

School inspection report

1 to 3 April 2025

Thames Christian School

12 Grant Road

London

SW11 2FR

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 and leaders have developed a clear strategic direction for the school. They ensure that the school's ethos, based on Christian values, develops pupils' sense of self-worth as individuals and as members of the school community.
2. Governors know the school well. They are kept informed by senior leaders through regular reports, meetings and visits to the school. Governors hold leaders to account and provide effective support and challenge. This approach leads to the Standards being met consistently.
3. Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum which successfully supports the passions and interests of individual pupils in a tailored and nuanced manner. Pupils' needs are well understood and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is identified early and provided effectively, helping to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
4. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of additional activities. Sport, art, music and drama feature highly in some pupils' lives and the programme of life skills lessons and extra-curricular experiences enhances the curriculum for all.
5. Pupils become keen learners as they settle into the school. The effective and supportive relationships developed between adults and pupils build on pupils' enthusiasm for learning and leads to positive outcomes. However, the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme does not meet older pupils' needs as effectively as possible.
6. Pupils feel their school is a safe place where they can be themselves. They are confident to speak to adults about any concerns. They develop a firm sense of respect for their peers and are appreciative of people's differences and identities. Pupils are keen to contribute to their community. However, there is a lack of opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills and for their voices to be fully heard and responded to.
7. The curriculum effectively supports pupils' development towards adult life. Pupils are well supported when making choices about subjects and when considering routes into further and higher education, or the world of work. Pupils develop a mature understanding and appreciation of their local community and develop their understanding of citizenship well.
8. Safeguarding arrangements effectively promote the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders are well trained and ensure all staff understand their role in keeping pupils safe. Record keeping is robust, and leaders liaise appropriately with external agencies when necessary.

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 RSE programme meets older pupils' needs as effectively as possible
- strengthen the development of the leadership skills of pupils across the school and their opportunities to help shape the school through voicing their perspectives.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders ensure that the school's vision and Christian values are pivotal to all aspects of school life. They ensure these values form part of the daily lived experience and that all pupils feel known and understood. As a result, pupils develop an understanding of their innate value as individuals and are well supported in the school.
10. Governors work closely with school leaders to ensure they are well informed about the work of the school and the performance of its pupils. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Governors attend meetings and visit the school to observe lessons, meet with staff and attend performances. In addition to the support this provides, governors challenge leaders through the scrutiny of regular reports written by leaders. As a result, they ensure that leaders fulfil their roles effectively so that the Standards are met consistently, and so that pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted. Governors ensure that leaders receive pertinent training to help maintain their secure skills and knowledge.
11. Leaders and governors ensure that relevant policies, which reflect current statutory guidance, are drawn up and implemented effectively. They liaise appropriately with external agencies, often in several different boroughs, to effectively promote pupils' wellbeing. The work of teachers and pastoral staff is effectively monitored and reviewed by senior leaders to ensure that pupils make good progress and feel supported.
12. Governors and leaders have adopted a comprehensive approach to identifying and managing risks. Governors have collated a register of risks and leaders have created a comprehensive suite of risk assessments for every area of the school and activities, both in school and on educational visits. Leaders consider any unexpected consequences for groups of pupils and individuals when they contemplate changes and developments, for example, to the curriculum or timetable.
13. Parents are provided with all required information, with a range of information on the school's website. The school provides parents with regular written reports, which give information about their child's progress and attainment.
14. Leaders and governors ensure that the school meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place that outlines how the school ensures that all pupils have access to the curriculum and facilities. Leaders provide the local authority with relevant information about pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans.
15. Parental concerns and complaints are handled effectively and in line with the written policy. Where necessary, governors are appropriately involved. Detailed records of concerns and complaints are kept securely so that leaders can reflect upon any common themes or lessons learned.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Leaders have developed a balanced and well-structured curriculum across all year groups. This caters for individual pupils' aptitudes and needs through the provision of carefully chosen courses, such as further mathematics to enable appropriate challenge for older pupils. The curriculum is intentionally broad in Years 7 and 8 before enabling individual choice in some areas to suit the developing skills and aptitudes of pupils in Year 9. This ensures an appropriate academic foundation, in which literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening are well developed and embedded throughout the curriculum.
18. As far as possible, leaders design personalised pathways for pupils, especially at A level, through subject choices which match pupils' aptitudes and interests. Thoughtful curriculum design prioritises building on pupils' achievements, with particular attention given to meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils are engaged in their learning and make good progress. High quality resources, for example in the areas of the arts and technology, enrich the learning experience and support pupils' creative efforts. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet the diverse needs of pupils, fostering both academic progress and personal development.
19. Teachers build highly positive relationships with pupils across all year groups, fostering a collaborative and purposeful learning environment where pupils take increasing leadership of their learning. A well-judged range of teaching strategies is used by teachers, including initiatives such as Socratic dialogue and the use of artificial intelligence tools when helpful. These enhance pupils' engagement and develop their critical thinking skills.
20. Well-structured lessons with clear objectives and targeted support for individual pupils cater to diverse learning needs. For example, the pace of lessons and the forms of assessment are tailored to meet pupils' needs and ensure they are able to make good progress and gain confidence. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge enabling them to develop well-planned lessons so that pupils make good progress. When helpful, teachers use techniques such as effective questioning, well-pitched verbal feedback, peer discussion and the use of model answers to deepen pupils' understanding of concepts and themes.
21. Teachers provide pupils with regular feedback which enables pupils to understand how to improve their work and make further progress. Teachers ensure time is provided for pupils to respond to feedback, building upon their successes and areas for learning.
22. Provision for pupils who have SEND involves close collaboration between teachers and leaders to support pupils with a range of needs, including dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This leads to effective teaching which supports those areas identified in individual pupils' support plans and, where necessary, their EHC plans.
23. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and require support for their English, receive tailored feedback, accessible materials and specialised additional support. As a result, they make good progress in their academic studies and beyond.
24. Leaders use an appropriate assessment framework to track and monitor the performance of all pupils. Regular assessments in all subjects inform leaders' and teachers' knowledge of pupils so that action can be taken to address gaps in their knowledge or areas which require further stretch and

challenge. Teachers maintain detailed records of pupils' progress in lessons and use this to inform planning for pupils' next steps.

25. Leaders provide a range of activities outside of the academic timetable, but within the school day, which enables pupils to explore other interests beyond their academic studies. Pupils develop their skills in areas such as sport, music and drama. Pupils benefit from extra-curricular activities such as debating, table tennis and cookery. The annual school musical and rehearsals for this give pupils the opportunity to develop their performance skills as well as team building and resilience.

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

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

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

27. Leaders promote pupils' development of a sense of self. The trust developed between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves, is based on the shared understanding that each person has an innate sense of worth. The school ensures that pastoral care is central to supporting pupils' academic progress as well as their positive mental health and emotional wellbeing.
28. A well-planned, bespoke personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum has been developed by leaders over time. Leaders are responsive to topical issues which arise from time to time and adapt the PSHE programme to accommodate discussion of these. Form teachers, who know and understand their pupils well, deliver the PSHE curriculum effectively to enable pupils to develop strategies to support their own emotional wellbeing.
29. Leaders ensure that pupils receive relationships and sex education (RSE) that reflects the requirements of current statutory guidance. However, while younger pupils find the content and teaching of RSE relevant, the RSE programme for some older pupils does not meet their needs as fully as possible. For example, aspects of healthy sexual relationships and birth control are not taught in a manner which resonates with all pupils' lives.
30. A physical education (PE) programme in and beyond the timetable enables pupils to develop skills as well as a passion and interest in some sports. Regular lessons in the curriculum contribute to pupils' physical development and give them the opportunity to understand the importance of exercise as part of a balanced lifestyle.
31. Pupils develop a firm sense of self-worth, which is fostered in an environment of mutual respect, courage and openness, where pupils encourage and support one another. The development of pupils' resilience is a key focus of the wellbeing and assembly programmes. Effective pastoral care supports pupils' development of the ability to take responsibility for themselves and to consider the consequences of their choices. Leaders' positive relationships with pupils ensure that where a pupil is concerned about any aspect of their education, they feel comfortable to approach leaders about their concerns. These close relationships allow leaders to identify emerging issues and respond proactively to support pupils' wellbeing.
32. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about world religions and encourage respect for people's diverse faiths and beliefs. Spiritual themes, such as readings from the Bible and references to historical characters of religious importance, form regular topics in assemblies and pupils develop their understanding of the spiritual perspectives of those who have faith and those who do not. The school building includes spaces for pupils to relax and reflect. Artwork on display encourages pupils to consider non-material aspects of life as well as appreciate the achievements of others.
33. The behaviour policy is understood by staff and pupils and sets out how good behaviour is promoted through the system of rewards, green points and commendations. Appropriate sanctions are used where pupils misbehave. As a result, pupils behave well and demonstrate respect for each other, the school rules and British values, such as individual liberty. The approach to behaviour management implemented by leaders enables staff to build close relationships with pupils and identify any emerging behavioural or pastoral issues and respond effectively to these.

34. Leaders are proactive in preventing bullying through the promotion of the school's values in assemblies and wellbeing lessons. Leaders ensure that pupils understand the different types of bullying and can relate these to their lives. For example, pupils learn how to avoid cyber-bullying. Bullying is not tolerated within the school and leaders have clear procedures in place to support pupils. The rare bullying incidents are reported appropriately and dealt with effectively.
35. Leaders ensure that pupils are aware of who they can speak to if they have concerns about their mental or physical health and pupils are comfortable approaching adults should they have any worries in this regard.
36. The premises are maintained to a high standard. Leaders ensure all required health and safety checks and servicing are carried out methodically. Regular fire drills ensure pupils know what to do in an emergency and a suitable fire risk assessment is in place and acted on.
37. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably trained in first aid and provide an appropriate space for the treatment of pupils and the administration of medicines. Leaders ensure that appropriate supervision is in place, including at breaktimes and on school trips, through the effective deployment of staff.
38. Leaders maintain admission and attendance registers in accordance with relevant legislation and with regard to current statutory guidance. Staff monitor attendance patterns and liaise with the local authority and parents to provide individual support for pupils where attendance is a concern. Leaders inform the local authority about pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard times.

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. The school creates an environment in which all pupils feel included. The curriculum effectively prepares pupils for life in British society, emphasising personal responsibility and the importance of respect for and tolerance of different cultural and social viewpoints. As a result, pupils feel that their school is somewhere that they can be themselves. Instances of racism, misogyny or lack of cultural respect are extremely rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively when they do occur.
41. The curriculum promotes pupils' understanding of human, social and economic issues, integrating into the range of subjects themes of equality and the need to respect diversity and people's protected characteristics, such as race, religion and sex. Activities with local charities and community engagement projects, for example, pupils' contributions to a local food bank, visits to a retirement home and carol singing in the local community, provide pupils with real-world experiences, foster a sense of social responsibility, and engender a sense of collective responsibility.
42. The school further fosters a culture of respect and diversity through initiatives such as 'mother tongue week', and engaging pupils in discussions about themes such as equality, toxic masculinity and healthy relationships. Leaders encourage pupils to engage with charity work abroad and to consider the work of organisations dealing with issues such as human trafficking and living in a war zone. Educational visits to France, Morocco and Iceland inform pupils' sense of global citizenship.
43. The school encourages pupils to develop respect for the rule of law through debates, discussions on moral rights and wrongs, and visits from legal professionals who discuss issues, for example, of copyright and discrimination against protected characteristics as part of employment law. This focus on British values supports pupils to develop into responsible, well-rounded individuals who understand their civic duty and the principles of fairness, tolerance and justice. Pupils develop an understanding of democracy through the curriculum and educational visits, such as to the Houses of Parliament. Leaders ensure that teaching does not undermine fundamental British values or promote partisan political views.
44. Through a structured careers programme as part of the 'wellbeing' and 'critical thinking' programmes, pupils are supported to explore further education, apprenticeships and employment opportunities, equipping them with the skills they need to make informed decisions and applications to prospective future educators or employers. Pupils are exposed to the world of employment through visits to places of work, including financial services, a risk management office and a barristers' chambers. Individual interviews with a careers advisor help pupils make informed choices about examination subjects, further study and chosen career pathways. Sixth-form pupils develop professional online profiles and are supported to write effective curriculum vitae.
45. Opportunities for pupil leadership are limited. The school council has not yet gained any substantial traction and, as a result, there is a lack of opportunity for pupils to demonstrate initiative and leadership. Pupils recognise the potential of the suggestion box and that the school council can enable them to submit ideas for school improvement, but do not always feel their voices are heard or acted upon. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills, but these are limited.

46. A 'life skills' programme helps to prepare pupils for adult life. For example, pupils in the sixth form engage in cookery classes as part of their preparation for life at university. Pupils develop their understanding of personal finances through developing an understanding of budgeting and saving. Pupils consider diverse cultural perspectives. Pupils are highly engaged and see the value in learning about aspects of life that will help them in the future.

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. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders have developed a robust culture in which the safety and wellbeing of pupils is a priority. The safeguarding policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance and is available to parents on the website. Governors have clear oversight of safeguarding arrangements, and a designated safeguarding governor meets regularly with leaders to ensure effective systems are in place to protect children from harm.
49. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are appropriately trained and demonstrate sound skills and knowledge to promote the safety of pupils. Effective decision-making leads to appropriate actions to support any pupils affected by safeguarding issues. These, and the rationale for them, are securely recorded. Governors and senior leaders ensure appropriate liaison with external agencies happens promptly, including, when required, the referring of concerns to appropriate safeguarding partners.
50. Staff receive regular training to ensure they are confident to identify and handle any safeguarding concerns raised by pupils or which otherwise present themselves. Staff are mindful of pupils' wellbeing and are quick to report any concerns. Training ensures staff understand their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty with regard to dangers of radicalisation or extremism. They maintain an awareness of any contextual risks that may arise.
51. Leaders ensure safer recruitment processes are robust. They ensure that all required pre-employment checks are undertaken before adults commence working at the school. These checks are recorded in a suitable single central record of appointments (SCR).
52. Pupils learn how to stay safe through the 'wellbeing' programme and assemblies. They are taught about the risks involved when using the internet and learn strategies to stay safe, for example, managing passwords and how to handle unwanted online contact. The school ensures appropriate filtering and monitoring procedures are in place to further promote online safety.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Thames Christian School
Department for Education number	212/6403
Registered charity number	1081666
Address	Thames Christian School 12 Grant Road London SW11 2FR
Phone number	020 7228 3933
Email address	info@thameschristianschool.org.uk
Website	www.thameschristianschool.org.uk
Proprietor	Thames Christian School
Chair	Mrs Marie-Louise Wells
Headteacher	Dr Stephen Holsgrove
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	208
Date of previous inspection	27 June 2023

Information about the school

54. Thames Christian School is an independent co-educational day school. It is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The directors of the company are also the charity's trustees and the school's governors. The school, which was opened in September 2000, moved into purpose-built premises close to Clapham Junction in 2022.
55. The school has identified 91 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Seven pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. The school has identified English as an additional language for six pupils.
57. The school states its aims are to help pupils to understand their innate value as individuals and members of the community. It seeks to encourage pupils to become well-rounded and compassionate young people, who embrace good character, personal responsibility and academic rigour. The school aims to develop its pupils as wise leaders who nurture their skills and talents in preparation for life beyond school.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

1 to 3 April 2025

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

59. 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

60. 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

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

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