

School inspection report

23 to 25 September 2025

Riverston School

63–69 Eltham Road

Lee Green

London

SE12 8UF

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.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
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	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders focus particularly well on pupils' wellbeing, which is at the heart of the decisions they make and the actions they take. Leaders continually check the quality of the school's provision. They identify appropriate areas for development and take suitable actions to address them. Leaders and the proprietor ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
2. Leaders have very high expectations and a determination that all pupils will be successful and achieve as highly as possible. They focus exceptionally well on meeting pupils' individual needs. The curriculum and how it is delivered is built around what is best for each pupil. This creates a highly bespoke offering that enables pupils to achieve well and make good progress, often from very low starting points. This is a significant strength of the school.
3. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. They plan lessons very carefully, matching the content and their approach to pupils' needs and interests. The education and therapy teams work closely together, which makes the delivery of the curriculum highly effective. Pupils receive the support they need to enjoy their learning and be successful.
4. The promotion of respect permeates every aspect of the school's work. The school's personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is well planned and thorough. Leaders give PSHE a high priority. They match the curriculum carefully to pupils' personal needs. Where necessary, pupils receive individual tuition and support to help them understand matters that are challenging for them, such as how to build and maintain positive relationships with others.
5. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance. Staff help them to understand and celebrate the differences between people. Pupils learn about fairness and equality. This helps to prepare them for life in British society.
6. The school's careers education programme is well developed. Pupils are given the information they need to make informed choices about their futures. They are given the support they need to take their next steps confidently when they leave school.
7. The school has a robust safeguarding culture. Staff are well trained and vigilant. They report any concerns about pupils promptly. Leaders take appropriate action to protect pupils, where necessary.
8. The school provides parents with all required information. There is a suitable complaints policy that is followed appropriately. Leaders take effective steps to develop links between home and school, but further attention is needed in this area. Generally, parents are very positive about the school and recognise the impact it has on their children. However, a small minority of parents are less positive because communication is not fully 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:

- develop and extend communication in order to improve some parents' confidence in and satisfaction with the school.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders are determined that pupils, whatever their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will achieve as well as possible. They are ambitious for pupils and resolute about providing whatever is necessary to meet pupils' needs. Leaders place a high focus on promoting pupils' wellbeing. This is widely known and understood. The school has a clear culture that puts pupils first. As a result, leaders and staff go out of their way to meet pupils' needs as well as they can.
10. The school's leadership team has been formed relatively recently, but its impact is already evident. Leaders share a vision for the school. They are clear about their priorities and know what they are aiming for. They monitor all aspects of the school to identify what is working well and areas for further improvement. Leaders identify appropriate priorities and put well-considered plans in place to address them.
11. The proprietor took over the school at the beginning of the academic year. Robust measures have already been put in place for governors to assure themselves that leaders have the knowledge and skills they need to meet the Standards fully and consistently. The proprietor provides leaders with appropriate support and challenge.
12. Parents are provided with detailed and informative reports about their child's progress and attainment. Reports also provide information about pupils' behaviour, engagement with their learning and independence. The school's website provides all required information for parents of current and prospective pupils. Leaders provide local authorities with all required information concerning education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Leaders also report to local authorities when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times.
13. The school's policies are carefully considered and implemented consistently. Leaders keep up to date with legislation and statutory guidance. They review and update policies in a timely fashion when guidance changes. Policies are shared appropriately with parents, pupils and staff so that they are widely understood.
14. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. It is a warm and friendly place where everyone is welcomed, regardless of their personal characteristics, such as race, religion and disability. The school's accessibility plan focuses on ensuring that all pupils have full access to the school, the site and the curriculum.
15. Leaders work with a range of outside agencies to benefit pupils' wellbeing. They establish and maintain links with charities that provide support for pupils in areas such as mental health. Leaders work with a range of professionals, including speech and language therapists and school nurses, to enhance the curriculum and better provide for pupils' needs.
16. The school has a suitable complaints policy, which is made available on its website. Leaders respond appropriately to any concerns that are raised and the complaints policy is followed where necessary. Most parents are very happy with the school and the positive difference it makes to their children's lives. Leaders focus well on developing links between the school and pupils' families, but communication is not fully effective. A small proportion of parents have concerns about communication and feel that they do not have enough direct contact with the school through the academic year. Where this is the case, they have less confidence in the school and its effectiveness.

17. The school has robust processes for identifying and managing risks, including those that are not immediately obvious. Leaders and staff have the knowledge and skills they need in this area. They identify risks thoroughly and put suitable measures in place to mitigate them. They review risk assessments regularly and adjust them as necessary.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum and know what they want it to achieve. They have a deep understanding of how pupils' special educational needs can affect their learning. Leaders have very high expectations of pupils, and their drive for them to do well academically has a notably positive impact. Leaders make the curriculum interesting and engaging. Where pupils express an interest in a subject that is not usually offered, leaders do all they can to enable it to be provided. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Results at GCSE were above the national average in 2025.
20. The school provides a core curriculum that includes areas identified by leaders as the most important for pupils to learn about. The core curriculum includes English, mathematics, science, computing and PSHE. The courses that pupils follow are chosen carefully to meet their needs and abilities, with pupils achieving functional skills, BTEC and GCSE qualifications, as appropriate. The core curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of other options including drama, French, history, music and art.
21. The curriculum in the sixth form is similarly well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils are offered a wide range of qualifications from entry level through to A level. Leaders think carefully about what suits pupils best, taking into account their abilities, interests and additional needs. Leaders' high expectations are evident in the increasing proportion of pupils who are working towards university entry. Leaders adapt the curriculum to enable pupils to reach higher academic levels. For example, they have introduced the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) to encourage pupils to think deeply and develop their research skills.
22. Teachers know and understand their subjects well. This enables them to explain concepts clearly and to anticipate pupils' misconceptions. Teachers break learning down into manageable chunks so that pupils digest, understand and remember what is taught.
23. Pupils are taught in small, well-staffed groups. Staff have a thorough understanding of pupils' additional needs. They take these into account when planning learning and during lessons. Pupils are provided with the support they need academically, socially and emotionally. Where pupils' learning disabilities make understanding new concepts challenging, staff make learning more practical and less abstract, using carefully chosen resources to support them.
24. Staff use their in-depth knowledge about pupils' needs to help them manage behaviour effectively in lessons. They identify suitable strategies for each pupil and follow them consistently. For example, where pupils need space to regulate their emotions, they are given it. Staff anticipate when pupils need a short break and provide it, supporting pupils to manage their own emotions and behaviour. As a result, classrooms are calm and productive places.
25. The school has a team of therapists covering drama therapy, speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. The team also provides specialist support for dyslexia and emotional literacy. In addition to direct therapeutic work with pupils, the therapy team contributes to the curriculum. Therapists write programmes of learning on aspects of their individual areas which are delivered to pupils during tutor time. This supports pupils to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in key areas.

26. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive the support they need. As with other aspects of the curriculum, this is tailored to pupils' individual needs. Where appropriate, staff use carefully chosen programmes to help pupils develop their literacy skills in English. This helps pupils who speak EAL to make good progress.
27. The school's approach to assessment is well developed. Teachers check regularly whether pupils have understood and remembered what they have been taught. They use this information to adjust their teaching methods or to provide additional support, where necessary. Teachers provide pupils with useful feedback on their learning, which helps them to focus on key targets for development.
28. The school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are able to take part in a range of clubs and activities, including sports, sign language, robotics and financial management. Leaders adapt and extend what is offered in response to pupils' interests.

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 place great emphasis on the importance of respect. Staff routinely model respectful behaviour in their interactions with pupils and other adults. This helps pupils to understand what is expected of them. The extensive PSHE curriculum teaches pupils about the differences between people. Leaders recognise pupils' particular challenges around understanding such differences and the concept of discrimination. They ensure that protected characteristics, such as race, religious belief and sexual orientation, are not taught as one-off, standalone lessons. Instead, they are regularly revisited in order to give pupils plenty of opportunities to discuss and understand these issues. Staff give pupils opportunities to explore their own feelings and experiences. They focus well on helping pupils to understand that 'you are who you are', as they explore their own identities.
31. Pupils are given plentiful opportunities to reflect on their own thoughts and beliefs. They are given the space they need to pause and reflect. This helps them to develop an appreciation of the world around them. Pupils learn about a range of religions and beliefs. This helps them to understand that other people's views and beliefs may differ from their own but are equally valid.
32. Significant attention is given to PSHE within the school's curriculum in order to meet the particular needs of pupils who attend the school. It is planned coherently and delivered effectively throughout the school, including in the sixth form. It covers a wide range of areas, including physical and mental health. The PSHE programme is supported by a planned form-time programme, which enhances and consolidates what is taught.
33. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum is similarly well planned. The curriculum gives broad and appropriate coverage of relevant topics, with a particular focus on teaching pupils about the concept of consent. Teachers adapt their approaches to meet pupils' emotional and cognitive needs, such as using teddy bears and references to video games to help pupils understand this important concept. The curriculum includes important areas such as puberty, pregnancy and contraception. Leaders understand pupils' needs in this area and recognise that many pupils find RSE particularly challenging. Key aspects are returned to frequently to reinforce pupils' understanding.
34. The physical education (PE) curriculum covers the whole school, including the sixth form. The curriculum includes a range of sports including football, basketball, athletics and dance. It is delivered effectively by specialist staff. Pupils are given opportunities to take PE qualifications that are matched to their needs, including BTECs and GCSEs. Pupils are also able to gain qualifications in sports leadership.
35. Pupils behave well throughout the school. The behaviour policy is suitable and implemented consistently. Staff know pupils' needs and pre-empt situations they are likely to find difficult. Staff act swiftly and appropriately when triggers occur that may result in negative behaviour. They take the right action for the individual pupil to help them manage their responses, such as going for a short walk or visiting the school's 'SAFE hub'. This helps classrooms to remain calm and orderly places where pupils feel safe, can concentrate and are able to learn.
36. Pupils learn about bullying and the forms it can take through the PSHE curriculum and form time. Throughout the school there is a continual focus on treating other people kindly and respectfully. Pupils know and understand this expectation. Pupils are closely supervised at all times so that

opportunities for bullying are limited. Adults support pupils effectively and respond promptly when issues arise. As a result, bullying is rare.

37. The school provides a suitable learning environment. It is clean and well maintained. Health and safety procedures are robust. All required checks, including those for fire safety, are carried out in a timely fashion by suitably qualified people. First aid arrangements are appropriate, with sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff.
38. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the latest regulations. Leaders monitor attendance carefully and take appropriate action in response to absences.

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. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance, through the PSHE curriculum, the form-time programme and assemblies. For example, pupils are supported to develop their understanding of other pupils' needs and/or disabilities and how this can affect how they respond to situations. If any disrespectful behaviour arises, staff tackle it appropriately. Leaders work with other agencies and specialist charities to support them in this work. Pupils are taught about the parliamentary system, including about members of parliament and the Houses of Parliament. Pupils are given opportunities to experience a democratic process through, for example, voting for the school council. This helps pupils to understand the expectations of life in British society.
41. Pupils learn about a range of cultures and beliefs. For example, the school's cultural day provides an opportunity for pupils to share and talk about dress and food customs from other countries and religious backgrounds. This helps them to develop a broad understanding and appreciation of the diversity in society.
42. Pupils contribute to wider society through raising money for local and national charities. Pupils contribute to the life of the school in a range of ways and as a result they develop social skills. For example, some older pupils provide mentoring and support for younger pupils. This helps them to develop empathy and to understand the importance of supporting other people.
43. The PSHE programme teaches pupils explicitly about the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are given ample opportunities to talk about moral dilemmas and to think about appropriate responses in different situations. They are also taught about the country's laws and the potential consequences of breaking them. The PSHE programme teaches pupils about law and order, including courts and the judicial system.
44. Pupils learn about a range of public services through PSHE, careers education and other aspects of the curriculum. The school has regular visits from National Health Service (NHS) staff and the police, which help them to understand these important roles. Pupils from Years 10 onwards undertake BTEC courses in public services.
45. Pupils are given opportunities to develop responsibility in a range of ways. For example, each of the school's houses has a captain and vice-captain, who take a lead role within their house. The sports captains and vice-captains lead the games elements for each house.
46. The school focuses well on helping pupils to prepare for their adult lives, for example, through the life-skills programme. The programme is closely tailored to pupils' individual needs. Pupils receive effective careers guidance, which helps them to understand the range of options available to them after leaving school. They are given the support they need to make informed decisions about their future.
47. Economic education is a component of the PSHE and mathematics curriculums that runs throughout the school. It covers issues such as budgeting, taxes and running a household. In Years 10 and 11, the life-skills curriculum includes a unit where pupils learn about financial capability. Pupils are given real-life opportunities to practise budgeting, including visiting cafes and planning the school's prom.

Pupils learn how to plan nutritious meals economically as part of the BTEC home cooking course. Economic education is taught effectively so that pupils develop the skills they need for adult life.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. Leaders give safeguarding a high profile. They understand very well the particular needs of pupils who attend the school and the ways in which these can make them more vulnerable. Leaders put effective measures in place to mitigate those risks. This creates a robust safeguarding culture throughout the school.
50. Staff are provided with safeguarding training when they join the school, as part of their induction. They continue to receive regular additional training, reminders and updates. As a result, staff know the importance of safeguarding and understand that it is everyone's responsibility. They are vigilant and report any concerns about pupils promptly, using the school's agreed systems.
51. Leaders respond quickly to safeguarding concerns that are raised. They put effective measures in place to support pupils when concerns arise. Leaders make referrals to children's social care and other agencies, where necessary. They are tenacious in their approach, taking whatever action is necessary to protect pupils.
52. Staff know what to do if they are concerned about the behaviour of a member of staff. They are vigilant and observant. Staff report any low-level concerns, about themselves or other adults, to leaders as soon as they arise. Leaders respond appropriately when concerns arise.
53. The school has a robust approach to the safer recruitment of staff. Leaders know and understand the importance of ensuring that only suitable people are employed to work with pupils. All required checks are carried out methodically before anyone is allowed to start work at the school. The single central record (SCR) of these checks is well maintained and meets requirements.
54. Arrangements for filtering and monitoring the internet are suitable. Leaders use an external company to restrict what pupils can access online and to monitor how they use the internet. Leaders receive notifications and alerts from the company, which they respond to swiftly and appropriately.
55. Pupils are taught about a range of ways to keep themselves safe. Pupils are taught about online safety and the risks around using the internet. They learn strategies to protect themselves, such as not giving personal information to people they do not know.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Riverston School
Department for Education number	203/6169
Address	63–69 Eltham Road Lee Green London SE12 8UF
Phone number	020 8318 4327
Email address	office@riverstonschool.co.uk
Website	www.riverstonschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Ltd
Chair	Mr Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Mr Guy Baker
Age range	11 to 19
Number of pupils	168
Date of previous inspection	26 to 29 April 2022

Information about the school

57. Riverston School is a co-educational day school in South London. It caters for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) including autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and moderate learning difficulties. The school operates on a single site. The proprietorship of the school changed on 1 September 2025.
58. There is a separate early years setting which is registered with and inspected by Ofsted. The setting provides for children from nine months to four years.
59. The school has identified all pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Almost all pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
60. The school has identified 14 pupils as speaking English as an additional language (EAL).
61. The school states its aims are to help young people thrive in a way that celebrates their unique and individual skills and talents. It aims to enable pupils to develop into unique, happy and independent young people who have the confidence and self-belief to achieve whatever they may want in the future. The school aims for pupils to become lifelong learners, who have the skills needed to be successful in the wider world. The school states it believes in being entirely inclusive, celebrating and sharing differences, and in the intrinsic value of a tolerant and respectful society.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

23 to 25 September 2025

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

63. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of governors and a representative of the proprietorial body
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders 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.

64. 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

For more information, please visit isi.net