ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

1 to 3 April 2025

Whitgift School

Haling Park Road

South Croydon

Surrey

CR2 6YT

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 work effectively towards their aim of fostering a culture of excellence and achievement that instils values of respect, tolerance and self-esteem. They enable pupils to gain the skills and knowledge they need to make a valuable contribution to society.

2. The governing body provides effective oversight and challenge to leaders. They are in regular contact with the school and ensure that the Standards are met consistently.

3. The boarding houses are managed effectively, and boarding pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school. Boarding accommodation is well maintained and has a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils are encouraged to become independent within a safe environment, developing their self-esteem and self-confidence.

4. Leaders recognise the impact on pupils' self-esteem and confidence of a programme of extra-curricular activities that is tailored to their individual needs. They seek the views of pupils and staff in establishing recreational, academic and sporting opportunities that inspire pupils throughout the school to take part. The co-curricular programme provides pupils with an exceptional range of clubs and societies which enables them to identify new interests and develop their skills. Pupils develop leadership skills and self-confidence through participation in sporting events and outreach programmes and through running their own clubs. Leaders are diligent in monitoring pupil participation to ensure that pupils are not overstretched or uninvolved. This programme is a significant strength of the school.

5. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and deliver well-planned lessons which stimulate and challenge pupils. Leaders monitor pupils' progress of across all subjects through a detailed tracking system, offering pupils support if any underperformance is identified. Those with responsibility for provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have suitable experience, and the department is well managed. Personalised support is provided to enable the pupils in their care to make the most of their abilities. However, strategies designed to support these pupils are not fully implemented in all lessons.

6. Leaders have put in place robust measures to ensure the health and safety of the school community. They promote a shared culture of safety through structured policies and expert oversight of their implementation.

7. Leaders promote tolerance, respect and inclusion throughout all aspects of school life. Pupils demonstrate these attributes in their interactions with each other and with the teaching staff. Pupils develop a clear understanding of their responsibilities as members of British society. This is fostered by the school's personal development programme which encompasses personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE).

8. Suitable arrangements are in place to promote the safeguarding of pupils. Staff with safeguarding leadership responsibilities are appropriately trained and ensure policy and practice is in line with statutory requirements. Adults throughout the school understand the part they have to play in implementing safeguarding procedures. Pupils utilise a range of options to report their concerns, which are managed sensitively and effectively.

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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 teachers use planned strategies in the classroom consistently to enhance the learning of pupils with specific needs.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders successfully promote the wellbeing of pupils in line with the school's aims. Those with leadership responsibilities have the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles effectively and to plan and implement strategic aims for the development of the school. The strategic plan for the school is comprehensive and is focused on the development of pupils in preparation for their future roles in society. The co-curricular programme has been established in response to identification of the needs and aspirations of pupils. It provides wide-ranging opportunities for pupils to extend their skills and knowledge and to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence.

10. Governors maintain effective oversight through meetings, school reports and visits to ensure that leaders fulfil the requirements of the Standards. They check that suitable policies are in place and that they are reviewed, monitored and implemented.

11. Leaders ensure that all staff are appropriately trained and review their performance regularly to maintain high standards of academic achievement and pastoral care. This means that the needs of the pupils are met and that they have an enriching and enjoyable school experience.

12. Leaders communicate effectively with external agencies to support pupils' wellbeing. They liaise with safeguarding partners when required and to enhance staff training. The school provides a full report to the local authority of provision and allocation of funds relating to pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.

13. The senior leadership team and governors oversee effective risk assessment processes and promote a culture of safety and accountability. Staff are trained in the assessment and mitigation of risk, and risk management is embedded in everyday practice. Leaders are aware of the risks to the wellbeing of pupils and carefully monitor their involvement in activities to ensure they are not overloaded.

14. Leadership of boarding is highly effective. Resident staff have a comprehensive induction programme and act as positive role models for the pupils, who are encouraged to develop their independence within a safe environment.

15. All required information for parents and prospective parents is provided on the school's website and in hard copy on request. Leaders have implemented an improved reporting system which enables more frequent, focused reporting on progress. This enables pupils and their parents to gain a detailed understanding of how they are performing throughout the year.

16. Leaders investigate complaints thoroughly and in a timely manner. They keep accurate records and a log of formal complaints and their outcomes. The complaints log is regularly scrutinised to identify any trends or complaints relating to specific groups. Complaints relating to boarding are analysed and action is taken as required.

17. Leaders meet their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 through their promotion of respect and tolerance. Pupils are inclusive in their relationships and respectful of their differences. A suitable accessibility policy and plan is in place to improve pupils' access to the premises and the curriculum.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders promote pupils' attainment and progress through a well-planned curriculum which is targeted to the needs and aspirations of the pupils. They monitor teaching and learning effectively to ensure that each pupil achieves their personal best. Pupils' learning and achievements are enhanced by the co-curricular programme, which provides extension activities and independent learning opportunities.

20. Pupils acquire advanced skills and knowledge in academic, creative and technological subjects. Leaders make a wide range of options available at GCSE level, including a choice of several languages. Older pupils select subjects to study at A level or within the International Baccalaureate curriculum. Leaders adapt the curriculum in response to changes in pupils' needs and in society. Global citizenship has recently been added in Years 6 and 7 to cover topics such as sustainability and to give pupils a wider view of current global issues.

21. Pupils of all ages make good progress, achieving results in public examinations that are above their expectations based on standardised baseline testing. Examination results for the school are above national averages, with an increase in the top grades at GCSE and A level over time. Post-A levels, most pupils further their education at a range of universities with high entrance requirements in the United Kingdom and abroad, whilst some pupils undertake degree apprenticeships or enter employment.

22. Leaders maintain a framework for regular assessment which is used to inform the next steps in pupils' learning. Teachers use assessment data to track and monitor pupils' attainment and progress across all subjects. Underperformance is identified and appropriate support is put in place tailored to pupils' individual needs to enable them to make good progress. Pupils appreciate the written feedback they are given and speak highly of the one-to-one verbal feedback they receive, which clarifies their understanding. This feedback, along with the individual support offered on request, enables pupils to make good progress.

23. Leaders employ a range of strategies to identify pupils who have SEND. They use assessment data to track the progress of pupils who have SEND against individual targets. Leaders draw up written profiles for each pupil, outlining their needs and the means by which they can be supported. Teachers implement these strategies in many lessons, but this practice is not fully consistent across the school.

24. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are assessed on arrival at the school and appropriate provision is put in place to support their needs. This includes individual sessions, group lessons and the provision of glossaries to support individual subjects.

25. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, delivering well-planned lessons using a variety of resources. Lessons are well paced, and teachers make good use of the time available. Teachers plan activities that enable pupils to extend their knowledge and skills through applying them to real-life situations. Pupils are interested in and enthusiastic about their learning, readily immersing themselves in their studies. They develop advanced critical thinking skills in theology and philosophy lessons through discussion of questions such as 'does God exist?'. Teachers foster pupils' ability to think for themselves through independent learning. For example, pupils in Year 8 research and

present an academic dissertation on a subject of their choice and those in the sixth form undertake detailed research within the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).

26. Pupils develop effective study skills which are taught through the PSHE programme and shared with parents. They take responsibility for their learning and are motivated to perform at their best, applying effort and perseverance. Pupils contribute confidently during lessons, persevere in the face of challenge and take risks to develop their knowledge and understanding.

27. Pupils are highly articulate and listen to the views of others with respect in discussion and debate in class and co-curricular activities. They learn to use a wide range of vocabulary and correct technical terms throughout the curriculum. Pupils develop their communication skills further in drama and music lessons and in the many co-curricular opportunities available. Their written work is of a consistently high standard, as seen in sixth-form essays in the school magazine on historical and political topics.

28. Pupils create original work in design and technology and in art, encouraged by the availability of a wide range of resources and teaching that is targeted to their interests. They hone their performance skills through music and drama lessons and many concerts and performances.

29. Leaders provide an extensive range of co-curricular activities in which pupils develop and extend their skills and knowledge in all curriculum areas. A varied daily activity programme is provided for boarders in addition to weekend trips and activities.

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

30. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

31. Leaders tailor pastoral systems to meet the needs of individual pupils. Adults throughout the school provide support which helps pupils to become self-aware and resilient. Pupils are well-mannered, modest, and keen to uphold the standards and ethos of the school. Leaders provide an extensive programme of activities which enables pupils to develop confidence and a strong understanding of their own strengths. Pupils request and set up their own clubs and projects, and staff identify areas that will enable pupils to explore interests that are not already catered for.

32. Leaders promote the school's ethos of respect and tolerance within the PSHE curriculum, where pupils learn about the diverse needs and characteristics of people in British society. Pupils explore a wide range of faiths and ideas in assemblies and within theology and philosophy lessons. Teachers engage pupils in challenging discussions, encouraging them to reflect on issues from a range of perspectives. The schedule is adapted when required to cover current societal issues and is enhanced by sessions involving visiting speakers.

33. The RSE course is age-appropriate and taught by staff who have received specific training. Pupils develop an understanding about managing relationships and what makes a healthy relationship in addition to topics such as consent, reproductive health and sexual harassment. Parents are informed of topics to be covered in advance and parental feedback is sought on the policy and the course.

34. Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual understanding. Religious societies in school welcome pupils who practice all faiths and none, inviting everyone to take part in spiritual reflection. Lessons in music, drama and art, co-curricular activities, productions and concerts provide opportunities for pupils to develop an appreciation of the non-material aspects of life.

35. Pupils routinely meet leaders' high expectations of their behaviour throughout the school day and in the boarding houses. Incidents of poor behaviour are managed effectively through a system of sanctions which encourages self-reflection. Incidents of bullying are rare and are managed swiftly in line with school procedures.

36. The physical education (PE) curriculum plays a key role in promoting pupils' physical and mental wellbeing within an inclusive and supportive environment. The taught curriculum is balanced and inclusive and helps pupils to establish lifelong healthy habits and a positive attitude towards physical activity. Staff encourage pupils to try various sports in order to find the one that suits them best. Pupils develop their skills to a high level in a wide variety of individual and team sports, supported by professional coaching. Leaders celebrate pupils' achievements and provide opportunities for self-reflection so that pupils develop confidence and an understanding of their abilities.

37. The boarding houses have a welcoming and supportive ethos and a strong sense of community. Residential staff, matrons and nurses know boarders well and support them academically and pastorally. They liaise with school leaders and staff to ensure continuity of care throughout boarders' time in school. Boarders have access to good-quality and nutritious meals, snacks and drinks throughout the week. A comprehensive induction programme for new boarders helps them to settle in quickly. The pupil boarding council meets every half term to discuss aspects of boarding and suggest improvements.

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38. Leaders take suitable measures to promote pupils' health and safety so that they can work and play in a safe environment. Health and safety policies are robust and well understood, comprehensive records are kept, and staff understand their responsibilities with regard to buildings, pupils and their personal safety. Arrangements for fire safety are suitable, including fire drills at night in the boarding houses. Leaders ensure appropriate, unobtrusive supervision is in place which keeps pupils safe whilst developing their independence.

39. The school maintains an accurate record of admission and attendance, in line with current statutory guidance. Attendance records are analysed by school leaders and appropriate strategies are drawn up to address related concerns. Leaders inform the local authority of any pupils who join or leave at non-standard transition points.

40. Prefects take pride in fulfilling their responsibilities in school and the boarding houses. Leaders ensure their duties are appropriate, including running activities and mentoring younger pupils.

41. Pupils who have an accident or fall ill whilst at school or playing sport are treated and cared for by suitably qualified staff. The boarding houses have their own medical staff and facilities, and suitable arrangements are in place for overnight care if required.

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

42. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

43. Leaders enable pupils to develop a broad knowledge of different cultures and beliefs in PSHE lessons and within the wider curriculum. Pupils further their shared understanding through events and assemblies organised by the culture and diversity board. Pupils have a mature understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect towards others. This is evident in their interactions with staff and other pupils within the school's diverse community.

44. The school encourages pupils to engage in democratic processes through active participation in the election of prefects and selection of school council representatives. Pupils are confident that their views are heard and acted upon, such as in relation to school facilities, procedures and uniform. Boarders identify ways in which to improve their houses and experiences, such as through improved cooking facilities.

45. Leaders prepare pupils for life in wider society by promoting respect for laws, public institutions and individual liberty through PSHE lessons, assemblies and school events. Pupils are taught to recognise right from wrong and have a strong moral code and a sense of responsibility for their actions. Pupils discuss and debate a wide range of issues in lessons and co-curricular activities such as the debating society, developing their thoughts about issues in the world around them. Leaders monitor teaching and check visiting speakers to ensure that pupils gain a balanced view on political issues when these are discussed.

46. Pupils develop leadership and social skills through a range of roles in school, such as prefects, house captains, sports captains, school council representatives and pupil mentors. They develop organisational skills when setting up their own activities, including the animal club and the senior prefects' mentoring programme. Leaders foster positive relationships between pupils of all ages through the house system. House events such as debating, drama, competitions in sport, art and creative writing promote the development of friendships across the year groups. Further opportunities to develop leadership skills are offered through the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) programmes.

47. Pupils are prepared well for the next stages in their education and adult lives through a comprehensive programme of careers education. Teachers provide pupils with information and guidance about future pathways through dedicated lessons, use of an online careers platform and individual coaching. Older pupils receive expert advice and have access to helpful resources when completing applications for further education courses.

48. Leaders enable pupils to develop their economic awareness in business and economics and within the PSHE curriculum. Younger pupils learn basic skills of handling money and budgeting, whilst older pupils understand the importance of managing a student loan and the economic concerns in society. Pupils gain real-world experience through the '£100 Enterprise Club', where they acquire business and financial skills through designing, manufacturing and selling products to raise money for charity. Pupils lead a business and economics society in which they explore and debate current issues in the business world. Through these activities pupils develop skills in public speaking, manufacturing techniques and entrepreneurship, preparing them for future careers.

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49. Pupils contribute positively to the wider community through charity work and raising funds for local and international charities. They organise events such as bake sales and a fashion show in conjunction with a nearby school. Leaders foster pupils' sense of responsibility towards others through an extensive outreach programme in the local community. Sixth-form pupils make a weekly commitment to community service, such as working with pupils in local primary schools.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Leaders draw up a safeguarding policy and procedures which pay due regard to local and statutory guidance. These are shared with staff so that they have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Those with responsibility for safeguarding have the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their roles effectively. The safeguarding governor actively supports safeguarding in the school with advice and guidance, including through an annual policy review and oversight of staff training and safeguarding induction procedures.

52. Staff, leaders and governors receive appropriate training for their roles. Leaders check staff understanding through discussion of safeguarding scenarios and an online quiz. Regular updates are provided by the safeguarding lead through meetings, briefing papers and online videos.

53. Leaders have clear procedures in place so that any safeguarding concerns are passed to the safeguarding team. They manage concerns effectively and make timely referrals to external agencies when required. Leaders seek advice when appropriate and call on local authority expertise within the staff training programme.

54. Staff have a secure understanding of the staff code of conduct. They understand and use the low-level concerns policy appropriately to report instances when expectations of staff behaviour are not met. Allegations against staff are referred to the designated officer and action is taken in relation to the advice given. Record-keeping is meticulous, with detailed accounts kept of investigations and referrals.

55. Pupils make appropriate use of the range of options available to them to raise concerns. These include an anonymous online reporting system and access to school counsellors. Pupils are confident that their concerns will be treated with respect and handled discreetly in both the school and boarding houses. Boarding pupils have access to a person who is independent of the school to share their concerns. Information detailing external sources of support is provided to pupils throughout the school.

56. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay safe when they are online. Teachers provide guidance on e-safety within the PSHE scheme, information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, assemblies and tutor periods. Leaders maintain a suitable filtering and monitoring system which is tested on a regular basis. Leaders receive alerts of attempted breaches, which are followed up with individual pupils and used to identify patterns.

57. Leaders assess and manage specific safeguarding risks to pupils in the school, including those related to radicalisation and exposure to adult material. They are aware of risks within the local area and have put suitable strategies in place to safeguard pupils.

58. Leaders undertake all required checks on staff and governors in a timely manner. These are recorded in an appropriate single central record of appointments (SCR), which is checked by the safeguarding governor.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Whitgift School
Department for Education number	306/6014
Registered charity number	312612
Address	Whitgift School Haling Park Road South Croydon Surrey CR2 6YT
Phone number	02086 889222
Email address	office@whitgift.co.uk
Website	www.whitgift.co.uk
Proprietor	John Whitgift Foundation
Chair	Mr Nick Edwards
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Halls
Age range	10 to 18
Number of pupils	1515
Number of boarding pupils	98
Date of previous inspection	12 September 2023

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Information about the school

60. Whitgift School is a day and boarding school for male pupils aged 10 to 18 situated in South Croydon. It operates under the John Whitgift Foundation which delegates the governance of the school to the Whitgift School Committee. The school consists of three sections: junior years for pupils aged 10 to 12 years, middle years for those aged 13 to 16, and sixth form. The current headmaster took up their post in 2024.

61. The school has two boarding houses on the school campus accommodating pupils from 13 to 18 years.

62. The school has identified 540 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

63. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 97 pupils.

64. The school states its aims are to foster a culture of excellence and achievement through a broad, balanced, and innovative curriculum and co-curricular programme. It seeks to challenge pupils and instil values of respect, tolerance and self-esteem.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	1 to 3 April 2025

65. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

66. 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 headteacher, 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.

67. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

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- 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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