

School inspection report

14 to 16 January 2025

Rishworth School

Oldham Road
Sowerby Bridge
West Yorkshire
HX6 4QA

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 have created an environment in which pupils are valued as individuals and their wellbeing is at the heart of the school's decision-making and subsequent provision. Leaders are highly skilled with the knowledge and understanding to ensure that the Standards are consistently met.
2. Leaders have established a rigorous process of self-evaluation in which the opinions and views of pupils, including boarders, are highly valued. Well-considered dynamic development plans are in place for all aspects of school life.
3. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's successes and areas for development. They maintain effective oversight of the work of leaders through frequent visits, regular receipt of reports and scrutiny of leaders' implementation of policy. Collaboration between leaders and governors has led to ongoing developments, such as the reorganisation of curriculum leadership responsibilities and the refurbishment of the sixth-form centre.
4. The majority of teaching is well planned and delivered so that pupils make typically good progress across all subjects. However, teaching does not always utilise all opportunities to challenge and extend pupils' thinking, resulting in inconsistent progress when this is the case.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are suitably supported. They make good progress because of the individualised and effective support from their teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive specialist support enabling them to access the curriculum and make good progress in their development of English.
6. The curriculum enables pupils to develop an understanding of the importance of mutual respect, and leaders and staff demonstrate that all individual pupils are valued.
7. A suitable assessment framework is in place. Leaders monitor pupils' progress through detailed data analysis and oversight of teaching and learning. Leaders ensure that suitable support is put in place for individual pupils. Leaders' knowledge of teaching across the school enables them to effectively plan staff training.
8. There is a well-planned programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education incorporating suitable relationships and sex education (RSE). The programme is reviewed regularly with feedback from pupils and parents. Staff are effectively trained and use a range of teaching techniques to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics covered.
9. The extra-curricular programme is well planned at both the senior and prep schools and includes a range of academic, sporting and cultural activities. The programme is effectively monitored at the prep, ensuring pupils take full advantage of the learning opportunities. However, the oversight of the extra-curricular programme at the senior school is more inconsistent, meaning that not all pupils participate effectively in the opportunities on offer.
10. Pupils are well prepared for their lives beyond school. They have developed a clear understanding of their social responsibilities which is informed by a mature moral compass. The school enables pupils to develop their understanding of everyday financial matters, as well as recognising the importance of taking responsibility for looking after their own mental and physical health. The school effectively

supports pupils' decisions about their post-school pathways through well-structured and age-appropriate careers guidance.

11. Children in the early years grow in confidence and independence as a result of a well-considered curriculum and provision that helps children to gain new skills and develop their interests. Children in the early years make good progress across all areas of learning. They are well prepared for transition to the next stage of their education.
12. Boarders are fully integrated into all areas of school life, including the Rishworth International Football Academy (RIFA). Leaders maintain a welcoming and supportive boarding community which allows pupils to grow in self-confidence and social awareness.
13. Safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively. A comprehensive training programme is in place for staff and staff fully understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Leaders work closely with external agencies and take swift and appropriate action in response to safeguarding concerns.

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 teaching extends and challenges pupils' thinking to enable them to make consistently good progress
- strengthen the oversight of the extra-curricular programme in the senior school to widen pupils' participation.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

14. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school. They provide suitable challenge for school leaders and scrutinise all areas of the school's operation through a group of sub-committees. Governors work diligently to ensure that school leaders have the skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out their responsibilities effectively so that the Standards are consistently met.
15. Leaders take a rigorous approach to self-evaluating the development of the school's educational provision and outcomes for pupils. Staff, parents and pupils are regularly consulted, and their views inform a detailed development plan in which the aims and ethos of the school are a constant thread. For example, leaders continually check that the school environment is one which focuses on kindness and values the uniqueness of every individual
16. Leaders place the promotion of pupils' wellbeing at the centre of their decision making. Their reorganisation of curriculum leadership responsibilities and planning has enabled pupils to have a greater understanding of, for example, how to transfer skills from one subject to another. Leaders have robust oversight of teaching and learning which informs their programme for the professional development of staff, as well as the review of different aspects of the curriculum. Leaders monitoring of the academic curriculum is detailed and effective. However, there is less rigorous oversight of the extra-curricular programme in the senior school. As a result, leaders do not ensure that senior pupils participate as effectively as possible in the opportunities that the extra-curricular programme offers.
17. Leaders' focus on equality of opportunity for pupils is central to their oversight of teaching. They ensure that teaching does not discriminate against any pupil or group of pupils. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.
18. Leaders have a clear understanding of how to mitigate against any potential harm to pupils' wellbeing and are proactive in identifying potential risks. Staff are well trained and produce suitable risk assessments that identify and manage potential risks to pupils, including with regard to school trips, the school site and activities, and individual pupils' welfare. The comprehensive risk register identifies current and potential contextual risks and leaders and governors review this register on an ongoing basis.
19. Leaders in the early years have the appropriate levels of skill and knowledge for their roles. They have effective oversight of the learning progress of each child. In addition, leaders maintain appropriate levels of staff supervision, suitable risk assessments and rigorous health and safety procedures to ensure the wellbeing of the children.
20. Leaders in boarding have a comprehensive understanding of their pupils' needs. They liaise effectively with teachers and form tutors to ensure the welfare and learning needs of each boarder are met. The inclusive boarding community enables boarders' self-confidence and self-esteem to grow rapidly after their arrival at the school. Leaders ensure that the boarding accommodation is well maintained and that all of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS) are met.
21. Leaders liaise and collaborate effectively with a range of external agencies such as children's services and other safeguarding partners. Leaders also work closely with the local authority, including

through informing them appropriately about the use of funding for pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

22. Leaders effectively implement the school's published complaints policy. They communicate constructively with parents within stated timescales. Leaders keep detailed records of complaints submitted and any actions taken as a result of these.
23. The school regularly provides information to parents on their child's progress. All other required information, including details of key school policies, is published on the school website or otherwise made available to parents.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

25. Leaders use their comprehensive understanding of the needs of the pupils to ensure that the curriculum is well planned and regularly reviewed and adapted to meet their needs, as illustrated by recent changes to the mathematics curriculum and GCSE choices in this area. The curriculum provides consistent opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding, and enhance their scientific, creative and technological skills. They are consistently enabled to apply knowledge and skills across different subjects, such as utilising their numeracy skills when studying the sciences and economics. As part of the curriculum, pupils are exposed to different genres of literature which enables them to apply different writing skills to their own work, as shown by younger pupils in English using different persuasive literary techniques. Opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills are wide-ranging. Pupils consistently demonstrate their ability to debate, engage in class discussions and express their own ideas articulately.
26. There is an effective framework for assessment. Leaders use the data to understand the progress of pupils measured against their starting points. Leaders are able to identify patterns across different groups of pupils and by subjects. Regular meetings of academic and pastoral leaders monitor the progress of each individual pupil. This results in appropriate decisions about what is the best support for individual pupils. The tracking of pupils' progress also informs staff training.
27. Leaders put suitable support in place for pupils who have SEND. Teachers use pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) effectively to plan and adapt their teaching accordingly. Teachers work in partnership with teaching assistants to provide effective one-to-one support for pupils when required. In addition, pupils are able to access further individual support outside lessons when needed. As a result, pupils who have SEND, make good progress from their starting points.
28. When required, pupils who speak EAL are given specialist support to enable them to fully access the curriculum and technical language that is required at GCSE and A level. Pupils who speak EAL receive extensive time in the curriculum to prepare them effectively for university English language assessments. As a result, pupils who speak EAL make good progress with their English.
29. Teachers consistently demonstrate a high level of knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects. They have a detailed understanding of the aptitudes of their pupils which enables them to plan lessons effectively. Teachers use well-chosen teaching strategies, such as effective questioning, to advance pupils' learning. As a consequence, pupils make typically good progress relative to their starting points by the end of their prep school education, at GCSE and also at A level. However, in some lessons there is inconsistency in the level of academic challenge, and this limits pupils' ability to think for themselves and apply ideas to new contexts. Consequently, pupils' progress is sometimes inhibited in such lessons.
30. Teachers provide pupils with effective verbal and written feedback on their work. Pupils are given time in lessons to reflect on the feedback and how they can improve their work. This has a positive effect on pupils' attitude to learning and encourages them to have high expectations of their own achievement. The consistency of the school's approach to helping pupils to reflect on their learning has a positive effect on their self-confidence and academic progress.
31. Teaching in the early years enables the children to explore their interests and stimulates their curiosity. The well-planned curriculum enables children to develop their number, language and

communication skills effectively. At the same time children are enabled to develop their fine and gross motor skills well. Staff carefully monitor children's progress and provide additional support for individual children as required. Children make good progress from their starting points.

32. Boarders are well supported in the boarding environments and are able to seek help and guidance from staff when working in their houses. They are able to work collaboratively in mutually supportive boarding communities. This has a positive effect on their progress, confidence and their ambition to achieve academic success.
33. Leaders implement a well-planned enrichment and extension programme across the school. The extra-curricular provision ranges from specific academic enrichment such as creative writing, to a miniatures gaming club. Pupils, including boarders, are able to further develop their interest and skills in various activities as well as taking on some leadership responsibilities. These opportunities, as well as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE), enable pupils to develop their leadership, teamwork and social skills.

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

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

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

35. A well-structured pastoral support system supports pupils' emotional wellbeing effectively. Tutors know their pupils well and this is enhanced by an extended tutorial at the start of every day. Staff have been well trained in understanding the needs and interests of their pupils. There is a clear commitment to the individual success of each pupil with regular staff meetings devoted to considering how best to support those who may be struggling or lack motivation. The recently instigated learning support room, called the 'Hub', provides a space for pupils to step out of the busy school life and receive individual help and encouragement.
36. Pupils learn about different faiths and world views through chapel talks and PSHE and religion and philosophy lessons. They learn about the importance of listening to each other and respecting different perspectives to their own. Leaders reinforce pupils' spiritual and moral understanding through a well-planned assembly programme and themed weeks throughout the year, encompassing events such as Remembrance and the meaning of Easter from different perspectives.
37. The PSHE programme, which incorporates RSE, is comprehensive and age appropriate. Pupils learn about themes such as different types of healthy relationships, the importance of consent, strategies to resist peer pressure and how to enhance their mental health. Regular lessons are complemented by a range of external speakers such as the local police talking about online safety and the dangers of criminal gangs. Specialist teachers deliver the PSHE programme and regularly assess pupils' understanding and knowledge. Leaders review and amend the PSHE programme in response to pupils' feedback and needs.
38. The well-planned physical education (PE) and games programme facilitate the growth of pupils' physical fitness and skills through a range of individual and team sports such as rugby, netball and badminton. At the same time pupils develop their mental determination and perseverance, such as by learning strategies to develop resilience during physical activity.
39. Early years staff help children recognise the importance of kindness to others. They successfully encourage children to share resources and support each other in their play and activities.
40. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility. Pupils are trained for their roles and recognise the positive contribution they make to the school community. Pupils take on responsibilities in roles such as prefects, mentors and leading enrichment and extension activities. The school's focus on pupils' development of leadership skills also supports their self-awareness and confidence.
41. Leaders communicate their expectations for behaviour effectively. As a result, the school's behavioural and anti-bullying policies are implemented appropriately and fairly. Leaders maintain detailed behavioural records and review these to identify patterns and take appropriate action. Mutual respect between teachers and pupils results in high standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school.
42. Leaders have ensured that comprehensive arrangements are in place for health and safety, fire safety and site maintenance. Staff training is regularly updated and appropriate checks are made on

fire equipment, evacuation routes, alarms and other equipment. The school building and outside areas are well maintained to provide suitable environments for pupils at both school sites.

43. Boarding accommodation is suitable and well maintained. There is a thorough induction programme in place for those new to boarding which enables them to settle quickly into boarding and school life. Boarding staff know and support their pupils well.
44. Supervision levels throughout the school, including overnight in boarding houses, are appropriate. Leaders maintain suitable staff to child ratios in the early years at all times.
45. First aid and medical provision, including that for boarders, is appropriate and effective. Suitable numbers of staff are appropriately trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid for those who work in the early years.
46. The school's attendance and admission registers are accurately maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders inform the local authority of any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points, or are absent for substantial periods of time.

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

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

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

48. The school teaches pupils from an early age about the importance of equality and respecting people's identity and protected characteristics, such as their faith, sex or race. Leaders promote these themes through assemblies, tutorials and PSHE lessons. Pupils develop and apply their sense of what is morally right in discussions about discrimination and prejudice. The importance of inclusivity is embedded into the school culture, enhanced by leaders' focus on the school values of kindness for others and respecting individuality.
49. Pupils gain an understanding of different cultural and social perspectives of the world through assemblies and subjects such as geography and history. Assemblies which encompass events and themes such as neurodiversity, Pride week and Black History Month also enable pupils to broaden their understanding of different political views and issues. Teachers ensure that any discussions that include political content are conducted in a sensitive, unbiased and impartial manner.
50. The curriculum, through discussions in tutorials and PSHE lessons, enables pupils to gain an understanding of complex moral and ethical issues present in modern society. By thinking about and discussing issues ranging from the war in the Middle East to the concept of free speech, pupils' moral and social awareness grows as they mature.
51. Pupils are taught to understand and respect British values such as the rule of law and the democratic process. The youngest pupils are taught why rules are important in the classroom, while older pupils study themes such as the role of Parliament in passing new legislation and reviewing British taxes. Democratic principles are actively applied when pupils vote for prefects and members of the school council. They understand the importance of listening to and representing the views of others. This is enhanced by visits to the local council to learn about its purpose and how it is elected.
52. Pupils' economic understanding develops as they move through the school. Financial literacy is a recurring theme through the PSHE curriculum. This ranges from younger pupils using a defined budget to buy plants for the prep school garden, to their older peers being challenged to grow £10 through various Young Enterprise initiatives. As pupils mature, they learn about economic concepts such as credit and debt, tax, mortgages and student loans.
53. The school develops pupils' sense of social responsibility by encouraging them to help others through volunteering in the local community. On a weekly basis, pupils actively support ventures such as the local dementia café, tree planting, a local foodbank, and assisting elderly citizens on day trips.
54. A well-planned careers programme, including opportunities for work experience, is in place. This enables pupils to reflect on potential career pathways in an age-appropriate manner. Older pupils receive bespoke one-to-one guidance as they consider future pathways to apprenticeships, higher education, employment and professional sport. The effective careers guidance prepares pupils well for the next stages of their lives.

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

55. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

56. Leaders maintain a well-embedded safeguarding culture in which staff recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This is informed by a clear and appropriate safeguarding policy and procedures which are in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders implement the policy effectively.
57. Governors provide effective oversight of safeguarding, with one member of the board regularly scrutinising records and the work of school leaders. There is clear and transparent reporting from safeguarding leaders which enables governors to understand current issues and analyse the actions taken.
58. The induction and training of the safeguarding team, staff and governors is effective with comprehensive records enabling leaders to quickly identify those who may need refresher training or updates to the latest guidance. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding matters including the importance of the early identification of pupils who may need additional support and how to report any concerns that may arise. Staff understand the importance of reporting any allegations or low-level concerns about adults working in the school.
59. Safeguarding records are maintained and stored in line with statutory requirements. They include appropriate records of concerns and the support that has been put in place for any pupils affected by safeguarding issues. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and, when needed, referrals are made promptly.
60. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe. They have a clear understanding of what is inappropriate online behaviour. Suitable filtering and monitoring of internet use are in place and the system is appropriately tested on a regular basis. The safeguarding team respond quickly to any concerns about online activity.
61. Pupils, including boarders, know how to access adult support to share any concerns or worries. A wide range of staff are available including a counsellor and mental health first aiders. Staff know the pupils well and are able to identify changes of behaviour or signs that could possibly indicate a concern. This allows the safeguarding and pastoral teams to be proactive in ensuring that appropriate support is put in place. As a consequence, pupils feel well looked after and safe in the school and boarding community.
62. Suitable safeguarding arrangements are in place for the early years setting. Appropriate recruitment checks ensure that all staff in the setting are not disqualified from childcare. Mobile phone and personal devices are not used in front of children.
63. The school carries out all required safer recruitment checks in a timely manner for all adults who work with pupils, including those involved in boarding, supply staff, governors and volunteers. A suitable central record of appointments is in place and staff files include the information required by current statutory guidance.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

64. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Rishworth School
Department for Education number	381/6001
Registered charity number	1115562
Address	Rishworth School Oldham Road Sowerby Bridge West Yorkshire HX6 4QA
Phone number	01422 822217
Email address	admin@rishworth-school.co.uk
Website	https://www.rishworth-school.co.uk
Proprietor	Governors of Rishworth School
Chair	Rev Canon Hilary Barber
Head	Mrs Jessica Sheldrick
Age range	3 to 19
Number of pupils	411
Number of boarding pupils	35
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 October 2021

Information about the school

65. Rishworth School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school located in Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire. The school consists of a prep school and a senior school which includes a sixth form. The prep school is located on a site approximately half a mile from the senior school. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. The current head took up her post in September 2024.
66. Pupils can board from age 12 to 19 years. They are accommodated in three houses on the senior school site. One house is for female pupils, while the other two are for male pupils
67. There are 23 children in the early years setting, comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
68. The school has identified 94 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
69. The school has identified English as an additional language for 21 pupils.
70. The school states its aims are to create an environment in which the full potential of pupils is realised and a community in which the strength of relationships is strong. It seeks to foster a respect for learning in all pupils, inspiring a desire to understand and appreciate the world in which they live. The school's values are 'curiosity, valour, kindness and individuality'.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

14 to 16 January 2025

71. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

72. 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.

73. 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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