as sharing, teamwork and collaboration. Teachers plan activities for pupils to develop these themes in engaging ways during form times. For instance, pupils in Year 6 create a chain reaction with toy cars and dominoes. They develop problem solving skills and resilience, testing and improving their model cars following a talk by racing car drivers.
50. The curriculum is enriched by talks from visiting speakers, including parents and alumni. These range from members of the fire service and police to architects, footballers and interior designers. Pupils take part in workshops to create their own products, such as handmade soap. They learn how to market and advertise them from a project manager in advertising. Pupils gain a deep insight into various aspects of animal care from visiting veterinary surgeons and physiotherapists for animals. Pupils across the school are inspired by male and female role models who talk about their careers. As a result, they are ambitious and begin, from an early age, to develop aspirations about jobs and careers.
51. Pupils are taught how to express their own points of view and listen carefully to others. Through debates and discussions, pupils understand the importance of balanced views on topics such as the importance of money. Younger pupils begin to understand the value of money through role play in a bakery, flower shop or post office. Older pupils learn to consider carefully how they should manage their spending of euros on a residential trip to France.
52. The school's 'life skills' programme for pupils in Year 6 prepares pupils for secondary school and beyond. They develop independent study skills and interview skills. Visitors are invited in to teach pupils baking skills or to help them understand the skills required to become the local mayor. Pupils gain an insight into mortgages, debt, credit cards and how to protect passwords to prevent identity theft.
53. Pupils are encouraged to develop empathy, kindness and respect for diversity, fostering responsible citizenship. They develop their understanding of right from wrong through assemblies, circle times and PSHE lessons. They learn about the importance of the rule of law, for example in relation to illegal drugs or restrictions on legal substances such as medicines and alcohol. A talk from a magistrate and lessons about Parliament help pupils understand the legal system in Britain.
54. Pupils benefit from visits to the elderly in care homes and from inviting them to their school productions. They understand the importance of Remembrance Day through attending local community events. Eco monitors organise clothes swaps and Christmas jumper swaps to prevent clothes from being discarded. Pupils exercise their democratic rights when voting for which charities to support after presentations from older pupils. They take part in fund raising in enjoyable ways, such as activities in PE to raise money through sponsors. Pupils recognise that people within their community benefit from food and other items they collect to support local food banks. The charitable activities they undertake help pupils to understand how the lives of other people in society may be different from their own.

55. Across the school, pupils develop their understanding of different cultures by celebrating festivals from around the world. Pupils appreciate concepts such as responsible trading when learning about the Kingdom of Benin, in West Africa, in humanities lessons. They use their technological skills to research information to deepen their knowledge about current and historic practices. Leaders choose relevant texts to support pupils' understanding of the diverse society in Britain today.

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. Safeguarding arrangements at the school are effective. Leaders ensure that their own knowledge of safeguarding is current through appropriate training provided by the local authority, including 'Prevent' duty training. As a result, leaders are aware of the contextual risks to pupils and take appropriate steps to mitigate these. Leaders contact appropriate external agencies where necessary for advice and make referrals to the relevant local authority when needed.
58. Leaders provide staff with comprehensive safeguarding induction when they join, annual training thereafter and regular updates. Staff are aware of how to recognise signs of potential harm and use systems effectively to report and record any concerns. Staff understand how to log any concerns about adults who work in the school, including those which are low level. They use the system effectively including for self-referral. Record keeping is thorough and monitored regularly by leaders, to look for any patterns.
59. Pupils across the school are taught how to stay safe online through computing and PSHE lessons. Children in Reception are taught about the importance of consent when taking images for their photo story. Older pupils are taught about how to recognise and respond to potential dangers when using social media or the internet. Leaders arrange workshops for pupils, staff and parents from organisations such as the NSPCC so that they are well informed about how to keep safe.
60. Effective filtering and monitoring systems are in place. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding test filtering and monitoring systems regularly and respond to any alerts quickly and sensitively.
61. Pupils are aware of who they can go to if they have a concern. There are worry boxes in each classroom and an email for pupils to use to report a concern anonymously. Pupils use these arrangements confidently as they understand that staff will respond swiftly and appropriately. There is a safe space created for pupils to go to should they need to speak to an appropriate adult. A few staff are trained to be mental health first aiders to support pupils.
62. Governors commission external audits of safeguarding arrangements at the school. They ensure that there is effective support in place for the designated safeguarding lead and carry out regular checks on the single central record (SCR) of appointments. The SCR is comprehensive, and appropriate checks are carried out for all adults who work at the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Stormont School
Department for Education number	919/6202
Registered charity number	311079
Address	Stormont School The Causeway Potters Bar Hertfordshire EN6 5HA
Phone number	01707 654037
Email address	admin@stormontschool.org
Website	www.stormontschool.org
Proprietor	St Albans Education Group
Chair	Mrs Alison Arnold
Headteacher	Miss Louise Martin
Age range	4 to 11
Number of pupils	121
Date of previous inspection	8 to 11 March 2022

Information about the school

64. Stormont School is an independent day school which is registered as a school for female pupils. The pre-prep comprises a Reception year and Years 1 and 2. The prep school continues up to Year 6. The school recently celebrated its 80th year. In September 2024, the school merged with St Albans High School to form the St Albans Education Group. The governing body oversees all the schools within the St Albans Education Group.
65. There are 121 pupils on roll, of whom 17 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage in one Reception class.
66. The school has identified 37 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
67. The school has identified English as an additional language for nine pupils.
68. The school states its aims are to provide a safe and nurturing environment to allow pupils to thrive to the best of their ability.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

25 to 27 February 2025

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

70. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- discussions with 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.

71. 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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