

# School inspection report

15 to 17 October 2024

## **Guildford High School**

London Road

Guildford

Surrey

GU1 1SJ

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'.

## Contents

<b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....	5
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE .....	7
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	9
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....</b>	<b>10</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	11
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>12</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	13
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>14</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	14
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>17</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor and governors ensure that leaders hold the appropriate knowledge and skills to actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. The proprietor, with support from the local governing body, maintains effective oversight and challenges leaders to ensure continual improvement.
2. Leaders successfully implement a consistent approach to education across the junior and senior schools, which fosters high levels of ambition alongside a love of learning. This approach ensures a smooth educational journey through the school for pupils. The curriculum is broad, stimulating and planned to take into account the needs of pupils.
3. The academic enrichment programme in the senior school has been developed so that, in addition to studying for public examinations, pupils study a wide range of additional subjects from abstract philosophy to contemporary politics. Alongside studying these subjects, pupils develop skills in critical thinking, oracy and research. This gives pupils a particularly wide-ranging understanding of academic disciplines, and an ability to draw links across these disciplines and apply this understanding to intelligent consideration of social issues. This is a significant strength of the school.
4. Teachers across the school use their detailed subject knowledge and understanding of how to promote learning to plan lessons that stimulate pupils' curiosity and challenge them to gain new skills. A robust assessment framework enables teachers to understand their pupils' needs and tailor their teaching accordingly, including to support those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve highly in GCSE and A-level examinations.
5. Leaders have embedded the importance of positive relationships throughout the school. Beginning in the early years, children understand the importance of behaving well towards others. This is developed further as pupils move through the school in specific lessons and through the consistent promotion of good behaviour. As a result, pupils demonstrate high levels of care and respect for their peers. Leaders analyse records of any rare incidents of bullying or poor behaviour and plan effectively to tackle any potential trends or emerging issues.
6. Pupils are suitably prepared for life beyond school through activities in lessons in the junior school and in the academic enrichment programme in the senior school. Senior school pupils receive information on future careers and older pupils experience a comprehensive programme of careers guidance events. However, careers guidance is less well developed for younger pupils in the senior school.
7. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in sport, music and drama both inside the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, including in partnership with other local schools. Many pupils compete and perform at national levels, and others develop a wide range of recreational interests.
8. The school's modern facilities are appropriate and well maintained. Procedures including those relating to health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment are robust and followed with care. Leaders supplement their own knowledge with external advice where necessary to create a suitable learning environment.
9. There is a robust safeguarding culture throughout the school, including in the early years. Pupils learn about keeping safe, including online, and have access to effective support systems. Where

necessary there is prompt communication with external agencies and local partners. There are appropriate procedures in place for the safer recruitment of staff.

## 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:

- strengthen careers guidance for younger pupils in the senior school to extend their knowledge about potential careers available to them.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors and leaders have a deep understanding of and fulfil their responsibilities towards the school and pupils. They use this knowledge to make effective strategic decisions which actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. Leaders in the junior and senior schools work closely together to successfully embed a whole-school approach and ethos, which is then adapted in an age-appropriate way throughout the school, giving pupils a fluid and coherent educational experience as they move through the school.
11. The proprietor and governors maintain effective oversight of the school through a systematic programme of school visits, including regular meetings with pupils and staff, and scrutiny of a wide variety of data and written reports from school leaders. This means that governors understand the experience of pupils in the school and take this into account when monitoring leaders' delivery of the school's vision.
12. Governors and leaders share a vision for education in which pupils are encouraged, successfully, to succeed across a wide range of opportunities whilst being supported by positive relationships with staff and their peers. Through this approach, pupils achieve highly in academic, artistic and sporting endeavours within an inclusive and respectful environment. Leaders communicate the school's aims and values effectively to the whole school community.
13. Leaders have a thorough system for monitoring pupils' academic progress, which is complemented by detailed pastoral oversight. This enables leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision and plan for constant and effective school improvement. Leaders are imaginative in measuring the impact of provision, such as by monitoring pupils' increased engagement in optional academic challenges as a result of the academic enrichment programme. Leaders listen to the school council and regularly survey pupils to ensure that pupils' views are taken into account in their decision making.
14. Leaders have a clear understanding of risk management and put in place comprehensive and effective risk assessments which are well documented and available to staff. These cover the school site and the activities undertaken by staff and pupils, including specific adaptations for the early years. All staff have received training in risk assessment and additional specialist training is undertaken where appropriate, such as by staff teaching science, and design and technology. There is a robust process in place for planning and approving educational visits, including post-trip evaluations which are used to improve future planning.
15. Leaders act in accordance with relevant legislation, including fulfilling the school's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. They maintain an appropriate accessibility plan which is reviewed regularly.
16. Leaders in the early years demonstrate a detailed awareness of the children's needs. They monitor the early years provision effectively to ensure that all specific early years requirements are met. Leaders meet with early years staff weekly to discuss the children's progress and wellbeing. Teachers and teaching assistants have regular review meetings and undertake ongoing professional development through online and in-person courses.
17. The school's website provides all required information to parents. This is supplemented by regular reports to parents about their own child's attainment, progress and next steps. Leaders share

appropriate information related to any funded pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan with the local authority as required.

18. Leaders maintain effective relationships with external agencies, such as those focused on support for pupils who have SEND and local safeguarding partners.
19. A clear and effective complaints procedure is in place. The number of formal complaints is low, but the policy is followed closely when needed and records are kept appropriately. Through reviews of both formal and informal complaints, leaders reflect on any opportunities for improvement.

### **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. School leaders have implemented an ambitious and broad curriculum throughout the school which fosters in pupils a love of learning and prepares them for their next steps. In the early years, children study a topic-based curriculum which engages them well and covers all prime and specific areas of learning. In the junior school, pupils study a wide range of subjects, including three different languages in Year 6, developing their linguistic skills.
22. In the academic enrichment programme in the senior school pupils develop their understanding about a diverse range of disciplines including philosophy, economics, psychology and natural history. These lessons are often inherently cross-curricular, enabling pupils to become skilled at recognising connections between subjects, such as between biological systems and approaches to design. Pupils respond to these topics in a range of ways, including by writing essays that are followed by interviews with subject specialists. This develops their ability to frame ideas with precision and defend them effectively.
23. Leaders oversee a whole-school assessment framework which provides detailed information on pupils' academic progress. This information is used effectively by heads of department in the senior school and form tutors in the junior school to monitor pupils' progress and provide additional challenge or support for pupils as they require. This means that pupils make good progress throughout the school and achieve high grades in GCSE and A-level examinations.
24. Teachers use their detailed subject knowledge and awareness of pedagogical techniques to plan lessons that challenge their pupils to develop their knowledge and skills. Lessons frequently begin with recall of previous topics, securing pupils' knowledge. As pupils learn new topics, teachers use skilful questioning to probe pupils' understanding and make them think deeply about their subjects. Teachers give pupils effective feedback, so pupils regard mistakes as a learning opportunity and understand what they need to do to improve. This is supported by pupils having positive relationships with their teachers, so they feel confident in seeking help when necessary. Teaching is conducted in line with the positive values of the school.
25. Throughout the school, pupils develop sophisticated linguistic skills for their age through a range of tasks and projects. In the early years, children retell familiar stories incorporating new characters. Older pupils learn to defend a point of view both in written essays and discussions. In the senior school, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to engage in debates in class and through enrichment activities. Pupils learn to make a case to others both on paper and in discussion. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and these pupils are given individual support for their English as required.
26. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' mathematical and scientific skills, and set appropriately challenging tasks based on their knowledge of the pupils' abilities. Teachers provide clear and knowledgeable explanations that enable pupils to apply a wide range of problem-solving techniques to quantitative problems and explain their reasoning clearly. Children in the early years become confident in applying numbers in a variety of contexts and older pupils apply mathematical skills across the curriculum, including science, and design and technology.
27. There is an effective process in place for identifying pupils who have SEND through assessments on entry and ongoing monitoring of pupils' progress. Where a need is identified, the learning support

staff give useful and clear advice to teachers about individual pupils. This, combined with regular training, enables them to support pupils who have SEND effectively in class so that they progress well. The 'SEND hub' provides a space for pupils to receive additional lessons as necessary, as well as a welcoming location for pupils to seek help should they require it.

28. Teachers encourage pupils to explore their interests and develop their intellectual and physical skills in a wide range of clubs and societies. As a result, many pupils compete successfully in national or international sporting events, essay prizes and other competitions. Pupils take part in a wide range of music and dramatic performances, including in collaboration with other local schools. Staff monitor pupils' engagement in recreational activities carefully to ensure they are making the most of the opportunities available whilst avoiding becoming over committed. As a result, pupils learn to balance their commitments in their daily lives whilst appreciating the importance of recreation for their health and wellbeing.

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

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

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

30. Throughout the school, leaders have developed an ethos that emphasises building positive, trusting relationships based on mutual respect. This is taught throughout the school as part of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, which is delivered in the 'Beehive' lessons in the junior school, and through the 'ASPIRE' programme in the senior school. This ethos is further developed through a consistent emphasis on the school's values and teachers having high expectations for how pupils treat each other. As a result, pupils learn to be respectful of each other, including those who have different backgrounds or characteristics to their own.
31. Leaders successfully promote positive behaviour throughout the school. In the early years, teachers' high expectations and well-developed classroom routines mean that children listen to one another respectfully, and learn and play collaboratively. In both the junior and senior schools, a clear behaviour policy ensures that pupils understand how they are expected to behave. Where a pupil's behaviour does not live up to expectations, any response includes restorative actions, such as apologies and conversations. As a result, pupils learn to show courtesy and consideration to teachers and their peers. Rare instances of bullying are dealt with promptly.
32. Staff with responsibility for PSHE education in the junior and senior schools work closely together to develop a curriculum where foundation skills are introduced in the early years, and each year, including in the sixth form, builds on what has gone before. Pupils learn the importance of keeping themselves physically and mentally healthy from a young age and their understanding of this develops as they move through the school. Leaders adapt and incorporate pertinent issues into the curriculum whenever they determine this necessary, such as increasing the emphasis on emotional literacy in recent years, and as a result pupils find it relevant and up to date. Subjects such as philosophy and religious education (RE), alongside assemblies, successfully develop the pupils' moral and spiritual understanding, including by providing opportunities for reflection.
33. Relationships and sex education (RSE) lessons reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance and are sensitively delivered by a range of staff, including drawing on outside expertise where appropriate. Common themes are introduced early and developed. For example, children in Reception learn about the importance of asking permission and this develops into a more mature understanding of consent as the pupils move through the school. Older pupils learn about intimate relationships, including sexual health. There is an emphasis developing pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence throughout these lessons and pupils are confident in talking openly and knowledgeably about these issues, including managing their relationships safely and appropriately both in person and online.
34. The well-planned programme of physical education (PE) helps to develop pupils' physical skills and confidence. Through a carefully planned curriculum, pupils are taught key physical skills which build their strength and stamina. Leaders are constantly adapting the programme of optional sporting activities in response to pupils' feedback, for example by recently introducing basketball. Pupils take part regularly in PE and sports sessions and gain an understanding of how exercise contributes to physical and mental health.
35. The school site has appropriate facilities. Staff with responsibility for health and safety have put in place a comprehensive system of regular monitoring which ensures that the school site is well

maintained. Where areas for improvement are identified, the site team deal with any issues promptly and effectively. Fire risk is suitably managed and regular evacuation drills are carried out. Throughout the school, including in the early years, there is comprehensive supervision by staff and pupils are confident in approaching them should they need any support.

36. A well-staffed health centre provides medical and health support for pupils, and the school has a sufficient number of trained first aiders, including those trained in paediatric first aid in the junior school.
37. Leaders ensure that admissions and attendance registers are comprehensive and accurately maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders monitor attendance regularly and respond to any absenteeism promptly. Leaders notify the local authority appropriately whenever pupils leave or join the school at non-standard times.

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

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

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

39. The school's culture, reflected in their 'GHS 8' values, encourages mutual respect. In the junior school, pupils learn that not all people are the same and are able to articulate thoughtfully the importance of treating everyone as they would like to be treated themselves. Teachers in the senior school support a range of clubs and societies that enable pupils to discuss, and develop their understanding of, different aspects of diversity, such as the prejudice affecting lesbian, gay and bisexual, transgender (LGBT) people and how their rights are to be protected.
40. Throughout the school, pupils learn about diverse cultures and British society through lessons integrated into the curriculum. In Reception, children explore different festivals and cultural rites of passage under the theme of 'Celebrations'. In history and geography lessons, older pupils learn about different societies, such as developing an understanding of democratic process through their study of the different political systems. RE lessons include the study of a range of faiths and beliefs. Pupils learn about the importance of mutual respect and other British values such as the rule of law and individual liberty. Pupils' understanding of the wider world is enhanced through regular trips, including travelling to France where they learn about the impact of the World Wars on Britain and Europe.
41. Children in Reception learn to share their equipment equitably, which helps to inform a moral foundation that is further developed through form time and PSHE in the junior school. In the senior school, the academic enrichment programme provides an opportunity for pupils to explore moral, philosophical and social issues in depth. Pupils study different approaches to morality from various viewpoints, with younger pupils beginning to be exposed to sophisticated ideas such as moral absolutism and relativism. Staff deal with potentially difficult topics with high levels of sensitivity.
42. The curriculum enables pupils to learn about their community. In Reception, teachers develop children's awareness of the local community by leading 'circle time' discussions which cover the school community, family and friends. Older pupils take part in a wide variety of voluntary work, both within the school and with local partners. This, combined with the house system in the senior school, develops pupils' sense of responsibility to each other and the wider community.
43. Through PSHE lessons and the academic enrichment programme, pupils study contemporary political issues, such as the relationship between benefits and work or ideas about whether the monarchy should be retained. Teachers arrange a wide range of assemblies and visiting speakers, so that all pupils learn about issues such as criminal law and the prison service. Pupils communicate their ideas about such themes through creative presentations, well-argued papers and in articulate debate. Pupils create their own political parties and have their proposed policies scrutinised by their teachers, gaining insight into the practicalities of running modern democracies. Teachers ensure that all discussions are managed impartially and remain unbiased, and that all viewpoints are heard.
44. Leaders and staff plan the curriculum and activities to ensure a smooth progression for pupils from one part of their education to the next. In Reception, the amount of formal learning time is gradually increased to prepare children for the expectations in Year 1. Older pupils receive clear guidance on next steps, including through taster days and older pupils sharing their experiences with younger ones.

45. The specialist careers department provides an extensive range of extra-curricular support to senior pupils. This is particularly well developed in the older years as pupils make subject and post-18 choices. Career 'speed dating' sessions, individual advice and visiting speakers ensure that older pupils are able to make informed decisions about their future pathways. Older pupils practise writing letters of application and CVs. There is specialist advice available for those pupils interested in applying overseas or for apprenticeships, and several pupils each year pursue these routes. However, the careers guidance for pupils in Years 7 to 9 does not always inform them about possible career options or the careers support available as effectively as possible.
46. Economics education is integrated into the curriculum throughout the school. Pupils in the junior school use coins to solve problems in mathematics lessons, including calculating the funds raised for local charities. Pupils in the senior school learn about managing money, including using bank accounts and credit or debit cards, and setting a budget at university.

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

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

## Safeguarding

48. Leaders ensure that there is an effective safeguarding culture and that procedures throughout the school fulfil the requirements of current statutory guidance. The safeguarding team understand their roles and take part in regular training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.
49. The proprietor and governors maintain regular and robust oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures, including through meetings with leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities and with pupils and staff, and through scrutiny of safeguarding reports.
50. All staff receive regular online and in-person training, as well as frequent updates from the safeguarding team which reflect national guidance and any local risks. This means that staff are confident in the safeguarding procedures. They make effective use of the reporting systems in place to pass on any safeguarding concerns that might arise. Pupils are aware of the opportunities they have to raise concerns through talking to trusted adults and are confident that concerns will be acted upon.
51. Where concerns are raised about pupils, the safeguarding team respond effectively and promptly, working with the police and children's services as necessary. The safeguarding team have a clear understanding of locally agreed procedures and liaise with pertinent agencies and local safeguarding partners so that pupils affected by safeguarding issues receive appropriate internal and external support and protection.
52. The safeguarding team keep detailed records of any safeguarding concerns and monitor these to ensure that they provide pupils affected by safeguarding issues with appropriate support. They are alert to the potential vulnerabilities of different groups of pupils, including pupils who have SEND.
53. The school implements appropriate procedures for responding to any allegations against or low-level concerns about staff. Leaders liaise appropriately with relevant safeguarding partners should such concerns arise.
54. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Appropriate filtering and monitoring of internet use are in place.
55. The school carries out all required safer recruitment checks before adults commence working at the school. These checks are recorded accurately in an appropriate single central record of appointments.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Guildford High School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	936/6046
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1016538
<b>Address</b>	Guildford High School London Road Guildford Surrey GU1 1SJ
<b>Phone number</b>	01483 561440
<b>Email address</b>	guildford-office@guildfordhigh.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.guildfordhigh.co.uk">https://www.guildfordhigh.co.uk</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	United Church Schools Trust (UCST)
<b>Chair of local governing body</b>	Mrs Kate Richards
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Karen Laurie
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1024
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 to 19 November 2021

## Information about the school

57. Guildford High School is an academically selective independent day school for female pupils situated in Surrey. The school consists of a junior school and a senior school located in a residential area east of the city centre. The school is overseen by the United Church Schools Trust and supported by a local governing body with delegated responsibilities. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
58. There are 35 children in the early years comprising two Reception classes.
59. The school has identified 133 pupils as having SEND. Three pupils in the school have an EHC plan.
60. Very few pupils have EAL.
61. The school states its aims, enshrined in what the school terms the 'GHS 8', are for pupils to be happy, be positive about their own gifts and abilities, maximise potential, think and learn creatively and collaboratively, develop intellectual curiosity and a love of learning, develop confidence to take appropriate risks, develop the resilience to cope with adversity and be kind and respectful citizens. The school's ethos is to aspire to live life to the full; to be grateful for and seek to make the most of opportunities; to thrive on being busy, getting involved and trying new things; and to be serious and ambitious about work and activities but to pursue them with joy, positivity and a sense of fun.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

15 to 17 October 2024

62. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

63. 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

64. 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)**.

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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