

School inspection report

16 to 18 September 2025

Wellington College

Duke's Ride

Crowthorne

Berkshire

RG45 7PU

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 have established a positive environment in which boarders and day pupils integrate well within a unified and purposeful school community. Pupils' wellbeing is at the centre of leaders' decision-making and leaders have successfully embedded the school's values of kindness, courage, respect, integrity and responsibility in all aspects of school life.
2. Governors are ambitious for the school's success and development and effectively hold leaders to account. Leaders regularly review which aspects of school life need improvement, undertake systematic self-evaluation, carefully consider pupils' views and respond to their suggestions. Governors prioritise safeguarding in their oversight of the school and rigorously assess risks, including those relevant to the context of the school.
3. Leaders have designed a rich and challenging curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects. They have reviewed the structure of the curriculum thoughtfully to give teachers time and scope to extend pupils' knowledge and deepen their learning.
4. Leaders provide a wide range of high-quality recreational and enrichment opportunities that enable pupils to broaden their interests and skills. These include sport, academic societies, talks by visiting speakers and creative activities. Leaders ensure that boarders have suitable recreational activities at weekends and during boarding time.
5. The leadership of boarding is effective. Leaders promote boarders' wellbeing by implementing suitable induction procedures and clear policies. Boarding staff are appropriately trained. Leaders prioritise fostering boarders' sense of belonging to their house and the wider school community. Boarders are well cared for in comfortable, secure and well-maintained accommodation. They have access to appropriate medical provision, secure storage for possessions and good-quality meals with suitable choice.
6. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge, which equips them to challenge pupils to think critically and extend their learning. Teaching enables pupils to make good progress, and pupils achieve highly in GCSE, A level and International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations. The school does not consistently evaluate the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) in developing their language skills.
7. Pupils, including boarders, uphold high standards of behaviour in school and boarding life, supported by staff who apply the behaviour policy consistently and link expectations to the school's values. The wellbeing and physical education (PE) programmes teach pupils effectively about relationships, consent, nutrition, health and fitness and are appropriately matched to their age and needs.
8. The school encourages pupils to recognise the importance of respecting all people, regardless of their individual identity, and pupils consistently demonstrate respect for others in their daily lives. Through the curriculum, wellbeing programme and boarding life, pupils learn about inclusion, cultural diversity and diverse faith traditions, and engage well with wider social, political and cultural issues.
9. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and develop social responsibility through leadership opportunities and service to the local and wider communities. Staff provide high-quality careers guidance, so that pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

10. Leaders have established clear safeguarding systems, understand the range of risks to pupils' wellbeing and implement effective strategies to manage them. Safeguarding leaders are suitably trained for their role, arrange further training as required and meet regularly with boarding, health and pastoral staff to share information and review concerns.
11. Staff are vigilant about pupils' wellbeing. They know how to report low-level concerns about the behaviour of adults. Leaders respond promptly to concerns, maintain detailed records, including rationales for the decisions they take, and liaise effectively with external agencies when required. Through the curriculum, assemblies and talks, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online.

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 consistency in assessing the language needs of pupils who speak EAL so that support is adapted regularly and as needed to promote their progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing in their decision-making. They have established a positive culture built on the school's values. Leaders consistently model these values and in turn, pupils reflect the school's values in their daily conduct, steadfastly upholding high standards of behaviour and mutual respect.
13. Leaders are ambitious for the success of the school. They regularly consider aspects of school life that may need development, including in boarding, and carry out systematic self-evaluation to identify what works well and what requires improvement. Leaders take pupils' views into account as part of this process and act on their suggestions where appropriate. For example, in response to pupil feedback, leaders relocated the house for male day pupils from the perimeter of the site to its centre. This has been successful in further integrating the experience that boarders and day pupils have of school life.
14. Governors prioritise safeguarding. They undertake appropriate training and regularly audit the range and quality of their skills to ensure they hold leaders to account effectively. Governors regularly visit the school to review the impact of leaders' decisions and to evaluate how well the school's values are embedded in its culture. Governors' effective oversight ensures that leaders fulfil their responsibilities consistently and that the school meets the Standards.
15. Governors work closely with leaders to promote a clear and forward-looking vision for the school's development. They carefully weigh the risks attached to their decisions and test their judgements by seeking advice from external experts. Governors are well informed about the contextual risks facing the school, and together with leaders, instigate measures to reduce them, including those linked to the site during boarding time. Leaders review risk assessments regularly and ensure that staff receive training in how to assess risk. They oversee the letting of the school grounds and buildings to ensure that safeguarding requirements are met.
16. The leadership of boarding is effective. Boarders receive suitable induction, and boarding staff are suitably trained. Appropriate policies relating to boarding are in place. As a result, boarders are well cared for. Boarding houses are well managed and boarding leaders successfully foster a sense of belonging and community spirit in their houses.
17. Leaders effectively meet pupils' health needs. They promote effective liaison between boarding, pastoral and health staff, provide training in the administration of medication and maintain suitable facilities for sick or injured pupils. Leaders have established a wide-ranging and inclusive PE curriculum to promote pupils' physical health. They ensure that pupils consistently receive high levels of support in their mental health and emotional wellbeing, which includes access to an independent person for boarders.
18. Leaders check that staff understand policies. Leaders review policies regularly to ensure they remain effective and reflect the latest statutory guidance. Where required, policies are published on the school's website. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, including the local authority, safeguarding partners and the police, and act promptly on their advice.
19. Parents receive informative and regular updates on their child's attainment, effort and behaviour. Leaders schedule meetings and other occasions for parents to speak to staff about their child's progress.

20. A suitable complaints procedure is in place. Leaders manage complaints appropriately and in accordance with the procedure. Leaders and governors reflect on complaints and take appropriate actions in response, including when a complaint is not upheld.
21. Leaders report on the annual review of any education, health and care plan (EHC plan) to the relevant local authority. The school implements a suitable accessibility plan, which leaders regularly review. Leaders ensure that they meet their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders report any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition times to the local authority.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders have designed a rich curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. The curriculum includes a wide and challenging range of subjects such as Russian, Mandarin, classical Greek and ancient history. A 'fragments' course, devised by the school's academic leaders, encourages pupils to explore links between disciplines such as architecture, history, sculpture, film, art and technology, and to pursue wider academic and cultural interests. Leaders have carefully considered the time allocated to subjects, so that teachers have suitable time to extend and deepen learning and ignite curiosity. For example, pupils study advanced computational chemistry in science and in turn, learn to take risks in exploring new lines of enquiry. The curriculum is well matched to the aptitude and age of the pupils.
24. Leaders oversee an effective framework of assessment, which is understood well by staff, pupils and parents. Subject leaders evaluate pupils' progress effectively through analysing data, observing lessons and considering pupils' feedback, and provide appropriate support for pupils to improve their performance if required. Staff thoughtfully consider the outcomes of periodic assessments in relation to pupils' prior learning and attainment. As a result, they accurately assess the depth of pupils' understanding, identify areas for improvement and respond to individual needs. Teachers regularly assess pupils' understanding and progress and provide pupils with high-quality, well-structured feedback. Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve high grades at GCSE and A level and in the IB.
25. Teachers plan lessons effectively, building on what pupils know and developing their skills and understanding through a range of activities and good-quality resources. Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge, which enables them to deepen pupils' learning, spark pupils' curiosity and address complex questions. Through incisive questioning, teachers prompt pupils to explore their reasoning and reflect on the principles that underlie their learning.
26. Teachers foster a purposeful atmosphere in the classroom in which pupils apply sustained effort and show high levels of perseverance. Pupils reason well, think critically and show insight. In English, pupils relate interactions between characters in two Shakespeare plays to identify a common theme. In Latin, they consider perceptively how ancient Greek deities might make decisions if they were rooted in the values of the modern world. The school provides boarders with well-resourced study facilities during boarding time, with appropriate support available from boarding staff where needed.
27. Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who have an EHC plan. Specialist staff devise strategies that are tailored well to individual pupils' needs. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils who have SEND to express their views on the support they find effective and take these into account. Teachers follow the guidance provided and adapt their teaching as pupils' needs change. For example, teachers provide rest breaks for pupils who require them to sustain focus.
28. Pupils who speak EAL receive support to develop their speaking, listening and reading skills, and in lessons, teachers help them to understand technical vocabulary. The school does not consistently evaluate the progress of pupils who speak EAL in developing their language skills. This means that staff cannot always accurately measure the progress made by pupils who speak EAL.

29. Leaders provide a rich and stimulating range of recreational and enrichment options for pupils. Pupils broaden their interests and skills through sport, academic societies and creative work. For example, they attend a programme of 'fireside talks' given by external speakers, and collaborate with experts in residence who are national leaders in their fields. Leaders provide varied activities, including trips and competitions, for boarders who remain in school overnight on Saturdays.

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

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

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

31. Leaders make pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing a priority. Close liaison between boarding, day-house, teaching and pastoral staff, and with the health centre, ensures that pupils receive a high level of care. Leaders regularly draw on current academic research into mental and emotional health and take into account pupils' views to shape and improve provision.
32. Pastoral leaders and counsellors are readily accessible to pupils for support, as is an independent person for boarders. The school's wellbeing curriculum, which includes personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE), is effective in teaching pupils how to manage their mental health, respond to anxiety and seek support when needed. In boarding houses, staff implement a clear induction procedure, arrange peer mentoring and organise house activities to foster boarders' sense of belonging. They arrange for younger pupils to share rooms with different pupils on a rotational basis, helping them to build and manage friendships.
33. Pupils effectively develop their spiritual awareness by regularly participating in services at chapel or in a multi-faith room. They connect with their inner selves through silent contemplation in services. In religious studies and other lessons, pupils learn about different faiths and engage with their perspectives and practices. Pupils explore moral issues in depth across the curriculum, including through the wellbeing programme, as well as in religious studies, talks and assemblies.
34. The school's well-structured programme of RSE, taught through the wellbeing programme, is effective and matched well to the age and needs of pupils, including those who have SEND. Leaders monitor the quality of lessons. Teachers are suitably trained. Pupils explore topics such as consent and respectful relationships through meaningful discussion and enquiry, and staff assess understanding and provide feedback to keep the provision effective and relevant.
35. The PE curriculum is effective. It enables pupils to develop physical health, fitness and healthy habits, including in sleep and nutrition. Leaders ensure that provision is accessible to all, complementing team and individual sports with activities such as strength training and non-competitive agility work on the squash court. As a result, pupils build stamina and successfully extend their physical skills. They understand the connections between physical exercise and their health and wellbeing.
36. Pupils behave well and show courtesy and respect in their daily lives at school, including in the boarding houses. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently and ask pupils to consider behaviour that does not meet expectations in light of the school's values.
37. Leaders implement rigorous procedures, underpinned by a detailed policy, to address any instance of bullying swiftly and effectively. Instances of bullying are recorded and leaders regularly analyse logs to identify any patterns that require addressing.
38. Leaders ensure that health and safety measures are implemented appropriately. Staff are suitably trained in health and safety. Fire safety is well managed, including in the boarding houses. The school has appropriate risk assessments in place for site security. First aid and medical arrangements are suitable, including the administration of medication. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the medical care of boarders.

39. Boarding accommodation is comfortable and of good quality. Boarders have secure storage for their possessions. Boarding houses are well maintained and secure. The school provides boarders with nutritious meals, with appropriate choices for pupils with dietary requirements. All boarding requirements are met.
40. Staff effectively supervise pupils during meals, breaktimes, recreational activities and in boarding houses. Supervision is reinforced by CCTV, which staff monitor throughout the day.
41. The school's admission and attendance policy is implemented effectively in line with statutory requirements. Leaders review pupils' attendance regularly and take appropriate action when concerns arise.

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

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

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

43. Through the wellbeing programme, tutorial sessions, assemblies and the wider curriculum, pupils learn to recognise and respect difference. In PE lessons, pupils consider the impact of inclusive language and how activities can be adapted for individuals with particular needs or disabilities. The school fosters appreciation of other cultures by serving food that reflects the diverse traditions of the community, promoting cultural and religious celebrations and organising trips abroad. Boarders explain that boarding life fosters respect for varied cultural and religious backgrounds, to the point that such differences are simply accepted.
44. The curriculum supports pupils in engaging constructively with social, political and cultural issues. Through a programme in global citizenship, they learn about geopolitical conflicts and sensitivities. Leaders provide a broad range of opportunities in music, dance, drama and art, through which pupils develop cultural awareness and sensitivity. Through the PSHE programme, academic societies, experts in residence and visiting speakers, pupils learn about British institutions such as Parliament and the legal system. They have a clear understanding of democracy and how the British electoral system is founded upon it, and gain deeper insight into democratic processes through participation in mock elections and the selection process for pupil leaders. Leaders ensure that fundamental British values are promoted throughout the curriculum and that teaching does not undermine them.
45. Pupils demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong in their interactions with others. They understand how ethical behaviour connects to wider issues, such as developing sustainable methods of energy production, including for vehicle use. Through regular reflection on the sacrifices of former pupils in the World Wars, pupils gain a clear understanding of how the past shapes modern British life and the duty to honour service and sacrifice. In the Combined Cadet Force, pupils take personal responsibility for the safe use of weapons and consider the consequences of unsafe practice for those around them. Wide-ranging leadership opportunities enable pupils to develop a secure sense of responsibility towards their peers and the school community.
46. Leaders encourage pupils to develop social responsibility. Pupils engage extensively with the local community, for example, by supporting disabled children in nearby schools and visiting residents of care homes. They extend this commitment beyond the local area, regularly welcoming refugees from Ukraine and supporting those in Calais. As a result, pupils gain an understanding of peoples' lives that are very different from their own. Boarders use this experience of supporting others to help new pupils settle in, including those from abroad.
47. The school ensures that pupils develop a secure understanding of personal finance so that they are well prepared to manage future financial responsibilities. Through the curriculum and talks given by visiting speakers, pupils explore themes such as budgeting, taxation, reading payslips, the difference between current and savings accounts, and the effect of changes in interest rates on mortgage payments. Pupils gain useful insights into entrepreneurship and commercial enterprise through participating in a programme designed by a British banking firm.
48. Leaders ensure that pupils receive high-quality guidance when considering their next steps, so that they are well prepared for life beyond school. The well-structured careers programme helps pupils to understand a wide range of professions and includes regular opportunities for pupils to meet representatives from a wide variety of careers to discuss entry routes and the nature of the work.

Specialist staff provide suitable advice to sixth-form pupils on gap year opportunities, higher education, apprenticeships, art colleges and international universities. The school has developed an app that connects pupils to alumnae, so that pupils can explore career and university pathways further. The careers programme provides high-quality guidance that supports pupils in writing curricula vitae, building professional networks and conducting themselves in interviews.

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

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

50. Leaders have established clear and effective systems to safeguard pupils. They understand the range of safeguarding risks to pupils, including contextual risks, and put in place appropriate strategies to manage them. Staff are vigilant about pupils' welfare and report any concerns without delay, in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy, which reflects latest statutory requirements.
51. Safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained for their role and promptly arrange further training if required in response to contextual safeguarding issues as they arise. Staff and governors receive suitable updates and training that reflects statutory requirements.
52. Governors place safeguarding considerations at the heart of their decision-making. They interrogate safeguarding arrangements at the school through scrutiny at governors' meetings and periodic discussions with the school's safeguarding leaders. Governors regularly review the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding policy.
53. Safeguarding leaders regularly meet boarding, health and pastoral staff to review concerns and to ensure that information is shared appropriately to promote pupils' welfare and safety. Leaders respond to safeguarding concerns promptly and maintain detailed records, providing clear rationales for decisions taken. Safeguarding leaders review records regularly to identify trends and determine any action needed.
54. Safeguarding leaders assess risk carefully and put in place appropriate plans to support pupils affected by safeguarding concerns. They liaise promptly and effectively with external agencies, including children's services and the police, when required.
55. Staff know how to report low-level concerns about the behaviour of adults to senior leaders and do so when required. They self-refer when necessary. Leaders respond appropriately to any concerns and keep detailed records of referrals, which they review regularly to identify any patterns that require attention. They seek advice from the local authority and make referrals promptly when necessary.
56. Pupils learn about online risks through the wellbeing programme and broader curriculum, talks and assemblies, and they know how to seek help from adults if they feel at risk of harm when online. Leaders maintain effective internet filtering and monitoring systems.
57. The school completes all required statutory pre-employment checks on staff. Appropriate checks are undertaken on adults not employed by the school who live in boarding accommodation. If a member of staff begins employment before the review of a Disclosure and Barring Service check, suitable risk assessments and supervision are implemented. The single central record of appointments (SCR) is accurate. New staff receive comprehensive induction.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

58. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Wellington College
Department for Education number	867/6001
Registered charity number	309093
Address	Wellington College Duke's Ride Crowthorne Berkshire RG45 7PU
Phone number	01344 444000
Email address	info@wellingtoncollege.org.uk
Website	www.wellingtoncollege.org.uk
Proprietor	Wellington College
Chair	Mr William Jackson
Headteacher	Mr James Dahl
Age range	12 to 19
Number of pupils	1173
Number of boarding pupils	939
Date of previous inspection	10 to 13 May 2022

Information about the school

59. Wellington College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school located in Crowthorne, Berkshire. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection the school has opened a new sixth-form boarding house for male and female pupils and has relocated the day house for male pupils from the perimeter of the site to its centre.
60. The school has 16 boarding houses, eight for male boarders, seven for female boarders, and one for male and female boarders. Most boarders leave school on Saturday afternoon and return on Sunday.
61. The school has identified 362 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Very few pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
62. The school has identified English as an additional language for 182 pupils.
63. The school states its aim is to provide young people with the knowledge, skills and character to fulfil their potential and serve the ever-changing world in which they will live.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

16 to 18 September 2025

64. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

65. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with 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.

66. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net