

# School inspection report

16 to 19 April 2024

## Oswestry School

Oswestry School

Upper Brook Street

Oswestry

Shropshire

SY11 2TL

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

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. The new leadership team plan carefully for the school's future development. They have reviewed all aspects of the school's work and have listened to the views of parents and pupils through a detailed consultation process. Leaders have created a set of 'values and virtues' for the pupils to follow that are well known by pupils. New programmes for wellbeing and Futures support leaders' aims to provide an all-round and balanced educational experience valued by the pupils, including boarders.
2. The governing body provide effective oversight of leaders' work. They challenge and hold the leaders to account. Governors review policies annually so that they meet statutory requirements and provide the appropriate information and guidance for staff, parents and pupils. Governors carry out effective monitoring so that high standards are maintained.
3. Teaching is effective in meeting the needs of pupils, including for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils often exceed above the expectations based upon their assessed starting points. Examination results at GCSE and A level have improved and are above the national average for all pupils. Pupils for whom English is as an additional language (EAL) make good progress in their use of English. The EAL department supports pupils effectively through the use of specialist teachers and resources. Leaders have implemented a new teaching and learning model to develop and monitor teaching so that teaching provides appropriate challenge for pupils through activities that match their abilities. Some teachers are not providing this challenge consistently.
4. Assessment data is used effectively to track pupils' progress and to set individual targets which helps pupils to know how to improve in their work. Teachers know and support the pupils well. Pupils are confident learners because of the positive relationships.
5. Children in the Reception class settle quickly into child-centred activities and are actively engaged in their learning. Almost all children reach a good level of development across all the early learning goals, outcomes which are in line with national norms. Prep school pupils benefit from varied and innovative teaching and work well, focusing on their learning tasks. Senior pupils apply themselves well and appreciate the support they receive to extend their knowledge.
6. Pupils' learning is further enhanced by extensive co-curricular activities, outdoor education and enrichment sessions. The new Futures programme is well established to support pupils to make informed choices for their next steps and careers, in keeping with the school motto, 'We learn not for school but for life'.
7. Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum to ensure it encapsulates the values and virtues and meets the needs of the pupils. In consequence, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) have been restructured. They provide further opportunities for pupils to discuss topics and issues so that pupils develop their understanding of healthy relationships and know how to keep safe, both physically and online.
8. A well-organised and supportive boarding community means that boarders settle in well and integrate into school life. Day pupils and boarders live and learn together harmoniously.

9. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff have the appropriate training, and referrals are made promptly. Leaders had identified and addressed a minor discrepancy in the single central register before the inspection.

## 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:

- continue the development and monitoring of teaching that includes planned challenge in teaching activities to help pupils to make the best progress
- ensure that the single central record consistently presents an accurate record of the required recruitment checks.

## Material change request

10. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include an increase in capacity from 515 to 570 pupils and an increase in age range from 4–18 to 4–19. This is to provide the additional capacity to meet the increase in demand for places and facilitate the very small number of pupils, principally boarding pupils from overseas, who turn 19 during the course of their final year at school.
11. As part of the school's development plans, recent improvements to facilities have included a new library facility, a refurbished sixth-form centre and expanded food science teaching areas. A new pedestrian pathway system has been designed to improve pupil safety around the site, and a purpose-built, indoor sports hall was opened in 2018.
12. Leaders have planned carefully for increased pupil numbers. A new co-educational sixth-form boarding house is ready for September 2024 to include accommodation for pupils who become 19 during their time in the school.
13. The curriculum meets requirements. The school takes the needs of all pupils into account in creating the schemes of work and detailed planning for day to day working in the school. The school has a highly supportive staff who work well with pupils with SEND. There is a clear policy with guidance for staff to manage pupils with EAL. The school have an EAL department with specialist teachers who support pupils well. Pupils achieve well in this school because their needs are identified and followed up. Pupils make good progress overall.

14. The site has large grounds and sufficient boarding, classroom and recreational space to accommodate the increased numbers. Sports facilities are spacious and include a large hall. A new library space has been created with a learning space for pupils.
15. The premises are well maintained. Risk is well managed for all aspects of the school's work including for pupils' wellbeing. The site is secure and safe and new pathways have been provided which ensure pupils move around the school separately from vehicles.
16. Safeguarding is effective. All staff are trained and receive regular updates to their training. The designated safeguarding lead and deputies are trained and work with outside agencies to support pupils' wellbeing.
17. Staff are well trained, adhere to a clear code of conduct and understand their responsibilities for the safeguarding and the welfare of pupils. Low-level concerns are reported in accordance with the safeguarding policy.
18. Risk assessments for students aged 18 years and over are in place. Leaders create the appropriate risk assessments and are rigorous in the management of risk. A sixth-form co-educational boarding house has been created. This will include specifically allocate accommodation for those pupils who become 19 years of age in their final year of school.
19. The required recruitment checks are carried out on all staff and a record is kept and checked termly by governors who oversee all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures.
20. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

21. Leaders and governors share a clear vision for the development of the school. Considerable thought has gone into strategic planning so that the school provides an all-round and well-balanced educational experience for the pupils. The curriculum has been reviewed and ongoing scrutiny and adaptations ensure it matches the needs of pupils. Leaders listen to parents and pupils' views, exemplifying the listening culture and positive relationships they seek to establish. Pupils' wellbeing is central to their work.
22. Leaders effectively communicate their 'values and virtues' and seek to ensure they are woven into the learning experiences of pupils. This effectively promotes a supportive community where respect and tolerance are the norm. Pupils' lives are enriched through the positive relationships around them. Senior pupils feel that the school prepares them well for later life.
23. The governing body is actively involved in the life of the school. Governors are supportive of leaders and oversee all aspects of their work. They meet regularly to review leaders' planning and decision making. They challenge leaders to ensure that the provision consistently meets the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils, including those of the boarders.
24. Academic leaders in senior, prep and the early years are effective in their approach to promoting effective learning. There are clear cycles in place for monitoring and review. Academic leads meet with subject leads fortnightly to discuss curriculum planning and teaching to support pupils' progress. They place emphasis on planning which considers the needs of individual pupils. This has improved focus and engagement in lessons. Pupils' progress and examination results have improved over the last three years. Academic leaders continue to work on the 'stretch and challenge' aspect of the new teaching model as the desired level of challenge is not yet consistent across all subjects and sections of the school.
25. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010. An updated accessibility plan is in place, supporting pupils' educational needs, and staff and visitors access to the school site. The learning support department meets with staff regularly to ensure the allocation of adequate resources is matched to the needs of pupils. The school makes the relevant reports to the local authority for pupils who receive additional funding.
26. Information is available for parents including the detailed policies on the school website. Parents receive termly reports on their children's progress. Leaders are available to parents and deal with any concerns within the appropriate timescales. Complaints are responded to and recorded appropriately.
27. Boarders live and work in a safe, secure and comfortable environment. Boarding and teaching staff enhance the educational opportunities for boarders by providing numerous activities and new experiences in sport, outdoor education and performing arts.
28. Mitigating risk is an ongoing priority as part of the monitoring and safeguarding of pupils. Leaders have suitable risk assessments in place for pupils that are monitored and kept up to date to ensure the needs of the pupils are managed appropriately.
29. Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding leads are knowledgeable and work with the relevant agencies when required.

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

**30. All the relevant Standards are met.**



## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

31. The curriculum meets requirements. The schemes of work are regularly reviewed and adapted to ensure they provide the appropriate resources and materials for teachers to plan effectively. Senior school pupils acquire knowledge and understanding across subjects and can develop their skills in practical subjects such as science, design technology and art. Prep school pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and speaking skills which they effectively apply across all their learning.
32. There is a clear framework in place for assessment. Leaders have designed and implemented a thorough reporting, assessment and tracking cycle which is then linked to curriculum planning. Pupils are assessed through subject-specific skills. Individual pupils who are experiencing difficulty have well-timed, planned interventions.
33. Progress is good. Pupils achieve well in public examinations at GCSE and A level, many above expectations from their assessed starting points. The attainment of pupils at A level and GCSE is above the national average for all pupils.
34. The quality of the teaching across the school enables pupils to make good progress relative to their starting points and promotes high levels of pupil engagement and participation. Regular training and reflection on their teaching practice ensures that staff consider the welfare and emotional needs of pupils. Pupils are motivated in their learning as a result. Boarders are well looked after and supported in lessons and by their academic tutors in their boarding house with their academic work.
35. Pupils who have EAL are well supported. Subject leaders identify when pupils are not making the expected progress from their assessments and incorporate timetabled sessions with specialist EAL teachers to strengthen subject specific language, allowing pupils to make good progress.
36. Leaders promote the 'stretch and challenge' strand of the new teaching and learning policy to ensure that activities provide further challenge for pupils. The application of this strand is not fully consistent across all subjects and sections of the school, and progress is sometimes not as strong as a result.
37. Prep school leaders plan carefully so that literacy and numeracy are given priority and support pupils' learning across all subjects. Pupils develop fluency and increase their vocabulary through the effective use of reading activities which are tailored to individual progress. Specialist teaching for prep children supports effective learning in French, Spanish, physical education (PE) or information, communication and technology (ICT). Prep pupils become familiar with the senior school, supporting a smooth academic transition.
38. Leaders in the early years plan carefully so that children have a wide-ranging programme of adult led and child-initiated activities. Children learn sounds, letters and numbers through activities and topics so that they build continually on prior knowledge. The learning environment is calm and purposeful. The children are curious, eager to explore through water and sand play and in using weights and measures and building materials to help their understanding of the world. Children listen and respond well to others and to their teachers so that they make good progress in their language and communication skills.
39. Pupils who have SEND are effectively supported in lessons. They progress well because teachers understand their needs and plan so that they build on prior learning. There is effective use of

specialist learning support staff and resources. Behavioural needs are met with time out for those who require a quiet place and time to then continue their learning.

40. Pupils learn well because of teachers' effective behaviour management. Relationships between staff and pupils and pupils with each other are positive and support engagement in learning. Staff are patient and encourage pupils to see their mistakes as a learning opportunity. Pupils typically are confident and self-reflective and want to achieve their best because of the nurture and care they receive.
41. Pupils have extensive co-curricular, enrichment activities and outdoor education opportunities. The structure of the school day has been adapted to ensure all pupils can take part in the activities and enrichment sessions. Participation in the activities programme further promotes the integration of pupils and boarders so that a convivial atmosphere prevails throughout. Boarders also take part in a wide range of activities during boarding time.
42. A wide range of sports, clubs and societies extend pupils' learning and skills. These benefit pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. Prep and senior pupils learn to look after dogs, turtles and chickens in the animal club and pupils extend their skills in the dance club. Prep and senior pupils play chess, go cross country running or develop their culinary skills in cookery club with recipes from around the world, including some shared by international pupils. The weekly games sessions include less traditional sports such as Zumba, yoga and fitness, volleyball and basketball, many of which are particularly popular with boarders and international pupils.

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

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

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

44. A positive culture of acceptance and mutual respect prevails because this is an expectation set by leaders and staff. The school is an inclusive community. Diversity is explained at an age-appropriate level so that pupils understand and are accepting of difference. Senior pupils lead house groups and organise events and competitions which promote integration, mutual respect and trust across ages and nationalities.
45. Pupils develop their spiritual understanding and awareness through attending church and chapel services. Pupils appreciate the opportunity for reflection which provides a pause from their busy daily life in school. Pupils also have ethics, philosophy and religion (EPR) lessons where they focus on the non-material aspects of life.
46. Leaders have enhanced the games and fitness programme which has resulted in an increase in pupil participation. Pupils' physical health is a focus, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to play in fixtures at a high level or for enjoyment. Pupils have lessons in the components of fitness and learn how to train, developing their physical wellbeing.
47. The wellbeing programme incorporates the requirements for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) across all ages. Pupils cover a broad range of topics that support healthy lifestyles and relationships and help them to stay safe. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to have their views or questions heard on topics such as positive relationships, the dangers of drugs and online safety. Teachers revisit a topic if required to extend pupils' understanding. The library provides pupils with a space for reading and a wellbeing hub, where they can drop in and talk to support staff.
48. Children in the early years play happily, interacting with their key staff in the reception class. Staff model good behaviour, and increase children's sense of self-esteem and confidence through the effective use of praise. Suitable safety and supervision arrangements are in place to protect children from harm.
49. Leaders take a restorative approach to behavioural incidents. Staff expect good behaviour in lessons and activities. Pupils are respected and able to express their views. Pupils are appropriately supervised and cared for. Prefects play an effective role in the supervision arrangements and are a role model for younger pupils, reinforcing positive behaviours.
50. There are few incidents of bullying throughout the school and pupils are generally considerate towards one another and well behaved. This is due to the high expectations of leaders who set the tone and an atmosphere of respect for all.
51. The school premises are well maintained. Health and safety documentation is reviewed as required. All aspect of fire and risk management are effectively managed and rigorously reviewed. Provision for first aid and medical help is provided by well-trained staff in the medical centre. Teaching and non-teaching staff are well trained to ensure pupils' wellbeing. Pupils feel safe and secure on site.
52. Boarding accommodation is well maintained and comfortable. Boarders confirm that they feel safe in their boarding houses, where there is a homely atmosphere. Boarding accommodation is

refurbished on a rolling programme. There is suitable security for boarders' possessions. Boarders are provided with meals that are nutritious, healthy and balanced. There is ample free time and an extensive range of activities, trips and visits to support their learning and wellbeing. They know that there are a number of staff to talk to if they have any concerns or worries in boarding and in school. The medical centre provides the appropriate first aid and care if they are unwell. Boarders say that they are listened to and are able to express their views. Boarding staff are appropriately trained. The positive interactions between boarders and day pupils and the care from house staff and teachers, highlight the sense of community.

53. Attendance and admissions registers are maintained appropriately. Absence is followed up if unknown and parents are contacted. The school ensure that pupils are registered in lessons so that they know the whereabouts of pupils and boarders during the school day and in boarding time.

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

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

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

55. The motto 'We learn not for school but for life' is evident in leaders' emphasis on participation in a wide range of activities. Leaders provide numerous enrichment experiences and develop pupils' social skills through clubs such as debating, eco club, The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, and workshop discussions with invited speakers. There are leadership roles for pupils at every stage as form leaders, school council and talking in assemblies. Prefects help to supervise younger pupils, lead societies and support the library hub and reading initiatives.
56. Pupils and boarders feel part of their close-knit community. Celebration days, world language day and cultural days are often led by international boarders and inform pupils about other cultures and faiths. Leaders aim to develop pupils' knowledge so that they recognise and understand the dangers of stereotyping and value diversity with an emphasis on tolerance, respect and acceptance of all.
57. Leaders provide numerous opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school and wider community. Year 10 pupils can choose between the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), community action or sports leadership. Those undertaking community action help out with the local food bank, visit nursing homes, and have undertaken a project to revitalise and regenerate a local park. They fundraise for local and international charities. Sports leaders develop their skills in planning and delivering sports sessions and act as role models to younger pupils. Around seventy five percent of Year 13 are undertaking the gold level in The Duke of Edinburgh Award, and volunteer in their local community. Music, sports and drama house events allow pupils to collaborate together. Spring and summer fairs with stalls to raise funds are organised by pupils who enjoy working together to support the local community and projects further afield.
58. Pupils understand British values in the context of their school values and virtues. The Reception class children learn to be respectful with each other. Prep school pupils understand human rights as they discussed the need of shelter for those fleeing conflict. Prep and senior pupils explore and reflect on the role of public institutions and events such as the annual Remembrance service and a local MP talking about their work and responsibilities.
59. Pupils visit the Houses of Parliament which helps them to understand the importance of democracy. Boarders appreciate being part of a community where all are welcome and tolerance and respect are the expectation and the norm. Pupils discuss current topical issues, the justice system and that individual rights of speech and action come with responsibilities.
60. Leaders ensure that pupils have the qualifications, skills and personal qualities well suited to their plans as they move on to further education, a training apprenticeship or work. The youngest children learn about the role people who look after them in the community such as the police and fire brigade, the doctors, nurses and their teachers. Prep school pupils begin to think about which subjects they enjoy, reflecting on the reasons why, as an introduction to making subject choices for senior school. Pupils in the senior school plan their futures from exploring A-level choices and courses or training that would provide them with the qualifications to apply for the career path they would like to follow. They discuss finances and budgeting as part of their sixth-form preparation for life programme so that they develop the knowledge to manage their own finances, in preparation for the next stage.

61. The school's Futures programme contributes age-appropriate, impartial careers guidance. This provides opportunities for pupils to explore their future plans. This is further developed to making subject choices, interactive careers workshops, work experience, and networking events with local companies. The 'Futures Fortnight' initiative provides opportunities for all pupils at senior and prep level with talks by alumni, practice interviews, apprenticeship information and university open days. Parents give seminars on their work. Science and mathematics lessons focus on aspects of their curriculum that link to specific work situations such as the use of mathematics in correcting a spinal injury.

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

- 62. All the relevant Standards are met**

## Safeguarding

63. Safeguarding arrangements are well established and effective. The safeguarding policy includes the latest statutory guidance and provides clear guidance for staff, parents and pupils, and it is implemented effectively. Governors and leaders oversee safeguarding arrangements and meet with safeguarding leaders regularly to support leaders in promoting the welfare of pupils.
64. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and team work closely with external agencies when required. Referrals to the appropriate body are made promptly. A member of the school safeguarding team or staff member is available at all times should pupils have any concerns. Pupils know who to go to if they have a concern.
65. Leaders ensure that all staff and any volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training when they join the school. Those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities receive suitable training for their role in school and ensure that training is updated within the appropriate timescales. Safeguarding training is delivered at the beginning of each term with weekly updates that include advice and scenarios to work through so that staff are reminded of safeguarding needs and the correct reporting procedures.
66. Staff are knowledgeable in all areas of safeguarding pupils, including online behaviours, child-on-child abuse and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Staff know pupils very well and are alert to any signs of need in their care for the pupils. Teachers understand the importance of online safety. Teaching through the PSHE programme and support from tutors reminds pupils as to how to stay safe online. Suitable monitoring and filtering processes are in place throughout the school to support pupils' safety.
67. Safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly. Records are kept up to date, are suitably detailed and securely stored.
68. Safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and governors. A discrepancy in recording was identified by leaders before the inspection and rectified. An accurate record of appointments is now kept. The single central record is checked by governors and leaders to ensure that all checks are recorded and are up to date.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Oswestry School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	893/6011
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1079822
<b>Address</b>	Oswestry School Upper Brook Street Oswestry Shropshire SY11 2TL
<b>Phone number</b>	01691 655711
<b>Email address</b>	headmaster@oswestryschool.com
<b>Website</b>	www.oswestryschool.com
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Wilcox-Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Peter Middleton
<b>Age range</b>	4–18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	514
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	100
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15–17 June 2021



## Information about the school

70. Oswestry School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between 4 and 18 years. It was founded in 1407 and is situated in the centre of the market town of Oswestry.
71. Boarding is available from the age of eleven and boarders are accommodated in three houses on the senior school campus.
72. Oswestry School Prep for pupils aged 4 to 11 years, stands in its own grounds, a short distance from the main school campus and includes one Reception class, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
73. The school has an Anglican ethos but welcomes all faiths or none in the spirit of its original non-denominational foundation. The headmaster has oversight of both senior and prep schools. A single governing body oversees the prep and senior school.
74. The school has identified 157 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Nine pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
75. English is an additional language (EAL) for 51 pupils, 28 of whom receive additional support.
76. The school aims to create a happy environment where pupils enjoy their education and benefit from living in close-knit community. It seeks to celebrate the individual and to encourage all pupils to reach their potential through educating the whole child with an emphasis on intellectual, spiritual and physical development.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

16 to 18 April 2024

77. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

78. 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.

79. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)