ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

30 September to 2 October 2025

Claires Court Schools

1 College Avenue

Maidenhead

SL6 6AW

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'.

Contents

Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor and leaders have a clear vision for the school based on the values of personal responsibility, respect for others, integrity and loyalty to the school. They understand and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders place pupils' wellbeing at the heart of their decision-making. As a result, pupils thrive. They are proud to belong to the school community.

2. The proprietor exercises close oversight of leaders' work through regular meetings and external audits. Leaders are well trained. They implement policies and procedures effectively so that the Standards are met consistently. Pupils' wellbeing is monitored carefully. Appropriate measures improve pupils' academic performance and pastoral support when needs are identified.

3. All the required information for parents and parents of prospective pupils is made available. However, at the time of the inspection, not all previous inspection reports were available on the school's website. This was rectified during the inspection.

4. The early years setting is well led and managed. Staff match activities skilfully to meet individual needs and to promote children's development. As a result, children make rapid progress towards their learning goals.

5. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They are keen to improve and to achieve their best. Pupils of all ages make good progress from their given starting points and achieve well in public examinations.

6. Teaching is typically well planned and engaging. However, in a minority of lessons in the senior schools and in the sixth form, teachers' expectations are not always high enough, so some pupils do not learn as much or as deeply as they could.

7. Pupils' who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early. Specialist staff review personal learning plans regularly. These are tailored carefully to each pupils' needs. Teachers are well informed about these needs. Consequently, they offer appropriate support and well thought out activities in lessons. Sensitive support for pupils with physical disabilities or mental health needs allows them to access the curriculum fully and to participate in the activities on offer. Pupils are provided with sustained pastoral support to build confidence. As a result, pupils who have SEND make extensive progress from their given starting points. They achieve well in public examinations. The success of thoughtfully tailored provision on outcomes for individual pupils who have SEND is a significant strength of the school.

8. Pupils' physical education is promoted through a wide range of specialist sporting programmes, team sports and activities. Such activities help pupils to develop their self-confidence. Pupils learn how to keep fit and the importance of establishing a healthy lifestyle from an early age.

9. The school provides a comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Pupils learn to respect one another, to value difference and to understand themselves and their place in the world.

10. Pupils are well informed about career options. Expert guidance for subject choices and for courses beyond school enable pupils to choose appropriate pathways for their future.

11. Pupils have a strong sense of service. They enjoy supporting one another in school and volunteering in the local community. These opportunities give them an empathetic awareness of the needs of others.

12. Arrangements to safeguard pupils' wellbeing are effective. Staff are well trained to recognise and report safeguarding concerns. The school liaises appropriately with external agencies in a timely manner. Procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are robust. Accurate records of any safeguarding concerns are kept securely.

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 previous inspection reports are published and maintained on the school's website
- ensure that teaching in the senior school sets high expectations routinely, so that pupils achieve their full potential in every lesson.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. A culture of continuous professional review, linked to relevant training, ensures that leaders have appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles effectively. The proprietor maintains close oversight of leaders' work through regular executive meetings. This rigorous oversight includes prompt action, including on the advice of external professionals supporting audits of safeguarding procedures and all aspects of health and safety. Collaborative working between leaders over the three school sites ensures the consistency of practice across the school. As a result, the Standards are met consistently.

14. The proprietor and leaders review the effectiveness of the school's provision routinely. This thorough process of self-reflection informs the school's development plan, which prioritises pupils' wellbeing. Leaders ensure that any decisions are implemented effectively. They reflect on the impact of their improvement actions on pupils' learning experiences, making changes when needed. For example, leaders recently identified the need to ensure that pupils with higher prior attainment achieve their full academic potential. Through refinements, such as providing more challenging tasks, attainment for these pupils has increased.

15. Leaders monitor pastoral concerns closely through the school's electronic recording system. They ensure that all relevant information about pupils is disseminated to staff so that pupils' needs are known and met. Leaders' careful oversight of pastoral concerns is underpinned by accurate record keeping. As a result, the provision responds effectively to pupils' changing pastoral needs. For example, leaders are currently planning ways to reduce some pupils' over-reliance on smartphones and screens, while balancing the benefits that artificial intelligence and wider technology can bring to education.

16. Leaders have established close working relationships with external agencies to promote pupils' wellbeing. The school reports the details of any pupil who leaves or joins the school at a non-standard time to the local authority. A wide range of community links and strategic partnerships with sporting organisations allow pupils additional opportunities to explore their interests and aptitudes beyond the school day.

17. The early years is skilfully led and managed. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained. Staff performance is regularly and supportively reviewed. All the statutory requirements and required regulations are met consistently.

18. Leaders take a strategic view of risks within the school. The three sites are protected by CCTV and electronic entry systems. Detailed risk assessments for the school sites and for high-risk areas, such as science, indicate a positive culture around assessing and mitigating any potential harm for pupils. Leaders discuss any accidents or 'near misses'. This allows them to assess risks that are harder to spot. Risk assessments for off-site trips are comprehensive. Staff understand their responsibilities to ensure the safety of pupils when away from school.

19. All the required information for parents and parents of prospective pupils is available on the school's website or from the school's office. Parents receive regular reports about their child's progress, which offer advice for further improvement. The school has appropriate policies reflecting the latest statutory guidance. However, at the time of the inspection not all previous inspection reports were available on the school's website. This was rectified during the inspection.

20. The school takes any complaints seriously. Investigations are thorough, with detailed records kept if they arise, including in the early years. Leaders act promptly and sensitively to seek a resolution in the best interests of the pupil.

21. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Provision for male and female pupils is equitable across the school. Teaching does not discriminate. A suitable accessibility plan with realistic timescales informs appropriate adjustments so that pupils who have disabilities can access the curriculum and the school site effectively. Leaders send the required information to the local authority about all pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) including about the use of funding and support.

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

22. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. The curriculum is designed to suit the broad range of pupils' needs and interests. Junior pupils enjoy an array of academic, creative and physical education, including the opportunity to learn three languages. Pupils in the senior school choose from a wide range of academic and practical subjects, with opportunities for a foundation sixth-form year if needed. In addition to GCSE courses, pupils can choose a BTEC First qualification in business, as well as an optional Higher Project Qualification (HPQ). Sixth-form pupils typically study four A levels before refining their choices to three subjects. Links with an agricultural college and BTEC National Diploma programmes offer more practical curriculum choices for some sixth-form pupils. Leaders prioritise pupils' individual aspirations, enabling almost all pupils to study their preferred combination of subjects and to develop their own academic pathway through the school.

24. Teachers display good subject knowledge. They typically adapt their lessons to ensure that pupils' needs are met appropriately. For example, in science, teachers devise different, creative ways for individual pupils to understand and use formulae effectively. Teachers plan carefully and use a wide range of techniques and styles to engage and enthuse pupils. Through skilful questioning, they support pupils to think for themselves and to deepen their understanding. As a result, pupils are confident to take risks in their learning, such as when working together to prepare and practise for oral examinations in languages.

25. In a minority of lessons in the senior school and the sixth form, some teaching is less successful. In these lessons, the tasks are undemanding and expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Pupils' progress slows as a result.

26. In the early years, children demonstrate effective learning skills. They develop confidence to tackle new ideas through play and exploration, such as when moving easily from counting games to practising addition and subtraction. Leaders promote children's effective communication skills by encouraging them to discuss characters in stories and to share their own experiences. In Reception, the acquisition of well-developed skills in phonics and numeracy are priorities. Consequently, children make rapid progress towards their learning goals. They are well prepared to move up to Year 1.

27. Pupils' work is assessed regularly. Detailed verbal and written feedback ensure that pupils are clear about where to direct their efforts to improve their work. Teachers track pupils' progress and act promptly to address any concerns about underperformance. Pupils reflect on their attainment and set their own goals. Pupils take responsibility for their own progress and are keen to do well as a result.

28. Pupils of all ages achieve well from their given starting points. Junior pupils achieve at or above expectations in English and mathematics. Older pupils achieve beyond national expectations in public examinations and consistently well across all subjects in the senior school.

29. Leaders ensure that all pupils who have SEND receive tailored support, so they access the curriculum successfully. Highly trained staff check pupils' needs carefully using a wide range of information and assessment. Each pupils' needs are clearly identified and reviewed regularly in consultation with pupils and parents. Every pupil on the school's SEND register has a personal learning plan which details the specific support required. Specialist teachers offer one-to-one or small-group support for

pupils with dyslexia, dyscalculia and those who have needs linked to neurodiversity. Successful support is provided for pupils who have a physical disability or mental health need. Consequently, pupils typically access the curriculum with confidence.

30. Teachers meet the needs of pupils who have SEND in lessons through well-designed tasks, so pupils build their confidence to learn effectively. In English, teachers provide precise individual guidance, so pupils with SEND produce fluent and well-structured written work. Overall, the individualised support for pupils who have SEND underpins their good progress throughout the school. They achieve highly in public examinations relative to their starting points.

31. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported in their learning. Together with other pupils, they make good progress. As needed, some pupils receive individual support. The majority access the full curriculum with help from class teachers, who provide additional materials such as lists of subject-specific vocabulary.

32. The school provides an extensive co-curricular programme of academic, creative, sporting and outdoor activities. Leaders promote the importance of pupils' trying new activities to complement their academic achievements and known aptitudes. Throughout the school, pupils lead busy lives outside their academic lessons. They grow in self-confidence as they develop new skills and interests.

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

33. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

34. The school provides a suitable physical education (PE) programme and an extensive range of sporting activities. Children in early years develop their physical skills through ball games, and in swimming lessons. Junior pupils practise balance and co-ordination in PE lessons. They build their individual skills and learn teamwork in a wide range of sports. In the senior school, leaders provide specialist programmes to support pupils with a particular aptitude in sports such as football, rugby, hockey, netball, sailing, tennis or rowing. These pupils benefit from specialist coaching and health advice to develop their skills to a high level.

35. Pupils know the importance of physical health. Most pupils represent the school in a team sport. Others find enjoyment in keeping fit through a range of non-competitive activities such as the fitness club or canoeing. Pupils learn the importance of establishing and maintaining a healthy lifestyle through lessons in food and nutrition and in PSHE. Children in the early years learn about healthy snacks. They enjoy physical exercise through lessons in dance and when playing outdoors.

36. Leaders provide a comprehensive programme of PSHE, which includes relationships and sex education (RSE) at appropriate stages. Children in early years learn to form good relationships by sharing toys and helping one another to get dressed for outdoor activities. In the junior school, an effective programme of PSHE challenges pupils to consider how they relate to others by posing questions such as 'can one person change the world?' In the senior school, the programme promotes the school's values of integrity and respect for others through topics such as human rights, prejudice and personal responsibility. Throughout the school, the programme challenges pupils to think maturely about how they can make a positive difference in their school and beyond.

37. Leaders provide significant support for pupils' mental and emotional health. Children in the early years are encouraged to talk with adults about how they feel in the 'cosy cove' area of the classroom. Leaders in the junior school prioritise and monitor pupils' wellbeing, providing 'brain breaks' and reflection time in lessons. In the senior school, nurses, counsellors and the school's therapy dog, all provide support for pupils' mental health. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss any concerns in form time. As a result, pupils know they are valued by the school and are confident to be themselves.

38. Pupils have a growing awareness of the non-material aspects of life as they move up the school. Junior pupils, for example, learn to appreciate the beauty of nature in their outdoor lessons in the woodland. Older pupils value times for self-reflection in PSHE lessons and at school events such as the Remembrance Day service.

39. Throughout the school, adults model good behaviour and set high expectations for pupils' conduct. Pupils respond accordingly. Teachers use positive reinforcement when pupils behave well. As a result, poor behaviour is rare. If misbehaviour does occur, pupils typically reflect and learn from their mistakes. Bullying seldom happens. The school reacts promptly, proportionately and effectively when instances of bullying arise.

40. The proprietor maintains the premises to a high standard. Leaders ensure that the requirements of health and safety legislation are met. Relevant policies and procedures are implemented effectively.

Fire safety arrangements are effective across the school's sites. External health, safety and fire audits ensure that leaders' knowledge and skills are up to date and that systems are tested regularly.

41. The school ensures that appropriate medical care and first aid care is available for any pupils who are ill or injured. The medical centres are well equipped. Staff are well trained, including an appropriate number of staff trained in first aid and paediatric first aid.

42. Pupils are well supervised on all three sites. Effective systems register and monitor pupils' attendance. Leaders look carefully to spot any trends or patterns in pupils' absence. They work closely with families and the local authority if pupils do not attend school regularly. An accurate admission register is kept as required.

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

43. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

44. Through their lessons in PSHE, pupils learn about the rule of law and how British institutions work. Visits from a local councillor and a magistrate raise pupils' awareness of legal issues and democratic systems. Pupils practise democracy when voting for pupil leaders in various positions across the school. In the early years, leaders provide exciting opportunities for children to engage with the wider world, such as learning about the roles of the police and the fire service in the community.

45. Throughout the school, pupils mix well together and show good social skills. In the early years, leaders promote children's social development effectively by demonstrating the importance of taking turns and helping each other to achieve a task. As a result, children show kindness and respect for others. Pupils of all ages are at ease when talking to adults. Peer support systems throughout the school help younger pupils, for example, to navigate school life. This interaction fosters a strong sense of community built on mutual respect. A variety of social events between the girls' and boys' schools ensures that pupils are at ease in each other's company. These events prepare pupils well for the co-educational sixth form, where pupils work and socialise together effectively.

46. Leaders seek and value pupils' views. Pupil-led councils contribute maturely to the smooth running of the school. For example, pupils in the sixth form have recently requested and helped to design a new school area for work and relaxation. Pupils' participation in these roles helps them to learn how to negotiate and to develop a wider perspective on school life.

47. School values, such as respect for others, integrity and personal responsibility are promoted and prioritised by school leaders through assemblies and in PSHE lessons. Consequently, pupils have a clear sense of right from wrong. They know how to behave respectfully towards others. Pupils of all ages show respect for one another, are accepting of difference and are confident to be themselves.

48. Pupils develop an understanding of different faiths through their lessons in religious studies. Similarly, in modern language lessons, pupils learn to appreciate different cultural perspectives. Children in the early years learn about each other's cultures and faiths by celebrating religious festivals and talking about family life.

49. Pupils are keen to help others in the school and in the community. Pupils in the sixth form are proud to show their 'make a difference passport'. This documents twenty hours of self-directed community service, such as assisting with sport for children with disabilities. Younger pupils choose and raise money for a variety of charitable causes. Such activities enable pupils to understand others' needs. In school, older pupils volunteer to mentor younger pupils. Some act as house and school leaders and run activities. These roles help to foster a close sense of community and a shared purpose across the school.

50. Pupils' economic education is effective and begins at an early age. Children in the early years learn to count and handle money in a pretend shop. Junior pupils run enterprise clubs where they design, make and sell products at school events to raise money for good causes. Older pupils learn more technical aspects of financial management through their lessons in business studies. In PSHE lessons, pupils gain a practical knowledge of bank accounts, budgeting and interest rates. Pupils in the sixth form have a good awareness of how student finance works before they leave school.

51. Leaders provide an extensive programme of careers education, in which pupils reflect on their aptitudes and preferences from an early age. In the junior school, careers week stimulates pupils' interest in the world of work. Older pupils consider a wide range of career options through PSHE lessons in Years 7 to 9, and at the careers fair in Year 10. Pupils are well informed about subject choices and career paths as they move into the sixth form. Well-trained staff offer individual advice on university choices and apprenticeships, so that pupils are confident about their next steps after school. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of careers education through pupil and parental surveys.

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. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders have embedded a strong safeguarding culture, so that the wellbeing of pupils is prioritised throughout the school. Through reviews, including external audits and regular reports, the proprietor ensures that leaders have the appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles effectively. Clear and detailed policies meet the requirements of the latest statutory guidance.

54. Leaders with safeguarding responsibilities are well trained. Staff receive annual training and regular updates during the year. This training is supplemented by online courses to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about the relevant risks to the pupils in their care. Consequently, staff are confident to recognise and report any safeguarding concerns. They understand the importance of reporting any low-level concerns raised about themselves or other staff.

55. Leaders understand their responsibilities to refer matters of concern to external agencies. They liaise effectively with local safeguarding partners when the need arises. Referrals are made in a timely manner. Detailed and secure safeguarding records are kept. Leaders share relevant information with staff about the vulnerabilities of individual pupils who have SEND or an EHC plan so that these pupils are well cared for. Staff record safeguarding and pastoral concerns effectively on the school's electronic reporting system. Leaders are alert to act on any patterns or trends identified. The school works sensitively and appropriately with parents if safeguarding concerns arise.

56. Leaders and staff are aware of the contextual risks for pupils, such as county lines. Appropriate training enables teachers to discuss issues sensitively with pupils in lessons or individually. Staff know how to report any potential concerns which may be linked to extremism or radicalisation.

57. The school ensures that arrangements to recruit staff are robust. Leaders are trained in safer recruitment practices. All the required pre-employment checks are carried out on staff who work in the school. An accurate record of these checks is kept. Regular reviews of information held include termly checks by an external professional.

58. Pupils know how to stay safe online through their PSHE lessons. Effective measures filter and monitor internet use on school systems to protect pupils from potential risks online. The suitability of these measures is tested regularly. Leaders act promptly to address any concerns that arise through internet use.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Claires Court Schools
Department for Education number	868/6014
Address	Claires Court Schools 1 College Avenue Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 6AW
Phone number	01628 327700
Email address	registrar@clairescourt.com
Website	www.clairescourt.com
Proprietor	Claires Court Schools Limited
Chair	Mr Hugh Wilding
Headteacher	Mr James Wilding
Age range	2 to 18
Number of pupils	864
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2024

Information about the school

60. Claires Court is an independent day school for male and female pupils. It is owned by Claires Court Schools Ltd whose directors are the academic and administrative principals of the school. The school operates on a diamond model with regard to the education of pupils of different gender. The nursery, Reception, Years 1 to 3 and sixth form are organised in mixed-gender groups, while pupils in Years 4 to 11 are educated separately. The school is organised across three sites. The nursery, girls in Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form are taught on the College Avenue site. Pupils in Reception to Year 6 are educated in the junior school on the Ridgeway site. Boys in Years 7 to 11 are educated on the Ray Mill Road East site.

61. There are 34 children within the early years setting. The early years setting is co-educational and consists of a nursery for pupils aged 2 to 4 on the College Avenue site and a Reception class located on the Ridgeway site.

62. The school has identified 158 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) Twenty-one pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).

63. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for eight pupils.

64. The school states its aims are to enable pupils to pursue and acquire a modern and relevant education, a range of life skills and a strong spiritual and moral character. These aims are underpinned by key values of personal responsibility, respect for others, loyalty to the school and integrity above all.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	30 September to 2 October 2025

65. A team of 9 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 proprietors
- discussions with the principals, 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.

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

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

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

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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