

School inspection report

4 to 6 February 2025

St Peter's School

Clifton

York

North Yorkshire

YO30 6AB

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 cultivate a close working partnership with leaders. This enables them to provide support and challenge to hold leaders to account for the school's work. Governors ensure that leaders have the required skills and knowledge to carry out their responsibilities effectively, so that the Standards are met consistently.
2. Leaders create an environment in which pupils enjoy learning, take advantage of the many opportunities available to them and achieve well. The well-balanced academic and co-curricular programme provides extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their self-confidence and to acquire new skills and interests. Pupils make good progress from their starting points and, in the senior school, achieve high outcomes, enabling them to progress to the next stage of their education.
3. Pupils behave well and are courteous and respectful in their interactions with each other and with staff. They understand the importance of rules to help keep them safe and the reasons for sanctions. However, occasionally, during unstructured times, staff do not consistently implement strategies to prevent the occurrence of negative behaviours.
4. The buildings and premises, including boarding accommodation, are well maintained. Risk-assessment procedures are effective in promoting the welfare and safety of pupils in school and on school trips.
5. The physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing of boarders is given the highest priority by leaders. Pupils' medical needs, including their emotional wellbeing, are well supported by trained specialist staff in an easily accessible and dedicated wellbeing hub. Boarding staff take good care of boarders, know their pupils well and respond to their needs appropriately.
6. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons help pupils to gain an understanding of social and economic matters. Pupils develop their financial literacy by learning how to manage money and consider profit and loss when planning enterprise activities to make sound financial decisions.
7. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress because of the effective individual support they receive from support staff and their class teachers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive nurturing support that helps them to quickly achieve proficiency in English so that they can confidently access the curriculum in all subject areas.
8. Safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively. The well-trained safeguarding team ensures that staff are kept up to date with the latest statutory guidance. They follow the appropriate procedures to safeguard pupils effectively. Records of recruitment and pre-employment checks are meticulously kept. Staff are fastidious in carrying out pre-employment checks in a timely and robust manner.
9. Leaders in the early years provide a stimulating learning environment for children to develop and thrive. Children participate in a range of physical activities and enjoy lessons in music and movement and woodland studies. Older pupils participate in a range of outdoor pursuits and take up opportunities to engage in competitive sports. Pupils of all ages understand that participating in physical pursuits can have a beneficial effect on their mental health and wellbeing.

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 staff consistently implement strategies to prevent negative behaviours occurring during unstructured times.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors undertake a range of monitoring activities to quality assure the implementation of policies in practice. Governors provide appropriate support, encouragement and challenge to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. This maintains a focus on continuous school improvement. Leaders and governors work effectively together to ensure that the Standards are consistently met and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted. Effective systems are in place to evaluate the quality of the school's work. Through rigorous self-evaluation, leaders and governors have identified areas for improvement, including changes to the management structure of the school.
11. Leaders collaborate and liaise effectively with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils' particular needs are identified and understood thoroughly. They work productively with children's services and other safeguarding partners to ensure a coordinated approach to safeguarding both day pupils and boarders.
12. Leaders are adept at managing areas of risk. Systematic procedures are in place to identify potential risks, and suitable mitigations are implemented across all areas of school life. Staff are well trained to identify and implement effective risk-mitigation strategies, for example, for higher-risk activities such as those that take place in sport, on water or during overseas trips. Leaders are alert to the contextual risks associated with the school being located within a city centre. Teachers carry out detailed assessments of risk associated within their teaching areas, ensuring that the needs of individual pupils are fully considered.
13. Early years leaders promote children's safety and wellbeing through effective collaborative working with staff. They provide suitable opportunities for staff to discuss their own professional development and work together on strategies to best support children's wellbeing.
14. Boarding staff are well trained and look after boarders with considerable care. They foster a culture of kindness, reflected in the school, to ensure that boarders' physical, emotional and wellbeing needs are well catered for.
15. A suitable three-stage complaints procedure is available on the school's website and leaders respond appropriately to any concerns raised in a timely manner, in line with the school policy. There is an appropriate and up-to-date accessibility plan, and the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
16. All the required information for parents and prospective parents regarding policies and procedures is published on the school's website. Parents receive an appropriate combination of written reports and regular updates regarding their child's progress and attainment across all subjects.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders provide a comprehensive and effective training programme for teaching staff. For example, leaders regularly observe lessons, provide feedback to teachers and provide targeted training to strengthen teachers' planning.
19. The ambitious and broad curriculum is suitably adapted to meet pupils' diverse needs. Language provision at the school is comprehensive, comprising six classical and modern foreign languages. In the aesthetic and creative subjects, pupils perform well in music and make a positive contribution to dance and drama productions.
20. Older pupils make good progress from their starting points and typically achieve high outcomes at GCSE and A level across many subjects. Pupils are afforded a wide range of higher education opportunities, with many gaining places at their first-choice universities, often with competitive entry criteria.
21. Pupils in the middle section of the school demonstrate confident proficiency in knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects, both within lessons and in extra-curricular activities. For example, in German, pupils were confident in manipulating modal verbs and infinitives to construct sentences explaining the school rules.
22. The carefully planned and balanced early years curriculum supports children's learning well, particularly in reading. Children in the early years develop their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make, so that they acquire secure early reading skills. Staff know each child's individual needs and interests and take this into account in their planning. Speaking and listening skills are developed effectively through skilful questioning, which encourages children to communicate together and to elaborate on their initial response.
23. In the early years, children develop their understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, children learn how to apply different problem-solving skills when identifying place value. Creative play activities, such as investigating the school's outdoor spaces, help to develop children's physical skills and their curiosity about the world around them. Practical music sessions involving singing and body percussion games develop children's coordination and fine-motor skills. This experience enables children to meet their developmental goals and to achieve well.
24. Knowledgeable subject leaders regularly monitor their curriculum areas and appropriately adapt curriculum plans to meet pupils' needs and to enhance pupils' outcomes. Positive professional relationships are successfully promoted between teachers and pupils, which fosters a scholarly ethos. In the best lessons, teachers use targeted questions and design well-planned activities using high-quality resources that challenge pupils to apply what they know and can do. Well-taught lessons help to motivate pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills. Staff are alert to correcting any emerging misconceptions in lessons, drawing on their specialist subject knowledge.
25. Pupils are keen to learn. They readily respond to feedback from their teachers and confidently redraft and edit their work. Pupils in the senior school, including those in the sixth form, positively welcome the opportunity to receive granular feedback on their answers to practice examination questions, which supports them to make good progress.

26. An appropriate assessment framework is in place which enables teachers to regularly check pupils' progress. Standardised tests are used to identify pupils who may need additional support. Using this information, together with detailed knowledge of pupils' individual skills and aptitudes, teaching and support staff implement appropriate strategies to enable pupils to make good progress.
27. Pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points. Pupils' needs are accurately identified through effective screening assessments. The learning support team advises teachers about a range of strategies to support pupils who have SEND and provide resources to help pupils overcome any barriers to learning. Teachers apply the strategies in lessons, using a range of stimulating resources to enable pupils who have SEND to access the curriculum.
28. Pupils who speak EAL receive additional support to improve their confidence in speaking and to develop their comprehension skills in English. Teachers deploy an effective range of strategies which help pupils to quickly become confident in their English skills so that they can access all areas of the curriculum and make good progress.

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

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

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

30. The PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes form an important component of the school's curriculum and promote pupils' wellbeing. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect for individual differences. Older pupils appreciate and understand the importance of consent and pupils maintain appropriate social boundaries.
31. The effective PSHE and RSE curriculum support pupils' personal development, mental health and wellbeing. Suitable adjustments are made by teachers, so that pupils can access the curriculum and develop their knowledge and skills in PSHE and RSE.
32. From the Nursery to the senior school, staff adopt a nurturing approach, helping children and pupils to learn how to understand their feelings and to balance their emotions during the day. Teachers help pupils to learn a range of techniques to reduce anxiety and stress levels. For example, teachers deploy therapeutic resources such as plastic construction bricks and fidget toys to help pupils to reduce anxiety. A wellbeing hub is available for older pupils to visit and discuss any worries or concerns with either their teachers or specialist mental health professionals.
33. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching and coaching across a comprehensive programme of sport and recreation activities. Pupils understand that participation in games and physical pursuits will support their personal fitness, mental health and emotional wellbeing. Pupils are actively encouraged to discover new sports and interests, which helps them to gain self-confidence and to develop useful strategies to manage and recover from challenges they encounter.
34. The physical education (PE) and games curriculum encourages pupils to enjoy exercise, and if they wish, to strive to excel in their chosen sport or form of exercise. Participation in sport is high, with many individuals and teams enjoying local county and national success, for example in rowing regattas.
35. Leaders provide a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities which support pupils' personal development. Pupils take part in a variety of activities such as fencing, juggling, robotics, philosophy and ethics. Participation in these activities supports pupils to acquire new skills and interests in these areas and to develop their self-confidence. Boarders enjoy the many activities on offer within the school and boarding houses. Involvement in these activities helps to encourage a positive boarding house ethos and develops boarders' independence and good habits of organisation and study.
36. Suitable staff-to-child ratios are maintained in the early years and staff are appropriately deployed to supervise pupils during the school day. Boarders are well supervised through regular registrations throughout the day, evening and before they go to bed. Boarders are made suitably aware of the school's expectations for city leave, including high standards of behaviour and time for boarders to return to school.
37. Leaders provide several opportunities for pupils to be heard, including by establishing different methods through which pupils may report any worries or concerns.

38. Leaders ensure that the school anti-bullying strategy is implemented by staff. Regular training is provided for staff, and counselling is provided for pupils who need support. Leaders' careful monitoring enables them to respond swiftly to the very few incidents of bullying that occur. Pastoral leaders deploy restorative approaches effectively to encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour and provide timely support for both victims and perpetrators.
39. The school's buildings and grounds, including the boarding houses, are properly and well maintained. The required health and safety checks are implemented regularly, and leaders ensure that appropriate arrangements for the prevention of fire are in place. Regular fire drills are undertaken, including for boarders, in line with statutory requirements. Fire exit routes and fire safety equipment are signposted clearly and fire safety equipment is well maintained.
40. Boarding houses are well resourced, clean and bright. Spacious kitchens and comfortable common rooms provide boarders with suitable opportunities to enjoy social time together. Boarders have well-resourced study facilities and can keep their belongings safe in their own personalised living spaces. In the boarding houses, leaders provide a calm environment where pupils can relax, feel at home and participate in a range of social events.
41. Suitable arrangements and dedicated accommodation are in place to care for pupils, including boarders who are ill or injured or have additional medical needs. Many staff are trained to administer first aid, while some staff, for example in the early years, in PE and in sport, have enhanced first aid training. Medical staff inform parents of any administration of first aid or medication in a timely manner, in line with statutory requirements.
42. Pupils learn about different world religions and spiritual perspectives in the curriculum. This helps pupils to develop an appreciation of the spiritual and moral dimensions of life, particularly in art, dance, music and religious studies. Teachers provide several opportunities for pupils to reflect on the thoughts, beliefs and values that influence them. Pupils are respectful when they attend collective services in the school's chapel and in York Minster.
43. Attendance and admissions registers are suitably maintained and meet statutory requirements. Leaders follow up any non-attendance effectively and inform the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition times. Leaders regularly analyse data and ensure that any concerns about pupils' attendance are picked up swiftly.
44. In the early years, staff use praise effectively and encourage children to express their feelings. Staff teach pupils from a young age that their actions have consequences. Pupils learn to appreciate and understand the need for rules, rewards and consequences to protect individual interests and to promote a well-ordered society. Staff model appropriate social behaviour that enables pupils to distinguish between right and wrong and promotes the school's aims and ethos.
45. Staff in the early years use a range of effective strategies to develop children's social skills. Children in the early years learn how to regulate their own behaviour with consideration for others. For example, Nursery children learn how to collaborate with peers and adults by taking turns, responding to questions and instructions confidently. By interacting with staff, children use their newly acquired social skills to explore their world, and work and play together effectively.

46. Pupils are courteous and respectful towards each other and with staff, particularly in lessons. However, some staff do not always implement strategies consistently enough to prevent negative behaviours occurring, particularly during break and lunchtimes.

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

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

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

48. Pupils develop their understanding of economic matters through the carefully planned curriculum. For example, children in the early years learn about the concept of coins and how to exchange money for items they would like to purchase. They then put this into practice, first in role-play activities in school, and then by visiting local shops. Pupils in the middle section of the school develop their financial literacy skills and understand the benefits of making wise financial decisions. Pupils participate in a range of enterprise projects to develop their skills to navigate real-life economic scenarios, such as calculating profit margins. Older pupils gain valuable insights into socioeconomic issues when they organise and raise money for charity events. In PSHE lessons, older pupils learn how to manage their personal finances while at university and are aware of the dangers of gambling. Participation in these activities enables pupils to develop important life skills that help to prepare them for life in British society.
49. Pupils receive helpful and impartial guidance from staff about a range of careers. This includes specific individual advice about subject choices, support for writing curriculum vitae and help with interview technique. Pupils make effective use of a commercial online careers platform to identify their strengths and match them to a range of potential career options. Visiting speakers from industry and business together with alumni of the school give advice on economic matters and independent living. Pupils are successful in gaining places at their chosen institutions of higher education, where they study a wide variety of courses, while some pupils proceed to employment.
50. Leaders extend the provision to a careers programme for children in the early years and pupils below the age of 11. This age-appropriate programme makes effective use of outside speakers, including parents, who speak about their jobs and careers. These activities support children and younger pupils to develop their thinking about future career pathways from an early starting point.
51. Pupils gain an understanding of British institutions and learn the importance of the law in modern society. Younger children visit local shops and the post office. Older pupils visit York Minster and the Houses of Parliament to learn about legislation and how it is applied, for example, to address issues of inequality.
52. The curriculum across all phases of the school provides a range of activities, both in and outside lessons, which nurture pupils' appreciation and understanding of all groups of people. Children in the early years learn about different cultural traditions, whilst older pupils learn about how people live in different parts of the world in their geography lessons and learn about different faiths in religious studies lessons.
53. The PSHE curriculum enables pupils to learn to respect and celebrate individuality and to avoid stereotyping. Pupils listen to one another and are understanding, appreciating that not everyone thinks or acts as they do, and that everybody is entitled to a point of view.
54. Staff in the early years use a range of effective strategies to develop children's social skills. Children in the early years learn how to regulate their own behaviour with consideration for others. For example, Nursery children learn how to collaborate with peers and adults by taking turns, responding to questions and instructions confidently. By interacting with staff and their peers,

children use their newly acquired social skills to explore their world, and work and play together effectively.

55. Pupils gain an understanding of British values by studying democracy, laws and legislation. They apply this knowledge to topical issues. For example, pupils appreciate how groups of people may be affected by climate change and increased carbon emissions. Leaders ensure that they present a balanced range of viewpoints, particularly if political issues are being considered and discussed.
56. Leaders create opportunities for pupils who belong to a social action group to support the local community, for example, through joint working with local schools and through fundraising for a centre that provides support for disadvantaged children. This provides pupils, including boarders, with an understanding and appreciation of the value in helping others.
57. Pupils readily take on leadership roles in school, such as heads of school, heads of house, sports captains and charity and eco-representatives. These posts of responsibility help pupils to appreciate the views and opinions of others as well as developing their leadership skills.

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

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

Safeguarding

59. Leaders ensure that effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare. Governors provide effective oversight of safeguarding. They monitor any safeguarding trends and analyse the impact of leaders' actions. This enables governors to have an up-to-date view of safeguarding issues.
60. Safeguarding leaders keep detailed records, maintaining regular communication between the pastoral and safeguarding teams. Staff maintain high levels of vigilance across all phases of the school, which helps to safeguard pupils.
61. The comprehensive safeguarding policy is reviewed regularly, reflects current statutory guidance and is implemented effectively. The staff code of conduct clearly sets out leaders' expectations about how staff should conduct and present themselves, both online and in person. Staff understand these well, alongside their responsibility to share any safeguarding concerns about pupils or adults working with them. Whistleblowing procedures are understood well, and staff are aware of how to report low-level concerns.
62. The well-trained safeguarding team, including those in the early years, are knowledgeable about their roles. They have cultivated positive and effective working partnerships with external agencies, including the local authority's designated officer. This enables them to draw on professional advice and guidance, as required.
63. Staff teach pupils how to stay safe, including online, through PSHE 'lessons for life' sessions that allow pupils time to discuss relevant issues. Pupils are clear on how to access support should they need it. A range of staff, including counsellors and mental health first-aiders, are available for pupils to speak to about any concerns they may have.
64. A secure filtering and monitoring system on the school's network helps to reduce the risk of pupils accessing inappropriate material while using digital technology. An anonymous online reporting system allows pupils to raise concerns promptly with safeguarding leaders.
65. A suitable single central record (SCR) of appointments is accurately maintained in line with statutory requirements. Safeguarding leaders and governors are closely involved in monitoring the recruitment process at all stages.
66. Leaders have a secure understanding of safeguarding requirements for boarders and have established clear mechanisms for pupils to seek assistance. There is an independent person available to boarders. Robust systems are in place for checking the suitability of staff and family members of boarding staff resident in the boarding houses. Procedures to safeguard the welfare of boarders are well understood and effective, with regular communication taking place between the medical, pastoral, safeguarding and boarding house teams.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	St Peter's School
Department for Education number	816/6002
Registered charity number	1141329
Address	St Peter's School Clifton York North Yorkshire YO30 6AB
Phone number	01904 527300
Email address	headmaster@stpetersyork.org.uk
Website	http://www.stpetersyork.org.uk
Proprietor	St Peter's School, York
Chair	Mr William Woolley
Headteacher	Mr Jeremy Walker
Age range	2 to 18
Number of pupils	1331
Number of boarding pupils	144
Date of previous inspection	4 to 5 March 2022

Information about the school

68. St Peter's School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school, located in York, North Yorkshire. It is a registered charity, overseen by a board of governors, and was founded in AD627. The school comprises three sections, known as 'St Peter's': one for children aged 2 to 8, one for pupils aged 8 to 13 and one for pupils aged 13 to 18.
69. There are five boarding houses located on or close to the St Peter's campus. There are four senior boarding houses for pupils aged 13 and older, two for male pupils and two for female pupils. The junior house is co-educational and for pupils aged 10 to 13.
70. There are currently 100 children in the early years in two Nursery and three Reception classes.
71. The school has identified 214 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are very few pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and none receive funding from the local authority.
72. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 83 pupils.
73. The school states its aims are to maximise pupils' potential to lead successful and fulfilled adult lives, and to make a positive impact on their world. The school seeks to achieve this through four 'keys': qualifications, skills, interests and values.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

4 to 6 February 2025

74. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The on-site inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

75. Inspection activities included:

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

76. 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**.

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For more information, please visit isi.net