

School inspection report

14 to 16 November 2023

Stockport Grammar School

Buxton Road
Stockport
Cheshire
SK2 7AF

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. Stockport Grammar School is a vibrant and welcoming community where the values of respect and tolerance sit at the core of its ethos. Governors and leaders collaborate effectively and make pupils' wellbeing a priority. Leaders and governors are highly knowledgeable about their roles and apply insightful understanding of risk management to address any situations as they arise.
2. Pupils experience a broad curriculum complemented by an extensive selection of co-curricular activities. Teachers implement curriculum plans effectively and use their subject knowledge to motivate pupils. As a result, pupils are interested in their learning, eager to embrace challenge and participate in all activities.
3. Teachers use assessment information well to plan for the different groups of pupils. In the senior school, leaders have implemented a strategic plan to extend provision to support senior pupils who have special educational needs/ and or disabilities (SEND) to fully meet their needs.
4. Leaders promote pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing well. They support pupils' emotional needs in group and individual discussion when staff assist pupils in developing skills in self-awareness and resilience.
5. Leaders provide a variety of pathways so that pupils can openly share their thoughts and concerns. Opportunities for pupils to set up discussion forums, deliver presentations to governors and use online reporting tools to share concerns help them to contribute to and feel part of a diverse, fair and respectful community.
6. Pupils are well prepared for life beyond school and for the next stage of their education. Leaders provide an effective careers programme which helps to inform senior pupils' decision-making about the different opportunities open to them. Pupils enjoy community engagement events where they learn about helping those from different sections of the community.
7. Leaders and governors ensure that effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the safety and wellbeing of pupils in line with the requirements of the latest statutory advice. They are diligent in their approach and this provides reassurance to pupils who feel safe and happy in 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 measures to extend the provision to support pupils who have SEND in the senior school are consistently implemented in line with the school's strategic planning.

Material Change Request

8. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include an increase in capacity from 1470 to 1530. The following Standards were considered as part of the request: Part 3 paragraphs 7, 11, 12, 14 and 16; Part 4; Part 5; Part 8 paragraph 34. In addition, a check was carried out of the school's safeguarding policy and its implementation (Part 3) as well as its publication on the school's website or elsewhere (Part 6).
9. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.
 - Planned building work takes into account the need for additional facilities including for toilets.
 - The provision of increased staffing has been considered and planned for.
 - Any possible delays at lunchtime are to be managed through careful planning.
 - The planned development to provision for pupils who have SEND provides further capacity for support of pupils joining the school who may require additional support.
 - Safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders throughout the school work in close collaboration with the governors to prioritise pupils' wellbeing and safeguarding. Oversight is comprehensive and regular. Leaders ensure that communication between the different sections of the school works seamlessly to provide a unified approach for the benefit of pupils.
11. Leaders are purposeful in their strategic decision-making, anticipating and reacting to situations as they arise. They report annually to the governors on areas such as academic achievement, behaviour, safeguarding and bullying. Leaders analyse patterns and put actions in place to reduce the likelihood of incidents recurring. Governors hold regular meetings with leaders about health and safety and human resources to reassure themselves that the Standards are met consistently.
12. Governors, in tandem with leaders, successfully take responsibility for policy review and implementation. By ensuring that policy wording is clear and easily accessible, pupils and staff understand leaders' expectations. Leaders' record-keeping for the complaints process is detailed and follow up is timely. Through their oversight of complaints, governors commission further investigations when required. An investigation into bullying in the senior school by leaders speaking directly with the pupils allowed governors and leaders to learn valuable lessons and reassure themselves that processes are effective and risks are managed appropriately.
13. Pupils' presentations to the governing body and regular communication between leaders and pupils provide opportunities for pupils to air any concerns they may have. Governors and leaders promote the needs of the individual and regularly reassess strategies to ensure that pupils' voices are heard. Governors understand their responsibilities and ensure that leaders have the appropriate skills and experience to carry out their roles.
14. Leaders manage change perceptively and are continually looking for ways to improve. Leaders and governors take their responsibilities seriously and with consideration of the school's aims and ethos. Leaders' collaborative approach to school life provides pupils with reassurance. Governors regularly attend school events and interact with pupils to gauge their thoughts on any issues arising in school. Leaders model and help pupils to develop understanding of tolerance and respect.
15. In the early years, well trained staff continuously evaluate their practice to maximise learning opportunities for the children and to ensure that children are happy and thriving. An updated reading scheme and a conscious emphasis by teachers to celebrate a wide range of festivals help to broaden children's awareness of different cultures.
16. Leaders ensure the site is safe and well maintained. Children in the early years benefit from a nurturing classroom space and outdoor learning environment which is well designed to support children in their development. Leaders also provide suitable resources and facilities so that pupils of all ages can move around the school easily and safely.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Teachers' subject knowledge and their implementation of well-planned schemes of work enables pupils to learn and make good progress. Pupils in the senior school take pride in the richness and diversity of the subjects available to them, spanning such areas as classics, philosophy, politics and food preparation and nutrition. Inspired by the school's aim for them to be academically ambitious, pupils are interested and motivated in their learning. Pupils are resilient learners, eager to self-correct to improve their work. Leaders ensure a diverse coverage of topics, ensuring that teaching does not discriminate against any groups. For example, pupils in the senior school contribute their ideas keenly in discussions about gender stereotypes. They successfully link their own practical experience to classroom theory.
18. In the junior school, teaching is stimulating and elicits enthusiastic responses from the pupils. Adults provide pupils from a young age with a strong foundation in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils in the junior school have secure knowledge and command of phonics and a rich vocabulary. Teachers effectively use information from regular subject audits and pupil attainment data to plan learning so that the different groups of pupils can make the best progress possible.
19. Grades at A level and GCSE are consistently above average. Leaders identify pupils who may need additional support and act promptly to ensure that pupils continue to progress and achieve well. For example, their addition of new subject learning walks and an early focus on examination technique to guide pupils ahead of their A level examinations. Teachers guide pupils suitably towards choices about universities and courses with most pupils achieving their first-choice destination.
20. In the junior school, pupils make good progress from their starting points and teachers use assessment data well to plan learning that meets the needs of pupils. Children in the early years follow the early years foundation stage framework. Children make good progress and the vast majority consistently reach their early learning goals. This is a result of careful tracking of children's learning and a focus on developing higher order thinking skills in problem solving.
21. Teachers have subject expertise across the age groups they teach. They provide pupils with learning activities which support pupils' development. Academic extension leaders and learning development teachers effectively support the different groups of pupils to maximise pupils' achievement. Teachers use a considered approach to encourage pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) to participate in lessons, phrasing questions suitably and offering word banks to develop vocabulary. Leaders use language screening from an early age to help inform planning so that learning is matched to pupils' needs.
22. Pupils who have SEND are identified early. A range of supportive approaches are implemented and reviewed regularly. Whilst much teaching in the senior school meets pupils' needs, strategies to support senior pupils who have SEND are not consistently applied in lessons. Leaders have planned further measures to maximise outcomes for pupils particularly those with dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. A strategic plan is in place with priorities highlighted for the year ahead which reflects the senior school's ambitions in this area.
23. School leaders recognise that recreation is fundamental to pupils' wellbeing and provide ample space for pupils to socialise and be physically and cerebrally active. They provide a range of sports

and an extensive co-curricular programme, where clubs such as basketball and badminton sit alongside history and board games activities.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

24. Leaders constantly reassess how best to support pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. Staff respond swiftly to developing situations to address pupils' needs. Leaders train staff suitably. They give pupils access to speak to trained counsellors as well as staff and offer a senior school wellness portal which provides pupils with the means to speak openly about any concerns they may have. Pupils are given the tools to strengthen their understanding of themselves and grow in self-confidence. The use of the mindfulness room and pastoral hub in the senior school and the 'Calming Corners' in the junior school provides pupils of all ages with opportunities for reflection in a safe and supportive environment.
25. In the junior school's mindfulness programme, co-curricular activities such as pilates and yoga provide opportunities for pupils to learn relaxation techniques for their physical wellness. Pupils take advantage of the extensive facilities and sports curriculum to develop their physical health. By engaging in the community outreach and partnership schemes, senior pupils grow in self-confidence and leadership skills. Break time football in the junior school creates opportunities for teambuilding and collaboration and early years children enjoy exploring the woodland outdoor area where they can search for natural objects to create stick pictures. Leaders' commitment to prioritise wellbeing through the curriculum and regular discussion foster pupils' self-esteem and self-understanding so that, by the time they reach the sixth form, pupils understand the need for balance between taking responsibility for their futures and not becoming over-reliant on others.
26. School leaders have established a comprehensive programme of personal and health education which directly contributes to pupils' understanding of fundamental British values. Staff provide age-appropriate learning on relationships and sex education in the senior school and relationships education in the junior school. Through detailed schemes of work, leaders ensure that pupils have early access to learning relating to personal fitness, first aid, mental health and wellbeing, including coping strategies for potential issues of bullying and friendship issues.
27. The school culture, imbibed by school leaders, is centred around an atmosphere where pupils are treated fairly and where difference is respected. Diversity prefects form an important part of the school's anti-bullying council ensuring representation of pupils' thoughts and ideas. Staff intervene in a timely fashion if bullying incidents occur. Pupils are aware of various ways to express their thoughts such as through reporting tools and via the school council. Anti-bullying ambassadors contribute their ideas by helping to update the anti-bullying policy in discussion with leaders. Pupils speak with maturity about bullying, displaying empathy towards those impacted. Established pastoral structures set up by leaders promote pupil interactions with staff and other pupils that are courteous and based upon mutual respect. Pupils feel highly supported by staff.
28. Leaders take care to provide a safe and suitable environment. They have detailed procedures across all aspects of health and safety, supervision, medical care and admissions and attendance processes. Leaders understand the need to mitigate risk, and safety plans created for the more vulnerable pupils complement a whole school approach to protecting pupils from harm.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. Leaders have carefully designed an innovative curriculum which prepares pupils well for wider society and life beyond school so that they can become active and responsible citizens. From an early age, pupils are introduced to fundamental British values through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education in the junior school, gradually building their awareness of the need for rules and democracy in modern society. Life studies taught in the senior school offers insight into topical issues and helps to broaden pupils' awareness in matters ranging from personal finance to politics.
30. Senior school pupils take advantage of the high-quality careers guidance available to them, attending conventions, mock interviews and guest speaker lectures to support preparation for their future life choices. Specialist teachers highlight various options from universities to degree apprenticeships and pupils speak positively about how guidance supports their decision-making at key transition points, in subject choices and for further education. Eclectic co-curricular activities in the senior school, including the debating society and amnesty groups, increase the scope for pupils to engage in issues beyond the school gates and develop their global awareness. School leaders ensure that older pupils in the junior school have access to weekly sessions ahead of the senior school entrance assessment which helps them to manage any worries as they prepare for the next stage of their education.
31. Pupils value the chances leaders provide to engage with their local community and with charitable endeavours, showing pride in the contributions they make. Pupils are involved in organise drama trips to local primary schools, also hosting mathematics challenges and a chemistry quiz, and welcome members of the local area to their carol services. In these ways pupils form purposeful links with their local community. Pupils take pride in this work. Senior school pupils show empathy when pitching a business idea for an airline for people with disabilities, and in the junior school pupils are proud of their support for a local food bank and charities for disadvantaged children. Pupils show awareness of the positive impact they can make by helping different sections of the community. Positions of responsibility such as house captains, senior prefects and playground buddies enable pupils to practise their skills in leadership and democracy through the school council and fundraising projects. These opportunities prepare pupils well for life beyond school. The school council in the junior school demonstrates growing awareness of financial management by allocating budgets to each class to purchase wet break games.
32. Leaders use the curriculum to great advantage to strengthen pupils' attitudes about respect and tolerance towards those from cultures and religions different to their own. Pupils in the senior school have opportunities to attend assemblies for different faiths on specific days and benefit from access to designated prayer spaces. School leaders' focus upon inclusion is widely reflected in the existence of pupil discussion forums and the various lectures on offer. They appoint diversity prefects and 'Inclusion Union' ambassadors who speak at senior assemblies. Governors invited pupils to present an equality charter to them reflecting their overarching drive to work with the pupil body to promote a tolerant and respectful school community where pupil voice is active and positively encouraged.
33. Robust pastoral systems, established through effective reporting lines and regular communication between leaders, provide a foundation for constructive support and reassurance to benefit all pupils. Pupils know right from wrong and display caring and respectful attitudes to each other. Pupils

in the senior school welcome the opportunity for restorative conversations to help them understand the impact of their behaviour when incidents arise. Pupils in the junior school understand their responsibilities to uphold the school values of enthusiasm, resilience, curiosity, togetherness and respect. In PSHE lessons pupils exercise their decision-making skills when working through a range of hypothetical scenarios.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

34. Leaders and governors ensure that arrangements to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of pupils are effective. Systems for oversight, including annual policy review and summary reports to governors, are rigorous. Pupils feel safe and well supported by the adults around them. They speak knowledgeably about keeping safe online and they benefit from opportunities to share any concerns they have with their teachers. Pupils have confidence that their concerns will be heard and taken seriously.
35. Regular training for staff and governors includes updates on the latest safeguarding guidance. The safeguarding governor checks the process for staff appointments regularly. Appropriate information is maintained to ensure safer recruitment procedures are followed. Leaders' vigilance in respect of filtering and monitoring measures, coupled with regular tests of systems and follow up on each potential breach, means that pupils' access to inappropriate material is effectively monitored.
36. Safeguarding leaders work effectively with external agencies to support pupils' needs when incidents arise. Concerns are dealt with in a timely manner and records are well maintained. Leaders analyse records to check for any patterns or trends that may require further actions. In the early years setting, leaders ensure that safeguarding is an important focus through weekly supervision meetings. Leaders take time to listen to pupils and to reassure them, which creates a culture of openness and trust amongst the pupils.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Stockport Grammar School
Department for Education number	356/6018
Registered charity number	1120199
Address	Buxton Road Stockport SK2 7AF
Website	stockportgrammar.co.uk
Email	sgs@stockportgrammar.co.uk
Proprietor	Stockport Grammar School (Limited)
Chair	Mr Jonathan Lee
Headteachers	Mrs Sarah Capewell – Head of Senior School Mr Matthew Copping – Head of Junior School
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	1503
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 October 2019

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

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

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