

School inspection report

17 to 19 June 2025

Horris Hill School

Newtown

Newbury

Berkshire

RG20 9DJ

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. Governors ensure that leaders promote the wellbeing of pupils. They offer leaders effective support and challenge and review policies and procedures appropriately to ensure that school and boarding leaders carry out their responsibilities and that the Standards are met.
2. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. They make reasonable adjustments which are regularly reviewed within a suitable accessibility plan. Important information for parents is readily available on the school's website, including an appropriate complaints policy which follows statutory guidance. Leaders maintain an appropriate admission and attendance register, reporting to the Local Authority as required. However, at the start of the inspection, the school had not sent the most recent annual financial report for any funded pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan to the local authority. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
3. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught a balanced curriculum which includes an appropriate range of subjects and is complemented by suitable extra-curricular provision. Teachers know the pupils well and respond effectively to their individual needs, including with regard to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) also receive the support they need to learn successfully. Pupils make good progress as a result and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, the use of assessment data to inform curriculum planning is not consistently effective across all subjects.
4. Children in the early years are taught an appropriate and stimulating curriculum and are supported to meet age-related expectations. They benefit from a wide range of lessons and activities which include regular opportunities for outdoor learning.
5. Leaders actively promote pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. They implement appropriate behaviour and anti-bullying policies typically effectively and, as a result, pupils are generally well behaved, and bullying is rare. Relationships between most pupils are positive and in line with the school's core ideas of 'family, freedom and flair'. However, the school does not enable pupils to show as much tolerance and respect to pupils of different ages to themselves as they do to pupils within their own age group.
6. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes include age-appropriate, relevant content that enables pupils to understand important issues to support their wellbeing. Pupils acquire insight into financial matters and future careers through the curriculum and have the opportunity to contribute to the wider community by raising money for local charities.
7. The school has a robust approach to managing risks. Leaders and staff identify potential risks and implement appropriate measures to mitigate them. Health and safety arrangements, including first aid provision and fire safety, are comprehensive and comply with current regulations.
8. Leaders promote inclusivity, respect and appreciation of diversity typically effectively. The curriculum is planned to provide opportunities for pupils to explore issues relating to moral dilemmas, democracy and being a good citizen.
9. Leaders foster a supportive boarding environment. Boarders are well supervised and make productive use of their recreational time, participating in suitable activities in the evenings. Boarders

have opportunities to share their views about boarding provision, which helps leaders to continue to develop the boarding experience. Boarding accommodation is suitable, and boarders' medical and dietary needs are met.

10. Safeguarding arrangements in the school are effective and well known by staff. Leaders monitor these arrangements and seek advice from external agencies where applicable. Staff receive appropriate induction and ongoing safeguarding training. They are confident about how to respond to any safeguarding concerns. All required safer recruitment checks are carried out before a person starts work at the school.

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 financial reporting for any pupil with a funded education, health and care (EHC) plan is consistently provided annually to the local authority
- strengthen the use of assessment data across the wider curriculum in order to best support pupils' learning
- strengthen the teaching of tolerance and respect to ensure pupils know to have respect for all.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school to ensure that it prioritises and promotes pupils' ongoing wellbeing. They visit the site regularly and engage actively with the views of staff, pupils and parents. Governors receive detailed reports from leaders, including on attendance and complaints as well as pupils' academic outcomes and safeguarding matters. This ensures that governors keep themselves regularly updated on the day-to-day workings of the school.
12. Leaders use their knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They engage in a comprehensive self-evaluation process that informs their school development planning and results in decision-making which promotes positive outcomes for pupils. Leaders take effective action to address any areas for development that are identified so that the school continues to improve.
13. Leaders promote and communicate the aims and ethos of the school effectively. They utilise the three core ideas set out in school's 'Horris Hill School Charter' of family, freedom and flair to support pupils' personal development.
14. Leaders are vigilant to possible risks. Staff receive regular training in risk assessment. Risk assessments for various activities, including educational visits, outdoor learning and the suitable use of teaching spaces are detailed and thorough. They identify suitable control measure to minimise the potential risks identified.
15. Leaders maintain effective links with relevant external agencies. They seek specialist advice, when necessary, to inform their ongoing practice, and work with external safeguarding partners to protect pupils' wellbeing.
16. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Pupils are not discriminated against by the school. The school has an appropriate accessibility plan. Leaders implement reasonable adjustments to meet pupils' needs. Adaptations to the site include accessible toilet facilities and ramps for entry to the school buildings as well as specialist classroom resources. Such measures ensure that all users have access to the school's curriculum and to the buildings and surroundings.
17. The school provides parents with appropriate and clear guidance about the school's complaints process. The complaints policy outlines timely and suitable procedures to be followed in the event of concerns or complaints being raised. Leaders address complaints effectively and keep appropriate records of complaints received and the school's responses to these.
18. The school provides parents with required information about the school through its informative website, including key and up-to-date policies that contain clear guidance. Staff provide parents with feedback about pupils' educational attainment, progress and personal development through regular written reports and verbal feedback at parents' evenings. Leaders typically share information with the local authority appropriately, regarding the provision for pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. However, the most recent annual account of financial information relating to an EHC plan had not been shared with the local authority when the inspection commenced. This was rectified by the school during the inspection.
19. The school's early years provision is well led and managed. Leaders meet regularly with early years staff to promote their professional development and support their stimulating and effective teaching and use of the environment.

20. The suitable boarding environment is led by appropriately trained and experienced leaders who communicate with pupils and parents well, maintain records as required and act promptly whenever it is necessary to do so. Boarding leaders and staff continually liaise with academic and pastoral staff to ensure pupils' needs are met.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Pupils experience a well-planned curriculum that is tailored to meet their needs. Subject leaders work effectively together to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and interesting, such as by using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a topic theme throughout all subject areas. Schemes of work are designed effectively to support pupils' good progress. A suitable range of subjects enables pupils to develop their literacy, mathematics, physical and linguistic skills well. The curriculum includes a variety of creative subjects, such as drama, art and music, as well as science and mathematics teaching as part of a wider science, technology, English, arts and mathematics (STEAM) curriculum.
23. Teachers make effective use of pertinent resources to promote pupils' learning. The use of electronic devices enables pupils to develop their investigation, research and presentation skills. For example, in Year 5 music, pupils use notation software to compose pieces in particular styles of music, and in Year 8 science, pupils integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into their display work and research.
24. Teachers' in-depth understanding of their subjects and of pupils' individual needs enables them to deliver the curriculum effectively. Pupils develop their subject knowledge and make good progress due to the effective methods used by teachers in lessons. Teachers select appropriate activities to enable pupils to develop their skills and understanding. These are adapted, as necessary, to allow pupils of all abilities to access the curriculum. Most pupils behave well in class due to teachers' effective classroom management and the appropriate pace of lessons. However, where the pupils are less engaged, some low-level disruption can cause progress to slow.
25. Teachers provide pupils who speak EAL with additional help, including individualised support, as necessary to develop their English skills and comprehension. For example, when required, staff use appropriate resources such as Chinese pictograms to facilitate translation during teaching. This enables pupils who speak EAL to make good progress with their English.
26. Teaching in the early years is adapted to support individual children's needs. Teachers plan lessons and activities which build on the children's interests and develop their curiosity, knowledge and ability to pose insightful questions. Staff develop children's language skills through teaching about the sounds that letters make, story time, French lessons and discussions. Children make good progress from their starting points.
27. Leaders provide effective support for pupils who have SEND. Most teachers make effective use of individual support plans that identify targets for individual pupils, to adapt their teaching to the pupils' needs. This includes use of technology to support pupils' learning where appropriate. Teaching assistants provide additional support for particular pupils when this is required. The support that the school provides enables pupils who have SEND to make good progress from their starting points.
28. Leaders typically make effective use of a suitable assessment framework to monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders analyse assessment data appropriately to inform pupils' preparation for future senior schools. For younger pupils, teachers adapt ways of monitoring pupils' progress to suit individual subjects. However, leaders' oversight of assessment data across the wider

curriculum is less well developed. This reduces opportunities for leaders to utilise such data to consistently support pupils' learning as effectively as possible.

29. The school provides a suitable recreational programme. Pupils develop a range of skills through a wide assortment of optional clubs that range from jewellery making and judo to orchestra and trampolining.

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. Communication of the school's ethos by leaders and staff enables pupils to develop a positive understanding of their own attributes. Affirming relationships with staff and celebration of the achievements and effort of individual pupils during chapel and assemblies further support pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence.
32. The PSHE and RSE programmes are well planned, resourced and assessed. Age-appropriate content taught throughout the school, including about healthy relationships, managing emotions, consent and puberty, actively promotes pupils' understanding and self-regulation. Pupils' learning in these areas is extended beyond the classroom. For example, visiting speakers enable pupils to gain a deeper understanding of specific topics.
33. Pupils' spiritual development is fostered effectively through lessons in theology, philosophy and religion (TPR) which encourage pupils to empathise with people of different backgrounds, beliefs and faiths. Leaders also encourage pupils to appreciate various forms of creative endeavour including classical music, drama and art, and they develop the ability to be reflective in assemblies and chapel.
34. Pupils learn about the importance of maintaining positive physical health through a broad and balanced programme of physical education (PE). Pupils learn about healthy food choices in PSHE and science lessons. Children in the early years learn about healthy eating and oral hygiene. Pupils experience regular exercise at school and effective guidance which enables them to understand how to promote their physical health. When appropriate, staff make effective use of outdoor education for all pupils, and the 'Wild Child Charter' for early years children to develop their self-confidence and independence through exploration and investigation.
35. Behaviour management is typically effective with expectations from leaders and staff that are reinforced through consistent and fair use of rewards and sanctions. Leaders and staff teach pupils that kindness and respect to one another should be at the centre of relationships and encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour when any minor issues arise. However, not all pupils show the same levels of respect or tolerance towards pupils of different ages to themselves as they do to peers of the same age.
36. The anti-bullying strategy is effective. Leaders respond appropriately to the rare incidents that do occur, including by providing support to pupils affected. Staff encourage pupils to share with them any concerns about bullying that they might have.
37. Pupils are appropriately supervised whilst on the school site and on visits and fixtures through effective deployment of sufficient staff. In the early years, the required staff-to-child ratios are adhered to at all times and children always kept within sight and or sound of an adult.
38. Leaders ensure that first aid and medical care is administered appropriately through providing effective training for staff, including in paediatric first aid for those working in the early years. The premises include suitable specific medical facilities for pupils who become unwell or injured.

39. The school maintains suitable attendance and admission registers and the procedures relating to these are well managed. Leaders take prompt and effective action in the event of absenteeism. The school informs the local authority whenever pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times.
40. The school provides good quality and suitable boarding accommodation. Boarders are suitably supervised according to age and sex, including overnight. They access appropriate food, drinks and health care. The school provides boarders with an effective induction programme and ensures that they can always find staff to support them or to whom they may express any worries or suggestions.
41. Health and safety and fire safety arrangements are effective. Regular checks and servicing take place to ensure that the premises are well maintained, and effective systems are in place to deal with any repairs required or defects that come to light. The school maintains, and acts upon, regularly reviewed fire risk assessments. Staff conduct regular fire evacuation drills both during the day and in boarding time.

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. The school prepares pupils well socially and emotionally for their next stage in education. Transition to new year groups is well managed. Older pupils' transition to a range of senior schools is supported by close liaison between the school and senior school leaders. Staff support pupils who are moving on to senior school with guidance on next steps, visits and preparation activities. Older pupils are introduced to a range of different possible future careers through guidance in PSHE.
44. There is a clear focus on children's social development in the early years. Staff foster children's social skills through structured activities which promote and practise turn-taking, sharing and listening. As a result, children learn how to interact with each other successfully, co-operate, collaborate and share resources for mutual benefit.
45. Pupils learn how to manage money through the mathematics curriculum. Children in the early years exchange money when buying and selling goods in their role-play shop. Leaders support older pupils' economic education in mathematics and PSHE lessons through discussion of savings, interest, depreciation, appreciation and junior stocks and shares ISAs.
46. Leaders promote British values such as those of mutual respect and individual liberty, through PSHE lessons, assemblies and displays. Pupils learn about issues such as prejudice and human rights. The TPR curriculum widens pupils' knowledge of diverse religions and world views, and the school celebrates multi-culturalism through regular themed days, such as a language day and an international day, where different cultural traditions are explored.
47. Staff work together to maintain a caring community and encourage pupils to be appreciative of themselves and others, both within the school and the wider world. Pupils learn about the importance of rules and laws and typically express a secure understanding of right and wrong.
48. The thematic curriculum based upon the UN Sustainable Development Goals encourages pupils to become global and responsible citizens. This includes growing food in the school's kitchen garden and donating it to a local charity, organising a 24-hour football match to raise money for charity and hosting a 'girls in science' event for local schools, to engage with the community.
49. Pupils develop an understanding of democracy through the curriculum, learning about the electoral system, voting and the role of Parliament through PSHE lessons. They also experience democracy in action through the various established committees and councils that exist, such as school council, boarding council and the food committee. These enable boarding and day pupils to make a positive impact in the lives of others in the school and to develop an understanding of the importance of expressing their views, for example, when asking the school to add items to the lunch menu such as more fruit or Mantou bread.
50. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils of all ages to undertake roles of responsibility. These range from being elected to the school council, the food committee and the boarding council. These opportunities help develop pupils' sense of responsibility for different areas of school life and their ability to provide support to their peers.

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

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

52. Governors monitor the school's safeguarding arrangements effectively, and leaders and governors revise safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that they reflect any updates to statutory guidance. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding holds regular meetings with staff, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and headteacher, to remain suitably informed and provide appropriate oversight and challenge to ensure the school follows suitable and effective safeguarding procedures.
53. Staff training is thorough. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities regularly check staff knowledge and understanding to ensure they are confident to apply the school's procedures. Consequently, safeguarding practice is embedded in the school's culture. Staff record and report any concerns about pupils, or about adults working in the school that might arise. The safeguarding team responds effectively whenever safeguarding concerns arise, including by liaising appropriately with, and seeking advice from external safeguarding partners, such as the local authority designated officer. Leaders refer safeguarding concerns to relevant external agencies when necessary.
54. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to approach any member of staff if they have a worry or concern and want to discuss matters in person. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, both in the physical world and when online. Governors ensure that material accessed from the internet is appropriately filtered to ensure only appropriate content is accessed, and the DSL takes appropriate action should monitoring indicate that any unsuitable websites may have been requested.
55. Leaders carry out all the required safer recruitment checks on adults before they commence work at the school. They record these checks in a suitably maintained single central record of appointments. Regular scrutiny by governors ensures that the school's safer recruitment procedures are appropriate.
56. The school's safeguarding leaders are suitably trained for their role. They keep detailed records of any concerns raised and how the school has responded to these. Appropriate policies for staff behaviour are in place, including suitable whistleblowing procedures should any allegations or concerns be raised concerning adults who work at the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

57. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Horris Hill School
Department for Education number	850/6072
Address	Horris Hill School Newtown Newbury Berkshire RG20 9DJ
Phone number	01635 40594
Email address	office@horrishill.com
Website	www.horrishill.com
Proprietor	Forfar Hampshire Limited
Chair	Mr John Forsyth
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Wilkinson
Age range	2 to13
Number of pupils	100
Number of boarding pupils	37
Date of previous inspection	7 to 10 June 2022

Information about the school

58. Horris Hill School is a co-educational independent boarding and day school situated in Newtown, Newbury. Since the previous inspection, the school has opened a nursery for children aged 2 upwards. The school comprises four sections: Nursery, Lower School for pupils in Reception to Year 2, Upper School Transition for pupils in Years 3 and 4, and Upper School for pupils in Years 5 to 8. The school is part of the Forfar Education group of schools and is governed by them. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2025.
59. There are three boarding houses, one within the main school building and two within the grounds. One boarding house, The Bank, is currently not in use.
60. There are 42 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
61. The school has identified 13 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. The school has identified 34 pupils for whom English is an additional language.
63. The school aims to provide an excellent education, with academic ambition, tailored to the individual child. It seeks to ensure every child is happy and confident and has the opportunity to discover their skills and passions by offering a range of experiences in academics, sports and the arts. The school endeavours to promote kindness, courage, respect and resilience, with a focus on the benefits of hard work, good manners, good humour and having the spirit to succeed.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

17 to 19 June 2025

64. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

65. 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.

66. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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