

School inspection report

28 to 30 April 2026

St Teresa's School

Effingham Hill

Dorking

RH5 6ST

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	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	5
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	5
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	14
SCHOOL DETAILS	15
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	16
INSPECTION DETAILS	17

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders ensure that the school's values are reflected consistently across all aspects of school life. As a result, pupils develop a secure moral framework which underpins their relationships and prepares them well for life in British society.
2. Governance is effective, with governors demonstrating a secure understanding of the school through detailed reporting and direct engagement with leaders, staff and pupils. They provide appropriate oversight across key areas, including safeguarding, and are well placed to assure themselves that leaders have the skills and knowledge to meet the Standards and fulfil the school's aims.
3. Leaders take a systematic approach to risk management and implement policies and procedures effectively in line with statutory requirements. Communication with parents is clear and regular, and appropriate liaison with external agencies ensures that pupils receive suitable support when needed. Arrangements to promote equality of opportunity are effective, including a suitable accessibility plan, ensuring that the school meets its statutory responsibilities under equality legislation.
4. Leaders provide effective oversight of a broad and balanced curriculum which is responsive to pupils' needs. Across the school, the curriculum is designed and reviewed carefully to ensure relevance and continuity, with appropriate preparation for key transition points and a wide range of subject choices in the sixth form.
5. Teaching typically enables pupils to make good progress. Regular assessment is used to inform planning and address gaps in learning. In the most effective lessons, teaching is well planned and uses a range of approaches to support pupils' understanding and develop their speaking skills. However, in a minority of senior school lessons, teaching does not consistently meet the needs of all pupils, and low-level disruption occasionally limits progress.
6. Leaders have a clear understanding of individual pupils' needs and use effective systems to monitor progress and provide targeted support when required. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively, enabling them to access the curriculum and make progress. Pupils with higher prior attainment are identified accurately and provided with appropriate opportunities to extend their learning. Assessment processes are thorough and used well to identify underperformance and implement timely support, contributing to improved outcomes.
7. Leaders ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported effectively through a range of appropriate resources, based on assessment of their language fluency.
8. Pupils benefit from an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities which enhances their overall development. Participation is high and pupils engage readily in a wide range of opportunities.
9. Leaders provide a comprehensive and well-structured programme for pupils' personal development, which is carefully planned and effectively delivered. Through a broad personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum, alongside religious studies (RS), assemblies and enrichment opportunities, pupils develop a secure understanding of moral, social and cultural issues, including the importance of having respect for others' beliefs and

values. Pupils demonstrate secure self-awareness, confidence and the ability to reflect thoughtfully on their experiences.

10. Pupils show respect for one another from an early stage and engage positively in school life. Behaviour is typically good, and relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils are confident and articulate, contribute willingly to assemblies and wider activities, and take pride in their achievements. A well-structured pastoral framework supports pupils' wellbeing, with effective systems in place to monitor and respond to their needs. Opportunities within the curriculum and extra-curricular provision encourage resilience, leadership and collaboration, enabling pupils to develop confidence and a sense of responsibility.
11. Arrangements for health and safety and boarding are effective. The school implements clear policies consistently, maintains detailed records and provides appropriate support for pupils where needed. Boarding provision is well managed and offers a supportive environment. Supervision and first aid arrangements are appropriate, and systems for attendance and admission are secure. As a result, pupils feel safe, well supported and able to develop and progress in a positive and well-managed environment.
12. Through a broad and well-integrated curriculum, pupils develop a secure understanding of British values and engage thoughtfully with complex ethical and societal issues. They contribute positively to school and wider community life. As a result, pupils are confident, socially aware and well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life beyond school.
13. Leaders have established a robust safeguarding culture in which pupils' wellbeing is prioritised. Arrangements are implemented effectively by a trained safeguarding team, with clear recording of and prompt responses to concerns, including liaison with external agencies. Pupils feel confident in seeking support, and governors provide effective oversight. Systems for online safety and safer recruitment are robust. As a result, safeguarding is well managed and effective.

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 teaching in all subjects in the senior school consistently meets pupils' needs and enables them to make good progress
- ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented consistently in senior school lessons to ensure pupils make good progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

14. Leaders ensure that the school's values of 'faith, character, community, compassion and intellect' are reflected consistently in decision-making across all aspects of school life. Leaders make certain that the provision enables pupils to develop a secure moral framework, which supports their respect for others, their relationships with peers and adults, and their preparation for life in British society.
15. Governors demonstrate an insightful, well-established understanding of the school as a result of regular reporting and contact with senior leaders. Leaders provide clear analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils and the impact of actions taken, enabling governors to maintain an accurate view of educational standards. Effective oversight is supported by regular committee work, governors' visibility within the school and frequent updates across pastoral, safeguarding, academic and financial areas. As a result, governors are well placed to assure themselves that leaders have the appropriate skills, knowledge and capacity to meet the Standards and take actions designed to fulfil the school's aims.
16. Leaders take a comprehensive and systematic approach to the identification and management of risk. A detailed risk register is maintained and reviewed through the work of relevant committees. Effective pastoral systems support early identification of potential risks relating to pupils' wellbeing, balancing academic, enrichment and pastoral demands. This enables leaders to take timely and appropriate action to mitigate risks.
17. Policies and procedures are developed and implemented typically effectively in line with current statutory requirements and reflect the school's values. They are made readily available to parents through the school's website. For example, the school's three-stage complaints procedure is clear and accessible. Informal concerns are addressed promptly, and formal complaints are managed appropriately in accordance with published procedures. Leaders ensure that policies are applied consistently by staff and understood by pupils.
18. Leaders provide parents with suitable and regular information and reports about their child's attainment and progress. They fulfil their responsibilities in notifying the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points. Effective liaison with external agencies, including safeguarding partners, ensures that pupils receive appropriate specialist support when required.
19. The school maintains a suitable accessibility plan, supporting equality of opportunity for all pupils. Through these and other arrangements, leaders ensure that the school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

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 provide highly effective oversight of the curriculum, ensuring that it is suitably broad, balanced and responsive to pupils' needs. In the prep school, the curriculum is carefully designed to make meaningful links between an appropriate range of subjects, enabling pupils to connect concepts and develop practical life skills. For example, pupils engage in activities such as growing vegetables and preparing nutritious meals, which deepen their understanding of sustainability and wellbeing. In the senior school, the curriculum remains appropriately broad and is reviewed regularly, with thoughtful adjustments made to develop provision when required. Leaders place suitable emphasis on preparing pupils for key transition points, particularly entry into Year 10. In the sixth form, pupils benefit from a wide range of subject choices, including business, psychology and economics, with recent additions such as media studies introduced in response to feedback from pupils. As a result, pupils access a curriculum that is relevant and appropriate.
22. Teaching is effective overall in supporting pupils' learning and good progress. Teachers regularly assess pupils' understanding and use this information to plan subsequent learning, ensuring that gaps and misconceptions are addressed promptly. Additional support is implemented swiftly where needed, and pupils benefit from feedback that helps them to improve their work. In the most effective lessons, teaching is well planned and uses a range of teaching approaches which support pupils' understanding. Teachers employ questioning effectively to deepen understanding, to move learning beyond simple task completion and, in the most effective lessons, fosters secure conceptual understanding and develops pupils' speaking skills. However, in a minority of senior school lessons, planning does not consistently provide teaching approaches that meet the needs of all pupils. In addition, although pupils are generally engaged and enthusiastic, unchallenged low-level behaviour in a minority of senior school lessons limits the progress that some pupils make.
23. Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of individual pupils' needs, supported by effective monitoring and tracking systems. Pupils who have SEND receive carefully tailored support, informed by detailed assessment and delivered by well-trained staff. This provision includes individual learning plans, known as 'passports', which promote effective collaboration between staff and pupils, and targeted strategies that support both academic progress and emotional development. Pupils with higher prior attainment are identified accurately and provided with opportunities to extend their learning beyond the classroom. These challenge them appropriately and contribute to their academic and personal development.
24. Pupils who speak EAL benefit from well-planned support based on initial assessments of language fluency. Teachers adapt their teaching effectively, for example through the use of tailored vocabulary resources, enabling these pupils to access the curriculum and develop their language skills successfully.
25. Assessment processes are thorough and used effectively to support pupils' progress. Leaders make careful use of baseline assessment data, including standardised assessments alongside ongoing teacher assessments and examination results. This information is analysed carefully to identify underperformance and to implement timely and personalised support, resulting in improved outcomes for pupils. Staff receive appropriate training in the use of data, enabling them to track pupils' progress accurately and adapt their teaching accordingly. Leaders monitor carefully the performance of boarders, ensuring that targeted provision supports their achievement.

26. Pupils benefit from a programme of extra-curricular activities which enriches their overall educational experience. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities through the extensive provision of clubs and activities available throughout the year. Participation is high and is carefully monitored and recognised through initiatives such as the 'Pursuit Awards' scheme. As a result, pupils develop a greater range of academic, cultural and social skills effectively, and their engagement in school life is highly purposeful.

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

27. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

28. Leaders provide a comprehensive and well-structured programme for PSHE and RSE. This programme is carefully planned, age-appropriate and supported by bespoke schemes of work that cover a wide range of moral, social, cultural and political considerations, including British values, such as the rule of law and democracy. Delivery of PSHE and RSE is largely undertaken by specialist staff, which ensures consistency and expertise. The curriculum is sufficiently flexible to respond to current local, national and international developments, enabling pupils to engage meaningfully with contemporary issues, such as conflicts around the world. Through these experiences, pupils develop an understanding of how historical and cultural influences shape the modern world. Pupils develop a secure understanding of the importance of respect for others' beliefs and values, which is reflected in their positive interactions within the school community. Pupils discuss a broad range of topics and develop secure self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.
29. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is promoted effectively through a range of experiences. Chapel services and assemblies regularly explore themes of respect, cultural diversity and faith, reflecting the school's Catholic foundation while remaining inclusive of pupils of all backgrounds. Opportunities for reflection are embedded within the curriculum, particularly in RS and PSHE, and are complemented by access to the school's grounds, which include quiet and reflective spaces. Activities such as walking, wellbeing sessions and yoga further support pupils' ability to be reflective and mindful. As a result, pupils develop an appreciation of non-material aspects of life and an ability to reflect thoughtfully on their experiences and spiritual ideas.
30. From an early age, pupils typically demonstrate respect for one another. In the prep school, they listen attentively, take turns in discussion and show a clear understanding of fairness and equality. Behaviour is typically good, and relationships are positive. Leaders and staff respond appropriately to any worries raised by pupils and provide them with access to pastoral support, including counselling where needed. Pupils contribute actively to school life, for example through the school council, where they are able to express their views and influence aspects of provision. In both the prep and senior schools, pupils interact positively at break times, supported by appropriate supervision and well-designed outdoor spaces that encourage physical activity and creative play.
31. Pupils are confident and articulate. They speak and perform in assemblies with assurance and engage positively with visitors. Pupils take pride in their achievements and enjoy opportunities to collaborate, celebrating each other's successes. Staff act as effective role models, setting clear expectations and fostering a culture of mutual respect.
32. The school places an emphasis on supporting pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing. Leaders promote physical and emotional health effectively through a range of initiatives, including tutor systems, PSHE provision and access to external support where appropriate. Pupils' emotional wellbeing is monitored regularly through structured pastoral systems, enabling timely support. Opportunities within the extra-curricular programme encourage pupils to persevere, take risks and build resilience. Recognition of effort, such as awards for improvement and contribution, further supports the development of pupils' self-esteem. Pupils are also encouraged to take on leadership roles, including within the boarding community, providing meaningful opportunities to contribute to decision-making and to develop responsibility.

33. Arrangements for behaviour are clear and typically applied effectively. The school operates a well-understood behaviour policy, which emphasises positive reinforcement alongside appropriate sanctions. Records of behaviour and any incidents of bullying are detailed and are maintained carefully, with appropriate communication with parents and external agencies where required. Leaders support both victims and perpetrators whenever behavioural incidents take place. Leaders monitor patterns and trends to ensure that behaviour management remains effective.
34. Boarding provision is managed effectively in line with the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS). Boarders are cared for in suitable and welcoming accommodation, and experience positive relationships with staff. Systems for supporting boarders' safety are robust, with risks identified and managed appropriately. As a result, boarders are well supported, and have their needs met effectively.
35. Health and safety arrangements are effective. Premises and accommodation are maintained to a suitable standard. Fire safety procedures are appropriate and provide regular and effective assurance through external and internal reports.
36. Pupils are supervised effectively throughout the day and in boarding through well-deployed staff, clear routines, secure communication systems and a culture of pastoral vigilance, enabling pupils to feel safe, supported and well cared for at all times.
37. First aid provision is well organised. Trained staff and suitable facilities enable prompt and effective care when required.
38. The school maintains suitable admission and attendance registers. Leaders ensure that pupils are accounted for throughout the day. Leaders promote pupils' attendance effectively, including through liaison with external agencies where necessary.

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

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

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

40. Leaders demonstrate a coherent vision and commitment to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to promote understanding of democracy, the rule of law, moral responsibility and British values.
41. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a broad programme of human, social and economic education. This is delivered through RS, enrichment lessons in ethics and philosophy, PSHE, the extra-curricular programme and assemblies, where pupils engage with complex and topical issues, such as homelessness and global conflicts, are encouraged to reflect on ethical matters and act with integrity. These opportunities encourage pupils to consider different perspectives and to develop respect and tolerance for others. As a result, pupils demonstrate a mature understanding of the nature of a diverse society and develop the confidence to distinguish right from wrong and to contribute positively to that society.
42. Leaders promote respect for diversity effectively. Events celebrating different cultures, such as themed community activities, provide pupils with opportunities to appreciate and respect a range of cultural traditions. As a result, pupils demonstrate inclusive attitudes and a readiness to engage positively with others from different backgrounds to their own.
43. Leaders ensure that pupils develop a secure understanding of democratic processes. Pupils learn about political systems in a non-partisan way and participate in elections for positions of responsibility within the school, enabling them to experience democracy in practice. Provision for personal development also includes practical education in areas such as do-it-yourself skills and personal safety, ensuring that pupils are well prepared for the responsibilities of adult life.
44. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their economic understanding well through a carefully structured programme of financial and economic education within PSHE. Provision is enhanced by specialist input, such as sessions led by financial advisers and wealth coaches for older pupils. In the sixth form, teaching focuses on practical aspects of adult life, including managing bank accounts, navigating student finance, understanding mortgages and rent, and making informed financial decisions. As a result, pupils develop the knowledge and confidence to manage their finances responsibly and are well prepared for the economic demands of life beyond school.
45. Leaders provide pupils with careers guidance, including specialist input, which equips them with essential life skills. Leaders provide a well-structured programme to prepare pupils for transition between each stage of their school journeys and beyond. Younger pupils are well supported in their move to the senior school and in making informed choices for GCSE study, benefiting from subject fairs and taster lessons. They also gain insight into a range of professions and receive appropriate guidance for work experience. Pupils receive thorough careers provision, which includes guidance on university applications as well as alternative pathways into other forms of study and employment. Access to careers fairs and external contacts supports pupils in making informed decisions about their futures. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment.
46. Leaders actively promote a clear sense of community within the school, characterised by kindness, respect and compassion. Opportunities to contribute to school life, including through peer support

and listening to pupils' initiatives, are well established. Through their studies and wider experiences, pupils develop an appreciation of diverse cultures and an understanding of how historical events have shaped the modern world. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community, including initiatives such as 'Values Week', voluntary work, environmental projects and support for local organisations. Through these experiences, pupils develop a well-formed sense of social responsibility.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

48. Leaders have established a robust and well-embedded safeguarding culture in which pupils' wellbeing is central to decision-making. Safeguarding arrangements reflect current statutory guidance and are implemented effectively by a suitably trained designated safeguarding team. The team meets regularly to review concerns, identify patterns and agree appropriate actions. This systematic approach enables leaders to maintain a clear and accurate overview of safeguarding across the school, including for the most vulnerable pupils.
49. Staff receive regular and appropriate safeguarding training, including thorough induction for new staff and ongoing updates, including about any changes to statutory requirements. Staff understand their responsibilities and are confident in recognising and reporting concerns. Records of safeguarding are maintained carefully and systematically, ensuring that decisions, actions and their rationale are clearly documented.
50. Leaders respond promptly and appropriately to safeguarding concerns, including any relating to staff. Leaders maintain effective relationships with external safeguarding partners and are prepared to escalate concerns where necessary in order to protect pupils. Where concerns meet the relevant thresholds, referrals are made to external agencies without delay, and procedures are followed rigorously.
51. Pupils are supported well through effective pastoral systems and demonstrate confidence in speaking to staff if they have concerns. They have access to a range of support mechanisms, including trusted adults, structured pastoral meetings and systems for reporting concerns. Leaders ensure that there is a suitable independent person available for boarders to contact, should they wish to, and clear contact information is displayed. Regular pastoral and academic monitoring ensures that pupils are known well by staff and that emerging concerns are identified at an early stage. Appropriate support is provided, including counselling and referral to external services where needed, with a clear emphasis on early intervention. Staff always know boarders' whereabouts.
52. Governors provide effective oversight of safeguarding. The designated safeguarding governor undertakes regular reviews of practice, including appropriate scrutiny of records and procedures, and reports to the governing body. Governors receive regular updates from safeguarding leaders, including analysis of trends and emerging risks, and undertake suitable training. This enables them to maintain a clear understanding of safeguarding arrangements and to assure themselves of their effectiveness. Governors' understanding of safeguarding is secure, underpinned by training and systematic review of policies and regular safeguarding and boarding reports.
53. Leaders ensure that use of the internet is appropriately restricted. The internet filtering and monitoring system is reviewed regularly and are effective in identifying potential risks, with alerts shared promptly with the safeguarding team. Pupils are taught how to stay safe including online. Leaders remain alert to emerging risks and respond with appropriate measures to mitigate these.
54. Safer recruitment procedures are implemented effectively. Appropriate checks are completed prior to appointment, and records are maintained accurately in the single central record of appointments (SCR), which is reviewed regularly by leaders and governors.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

55. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	St Teresa's School
Department for Education number	936/6418
Registered charity number	1095103
Address	St Teresa's School Effingham Hill Dorking Surrey RH5 6ST
Phone number	01372 452037
Email address	info@st-teresas.com
Website	www.st-teresas.com
Proprietor	St Teresa's School Effingham Trust
Chair	Mr Damian Honey
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Field
Age range	10 to 18
Number of pupils	477
Number of boarding pupils	48
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 May 2023

Information about the school

56. St Teresa's School is an independent Roman Catholic day and boarding school for female pupils up to Year 11 and male and female pupils in the sixth form. Founded in 1928 by the Religious Order of Christian Instruction, ownership was transferred in 2002 to St Teresa's School Effingham Trust. The school is a registered charity administered by a board of governors who are also its trustees. The trust includes St Teresa's School, Cranmore School and since the previous inspection, Manor House joined the trust in September 2023. Since the previous inspection, the prep school year groups have begun to be phased out. The school currently educates pupils from age 10 to 18, working towards the final model of 11 to 18 years in two years' time. The current headteacher took up his position in September 2024, and the current chair of governors in April 2026.
57. Boarders are accommodated in two boarding houses which are situated on the school site.
58. The school has identified 168 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
59. The school has identified English as an additional language for 36 pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to promote pupils' enjoyment of learning and achievement through the pursuit of academic excellence across the curriculum and wider activities. It seeks to provide appropriate support, encouragement and challenge to enable pupils to realise their potential and are well prepared for their future lives. The school also aims to promote high standards of personal behaviour and to foster pupils' moral and spiritual development.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 to 30 April 2026

61. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. Inspection activities included:

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

63. 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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