ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

3 to 5 March 2026

Winchester College

College Street

Winchester

SO23 9NA

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 visit the school frequently to appropriately scrutinise and support the work of leaders and give careful consideration to the written reports they receive. Leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and carry out their roles well to actively promote pupils' wellbeing by the consistent and effective implementation of suitable policies. However, at the start of the inspection, not all of the school's previous inspection reports were published on the school's website as required. Leaders rectified this before the end of the inspection.

2. Leaders have designed a broad curriculum which enables pupils to investigate and develop their academic interests. Alongside the subjects which are assessed in public examinations, leaders have implemented the 'Div' curriculum for all year groups which consists of a general course in history and philosophy and, in the sixth form, study of British, European and world culture. This curriculum helps pupils extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding and to develop their written and oral communication skills and cultural literacy. It supports pupils to form, and present clearly, original and balanced arguments and to debate a range of themes across subject divides. This develops pupils' understanding of how they can assimilate and synthesise ideas very well. This is a significant strength of the school.

3. Teachers plan lessons well and take into account pupils' prior attainment in selecting suitable learning activities and resources. This helps enable pupils to make good progress and achieve well in public examinations.

4. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. Leaders ensure that teachers understand pupils' needs well and that staff are clear on what steps to take to support pupils' learning in lessons.

5. Levels of participation by pupils in the extra-curricular programme are high. Pupils are able to choose from a wide variety of sports, clubs and activities which help to balance their academic studies with recreational activities and develop skills such as collaboration, organisation and leadership.

6. Boarders are cared for by well-trained staff. Staff ensure that boarders are able to get the help and support that they require and that boarding accommodation is well maintained, safe and comfortable. Boarders are supported well by staff in their academic studies, including in boarding time.

7. The relationship and sex education (RSE) curriculum is thoughtfully designed by leaders and taught well by trained staff. Content and resources are age-appropriate, and pupils are helped to develop their understanding sensitively. Parents are consulted on any changes to the curriculum which is available to them on the school's website. On an annual basis, at the start of the academic year, parents are reminded by leaders about the entire content of the RSE curriculum. However, the school does not always make it simple for parents to quickly see what has been taught as the year progresses, to be able to support their child if required.

8. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum, assemblies and chapel services help pupils understand different traditions and beliefs and fosters a culture of respect for all. Boarding houses ensure a well-developed sense of community and common purpose, with pupils helping and supporting each other in academic studies, sport and extra-curricular activities.

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9. Leaders record and monitor attendance data carefully. They take prompt action to support pupils and their families where required and inform the local authority of long-term absenteeism as required. However, at the start of the inspection, not all the information required by the statutory guidance was included in the school's attendance policy. Leaders amended the policy appropriately before the end of the inspection.

10. Pupils learn how to keep themselves and other pupils safe. They know the risks they may encounter when online and what they can do in order to mitigate these.

11. Pupils are kept well informed both of the consequences of their subject choices and of the possible routes to education and employment when they leave school through the careers programme, which offers tailored advice for each pupil.

12. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are implemented robustly. Staff and leaders with safeguarding responsibilities are well trained in safeguarding and understand their roles in helping to support pupils and keep them safe.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that all required previous inspection reports are consistently published on the school's website
- ensure that the school's attendance policy consistently reflects all the information required by current statutory guidance
- ensure that parents can quickly and easily identify and understand what has been taught in relationships and sex education (RSE) as the year progresses so that they can support their child if required.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors maintain a thorough oversight of the work of leaders through a number of committees and full governing board meetings. Leaders prepare detailed and clear reports for governors to help keep them informed. Governors visit the school frequently, including the boarding houses, in order to check relevant records, talk to pupils and staff, verify what has been reported to them by leaders and fully understand the impact of leaders' decisions. Governors' effective oversight ensures that leaders apply good knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities and promote pupils' wellbeing. As a result, all of the Standards are met.

14. Suitable policies to promote the wellbeing of pupils and the school's aims are in place and monitored by leaders to ensure the policies are effectively and consistently implemented and that staff understand their responsibilities. Leaders seek the views of pupils, staff and parents when producing comprehensive school development plans which include a detailed consideration and mitigation of associated risks.

15. A suitably detailed accessibility plan, which includes measures to improve the physical accessibility of the site and access to the curriculum, is in place and implemented and reviewed by leaders. The needs of pupils who have SEND are appropriately supported by staff. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

16. Leaders' approach to the identification and management of risk is consistent and robust. The school's risk assessment policy is implemented effectively by leaders and staff who consider carefully the full range of pupils' activities and experiences to determine potential risks to pupils' wellbeing, including those that might be less obvious. Staff receive suitable training in producing and implementing risk assessments and understand their role in risk management well. Risk assessments are detailed and reviewed appropriately to ensure they remain effective in helping to keep pupils and staff protected.

17. Leaders of boarding fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They are well trained and ensure that the school's values and boarding principles are understood by pupils and staff. Leaders of boarding take prompt action to help pupils where required so that pupils feel supported and safe when away from home.

18. Leaders ensure that the details of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points are shared with the local authority. Liaison between leaders and external agencies in supporting pupils is prompt and effective.

19. Leaders ensure that a suitable complaints policy is place and effectively implemented in a timely manner. Leaders maintain detailed records of any complaints submitted, identifying any of these that relate to boarding. Leaders and governors scrutinise the record of complaints to identify and take action in response to any trends or patterns that they identify.

20. At the start of the inspection, not all of the school's previous inspection reports were published on the school's website as required. Leaders rectified this before the end of the inspection. Leaders ensure that all the other information is made available or provided to parents. Parents receive detailed written reports on their child's progress and attainment, which enables them to identify what their children need to do to improve their work.

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. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed by leaders to include a suitable and wide range of subjects that caters for and stimulates pupils' academic interests. Leaders monitor the implementation of the curriculum carefully and amend it where required to ensure that pupils' prior attainment is taken into account in teachers' plans. Pupils in the sixth form are able to choose from a large number of subjects including mathematics, the humanities, modern languages including Russian, music, drama, art and Greek. Pupils are supported well by teachers to develop their skills for further academic study beyond school. For example, dedicated curriculum time is given to helping pupils take increasing responsibility for their own learning as they move through the school. Pupils are supported to plan, self-evaluate their work and set suitable goals for their own academic development.

23. A substantial amount of curriculum time has been allocated by leaders to the teaching of 'Div'. This allows to pupils to explore and discuss themes in depth, relating to history, philosophy and literature. Pupils engage with this curriculum with enthusiasm as they are helped to learn about and understand concepts and themes beyond their other academic studies. The themes chosen by leaders capture pupils' interest and curiosity and range from American short fiction to pilgrimages. Leaders' choice of subject matter is wide ranging and enables pupils to converse fluently about and engage creatively with historical events, literature and philosophical ideas and approaches that span subject specialisms. Teachers lead rich discussions that require pupils to think deeply and maturely, and to consider carefully alternative views and perspectives, before explaining their own thoughts and conclusions, and building on and extending those presented by other pupils. This approach helps pupils to think independently and critically, form and justify independent views, and develop research and both oral and written communication skills at a high level which link with and support their learning in the rest of the curriculum. It means that pupils are supported to develop an intellectual curiosity and analysis which they can pursue through interdisciplinary themes.

24. Leaders implement a thorough process of collecting and analysing data relating to pupils' attainment so that staff can promptly identify and act on any pupil who is not making good progress. Staff report to leaders every half term on both the standard of pupils' work and pupils' engagement with their work. This data, along with frequent assessments, means that pupils who require additional support with their work are recognised and their needs assessed so that suitable strategies can be implemented to help them improve the standard of their work.

25. Boarders are supported well by staff in their studies. Staff are on hand during boarding time to help pupils develop their subject knowledge and understanding. In addition, subject-specific support sessions are available during the school day to further support pupils if required. Older pupils in boarding houses also help and support younger pupils with their academic work.

26. As a result of effective teaching and the carefully planned curriculum, including 'Div', pupils make good progress. Pupils are ambitious and are keen to produce work of a high standard. They are articulate and thoughtful communicators who are routinely supported and challenged by teachers to think carefully and deeply about their work. For example, in mathematics, pupils are supported to understand challenging problems such as the determination of the product moment correlation coefficient with clear examples and explanation from the teacher. Teachers' detailed questioning supports pupils to develop their own thinking and understanding. In English lessons, teachers lead

engaging discussions which develop pupils' reflection on their work, ability to confidently apply literary terminology and make critical links between play texts and performances.

27. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are determined on arrival at the school by leaders who then develop appropriate strategies for teachers to apply in lessons. This helps pupils to gain confidence in their spoken English and improve their subject-specific vocabulary.

28. Lessons are planned well by teachers who take into account pupils' prior attainment and needs in their planning. Pupils and staff collaborate warmly in learning and teachers support pupils to develop and implement their own thoughts and ideas. Pupils extend their knowledge and understanding through structured questions from staff who have very secure subject knowledge. Teachers use class time efficiently and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour so that pupils engage purposefully with their studies.

29. Pupils who have SEND are well supported by staff. Leaders ensure these pupils' individual needs are identified promptly. Teachers receive training in understanding pupils' needs and leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND provide staff with clear guidance on how to support pupils in lessons. This helps to ensure that pupils who have SEND make good progress.

30. Pupils' engagement with the extra-curricular programme is high. This programme is responsive to pupils' needs, accessible to boarders during weekends and evenings, and includes a wide range of team and individual sports, performing arts and other clubs and activities, which helps pupils find and pursue their interests and develop skills such as leadership, teamwork and clear communication.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. Pupils are helped to develop a clear understanding of the school's values, including the importance of manners, kindness and honesty and the importance of working together to find solutions to problems. Pupils are also helped to further their appreciation of the non-material world and different religious faiths as well as to reflect on their own beliefs. This is because leaders take opportunities in chapel and assemblies to consistently promote these values and the PSHE curriculum is designed to help enable pupils to think about and discuss the importance of these values in their community.

33. The combination of the extra-curricular programme, school curriculum, boarding house activities and well-taught PSHE and RSE lessons helps pupils develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. This is because pupils are encouraged and supported to take measured risks in trying out their ideas and plans and to recognise and learn from their setbacks, as well as to support other pupils in their own endeavours.

34. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training in how to recognise different forms of bullying, including that which takes place online. Incidents of bullying are rare, though when they occur, leaders and staff take quick action to help and support all pupils involved. Leaders keep appropriate records of bullying and monitor these carefully to look for any patterns and take action to address these promptly. The PSHE curriculum helps pupils understand the signs and dangers of bullying and how they can report concerns about themselves and others. This helps to ensure that leaders can address bullying behaviours at an early stage.

35. Leaders' expectations of pupil behaviour are clear and well understood by pupils, who behave well. Pupils are respectful of each other as well as adults working in the school and typically act in accordance with the school values, which helps make the school community supportive, calm and purposeful.

36. Prefects and pupils in leadership positions in boarding houses receive suitable training from leaders to help them carry out their responsibilities and to help and support younger pupils when appropriate. Leaders ensure that there is an appropriate level of staff supervision to support pupils during the school day and in boarding time and staff are readily available if pupils require assistance overnight.

37. The RSE curriculum is thoughtfully designed to build on previous knowledge and understanding and is taught by suitably trained staff. Staff assess pupils' understanding and adapt the curriculum in the light of pupils' emerging needs, including through suitable adjustments made for pupils who have SEND, when needed. RSE lessons help pupils understand the importance of trust, respect and privacy in relationships as well as the implications of any relevant laws. Parents are diligently consulted when there is any proposed change to the RSE curriculum. A letter is sent by leaders annually to parents to highlight how they can find out what pupils will be taught in the coming year through the RSE policy, which is available to parents online. However, the school does not always make it easy for parents to quickly identify and understand what has been taught as the year progresses so that they can support their child if required.

38. Leaders ensure that the school's health and safety policy is fully reflective of relevant legislation and that it is implemented consistently to help keep pupils and staff safe. School buildings are appropriately maintained, and leaders take suitable steps to minimise the risk of fire. Pupils have a clear understanding of the action to take to keep themselves safe in the event of a fire as they experience frequent fire drills, including during boarding time.

39. Boarding staff are well trained and dedicated. They know and understand the needs of the boarders in their care and provide them with guidance and support when needed. Boarding accommodation is clean and well maintained and boarding houses are comfortable and secure.

40. Pupils who are unwell or injured are given prompt care by suitably trained and experienced staff in well-equipped medical accommodation. Boarders are able to quickly and easily get assistance at night from adults if required and staff in boarding houses liaise effectively with medical centre staff to ensure pupils' medical needs are supported.

41. The school's values are consistently and frequently promoted by boarding staff both in house assemblies and in daily interactions with pupils. This helps to build warm house communities which are welcoming to new pupils. Boarders are active in their support for each other in their activities in and beyond the classroom. Leaders of boarding monitor behaviour and take consistent action to help ensure that boarding house communities remain respectful and tolerant.

42. The PSHE and physical education (PE) programmes help pupils to understand how to live a healthy lifestyle and how to stay fit. Physical education lessons are planned carefully and taught well and help pupils' physical development, including with regard to efficient movement, strength and agility. To enable all pupils to participate, staff make adjustments to their plans to accommodate pupils who have SEND or who have injuries or physical conditions that may limit what they are able to do. Leaders assess progress by testing pupils four times in the year and help pupils improve their performance by assisting them to identify and act on meaningful targets based on their test results.

43. Leaders maintain suitable admission and attendance registers which include the information required by statutory guidance. Attendance is carefully monitored by leaders who analyse attendance data carefully. They ensure that the local authority is kept updated on both long-term pupil absence and illness when required. However, when the inspection commenced, the school's attendance policy published on the school's website did not contain all of the information required by current statutory guidance or reflect the effective practice embedded by leaders. This was rectified before the end of the inspection.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

45. Leaders monitor the curriculum, lessons and the presentations of external speakers to help ensure that British values such as individual liberty and mutual respect are supported and that there is a balanced presentation of views when political and sensitive themes or international events are discussed. The PSHE curriculum, chapel services and assemblies, including those taking place in boarding houses, help pupils to understand the values of different beliefs, cultures and traditions. This means pupils are respectful and accepting of different opinions and views both in their discussions in lessons and in their interactions with each other in other school activities and boarding houses. Leaders implement a thorough induction programme for boarders which helps them understand the expectations of staff and to settle in quickly to both house communities and school life.

46. Leaders have carefully designed the careers programme to help pupils understand the options available to them and support them well in their decision-making around both subject choices for public examinations and possible pathways when leaving school, including in higher education. The careers programme includes dedicated one-to-one advice sessions which provide pupils with support tailored to their interests and career aspirations. Pupils hear from former pupils, and their understanding of the workplace is enhanced through contact with employers and the opportunity for work experience.

47. Pupils' understanding of how they are able to support and help the local community is supported by leaders through both the community service programme and fundraising activities for local, national and international charities including Winchester Hospice, Great Ormond Street Hospital and SolarAid. Charities are selected by pupils through a voting system, which helps pupils understand both how democratic processes work and the value of democracy. Pupils are also taught about how both Houses of Parliament function and how different forms of democracy have evolved in other countries. Older pupils lead the school's charity committee which organises all elements of termly school-wide fundraising events including logistics, publicity and the collection of funds. This helps support pupils to develop their collaborative and problem-solving skills as well as to acquire an understanding of the management of money. Participation levels in the community service programme are high. Pupils in the sixth form assist at local primary schools and plan and deliver learning activities which help develop their organisational and communication skills.

48. The development of pupils' economic literacy is suitably supported by both the PSHE curriculum and the wider curriculum. Pupils are taught about themes such as budgeting, savings and loans and how to manage credit cards as well as direct and indirect taxation through the study of past and current events. This helps pupils understand how what they are taught has an impact on individuals and populations.

49. Pupils develop a clear understanding of both the role of public services, such as the emergency services, and those provided by local authorities, as well as the importance of law and order in society. This is a result of both the PSHE and wider school curriculum, which enables pupils to deepen their understanding of these areas through discussion and study of national and international events of global importance.

50. Leaders actively promote pupils' understanding of morality through the PSHE curriculum, assemblies and chapel services. Pupils explore a range of ethical and moral dilemmas encountered in historical events and philosophical thought in the 'Div' curriculum, which helps pupils think deeply about and develop their own moral and ethical values.

51. Leaders are active in seeking and responding to the views of boarders through both surveys and perspectives voiced by pupil leaders. For example, the food committee helps to keep leaders informed of pupils' opinions and experiences of the catering arrangements in houses so that they can amend this provision should this be required.

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

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

53. Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding policy is in line with statutory guidance and effectively implemented. Governors undertake a detailed review of safeguarding practice and procedures on an annual basis and provide suitable challenge and support to leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. Leaders understand the contextual safeguarding risks to pupils, including those who board, and take prompt and sufficient action to mitigate such risks.

54. Boarders have easy access to an independent person and to a number of external support services for children, in addition to internal counselling services which are available to all pupils. Leaders have thought carefully about how best to control the risks of boarders' access to technology and ensure that there is a consistent approach by staff in implementing relevant procedures. A suitable internet filtering and monitoring system is in place and leaders respond quickly when alerted to indications of possible concern. Leaders continually evaluate the effectiveness of this system and amend it as required. As a result of the PSHE curriculum, pupils understand how best to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

55. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are suitably trained for their role. They have a clear understanding of local thresholds for referral, and they liaise promptly and effectively with external agencies such as the local authority and the police to help ensure pupils get the support they need. Safeguarding records are detailed, include clear reasons for leaders' decisions and are securely held.

56. Leaders ensure that staff have suitable safeguarding training, including when they join the school. This training includes dealing with the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders also take suitable steps to ensure that staff have understood their training and their safeguarding responsibilities. As a result, staff know the signs of potential abuse and understand what action to take. They are vigilant and report concerns about pupil welfare promptly to safeguarding leaders. Pupils in sixth-form leadership positions are also supported in their roles with age-appropriate safeguarding training so that they know how to report concerns about the welfare of other pupils.

57. A detailed staff code of conduct is implemented by leaders who ensure that staff understand its requirements. Staff know how to recognise and report concerns relating to the behaviour of adults working in the school and take action without delay should there be a concern. Leaders maintain a detailed log of low-level concerns relating to the conduct of staff and monitor this carefully to identify and act on any patterns. Leaders seek advice and guidance from the local authority where required and act on this advice.

58. Safer recruitment procedures are consistently robust. The required checks are carried out before adults start work in the school or reside there. These checks are accurately recorded in a single central record of appointments, which is carefully monitored by leaders and governors.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Winchester College
Department for Education number	850/6037
Registered charity number	1139000
Address	Winchester College College Street Winchester Hampshire SO23 9NA
Phone number	01962 621100
Email address	information@wincoll.ac.uk
Website	www.winchestercollege.org
Proprietor	Warden and Scholars of St Mary College of Winchester
Chair	Sir Richard Stagg
Headteacher	Ms Elizabeth Stone
Age range	13 to 18
Number of pupils	739
Number of boarding pupils	686
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 March 2023

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Information about the school

60. Winchester College, founded in 1382 by William of Wykeham, is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in Winchester. Almost all pupils are male and are boarders. Members of the school's governing body, known as The Warden and Fellows, are also the trustees of the original foundation. The current headteacher took up her position in September 2023.

61. Boarders are accommodated in eleven boarding houses all located within a short distance of the school. There is separate accommodation for sixth-form female pupils which provides changing and study accommodation for their use during the day. All day pupils are also attached to one of the boarding houses where they may eat in the evening and stay later if they wish.

62. The school has identified 114 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.

63. The school has identified English as an additional language for a very small proportion of pupils.

64. The school states its aims are to foster and encourage an atmosphere of intellectual, spiritual, and cultural growth in which pupils of all ages and adults converse with mutual respect. It further seeks to encourage pupils to develop a lifelong love of learning, to embrace healthy and ethical living, to confront problems and find solutions together and to exhibit manners, kindness, honesty and punctuality at all times.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	3 to 5 March 2026

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

66. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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

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

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