

School inspection report

30 June to 2 July 2026

Steephill School

Off Castle Hill

Fawkham

Longfield

DA3 7BG

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 provide effective oversight and ensure that leaders have the knowledge and skills to discharge their responsibilities and ensure that the school consistently meets the Standards.
2. Leaders articulate a clear vision that places the school's values of kindness, inclusivity, perseverance and love of learning at the centre of school life. They promote a positive culture that prioritises pupils' wellbeing. Leaders undertake thorough self-evaluation to identify priorities for the school's development and implement well-considered plans to improve the quality of pupils' experience. They draw up policies and procedures that nearly always reflect current statutory guidance. At the start of the inspection, the written attendance policy did not fully align with statutory requirements. Leaders remedied this during the inspection.
3. Leaders oversee the early years provision effectively. Staff know children well and maintain well-established routines that help children to feel secure, behave well and engage purposefully in their learning. Children benefit from a well-planned, stimulating curriculum and extensive opportunities for play, exploration and practical learning, including in the school's outdoor spaces.
4. Leaders have designed a rich, well-structured curriculum that challenges pupils to think creatively and establish links between the different areas of learning. Knowledgeable teachers plan well-structured and stimulating lessons which enable pupils to make good progress. A secure framework for assessing pupils' progress is in place. Pupils receive helpful feedback on their work. Leaders identify the needs of pupils who have special educational needs/and or disabilities (SEND) and put effective provision in place.
5. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive effective support. A stimulating range of enrichment and recreational activities enables pupils to extend their interests and acquire new skills.
6. Leaders place emphasis on promoting pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health. Pupils know how to seek help from adults when they require it, supporting the development of their self-confidence and self-esteem. The relationships education and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes are age-appropriate, well considered and responsive to pupils' needs. Leaders promote pupils' health through implementing coherent programmes of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and physical education (PE).
7. Bullying is rare, and, when it occurs, it is dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils uphold high standards of behaviour, supported by staff who consistently link expectations to the school's values. Leaders implement effective health and safety procedures. They encourage high levels of pupil attendance and provide effective support for pupils who require help in attending school. Leaders ensure that pupils are supervised appropriately across the school site, including children in the early years.
8. Leaders prepare pupils well for life in British society. The school provides effective opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of religious and cultural traditions, including how people may differ from one another. Pupils contribute responsibly to the school and wider communities, supporting and enriching the lives of others. They gain detailed knowledge of British institutions, including Parliament, local government and the legal system. The curriculum enables pupils to reflect on moral and ethical issues and develop their understanding of right and wrong. Pupils, including

children in the early years, receive effective economic education. Leaders provide high levels of support for pupils as they prepare for their next steps, including their transition to senior schools.

9. Governors and leaders prioritise the safeguarding of pupils. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding, remain vigilant about pupils' welfare and report concerns in line with the school's safeguarding policy. Leaders maintain comprehensive records relating to safeguarding matters. They liaise appropriately with external agencies, including children's services and the local authority, when necessary. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including online. Leaders maintain appropriate internet filtering and monitoring systems. They ensure that all required safer recruitment checks are undertaken on staff before they begin work at the school.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

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

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the written policy on attendance aligns with current statutory guidance.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders place pupils' wellbeing at the forefront of their decision-making. They set high expectations across all areas of school life and consistently model the school's values. In turn, pupils uphold these values and maintain high standards of conduct within an environment of respectful relationships and mutual trust.
11. Governors hold leaders to account through formal meetings, regular discussions and detailed reports. They visit the school regularly to assess how leaders' decisions influence day-to-day practice. Through their effective oversight, governors ensure that leaders possess the skills and knowledge required to meet their responsibilities and ensure that the school consistently meets the Standards.
12. Leaders are ambitious for the school's future. They maintain effective systems to evaluate the quality and impact of the school's provision. They use the outcomes of self-review to identify priorities and shape a coherent strategic development plan. As a result of self-review, leaders have recently enhanced the curriculum so that it provides pupils with greater opportunities to make links across areas of study, undertake independent enquiry and apply what they know in different contexts. This helps pupils to become increasingly self-reliant and independent learners.
13. Leaders have a clear understanding of contextual and individual risks to pupils' wellbeing. They maintain comprehensive risk assessments to control potential hazards and review these regularly. Leaders train staff to identify, evaluate and manage risk, both within the school environment and on trips.
14. The leadership of early years is effective. Leaders set clear expectations and ensure that staff understand and implement routines consistently. This helps children to settle quickly and feel secure. Staff use their knowledge of children's needs and interests to plan purposeful activities that support learning across the curriculum. Leaders monitor provision regularly, so that they form an accurate understanding of how well staff meet children's individual needs.
15. Leaders ensure that all required policies, procedures and documents are published on the school's website or made available to parents and others as appropriate. They check that staff understand the school's policies and procedures and implement them consistently. Almost all policies reflect current statutory guidance. At the start of the inspection, the written attendance policy did not align fully with current statutory guidance. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
16. Parents regularly receive informative reports on their child's progress, effort and attainment. Leaders schedule structured and less formal opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress with staff.
17. Leaders maintain effective relationships with external agencies, including safeguarding partners, the police and the local authority, to promote pupils' wellbeing. They ensure that staff notify the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.
18. Leaders ensure that the school meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010. They maintain and implement a well-considered accessibility plan. This clearly sets out strategies for improving access to the physical environment, the curriculum and information for pupils, staff and others with

identified needs. Leaders help pupils learn about the ways in which people differ from each other and develop respect for others' diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

19. Leaders maintain a suitable complaints procedure. They manage complaints in line with published timescales and keep a suitable record of complaints received. Leaders review the outcomes of complaints to determine whether any changes to the school's procedures or practice are required.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders have devised a stimulating and challenging curriculum that provides pupils with a wide range of academic, creative and aesthetic experiences. In the early years, the curriculum helps children to develop firm foundations in reading, writing and numeracy. Across the school, leaders have designed schemes of work that sequence pupils' learning methodically and build systematically on their knowledge and understanding. The curriculum provides purposeful opportunities for pupils, including children in the early years, to make links across different areas of learning. For instance, pupils consider narrative storytelling when creating animations in computing lessons. In art, they create work inspired by poetry. Leaders review the curriculum to ensure that it continues to meet the school's aims and is matched appropriately to pupils' ages, aptitudes and stages of development. They take account of pupils' views when evaluating its effectiveness.
22. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and know pupils well. They plan lessons that build methodically on pupils' prior learning. They set clear expectations for pupils' conduct and use well-established routines to promote positive behaviour and purposeful learning. Teachers use a range of well-chosen resources to stimulate pupils' interest and deepen their understanding. These include, for example, toy cars to show how axles work and props in Spanish to consolidate pupils' acquisition of vocabulary. As a result of well-planned and engaging lessons, pupils approach their learning with enthusiasm and persevere when they encounter challenge.
23. Through incisive and sensitive questioning, teachers check pupils' understanding, prompt them to explain their reasoning and encourage them to think independently. Teachers promote a constructive learning environment in which pupils behave well, listen respectfully to others' views and respond thoughtfully to different perspectives. Leaders provide structured opportunities for teachers to reflect on and develop their practice through continuing professional development.
24. Leaders implement an effective framework for assessing pupils' progress, including in the early years. They analyse assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and identify where additional support is required. Teachers provide helpful feedback that enables pupils to understand how to improve their work. Pupils benefit from structured opportunities to reflect on the quality of their work and consider how they can improve their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress from their assessed starting points.
25. Staff in the early years teach phonics systematically, helping children to link letters and sounds. Children develop secure early writing skills through activities that develop fine motor control and support accurate letter formation. They build numerical understanding through practical tasks involving counting, ordering, sorting and recognising quantities. As a result, children are prepared well for the next stage of learning.
26. Leaders responsible for provision for pupils who have SEND develop effective individual learning plans (ILPs) to support pupils' needs. These plans take account of pupils' views about the strategies that help them to learn and feedback from parents. Leaders review ILPs regularly with pupils and parents to evaluate their effectiveness and adjust them if necessary. Teachers use ILPs to adapt their teaching, for example by providing access to computers where appropriate and modelling sentence structures before pupils write independently. Leaders provide staff with training on specific aspects of SEND, such as dyslexia, so that they can meet pupils' needs effectively.

27. Leaders identify the needs of pupils who speak EAL. They provide clear guidance to teachers on how to support pupils who need help in developing their written and spoken English. Teachers adapt their teaching appropriately, for instance by introducing relevant vocabulary to pupils before they encounter new topics that require this knowledge. Similarly, teachers ensure that pupils who speak EAL receive support, when appropriate, from peers who can model spoken English effectively.
28. Leaders provide a wide range of recreational and enrichment activities that extend pupils' interests and skills. Pupils participate in creative, practical and academic clubs, including gardening, cooking, Spanish, computing and science. They take part in activities in music, drama and art, including regular musical productions. Leaders ensure that children in the early years have frequent opportunities to use outdoor spaces for active play.

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. Leaders promote a culture in which staff know pupils and their families well. As a result, pupils receive effective support for their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Leaders check that pupils know how to seek timely help from trusted adults. In the early years, leaders assign each child to a responsible adult, helping children to feel secure and well cared for. Across the phases of the school, staff identify changes in pupils' behaviour promptly and provide support where required, including through a 'nurture' group for pupils who are vulnerable or need emotional support. Pupils can raise concerns anonymously through worry boxes, which staff follow up appropriately. Through the well-structured PSHE programme, pupils learn how to regulate their emotions and develop resilience. As a result of this provision, pupils develop self-confidence and self-esteem.
31. Leaders foster pupils' spiritual awareness effectively. Through regular services in the local church, pupils contemplate the non-material aspects of life. Leaders schedule a programme of daily mindfulness activities for pupils, including walks in the school grounds, listening to music and reflecting on meditative texts. This helps pupils to appreciate moments of stillness, connect with the natural world and become more aware of their inner thoughts and feelings. In the early years, well-resourced outdoor learning areas encourage children to explore and reflect on the world around them. Through the curriculum and assemblies, pupils learn about the beliefs and practices of different religions.
32. Leaders provide a well-considered programme of relationships education, including in the early years. Pupils learn to respect one another's personal space, recognise when physical contact is appropriate and navigate friendships. The RSE programme is well structured and age-appropriate. Pupils learn about consent, puberty, changes to the body and human anatomy in a sensitive and suitable way. Leaders plan the programme carefully, taking account of parents' views so that sensitive topics are introduced appropriately. Teachers check pupils' understanding and leaders gather pupils' views on what they learn, using this information to adjust the programme where required.
33. Pupils receive effective health education. In the early years, children learn about oral health, healthy eating and personal hygiene. Children develop gross motor skills through regular activity in the school's outdoor spaces, including the woodlands and orchard. This includes climbing, balancing and negotiating different surfaces and heights. Across the school, the PSHE programme helps pupils learn how to lead balanced lifestyles and make informed choices about their wellbeing. Pupils maintain a vegetable plot, growing produce that they later eat as part of school meals. This helps them understand the links between growing food, healthy eating and a balanced diet. Leaders implement a well-planned PE programme that systematically develops pupils' physical skills, stamina and core strength. Older pupils build these skills through athletics, gymnastics, team sports such as football and netball, fixtures with other schools and a weekly sports club.
34. Leaders set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff and pupils understand the behaviour policy well. Staff implement it fairly and consistently. When behaviour falls short of expectations, staff talk with pupils to help them reflect on their conduct and its impact on others. Leaders monitor patterns in behaviour and address emerging issues promptly. As a result, pupils behave well, show respect for others and take responsibility for their conduct.

35. Leaders implement a mobile phone policy that is aligned to current guidance. They ensure that the school is a mobile phone-free environment during the school day. This helps pupils to focus on their learning and interact positively with one another.
36. Leaders maintain an effective anti-bullying policy. Through the curriculum, assemblies and anti-bullying week, pupils learn about different types of bullying and how to report concerns. Leaders train pupils as anti-bullying ambassadors, helping others to understand their responsibility to challenge unkind or harmful behaviour. Bullying is rare. When it occurs, leaders respond promptly and effectively. They maintain a suitable log of incidents and monitor it regularly to identify and address any emerging patterns.
37. Leaders promote an effective culture of health and safety across the school. They review relevant policies regularly and ensure that staff with health and safety responsibilities receive suitable training. Leaders maintain an up-to-date fire risk assessment and schedule regular fire evacuation drills. Trained staff carry out routine checks and maintenance systematically. Leaders keep comprehensive records of checks, maintenance and any defects addressed. Staff know how to report health and safety concerns, which leaders address promptly. The school site is well maintained.
38. A suitable number of staff hold first aid qualifications, including in paediatric first aid. Leaders deploy staff trained in first aid suitably across the site. Staff administer medicines effectively. Leaders maintain accurate records of first aid, injuries, medicines administered and pupils' medical needs. In the early years, staff follow suitable procedures to reduce risks when children eat.
39. Leaders deploy staff effectively to ensure that pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the school day, including before school, at breaktimes and lunchtimes, after school and during activities. Leaders maintain suitable staff-to-child ratios in the early years.
40. Leaders promote and monitor attendance effectively. They maintain accurate admission and attendance registers in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders review attendance information regularly and act promptly when concerns arise. They identify pupils who require help in improving their attendance and implement suitable plans to support them. Leaders are successful in encouraging high levels of attendance across the school.

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

41. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

42. Leaders prepare pupils well for life in a diverse British society. Through the curriculum, assemblies and programmed activities, pupils learn to respect and value people's different backgrounds, faiths and identities. In PSHE, pupils consider how stereotypes can contribute to prejudice and discrimination, including in sport. They develop an informed understanding of the experiences of different communities, including refugees, and the prejudice they may face. Leaders deepen pupils' understanding of different religions, cultures and traditions through international days, the celebration of Chinese New Year, the commemoration of Windrush Day, a Japanese food festival and opportunities to sample food from different countries at lunchtime. As a result, pupils develop mutual respect, tolerance and cultural understanding.
43. Leaders provide effective opportunities for pupils to develop social responsibility. Through leadership positions, including ambassador and head student roles, pupils support their peers and contribute positively to the life of the school. They extend this sense of responsibility through service to the wider community, including visits to residents in a local care home, contributions to local food banks and participation in local sustainability projects.
44. In the early years, staff promote children's social development through establishing clear routines and purposeful opportunities for collaborative play. Teachers encourage children to share resources, take turns and listen to one another during group activities and shared tasks. Staff model kindness and respect in their interactions with children and guide them in resolving minor disagreements. As a result, children develop positive relationships with their peers and begin to understand how to behave considerately within a community.
45. Leaders ensure that pupils are well informed about Parliament, the justice system and other institutions. Leaders invite local councillors to speak to pupils so that they learn how local government works and how democratic decisions are made in the community and beyond. The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to participate in mock trials. These enable pupils to explore aspects of civil law, such as copyright, and criminal law, including the rights of defendants in criminal proceedings. Through the curriculum, presentations by visiting speakers and assemblies, pupils develop a clear understanding of fundamental British values, such as individual liberty. Teaching supports balanced discussion of political issues and encourages pupils to consider different viewpoints with respect.
46. Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their moral and ethical understanding. Staff help pupils to distinguish between right and wrong and to consider the consequences of their choices for other people. For example, through narrative writing teachers encourage pupils to explore how characters' choices affect others. They guide pupils to examine moral dilemmas relating to medical science, including the ethics of using animal organs in human treatment. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to explore themes of compassion and responsibility, including the moral duty to care for people they do not know and to protect those who are weaker or more vulnerable than themselves.
47. Leaders prepare pupils well for adult life. Pupils learn practical life skills, including how to respond safely to home emergencies involving electricity and water. In the early years, children develop a practical understanding of buying and selling through role play and visits to a supermarket, where

they manage shopping lists, weigh produce, scan barcodes and pay for goods. Older pupils develop enterprise skills through initiatives that require them to plan, take initiative and raise money for charitable causes. Through the PSHE programme and visits from professionals, including those working in science and public service, pupils learn about a range of careers and begin to consider the paths they might take in adult life.

48. Leaders provide a well-considered transition programme that helps older pupils to prepare confidently for senior school education. Pupils learn how to find key information about their new schools, including daily routines, timetables, starting and finishing times, and the roles of senior staff. They plan and practise their journeys to school and consider how to organise their morning routines so that they arrive punctually and well prepared. As a result, pupils develop the confidence, independence and practical knowledge they need for the next stage of their education.

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

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

Safeguarding

50. Governors place safeguarding at the centre of their oversight. They test the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding practice through regular meetings with leaders, scrutiny of reports and consideration of relevant records and data. Governors receive appropriate training and updates to ensure that their knowledge of safeguarding remains current and relevant.
51. Leaders promote a robust culture of safeguarding. They ensure that staff are alert to the range of safeguarding risks to pupils. Leaders implement effective systems to record and report safeguarding incidents. They maintain comprehensive records which set out the rationale for decisions and the actions taken. Leaders review these records systematically to identify emerging risks, patterns or wider concerns, and to determine any further action required. They implement suitable plans to support pupils affected by safeguarding issues.
52. Staff receive suitable training in safeguarding for their roles. Leaders ensure that training addresses contextual risks within the school community. They check how well staff understand key safeguarding issues and arrange further training where required. As a result, staff remain alert to risks to pupils' welfare and report concerns promptly in line with the school's safeguarding policy.
53. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, including children's services and the police, when safeguarding concerns arise. They seek advice and make referrals promptly to ensure that concerns are handled appropriately and that pupils receive the support they need.
54. Staff understand their responsibility to report any concerns or allegations about the conduct of adults and know how to do so. Leaders maintain clear procedures for responding promptly to any such concerns should they arise. They keep detailed records of issues raised, actions taken and decisions made. Leaders review records to identify any patterns or emerging concerns. They seek advice from the local authority and make referrals when required.
55. Leaders maintain suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems to protect pupils from accessing inappropriate, harmful or illegal material online. They test these systems regularly and adjust them where required, taking account of emerging online risks. Leaders respond promptly to real-time alerts that raise concerns about pupils' online activity.
56. Through the PSHE programme, assemblies and visiting speakers, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. They develop an age-appropriate understanding of online risks, including harmful contact from unknown individuals, misuse of personal information and risks associated with generative artificial intelligence. Pupils feel safe and know how to report concerns to trusted adults at the school.
57. All required safer recruitment checks are completed before staff begin work. Governors are vetted in line with statutory guidance. Where a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate has not been received before a member of staff starts work, leaders implement a suitable risk assessment and appropriate supervision. The single central record of appointments (SCR) is maintained accurately and checked regularly.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

58. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Steephill School
Department for Education number	886/6024
Registered charity number	803152
Address	Steephill School Off Castle Hill Fawkham Longfield Kent DA3 7BG
Phone number	01474 702107
Email address	secretary@steephill.co.uk
Website	www.steephill.co.uk
Proprietor	Steephill School Educational
Chair	Mr Martin Levy
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Millward
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	81
Date of previous inspection	7 to 8 June 2023

Information about the school

59. Steephill School is an independent co-educational day school, situated near Longfield in Kent. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, the current chair of governors assumed his responsibilities in May 2024. The current headteacher took up her position in June 2024.
60. There are 22 children in the early years, comprising one class that is flexibly divided into smaller groups as appropriate.
61. The school has identified 10 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan.
62. The school has identified 39 pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
63. The school states its aim is to provide a high-quality education within a nurturing and ambitious environment where every child is known, valued and encouraged to flourish.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 June to 2 July 2026

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

65. 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 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. 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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