

School inspection report

12 to 14 March 2024

Bloxham School

Bloxham

Banbury

Oxfordshire

OX15 4PE

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 nurture pupils' wellbeing by ensuring the school's aims, to provide a high quality holistic education, underpinned by a Christian ethos, are central to their decision-making.
2. Governors have a visible role in school. They monitor the school's provision and its impact effectively through subcommittees, review of policies and oversight of leaders' work. Strategic direction, designed to ensure pupil wellbeing, flows effectively from the Woodard Foundation through the governors to leaders in the school.
3. Pupils are able to voice their opinions about the school through the supportive boarding environment, the pupil council and to approachable staff. However, some of the pupils do not always feel their voices are heard.
4. The behaviour of pupils towards each other is generally supportive and respectful, but staff do not always consistently address some of the incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour observed by pupils.
5. Pupils experience high-quality education through well-planned lessons, tailored support for pupils with diverse needs, and a rich and broad curriculum. Teachers' comprehensive knowledge of their subjects, coupled with pupils' eagerness to learn, contributes to pupils' good academic progress.
6. The 'broader curriculum' programme incorporates service, expressive arts and physical activities. All pupils represent the school in sport, music and drama. All pupils participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) or some form of outdoor education. Coupled with this there is an extensive activities programme that enables pupils to discover new interests or cultivate passions in existing ones. The choice of activities ranges from jazz band to yoga, clay pigeon shooting to water polo. Parents are effusive in their appreciation of the wide range of activities and cite it as one of the reasons they place their children in the school. Pupils appreciate the scope of activities, recognising how they contribute to their holistic development and prepare them for life beyond Bloxham. As part of the programme all pupils must participate in a service. This develops skills of empathy for others. As part of the programme leaders have introduced opportunities which are designed to prepare pupils for life beyond school. As a result, several of the activities have influenced the future careers and hobbies of pupils. For example, a number of pupils have entered events and hospitality professions following the cooking activity. This broader curriculum coupled and associated activities programme is a significant strength of the school.
7. Leaders' approach to educating the whole individual prioritises the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of its pupils. Pupils have a sense of belonging and achieve personal growth through diverse programmes, including the 'broader curriculum' beyond the classroom, and support provided, such as through the tutor and the house system.
8. Safeguarding is effective. Leaders implement robust policies suitably, provide extensive staff training, and take proactive and appropriate measures to address safeguarding concerns. An experienced safeguarding team is well trained, proactive and knowledgeable on potential local and national issues. Pupils are taught to keep safe through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons and assemblies.

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 the behaviour and rewards policy is implemented consistently by all staff so that all groups of pupils feel confident to raise any concerns about behaviour.
- ensure that all groups of pupils are listened to equally effectively.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors play an active role in the strategic direction of the school. They are highly visible in the school and visit regularly to talk to pupils and staff to help them ensure that policies are appropriately implemented. They support and challenge leaders to make sure the leadership team work cohesively to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses and fulfil their duties. Sub committees maintain effective oversight of specific aspects of the school, for example safeguarding and health and safety. Governors review policies and procedures, including the checking of records and critical questioning of leaders, to ensure that the provision promotes pupils' wellbeing.
10. Leaders foster a welcoming and secure environment in boarding houses, nurturing a sense of belonging among pupils. Pupils' wellbeing is further enhanced in the wider school environment through the provision of a stimulating environment and caring staff who ensure that pupils make good progress.
11. Leaders ensure the ethos of the school is actively promoted through a 'broader curriculum' which offers pupils a range of stimulating opportunities beyond the classroom. Through this 'broader curriculum', pupils encounter a breadth of experiences including service to others, academic enrichment, physical challenge and confidence-building initiatives, all of which help prepare pupils for life beyond school. In some instances, pupils' career choices have been influenced by skills learnt through the 'broader curriculum', such as in the field of hospitality.
12. Leaders provide staff with regular and up-to-date training to build confidence in, and understanding of, required safeguarding and health and safety procedures. Leaders maintain effective relationships with external agencies, utilising resources such as the local authority's safeguarding children's services for training.
13. Leaders deal with complaints in accordance with policy guidelines and governors are involved appropriately.
14. Leaders ensure that parents receive detailed information and feedback on their child's progress both academically and pastorally in the form of termly written reports, follow up phone calls and regular consultations and parents' meetings. Appropriate information is made available to parents on the school website.
15. Leaders' and governors' commitment to boarding is clear in the investment made to the upgrading of facilities in boarding. Leaders have identified that refurbishment is required to bring all houses to the highest possible standard. This is being addressed through a rolling programme of refurbishment.
16. Leaders have created a number of forums for pupils to initiate change. For example, the school council has initiated changes to the uniform. Pupils are confident in approaching house staff with any problems. However, not all pupils feel their voice is heard, for example, with regard to inconsistent approaches by teachers in addressing minor disciplinary matters.
17. Leaders take a strategic approach to identifying and managing risk. Suitable procedures are in place to assess and mitigate risks in such areas as health and safety, educational visits and safeguarding. Staff are made aware of the legal requirements surrounding risk, the prevention of risk and processes to be alert to wider assessment of risk. Staff are effectively trained about writing risk

assessments. The training covers identifying hazards and who may be harmed, evaluating any potential risks and recording findings. Risk assessments are routinely reviewed and updated. Leaders mitigate potential risks relating to the security of the school through effective implementation of various security measures such as external CCTV, keypad entry, and signing-in procedures for houses.

18. Middle leaders demonstrate clear awareness of senior leaders' strategic vision, and department action plans are aligned with the school's development goals, facilitating continuous improvement in pupil experiences. For example, in science, middle leaders regularly update the curriculum to inspire pupils with recent scientific developments and associated social implications. This helps to ensure that pupils develop scientific literacy and are open-minded, long-term learners who are able to critique science.
19. Leaders make certain that the school complies with the requirements of equality legislation. They implement an appropriate accessibility plan which identifies measures to improve the access that any pupils with a disability have to the physical environment, information and the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

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. Pupils receive high-quality education through well-planned lessons delivered by teachers with secure subject knowledge. Schemes of work are appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of the pupils. Heads of department regularly review the schemes of work to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate. The curriculum is broad with literacy and numeracy embedded in most schemes of work.
22. Lessons are adapted to address the curriculum needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), ensuring they receive tailored support aligned with their individual learning requirements. Teachers adapt resources and teaching methods in lessons so that pupils who have SEND make progress in line with their peers.
23. Leaders also ensure pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) can access the curriculum fully. For example, in science lessons, seating arrangements enable pupils who have EAL to sit next to pupils studying in their first language. The use of a glossary of terms and regular vocabulary work are used to support understanding and progress.
24. Leaders gather assessment data when pupils enter the school. This data is used by teachers and leaders to track pupils' progress robustly and regularly. Pupils make good progress due to this diligent tracking, effective teacher support, and pupils' eagerness to learn. Teachers' planning and subject knowledge provide opportunities for extension when required. GCSE results indicate that pupils tend to perform higher than predicted on entry to the school. Results at A level indicate that pupils achieve in line with predictions, although pupils who join the school in the sixth form tend to achieve higher than their predictions.
25. Teachers assess pupil work effectively through various means such as questioning in class, reviewing work completed between lessons, and regular testing. Their feedback about this work helps pupils develop their ability to self-assess, improve their work and make effective progress.
26. Mutual respect between pupils and teachers fosters a conducive and productive learning environment in lessons. The use of technology and digital note-taking applications support pupils with organisation and collaboration. Pupils gain confidence and broaden their knowledge and skills through being allowed to experiment and learn from mistakes.
27. The 'broader curriculum' is effectively designed to equip pupils with essential life skills not typically covered in the traditional curriculum. The 'broader curriculum' includes a wide range of activities, catering to diverse interests from clay pigeon shooting to yoga. It includes academic enrichment, such as the 'Bloxham mini-MBA programme', which gives pupils the workplace skills required in the modern business world. Through this programme, pupils gain experience in collaborative working, communication, assertion, debate, persuasion, as well as presentation skills.
28. Pupils have advanced speaking skills, evolved through opportunities to present to their house, the whole school in assembly and more widely in national competitions. For example, all Year 7 and 8 pupils partake in London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) exams.
29. Most pupils board either full-time or on a flexi basis, seamlessly integrating into the boarding community. Leaders have developed structured boarding routines which positively impact the

learning of boarders. Supervision during homework and support from teaching staff in the evenings for academic tasks results in improved academic outcomes.

30. Recreational activities contribute to a well-rounded educational experience, enabling pupils to learn new skills, or expand on existing ones. The sports facilities offer ample opportunities for pupils to engage in physical activities and support their personal development.
31. The 'broader curriculum' and activities developed by leaders is highly regarded by pupils ensuring personal growth and exploration of new skills and interests. Pupils benefit from the wide range of activities available, from sports to artistic pursuits. The emphasis on trying new things and the effective promotion of pupils' enjoyment of diverse opportunities highlight the school's commitment to holistic education.

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

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

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

33. Through the 'broader curriculum', opportunities to develop public speaking, pursue creative arts and outdoor engagement programmes build confidence, develop physical skills, and support mental health of the pupils. In PSHE lessons pupils learn strategies to prioritise their mental health and are given opportunities to ask questions anonymously, benefiting the whole class.
34. Leaders have introduced the 'Exham Award' for Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils and the 'Fourth Form Challenge' for Year 10 and 11 pupils. In both programmes, pupils are encouraged effectively to step out of their comfort zone, expand friendship groups and learn new skills to build self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem. They choose activities from a range of creative arts, academic enrichment, service to others, public speaking and outdoor pursuits.
35. The school's physical education department provides comprehensive curricular and extra-curricular sports programmes, ensuring every pupil represents the school in sports. Access to sports and fitness facilities supports pupils' physical health, with personalised guidance available for pupils' specific needs. Pupils are highly appreciative of the extensive opportunities in sport, whether it be pupils specialising in traditional school sports such as hockey, or those learning more unusual sports such as fives or water polo. Pupils understand the impact partaking in sport has on their mental health and physical wellbeing.
36. Pupils can confidently identify what constitutes bullying and speak passionately about the action they would take if they saw or heard something that was wrong. However, there are a small number of incidents of behaviour by some pupils that do not align with the high standards and expectations of the majority. This behaviour is not always consistently addressed by staff. As a result, some pupils are not as forthcoming with their concerns. The school is moving towards a more centralised recording of these incidents, designed to enable leaders to identify patterns of behaviour and ensure a consistency of response.
37. The school's prefect system, including both school and house prefects, fosters a sense of responsibility and community among pupils. Senior pupils act as effective and influential role models in this regard by carrying out clearly defined roles of responsibility.
38. Peer listeners play a valuable role in supporting younger boarders who may be away from home for the first time. Peer listeners are senior pupils who have been elected by staff and their peers to listen and advise pupils who are looking for someone in whom to confide. Thorough training of these prefects ensures they are prepared for this responsible role.
39. The teaching of PSHE in house groups highlights its importance to pupils and enables pupils to ask searching questions in a supportive environment. The PSHE programme covers various topics, including relationship and sex education (RSE), bullying, and healthy lifestyles, supplemented by guest speakers and practical lessons such as cookery for sixth-form pupils. The well-designed programme meets the needs of the pupils and is dynamic in its responses to current issues. Pupils feel that it has a positive impact on them and on their wellbeing.
40. Boarding leaders provide a supportive and close atmosphere within the boarding houses where pupils feel safe and are able to discuss concerns with tutors and matron. Boarding house

accommodation varies in quality, but all accommodations are comfortable and provide personalization and security for pupils. Readily available access to healthcare services, including a health centre and nursing staff, ensure pupils' medical needs are met. New boarders receive a helpful and informative induction. The positive relationships between boarding staff, prefects and boarders further enhance the welcoming and supportive environment. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to build friendships in boarding with different year groups, ensuring an extensive network to support pupils' wellbeing.

41. Health and safety measures are in place and implemented effectively. Regular checks are carried out on the fire safety equipment and fire drills are carried out at least termly including during boarding time in the boarding houses. The site is well maintained and any concerns regarding maintenance or health and safety raised by staff are acted on in a timely manner. Admissions and attendance registers are appropriately maintained with absences followed up promptly. Attendance is high with parents consulted routinely.
42. The medical centre is well staffed with two full-time nurses and two health care assistants. A number of other staff are first aid trained and wear an identifiable green lanyard. Suitable medical arrangements are in place for pupils who become unwell during the day or overnight, or for those with specific healthcare needs. Through the PSHE programme pupils learn basic cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and basic first aid in the event of an anaphylactic reaction.

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

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

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

44. Pupils are highly appreciative of the culture within school. Leaders nurture an environment where individuals are valued for what they bring and who they are. The school maintains a Christian ethos while welcoming other faiths and cultures, promoting diversity and understanding.
45. The PSHE programme reflects a commitment to inclusivity, social responsibility, and promotion of British values. Staff are clear and well informed on the threats to pupils around extremism and radicalisation, with pupils kept informed and educated through PSHE lessons. For example, in response to leaders' concerns surrounding the extreme views of a particular social media influencer, a programme of discussions was implemented to educate pupils in taking an informed view of his standpoint.
46. Through the 'broader curriculum' and activities, pupils engage in service to others and charitable endeavours. Pupils are encouraged, and given the freedom, to pursue their interests giving them the skills and respect for life in British society. The community service element of the broader curriculum encourages pupils to help others, expand their worldview and develop leadership skills. For example, pupils use their training as lifeguards and sports leaders to support local primary children. Pupils work with dementia patients at a local nursing home. Other pupils volunteer at the local primary school where they help younger children through a variety of clubs such as art, languages, sport and cookery. Some pupils learn British Sign Language to be able to support people who have hearing difficulties. Pupils actively engage in supporting charities through hosting fundraising events and through a Year 10 'Compassion Ambassadors Programme' which involves each house sponsoring a disadvantaged child from another country. As a result, pupils' social and cultural understanding is well developed.
47. In the sixth form, the 'broader curriculum' provides opportunities for academic extension and life after Bloxham. Pupils develop essential skills for university and beyond through in-depth study across areas of wider interest beyond the classroom. For example, Year 12 pupils follow a mini 'masters in applied psychology' course developed with a local University.
48. Boarding plays a central role in fostering mutual respect and a sense of belonging within the school community. The house system and activities such as choir foster friendships across year groups, nurturing a familial atmosphere. Boarding provides a supportive environment in which pupils acquire the necessary emotional and physical skills to prepare them for independent living beyond school. For example, activities provided at weekends and after school help boarders adjust to living independently and co-operatively as part of a community.
49. Leaders have developed opportunities to showcase pupils' creative talents through performances and competitions. The 'Exham Award' requires pupils to acquire new skills and contribute to the local community. For example, pupils in all year groups exhibit pieces of art in a public exhibition at the local museum. All Year 7 pupils are given the support and resources to learn how to play a musical instrument and then perform in a concert.
50. Pupils have comprehensive careers guidance which ranges from career fairs and guest lectures to practical activities such as kitchen management in hospitality courses. Pupils appreciate discussions

with tutors about career paths and gain practical experience through events and projects, reinforcing classroom learning.

51. Pupils engage in the democratic process through electing prefects, voting for their house charity and involvement in the Model United Nations. Enrichment opportunities such as the 'sustainability challenge' in the sixth form provide real-world experience. For example, some pupils work with a national environmentally centred business to help find solutions to real-world challenges, such as developing sustainable solutions for utilities and infrastructure in the UK.
52. Preparation for life beyond Bloxham is robust, with support for university applications and other pathways. Parental engagement in this is actively encouraged by the school. Younger pupils receive guidance through career fairs, helping them envision their future pathways.
53. Pupils are taught financial literacy both through the curriculum and the broader curriculum. For example, in Year 8 mathematics compound interest is taught alongside banking and investments and in the sixth-form lessons on personal finance, debt and student loans. In Years 10 and 11 pupils can study for the London Institute of Banking and Finance certificate in financial education through the broader curriculum, which is equivalent to a GCSE. In addition, pupils receive information on banking, managing overdrafts, student loans and budgeting from an external banking expert.

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

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

Safeguarding

55. Leaders implement a suitable safeguarding policy. Leaders at the school demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding risks within the boarding setting and the wider school.
56. Older pupils, in their roles as prefects and peer listeners, receive safeguarding training to enable them to support younger pupils. All pupils are taught how to keep safe through PSHE lessons and assemblies. Pupils are confident in their knowledge of online safety and robust filtering and monitoring systems support pupils' safety when using their devices through the school system.
57. The school has an experienced safeguarding team lead by a knowledgeable designated safeguarding lead (DSL). This team are appropriately trained for their role. All staff undergo safeguarding training on induction, which is updated annually. Staff are kept informed of their safeguarding duties through a strategic programme of training delivered by both school leaders and local authority experts. Governors also receive the same thorough training. The training is regular and comprehensive, covering current statutory guidance and any specific safeguarding issues that may affect the locality of the school.
58. Staff have a clear grasp of their safeguarding responsibilities, knowing when to escalate concerns to the DSL or the headteacher. Safeguarding leaders consult relevant external agencies such as the local authority designated officer (LADO) and other local safeguarding partners, appropriately.
59. Leaders conduct all necessary safer recruitment checks for staff, volunteers, and governors before they commence working at the school, maintaining a suitable single central record (SCR) that accurately reflects personnel files. Senior staff receive appropriate training in safer recruitment.
60. Governors' oversight of safeguarding is thorough. Governors meet regularly with the DSL to review safeguarding procedures and assure themselves of the effectiveness of safeguarding practice within the school. Governors review relevant policies and procedures through the relevant sub committees. They are appraised of safeguarding matters within the school through a termly report by the headteacher.
61. There are clear channels for pupils to report problems and a well signposted access to independent listeners for those pupils in boarding. Thorough arrangements are in place to safeguard pupils in boarding houses, including signing-in and out systems and prefects on duty.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Bloxham School
Department for Education number	931/6002
Registered charity number	1076484
Address	Bloxham School Bloxham Banbury Oxfordshire OX15 4PE
Phone number	01295 720222
Email address	info@bloxhamschool.com
Website	www.bloxhamschool.com
Proprietor	Woodard Corporation
Chair	Mrs Elisabeth Lewis-Jones
Headteacher	Mr Paul Sanderson
Age range	11 to 19
Number of pupils	562
Number of boarding pupils	446
Date of previous inspection	7 June 2023

Information about the school

63. Bloxham School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in the village of Bloxham, Oxfordshire. It was founded in 1860 and is a charitable trust under the trusteeship of the Woodard School group. The school is structured into three sections: the lower school for pupils in Years 7 and 8, the senior school for pupils in Years 9 to 11, and the sixth form.
64. The school has eight boarding houses. Four of these are for male pupils from Year 9 upwards. Female boarders of this age are accommodated in three other houses. Another house is located a short walk from the school and provides co-educational accommodation for pupils in Years 7 and 8. There are two additional day houses, one of which accommodates pupils from Years 9 to 13 and one which contains the lower school pupils.
65. The school has identified 48 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. English is an additional language for 23 pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to provide a high-quality holistic education underpinned by Christian values. It aims to prepare young people with the qualifications and skills they need to successfully take their place as global citizens in society. The school intends that the individual matters and the expectations are that every child will flourish.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 March 2024

68. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

69. 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 head, school leaders, managers 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.

70. 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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For more information, please visit isi.net