

School inspection report

6 to 8 February 2024

LVS Hassocks

London Road

Sayers Common

West Sussex

BN6 9HT

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. Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the school which is implemented effectively through their understanding of pupils' needs. Governors ensure that leaders have the knowledge and skills required to manage the school well. Leaders actively promote the aims and ethos of the school.
2. Leaders provide a suitable curriculum which is well-matched to the needs of pupils and supports pupils to access potential future pathways. Pupils' abilities, their ambitions and opinions play a key role in curriculum planning and implementation. Leaders understand the risks associated with possible future withdrawal of some qualifications and identify opportunities for an imaginative and suitable approach to certification for pupils where this is appropriate.
3. Staff have a detailed understanding of the individual profiles and needs for each pupil. This helps staff to plan learning in a way which builds confidence in pupils. This focus is effective because it supports pupils who may have had a previously negative experience of education and enables them to rebuild their trust.
4. Leaders and managers provide a school environment which prioritises pupils' physical health. Levels of supervision are appropriate to keep pupils safe, and all members of staff on-site understand and implement safeguarding procedures in line with school policy. The site is secure, and leaders take a proactive and effective approach to managing risk.
5. There is a culture of respect between pupils of different ages and genders and where there are negative comments involving protected characteristics, the school takes a restorative, educational approach to support pupils to correct their behaviour and to understand why it was wrong.
6. The development of life skills to enable pupils to thrive when they leave school is a core part of the school's aims and ethos. This approach is integrated into lessons and extra-curricular activities. For example, in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE), leaders support pupils to access a wide range of volunteering opportunities, with bespoke plans and risk assessments in place to keep pupils safe.

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 and governors should ensure that:

- they systematically identify trends in behaviour or bullying which may impact on those with protected characteristics
- the behaviour policy is implemented consistently so that the impact of disruptive behaviour in class is reduced.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Governors and school leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing in line with school aims and conduct learning walks each time they visit the school. Leaders have a well-developed knowledge of pupils in the school, their individual needs and potential as learners and respond proactively to these needs.
8. Leaders communicate with parents effectively, ensuring that parents are aware of their child's progress each week. Leaders flag information with parents in advance where changes in school are occurring which may impact on their child's equilibrium. This keeps parents informed and helps them to reinforce messages at home if necessary.
9. Leaders maintain an easily accessible website which provides relevant key information for parents of current and prospective pupils. This includes clear details of academic performance in the previous school year. Leaders implement an appropriate procedure for dealing with complaints.
10. Suitable risk assessments are in place to ensure pupils' safety, including during off-site activities. Risk assessments are bespoke to pupils, taking into account each of their needs. Sensible and proportionate mitigation strategies are in place which are dynamically updated as pupils' needs develop.
11. The school site is inclusive and accessible to all pupils. An external audit of the site and the appropriate accessibility plan informs ongoing improvements to the school site. Staff are cognisant of the needs of their pupils and make adjustments and adaptations to the physical environment so that it is as accessible as possible.
12. School leaders establish an effective school ethos which safeguards and promotes the welfare of the pupils. The safeguarding policy is implemented appropriately and adheres to statutory guidance. Pupils have trusted adults they can turn to when they need to raise concerns.
13. School leaders keep in regular contact with the local authority designated officer and make timely referrals. Low level concerns are logged appropriately and advice is sought from the LADO if and when needed.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

14. Leaders promote a unified approach to lesson planning and delivery. Lessons begin with a short period of recall practice, which is effective in habituating pupils to this repeated practice and helps previous learning to be brought to mind, prior to the introduction of new learning.
15. Pupils make progress in a range of subjects including English, maths and science. Pupils are set appropriate tasks to support their progress from their current attainment level. Staff balance challenge in lessons with suitable support so that pupils develop confidence in their learning.
16. Leaders implement a suitable monitoring system which tracks pupil progress compared to baseline starting points across different subjects. Pupils are assessed for tracking six times per year and the results recorded centrally. Individual pupils needing additional support are flagged-up by staff and appropriate interventions are put in place so that pupils are on track to meet their potential.
17. Work is suitably graded for pupils studying for GCSEs and this helps pupils to understand and reflect on their progress and academic achievement.
18. Staff provide effective support for pupils in relation to their diverse needs and interests and this leads to a high quality of learning experience for pupils. For example, some pupils have well-developed literacy skills, whilst not demonstrating these readily in more conventional or conformist circumstances. Some pupils have good scientific knowledge such as the workings of an electric circuit and can translate this to hazards found in the home, with an appropriate concern for safety. Some pupils demonstrate strong knowledge and understanding in computing and can apply their knowledge to coding.
19. School leaders effectively embed social literacy and the growth mindset motivation theory into the personal development curriculum. Skilled staff offer a dedicated, effective and highly intuitive approach to supporting pupils to make good progress relative to a pupil's profile and dynamic circumstances. Pupils are increasingly able to self-regulate and to grow as individuals, better able to navigate the complexities of life in a community.
20. Pupils develop their life skills in food technology classes, for example, pupils make pizzas from start to finish, using basic ingredients. Pupils develop many skills from this endeavour, and this supports pupils' independence as far as each pupil is able to demonstrate.
21. Pupils enjoy their learning relative to their level of interest and ability to engage. Pupil behaviour plays a significant part in pupils' experience of school, with disruption to learning managed swiftly and effectively by staff. Disruptive behaviour does, nevertheless impact upon learning.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

22. Leaders have clear oversight and manage the site effectively. The site is secure and has robust systems in place to support the safety of pupils. There are clear and appropriate procedures in place to identify and mitigate against risks on the school premises, including from fire, asbestos, and vehicle traffic. Leaders ensure that there is effective supervision across the site at all times of day.
23. Leaders create a respectful environment where pupils can express themselves safely. The strong mutual respect between staff and pupils supports pupils to be encouraging and approving of each other. Pupils build rapport and positive relationships with their peers.
24. Pupils feel that they are listened to and trust the adults to act on any concerns raised. Pupil voice is supported by leaders who meet regularly with pupil representatives to discuss any issues.
25. Leaders implement an improved system for tracking behaviour incidents which enable leaders to identify trends and to provide effective support and intervention. However, leaders do not systematically identify behaviour and bullying incidents linked to protected characteristics.
26. The attendance and admission registers are properly maintained, and leaders ensure that any pupils missing at the start of the day, or at any other time during the day, are quickly followed up in line with school policy.
27. The well-planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) scheme of work includes relationships and sex education (RSE) and promotes British values. This programme is delivered by specialist teachers in timetabled lessons on a weekly basis. There is a complementary social studies programme, delivered by tutors, which builds on aspects of the PSHE programme, such as relationships, while building skills which help pupils to manage the challenges that people who have autistic spectrum disorder may face.
28. Pupils' wellbeing is effectively promoted in PSHE and RSE lessons. Older pupils can take part in discussions about sexual health and understand the need to respect all groups of people including those with protected characteristics. The PSHE curriculum supports pupils to keep safe and to develop their relationships with others beyond school.
29. The school premises provide suitable accommodation to cater to pupils' medical and therapy needs. The welcoming nurse's room provides a safe space for pupils who can attend whenever required. Handling of medication is effective, with clear logs and suitable monitoring procedures in place. Leaders adopt a proactive approach to promoting pupil wellbeing by analysing medical logs, identifying patterns, and implementing mitigations where possible. Several staff are first aid trained and ongoing staff training is regularly monitored and up to date.
30. Pupils' preferences and dietary requirements are carefully considered and accommodated, with contingency food prepared and available, should pupil preferences change. Pupils are proactively encouraged to enjoy their lunch and to benefit from as healthy a diet as their profile needs will allow. Pupils inform the menu choices through pupil council discussions and through initiatives such as voting on food options in preparation for themed weeks.

31. Pupils are respected and valued by staff who gently encourage pupils to engage in school provision. Pupils are well known individually, so that support is tailored to meet their individual needs, with much patience and care. This supports pupils to be able to evaluate their approach to learning and to reflect on their achievements, when prompted by staff.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. Leaders provide several well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills and understanding of the world of work through the DofE award. Pupils are given the opportunity to engage in work-based training either onsite, for example working in the grounds and kitchens, as well as off-site for experience in their chosen area such as business, fitness centres and local retail outlets.
33. Pupils develop their understanding of economic education through their weekly engagement with the school café as part of the life skills programme. Parents and local residents are invited to the café on Fridays and food and drinks orders are taken by pupils who are also involved in the day-to-day management of the café.
34. Pupils receive relevant and impartial careers guidance through guided input from staff, who use their in-depth knowledge of pupils to facilitate an exploration of possible future careers. Pupils appreciate the positive impact 'life skills' classes have on their ability to be prepared for life outside of school.
35. Pupils are introduced to cultural differences, such as in music and dance. This broadens pupils' understanding, experience and enjoyment of diversity.
36. Leaders provide a horticultural area for pupil use, within the school grounds. This thriving resource not only cultivates vibrant crops but also nurtures the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. As a result, pupils develop their skills in areas such as patience, responsibility, and teamwork.
37. The social studies course prepares pupils effectively for life beyond Year 11. There is a focus on improving social interaction, developing frames for interacting with social conventions and supporting pupils to understand their own and others' behaviour.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

38. There are suitable arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. Effective procedures and systems are in place for staff to raise concerns and these are recorded and promptly acted on in line with the safeguarding policy. Safeguarding leaders make timely referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer and the police, where appropriate. Leaders work in partnership productively with external agencies to keep pupils safe and well.
39. The safeguarding policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance and is effectively implemented. It is available to staff, parents and pupils on the school website and contains all the necessary contact details.
40. All staff, including estates staff and receptionists, are aware of safeguarding procedures including actions to take in the moment and lines of reporting. Staff feel confident that pupils are safe online due to the extent of education offered and the response to emerging trends and incidents.
41. Governors and school leaders ensure that a suitable record of pre-appointment checks is maintained. Governors maintain effective oversight of the single central record and conduct regular and effective quality assurance checks.
42. Targeted PSHE lessons, talks, and relevant assemblies allow pupils to secure an understanding of how to keep themselves and their peers safe and develop an understanding of consent.
43. Leaders recognise that pupils with autism spectrum disorder can be vulnerable when navigating online. The school's online safety programme and work with parents are reviewed regularly. Pupils are supported to stay safe online through effective education provision in the curriculum which is informed by leaders' response to emerging trends and patterns in behaviour. The school online filtering and monitoring system is effective and protects pupils from accessing harmful or inappropriate content.
44. Leaders ensure that there are appropriate adults that pupils can turn to if they wish to raise any concerns.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	LVS Hassocks
Department for Education number	938/6267
Registered charity number	230011
Address	LVS Hassocks London Road Sayers Common West Sussex BN6 9HT
Phone number	01273 832901
Email address	info@lvs-hassocks.org.uk
Website	lvs-hassocks.org.uk
Proprietor	Licensed Trade Charity
Chair	Mr Mike Clist
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Borland
Age range	8-19
Number of pupils	61
Date of previous inspection	20 to 21 November 2019

Information about the school

45. LVS Hassocks is an autism specific school, offering placements to young people with autism aged 8 to 19. The school opened in 2009 and is set on 40 acres of land in Sayers Common. It is governed by trustees of the founding charity. The school is organised into two sections: the senior school for pupils aged 8 to 16 and the sixth form for pupils aged 16 to 19.
46. The school has identified 61 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). 61 pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
47. English is an additional language for one pupil.
48. The school states its aims are preparing pupils for life beyond LVS Hassocks, including the skills needed for employment, independent living and community inclusion, and for each pupil to learn, grow and achieve.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

6 to 8 February 2024

49. A team of 3 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

50. Inspection activities included:

- Observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- Observation of registration periods
- Observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities
- Discussions with the chair and other governors
- Discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- Discussions with pupils
- Scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school

51. 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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