

# School inspection report

1 to 3 October 2024

## **Ayscoughfee Hall School**

Welland Hall

London Road

Spalding

PE11 2TE

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

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. The vision and aims of leaders and the plans for achieving them are clearly articulated to all staff and parents, who understand and support them. Governors hold the leadership team to account by carefully analysing policies and procedures and asking challenging questions. The approachable leadership team work collaboratively to bring about school improvement, promoting a productive and inclusive learning environment.
2. Leaders foster their key messages of politeness; respect; independence; do your best; and everybody matters, aptly remembered by pupils through the acronym 'PRIDE'. Displays of a lion round the school encourage pupils to take pride in their work, appearance and actions. Pupils feel they develop into confident individuals with a clear sense of purpose, positive self-knowledge and they show an eagerness to benefit the world around them.
3. The broad curriculum is well planned and suitably assessed. Lessons are characterised by engaging content that encourages pupils to demonstrate their creativity and work well with others. This supports pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) to make good progress. Several subjects are taught so that pupils learn to link their curriculum knowledge with real life situations. This includes whole-school projects focusing on global issues, such as reducing plastic waste. As a result, as pupils advance through the school, there is a clear progression in both their writing skills and their understanding of social and environmental responsibility.
4. Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health. Pupils receive support through a well-delivered personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, and individual interventions when needed. This helps pupils to feel safe and happy at school. The PSHE scheme of work successfully supports pupils' all-round emotional wellbeing, equipping them with the tools to manage their feelings and develop resilience. However, the economic aspect of this programme is not as coherently planned. As a result, pupils' financial understanding is more limited.
5. Pupils learn to value and understand life in British society through well-planned teaching, assemblies and displays throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance towards individual differences and enjoy various opportunities to learn about democracy. Pupils behave very well and have a secure understanding of right and wrong. This is reflected in calm classrooms and a culture of kindness that permeates the school, where pupils feel valued for who they are.
6. The early years is managed effectively, with high-quality provision across all areas of learning. Leaders promote a welcoming environment, with caring staff who understand the needs of individual children. Consequently, all groups of children build upon secure foundations, make good progress and thrive.
7. The welfare, health and safety of pupils are actively promoted. There are robust procedures in place to monitor and review risks to safeguard pupils. Staff are suitably trained and take prompt action when any concerns or potential issues are identified. Pupils know whom to approach if they are ever feeling upset or unhappy. The school's premises and accommodation are well maintained.

## 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:

- design and deliver a programme of economic education that supports pupils to become more financially aware.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders have established an inclusive and harmonious environment where pupils feel supported both pastorally and academically. Together with governors, they are committed to fulfilling the school's aims, demonstrating a clear desire for continuous improvement. Leaders identify key areas for development, work effectively to address them and embed improvement across the school. This includes implementing a more streamlined system to identify and record pupil support, allowing early intervention where required.
9. Governors play an active role in the school. They visit frequently, which enables them to gather first-hand evidence and have an accurate understanding of current outcomes for pupils. Governors provide appropriate assistance and challenge in their regular meetings. They have established robust systems to check policies and procedures and are closely involved in the recruitment of staff. This enables governors to ensure that those in leadership positions have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted. As a result, the Standards are consistently met.
10. The school's accessibility plan demonstrates a desire to ensure inclusivity and supports the leaders' commitment to fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. This plan is specific about how the curriculum and site are adjusted to cater for the needs of the pupils and foster a supportive environment where pupils feel valued and respected. For example, floor coverings have been changed to enable easier access for wheelchair users.
11. Leaders use the expertise of external agencies to inform their decision-making around a range of matters including safeguarding, academic support and attendance. Records are kept securely and provide detailed information on actions undertaken to promote and benefit the wellbeing of pupils in their care. Leaders ensure that the local authority receives the required information relating to pupils who have education, health and care (EHC) plans.
12. The required information is made available on the school website. Staff work co-operatively and in partnership with parents holding regular meetings and providing informative reports written termly. This enables parents to receive updates about their child's attitude to learning as well as current attainment levels and helpful next steps.
13. The assessment and management of risk, including educational visits, is effective. Leaders consider potential risks and identify the appropriate actions to mitigate these. These processes are developed through regular discussion, systematic record-keeping and training from external agencies. Governors provide focused and supportive challenge to this important aspect of school life, ensuring that pupils' safety and wellbeing are catered for.
14. A suitable complaints policy is effectively implemented. Staff take concerns seriously from the earliest stage. They are quick to resolve any issues, engaging in discussion and recording information accurately. When concerns do arise, they are suitably recorded, any actions required are completed and lessons learnt inform any changes required to procedures.
15. Early years leadership is effective. They promote a supportive environment. Committed staff use their knowledge of children's interests and ability to help them move their learning forward. Leaders' careful oversight, and strategy of high-quality additional adult support, ensure that children make good progress from their starting points.

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

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

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

17. The thoughtfully designed curriculum covers a broad range of subjects and provides pupils with programmes of activities that are appropriate to their needs and aptitudes. The careful use of questions enhances pupils' independent and critical thinking skills. For example, Reception children investigated the question 'can a bubble be cube shaped?' and Year 5 pupils explored whether the evidence suggested Henry VIII's divorce was for love or political reasons. Pupils are enthusiastic learners, making good and often rapid progress. By Year 6, most pupils achieve above the national averages in national tests in mathematics, reading and writing.
18. Leaders implement an effective assessment model across the school. Regular, targeted assessments inform teaching and learning. Online programs are used to engage and support pupils, offering a range of tailored interventions that provide reinforcement and extension activities. Prompt interventions, known as 'scooping up' are used to help pupils who have not fully grasped a concept. Pupils articulate that this enables them to 'keep up rather than catch up'. This proactive approach minimises the risk of pupils falling behind by providing instant clarification and support where needed. Pupils benefit from capable teaching assistants, who are available in every class to support those that are finding concepts difficult and help provide additional challenge.
19. Teachers plan lessons carefully. This ensures that pupils acquire new knowledge, whilst effective questioning elicits pupils' understanding and extends their thinking. Teachers' high expectations are combined with lessons that are characterised by engaging content, such as an alien landing in Year 1. This encourages pupils to be engaged in their learning, self-motivated and enjoy a challenge.
20. Teachers provide pupils with helpful verbal and written feedback. A culture of self-review and improvement is embedded. Pupils self-assess confidently and by Year 2 use a red pen to edit work and independently check for key components of a task. This ensures that pupils know when they have grasped concepts, are clear about ways in which their work could be improved, and provides helpful targets so that further progress might be attained.
21. A stimulating environment within which the pupils work, and play has been created through a wide variety of high-quality displays. This includes pupils' work and powerful messages about topics such as inclusivity and supports the school's approach to cross-curricular learning. This helps pupils appreciate their own work and the work of others and generates excitement about the curriculum.
22. The individual needs of pupils who have SEND, including those with complex needs, are met through a variety of strategies. This includes clear targets in their support plans and the presence of additional adults for those who require it. Teaching assistants know the pupils very well so they can facilitate their progress. As a result, pupils who have SEND are keen to engage in their learning. Leaders and teachers track these pupils effectively to ensure they make good progress.
23. The curriculum is adapted so that those pupils who speak EAL become more confident and fluent in their use of English. These pupils are identified early and strategies to support them start promptly. This proactive approach ensures that pupils who speak EAL receive the support they need to make rapid progress in this aspect of their learning.
24. A wide range of extra-curricular clubs are available, allowing pupils to expand their interests and talents and enrich their educational experience. Clubs such as art, debating and hockey enhance pupils' physical, intellectual and creative skills and knowledge.

25. Teachers in early years demonstrate a secure understanding of children's development. Regular checks on learning are used to assess and monitor each child's progress. These assessments are effectively used to inform and adjust planning. This results in activities that are tailored to suit the diverse needs of the children so that they make good progress. A strength of the provision is the high-quality interactions between staff and children, which play a crucial role in supporting communication and language development. For example, children in Reception listened attentively and answered confidently as they considered the equipment used by people who help them.

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

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



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

27. Pupils' mental and emotional health is supported through a PSHE programme that celebrates differences and raises aspirations. Starting with the youngest children, reflection opportunities and guided discussions help pupils to recognise their uniqueness, and their differences, which in turn encourages mutual respect.
28. Regular opportunities to complete practical tasks in the woodland environment develops pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Activities such as den building encourages problem-solving, whilst learning to assess and take appropriate risks is developed through cooking on an open fire. Providing the time for pupils to focus on themselves, especially outdoors allows them to develop a secure understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and increases their curiosity and motivation to learn across a range of subjects.
29. The physical education (PE) and co-curricular programmes cater for pupils effectively. They enjoy their PE lessons and show enthusiasm to participate in different sporting activities. The school's programme of all-round sporting experience develops collaboration and promotes individual physical health and wellbeing. Pupils appreciate the well-taught programme of 'five ways to wellbeing' and can articulate how keeping healthy in body keeps their mind healthy too.
30. Staff develop pupils' sense of spirituality effectively, including through music, arts and woodland sessions, where they spend time considering the beauty of what they see and hear. Religious education (RE) lessons together with a carefully planned programme of extended learning opportunities deepen pupils' appreciation of diverse religions and traditions. For example, pupils who belong to the Sikh religion taught pupils in other years how Sikhs worship and celebrate religious festivals.
31. The comprehensive PSHE scheme includes relationships education and helps pupils understand the importance of healthy relationships and effective communication. Other required elements addressed through the science curriculum support pupils' wider personal development. This focus on wellbeing helps create a nurturing environment and positive atmosphere that enhances the capacity of pupils to make healthy choices.
32. The behaviour policy sets out high expectations for conduct and has clear reward strategies and sanctions. As a result, pupils behave well round the school and understand how their behaviour impacts on others. Incidents of bullying are rare. When they occur, they are well managed, with immediate interventions put in place to address unfavourable actions or resolve friendship issues. A strong emphasis is placed on developing respectful attitudes with every year group writing a class charter. Kindness ambassadors add names to the kindness tree each week and together with house points encourage pupils to regulate their behaviour. Older pupils understand the importance of being positive role models with prefects speaking of 'wanting to make a difference'.
33. Staff build warm and caring relationships with the children in the early years, helping them start the day with excitement. Children benefit from specialist games staff to promote their physical and emotional wellbeing. Children understand their feelings well for their age and are encouraged to share how they feel, helping them feel happy and supported throughout the day.

34. The school has an effective health and safety policy with appropriate procedures in place. Leaders ensure that through robust monitoring and sensible staff training, including for fire safety, the premises and accommodation are well maintained. This results in a school environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning.
35. Pupils are well supervised by caring adults who know individual pupils well. The school has suitable procedures in place to ensure that medications and first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by suitably qualified staff, including in the early years. Pupils are aware of who they can go to if they are hurt or unwell.
36. Admission and attendance registers are kept in accordance with the regulations. The school's attendance officer keeps well-organised files, maintaining a watchful eye on attendance patterns. This contributes to improved pupil outcomes because of consistent dialogue to promote high pupil attendance. The local authority is informed about pupil transfers at standard and non-standard transition points.

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

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

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

38. Pupils' social understanding is fostered through a broad curriculum and charity work within the school and in the wider community. Pupils engage in various events that help them understand how their actions can affect the lives of others, thereby developing their social responsibility. Older pupils participate in a community skills award, during which they complete tasks such as visiting a food bank, assisting in a churchyard and supporting the children in the early years.
39. Careful planning of key cultural themes across varied subjects and activities helps pupils acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. For example, Year 6 gain an understanding of Indian culture through studying the country in geography, focusing on Hinduism in RE, and engaging in a range of other activities, including the designing of Rangoli patterns in art and learning traditional Indian dances. This approach enhances pupils understanding of different cultures and heightens their awareness of the importance of global citizenship.
40. The curriculum provides some opportunities for pupils to develop their economic understanding, but this is not cohesively planned throughout the school. Pupils have a basic economic understanding, gained through maths, café role-play, selling produce grown in the garden and for the oldest pupils understanding costs and profit through their active participation in an entrepreneurial event. However, overall, pupils receive limited economic education and consequently, their understanding of topics such as budgeting and the value of money is restricted.
41. The curriculum ensures that pupils are effectively prepared for the next stage of their education and life in British society. Pupils understand that they live in a democratic society. They have numerous opportunities to develop their democratic understanding; whether voting for their house captain, or voting in debating club on, 'This house believes that petrol cars should be banned'. A range of visits such as the police or paramedics, promotes understanding of public services. Through workshops, such as a mock trial, pupils understanding of the judicial system is developed.
42. Opportunities to broaden pupils' horizons regarding future careers are interwoven through the year. Parents play an integral role by providing insights into various professions during a careers fair. This involvement enriches the pupils' understanding of different careers and helps foster aspiration and enthusiasm.
43. Leaders promote the principles of rights and responsibilities, through explicit teaching in PSHE and discussions during lessons and assemblies. This helps pupils to understand the importance of considering their actions on others and taking responsibility for their behaviour. Pupils understand their responsibilities when elected to the school council. They are aware that it serves as the voice for the entire pupil body and actively work to bring about positive change. Pupils spoke about recent changes such as the building of a greenhouse for pupils to grow their own vegetables and changes to playground markings.
44. Children in the early years are sociable and friendly, enjoying opportunities to play and collaborate with others. For example, in the role-play area, they worked together to build a rocket. Staff use group time to support social development, helping children listen to one another and wait for their turn. As a result, by the time they reach Reception, children know how to build friendships, co-operate effectively, and resolve conflicts peacefully helping them transition smoothly to Year 1.

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

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

## Safeguarding

46. Leaders and governors create a vigilant culture of safeguarding which is central to their decision-making. A clear and comprehensive safeguarding policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance. Regular governor oversight offers effective challenge and helpful advice for the safeguarding team.
47. Measures are taken to minimise risk so that as far as possible pupils are protected from harm and even the smallest incidents are dealt with promptly. An online system is used which provides a consistent approach for recording, monitoring and assessing concerns. There is a suitable log of low-level concerns. This coherent system enables the suitably trained designated safeguarding lead (DSL) to review any incidents and detect any concerning trends.
48. Staff appreciate the rigorous approach to the safeguarding of pupils. They know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and appreciate receiving regular updates and training to keep refreshing their knowledge. This ensures that all staff, volunteers and governors are kept up to date with any changes to practice and are clear about their responsibilities. Thorough induction training is in place which gives confidence to new staff and volunteers.
49. Staff are aware of the different types of concerns and the required actions to take in each case. Should incidents of child-on-child abuse occur, the school responds appropriately and promptly. Staff understand the risks associated with extremism.
50. Safeguarding leaders engage effectively with external agencies to support pupils where there are any safeguarding concerns. They seek informal advice and make referrals when necessary and where needed, put in place appropriate support.
51. Pupils are aware of how they can share any worries in confidence, such as using the classroom worry boxes. They appreciate the regular use of 'worry monsters' which helps them express their concerns and develop coping strategies. They are confident that adults will respond appropriately.
52. Appropriate teaching and useful workshops support pupils to be well informed about internet safety. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems are in place for pupil protection purposes. These systems are regularly monitored by the DSL and swift action is taken on any incidents of inappropriate use.
53. Leaders adhere to safer recruitment protocols, thereby ensuring that checks on all staff, volunteers and governors are completed before they commence their role. This includes robust procedures for monitoring, including by leaders and governors. Knowledgeable staff meticulously maintain the single central record of appointments.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Ayscoughfee Hall School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	925/6020
<b>Registered charity number</b>	527294
<b>Address</b>	Ayscoughfee Hall School Welland Hall London Road Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 2TE
<b>Phone number</b>	01775 724733
<b>Email address</b>	admin@ahs.me.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.ahs.me.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Ayscoughfee Hall School Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Sam Neal
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Theresa Wright
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	115
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 to 24 September 2021

## Information about the school

55. Ayscoughfee Hall School is a co-educational day school situated in the centre of Spalding, Lincolnshire. The school was founded in 1920 as the kindergarten and later the preparatory department of Spalding Girls' High School, becoming a separate school in 1958. The school operates as a company limited by guarantee and is overseen by a board of governors.
56. The early years section of the school comprises of 26 children in the Nursery and a Reception class.
57. The school has identified 14 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of these pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
58. There are four pupils who speak English as an additional language.
59. The school states its aims are to provide a broad-based education to the highest standard. This is within a caring, supportive family environment where young people are educated to be tolerant, socially responsible and independent of mind, equipping them with the skills to succeed in an ever-changing world. Throughout the school there aims to be a two-fold purpose: to enable the children to learn as much as possible according to their individual abilities, and to be happy in an environment of learning.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

1 to 3 October 2024

60. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

61. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- 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.

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



**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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