

Additional inspection report

2 to 3 December 2024

Sutton Valence School

North Street

Sutton Valence

Maidstone

ME17 3HL

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'.

Inspection outcome

Additional inspection: The school meets all the relevant Standards that were considered during this inspection.

Inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR Paragraphs 7(a) and 7(b), 8(a) and 8(b) (safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8; EYFS 3.4-3.8, paragraph 9 (behaviour); NMS 15, paragraph 10 (bullying); NMS 16, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9; EYFS 3.64, paragraph 14 (supervision); EYFS 3.35 -3.49, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); EYFS 3.76

1. The school currently has separate safeguarding policies for the prep and senior schools, both of which are suitable. The policies are effectively implemented. Safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained and they ensure that staff receive effective training at induction and regularly at the beginning of the year. This training is supplemented with frequent updates should these be necessary. Staff are well trained, and they have a suitable understanding of statutory and non-statutory guidance. Their training includes information on preventing radicalisation.
2. There are effective procedures in place for pupils to voice any concerns they have about themselves or their peers. These include worry boxes in the prep school and an electronic procedure for logging concerns anonymously in the senior school. Pupils use these systems and the school consults pupils about ways in which they feel most comfortable to make reports. Pupils are well educated about the risks of working online or on their own devices and the school has suitable systems in place to filter and monitor access to the internet. These are regularly tested and a log of such tests is kept.
3. Safeguarding leaders manage the reporting of any concerns about pupils effectively and take appropriate action promptly. Regular meetings between all members of the safeguarding team are held to monitor any pupils of concern and records contain all the necessary details and chronologies to ensure ongoing support. They maintain close links with the local authority, seek advice and refer to external agencies when necessary, thus ensuring appropriate support for pupils, including the youngest children in the early years and those pupils who are boarders. The school ensures that pupils requiring additional support have safety plans in place where needed and these are shared appropriately with staff who are closely involved with their care.
4. Staff understand their code of conduct, which emphasizes professional behaviour, and are clear about how to report any concerns they have about colleagues, including those which may not meet the harm threshold. A suitable log of these low-level concerns is kept which allows patterns to be identified.
5. Governors have received appropriate safeguarding training; they receive regular termly detailed reports from the safeguarding leaders. Governors interrogate the information they receive and are vigilant in their oversight, providing both support and challenge to school leaders.
6. School leaders implement suitable policies to promote good behaviour across the school; rewards are given for academic work and behaviour and information is provided for pupils which shows clearly how sanctions will be applied when necessary. Pupils understand these and accept that sanctions are fair. Should serious incidents of poor behaviour occur, the school acts promptly and appropriately and puts arrangements in place to support pupils who have been involved, including when the behaviour has occurred outside school. Incidents of bullying are rare and school leaders respond promptly and effectively to any such incidents.

7. Both the senior and prep school sites provide safe and well-maintained environments for pupils. Traffic is well managed to ensure separation from pupils and effective infrastructure is in place to ensure cars are parked safely. Fencing around the nursery outdoor area is suitable, including in the area where it is adjacent to the outdoor swimming pool. Procedures for children being dropped off and collected at the locked gate are robust and both children and their parents are educated about the importance of holding hands as they move from the gate to their cars in the car park.
8. Supervision of pupils is appropriate for the ages of the pupils. There is a detailed policy in place and staff are vigilant in their supervision of children in the early years. In the Nursery and Reception classes children are always within sight or sound and usually both. The supervision of pupils when they are in school and on trips is suitable. Should any incidents occur during educational visits they are reviewed carefully by senior leaders, who implement actions to strengthen practice, including additional staff training using the incident as a case study.
9. A suitable risk assessment policy is in place. Senior leaders monitor the risk assessment process and sign off completed risk assessments for departments, the school site and for educational trips and visits. Suitable risk assessments are completed for any residential and overseas trips; these consider the possible risks carefully and put suitable mitigations in place. In the early years daily checks are carried out to ensure that the indoor and outdoor environments are safe.
10. The school meets the Standards.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

ISSR paragraph 25 (maintenance)

11. Both senior and prep schools are well maintained and any maintenance requests logged are responded to promptly and effectively by the maintenance team.
12. The school meets the Standard.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

13. The school meets the requirement for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars for the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school website.
14. The school meets the Standard.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

ISSR paragraphs 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c), 34(2)

15. Senior leaders, supported by governors, prioritise the welfare and safety of pupils across the whole school, including in boarding. In the Nursery children are well cared for in a safe environment. Governors monitor safeguarding and welfare arrangements with diligence and risks to pupils are carefully considered so that suitable mitigations are put in place.
16. School leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
17. The school meets the Standards.

School details

School	Sutton Valence School
Department for Education number	886 6019
Registered charity number	1181012
Address	Sutton Valence School North Street Sutton Valence Maidstone Kent ME17 3HL
Phone number	01622 845203
Email address	hmsec@svs.org.uk
Website	https://www.svs.org.uk
Proprietor	United Westminster and Grey Coat Foundation
Chair	Mrs Gillian Swaine
Headteacher	Mr James Thomas
Age range	2 to 19
Number of pupils	859
Number of boarding pupils	124
Date of previous inspection	8 to 11 March 2022

Information about the school

18. Sutton Valence School is a co-educational day and boarding school located in rural Kent close to the town of Maidstone. It consists of a senior school and a prep school which is located approximately half a mile away from the senior site. The prep school includes a pre-prep and a Nursery. The school forms part of a charitable trust, the United Westminster and Grey Coat Foundation which provides governance for the school through an advisory panel of non-proprietary governors. Since the previous inspection the senior and prep school are now inspected as a single entity.
19. There are three boarding houses on site which accommodate pupils aged between 11 and 18. One is for female pupils and two are for male pupils.
20. There are 71 pupils in the early years comprising two Nursery and two Reception classes.
21. The school has identified 305 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan
22. English is an additional language for 30 pupils.
23. The school states that its aims are to help pupils become confident, civilised, and open-minded individuals who possess a love of learning and a strong set of values reflecting the school's principles as a Christian foundation. The school seeks for pupils to treat each other with respect, humanity and care and to develop their leadership skills alongside their academic and co-curricular activities.

Purpose of the additional inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. This inspection was an unannounced additional monitoring inspection which was carried out at the request of the DfE.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

2 to 3 December 2024

24. Two reporting inspectors visited the school for two days.
25. Inspection activities included:
 - scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school and information available on the school's website
 - tour of the school sites to consider aspects of health and safety
 - discussions with the chair of governors
 - discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
 - discussions with pupils, including boarders
 - visits to the boarding houses accompanied by staff

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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