

School inspection report

19 to 21 November 2024

Falkner House

19 Brechin Place

London

SW7 4QB

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. Proprietors do not have all the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure that all Standards are consistently met. The proprietors were not aware that they should not be the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), as stated in the statutory guidance. As a result, the Standards for leadership and management, and governance are not met.
2. Senior leaders, who are also the proprietors, know individual pupils well. They promote the school's aims by fostering positive relationships with pupils, staff and parents. Pupils are well supported by staff who are responsive to pupils' needs. Leaders work closely with parents to engage them as partners in their children's learning. Pupils are polite and confident, and communicate their learning articulately.
3. The attendance policy was not fully up to date with the latest statutory guidance. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
4. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and ambitious to help pupils develop knowledge and skills in a variety of subjects. Pupils achieve well in standardised tests. The curriculum is adjusted to match the prior attainment of pupils and individual pupils' needs.
5. Teachers plan engaging and purposeful tasks and use good-quality resources effectively to support and enrich pupils' learning, for both male and female pupils, in almost all lessons. Teachers provide individual feedback and marking so that pupils improve their work and make good progress. Pupils are engaged in their learning and apply effort in their work. Leaders monitor the progress of individual pupils in a variety of ways, although observations of teaching are not systematic.
6. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively. The level of support provided is monitored closely to foster independence and accelerate progress.
7. Many of the pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are proficient in English. Where necessary, strategies such as pre-teaching are used to enable pupils to access the curriculum and make good progress.
8. Higher attaining pupils are provided with ways to stretch and challenge their thinking. This is particularly effective in the upper school where specialist teachers use their subject knowledge well.
9. Leaders ensure that a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe, look after themselves and be kind and respectful to all. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are evident across the school. Pupils are well-behaved due to effective strategies to promote positive behaviour. Pupils are self-confident and know how to take steps to look after their physical and mental health.
10. Health and safety protocols are robust and are monitored regularly. Leaders and managers are aware of the risks involved and take steps to mitigate these through appropriate risk assessments. Record-keeping is accurate and this allows checks to ensure that required staff training in first aid and fire safety is up to date.
11. Leaders develop links and partnerships that enable them to provide pupils with a range of experiences to enhance their learning. Visitors are invited to the school to give pupils insights into a

variety of careers as well as the work of charitable organisations. Pupils develop skills of responsibility and take on a variety of leadership roles.

12. Fundamental British values are embedded in the curriculum and pupils understand their role in promoting tolerance, democracy and individual liberty. Pupils embrace the diversity within the school and their local community and are knowledgeable about current affairs in Britain and abroad.
13. Leaders did not ensure that the proprietors are not the DSL. This means that there is a lack of objectivity in reviewing safeguarding arrangements. As a result, the Standard relating to safeguarding is not met.
14. In other respects, effective safeguarding arrangements are in place so that pupils and staff are confident in reporting a concern. The safeguarding team takes appropriate steps to record any concerns and take prompt action, including referring them to the relevant external authority.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not all 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 not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- all statutory guidance in relation to safeguarding is reflected in the school's policy and practice.

The proprietor must ensure that:

- arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State

so that:

- there is independent and objective review of safeguarding arrangements in the school to actively promote the welfare of pupils.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the attendance champion is clearly defined in the attendance policy, in line with recent statutory guidance
- ensure that leaders undertake effective monitoring of teaching and learning to identify where improvements are needed.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

15. Leaders ensure that the school's aims and ethos are shared and understood by the whole school community. Leaders have knowledge of individual pupils' academic, personal and social needs. They work closely with parents and support staff to promote pupils' wellbeing. Pupils are self-confident, respectful, eager to learn and achieve well. However, there is a lack of oversight of requirements in terms of safeguarding and attendance to ensure that the wellbeing of pupils is consistently promoted.
16. The school was not aware of the statutory guidance in Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) that it is not appropriate for the proprietors to be the DSL. As a result, the Standard relating to the knowledge and skills of leadership and management, and governance is not met.
17. The school's attendance policy did not refer to the attendance champion, as required by the latest statutory guidance. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
18. The school is exempt from the learning and development requirements for children in the early years but they are not exempt from safeguarding and welfare requirements. In the early years, leaders ensure that positive relationships promote children's wellbeing.
19. Leaders evaluate the impact of their actions regularly. They are reflective and continually look for ways to improve pupils' learning experiences by sharing best practice within the school. Regular discussions between leaders at both sites ensure that decision making is evaluated for its impact on pupils' wellbeing and academic achievement. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning takes place through informal visits and looking at pupils' work, but this is not systematic. As a result, leaders are unaware of the inconsistency in teaching practice in the school.
20. Leaders ensure that staff take steps to promote pupils' wellbeing by being vigilant and offering care and support. Leaders provide an effective PSHE programme, make time available for pupils to talk to an adult, and plan activities for pupils to learn ways to manage any stress they may experience.
21. Leaders ensure that required information is shared on the school's website. Parents receive regular reports about their child's progress and detailed end-of-year reports with information about each subject taught and clear next steps.
22. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The curriculum is adapted, as necessary, to support pupils who have SEND. The school's accessibility plan is kept under regular review. It ensures that pupils' needs are actively supported with respect to the curriculum. Male and female pupils are taught at separate sites. Leaders demonstrate clear rationales for their decisions. They ensure that there is no discrimination with respect to the delivery of the school's aims and implementation of policies. Facilities, resources and staffing are appropriate to meet pupils' needs on both sites. They ensure that some activities, for example swimming, are co-educational. Events such as cross-country, sports day, swimming galas and some themed events are organised so that male and female pupils participate together.
23. The school's complaints policy is shared with parents and is effectively implemented. Leaders respond to complaints promptly and endeavour to resolve these through effective communication, taking appropriate action where necessary.

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

24. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

25. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is typically adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils. A wide range of subjects are taught, including history of art, music, Spanish and Latin. A thematic approach enables pupils to make links between different areas of learning. The curriculum actively promotes respect for all cultures and fundamental British values. The same curriculum is delivered to male and female pupils although there is some variance in terms of when topics are taught. Pupils make good progress and achieve well, and outcomes for either group are not compromised.
26. Overall, lessons are engaging and are appropriate to pupils' ages and aptitudes. Teachers use a range of strategies to enable pupils to think critically and apply their learning in different ways. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and manage the classroom well so that learning is not disrupted. Teachers plan lessons effectively and encourage pupils to use their prior learning. Children in the Reception year sit on the carpet for whole-class lesson introductions and complete teacher-directed activities at their tables. Resources, including staff deployment in the Reception year, are not always used effectively.
27. Subject specialists are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They deliver engaging and purposeful lessons that enable pupils to make good progress. They skilfully plan learning experiences to deepen the knowledge and skills of higher attaining pupils so that they are effectively challenged.
28. Pupils and staff in the upper school use technological devices skilfully to enhance learning. Pupils use personal devices across different areas of the curriculum to access information, organise their work and make links in their learning. Pupils make improvements to their work and can track their own progress.
29. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed through a variety of planned activities. Younger pupils develop linguistic skills through a systematically planned phonics programme that builds on pupils' prior attainment. In the early years and lower school, staff ensure that children use and apply their phonics knowledge well, such as when they write unfamiliar words or blend sounds to write. Pupils read often to adults and listen to well-chosen texts that broaden their understanding of the English language and deepen their understanding of current affairs. Pupils write and perform their own poems and take part in debates and discussions. Pupils throughout the school regularly talk about a given topic with adults at home, to plan their writing. This enables them to develop their ideas and use ambitious vocabulary and literary devices to enhance their writing.
30. In mathematics, pupils are taught to choose and use the most effective strategies, spot patterns, find their own mistakes or create problems for others to solve. In science, pupils enjoy practical investigations to deepen their understanding of scientific concepts. Older pupils take notes in science, which helps them to record their investigations and develop study skills for the future.
31. In the Nursery, children learn through effective planning of activities suited to their age and aptitudes. They learn collaboratively through imaginary play and enjoy choosing books to read. They develop communication and language skills through conversations with adults and each other. In the Reception year, pupils make good progress in developing their fine motor skills through early morning activities. They develop gross-motor skills during playtime, through their use of outdoor equipment, and during physical education (PE) lessons.

32. Throughout the school, pupils have lessons in history of art where they gain knowledge about a range of artists. They apply the skills that they learn to create their own drawings and paintings using a variety of media and techniques. Pupils take part enthusiastically in singing and instrumental lessons and work collaboratively to sing harmonies or play in musical ensembles. In information technology (IT) lessons, pupils learn practical skills to enhance their learning throughout the curriculum, as well as aid them in their next steps in education.
33. Feedback and marking are used effectively by teachers throughout the school to enable pupils to recognise what they have done well and what they need to improve. Pupils are given time to improve their work, and this enables them to reflect and learn from mistakes. Teachers use a range of assessment information to inform teaching. Teachers know their pupils well. Analysis of data enables staff to identify gaps and plan for support or challenge. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress regularly through reports and discussions in academic, personal and social areas of learning.
34. Pupils who have SEND are identified with the help of relevant experts. Pupils make good progress because they are well supported with effective strategies and resources. Lessons are adapted to suit individual pupils' needs, for example through the inclusion of movement breaks. Additional lessons and small-group work or individual support to match pupils' needs are planned and monitored carefully.
35. Teachers provide support tailored to the individual needs of pupils who speak EAL. Many of these pupils are fluent in English and do not require additional support. Where required, pupils are supported through the effective use of resources, such as word banks, first-language dictionaries and support from an adult, as necessary. Other strategies include pre-teaching, which enables pupils to access the curriculum and make good progress.
36. A range of extra-curricular activities are provided to enable both male and female pupils to pursue their talents and interests. For example, pupils attend martial arts club where they learn self-defence as well as skills to manage their emotions. They develop perseverance and endurance in cross-country club and life skills in clubs such as cookery.

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

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

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

38. The school's curriculum incorporates opportunities for pupils to prepare themselves for life in British society. Pupils have secure knowledge of current affairs and share these at assemblies and during form time. Texts used in English are carefully chosen to increase pupils' understanding of the responsibilities of living in a diverse society. Pupils treat everyone with respect and kindness. Older pupils are aware of protected characteristics such as age, race and gender, and recognise the importance of tolerance, individual liberty and democracy.
39. Admissions and attendance systems are well established. The school informs the local authority when pupils join or leave at non-standard transition points. Staff responsible for attendance provide monitoring and oversight of trends and patterns. The schools' attendance policy did not include reference to the attendance champions, as specified in statutory guidance. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
40. Leaders have created a well-planned PSHE curriculum which is supplemented through assemblies and form time. Teachers ensure that topics are relevant for pupils and prepare them well for the future. For example, they learn that sleep is important to support physical and mental health. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of self-care. They know the importance of healthy food and learn how to relax with music or meditation.
41. Pupils participate in, or listen to, Christian prayers at assembly in line with the school's ethos. Pupils are taught about world religions and beliefs. They enjoy opportunities to share and learn about their own and other cultures in school. They celebrate events like Diwali, Chinese New Year and Rosh Hashanah to support their understanding.
42. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is taught during PSHE and is appropriate to the ages of pupils. Parents are informed about the topics discussed. Pupils learn how to develop healthy friendships and relationships. Older pupils understand the importance of consent in a variety of contexts and learn how to express their feelings in different situations.
43. Leaders make arrangements for PE to incorporate outdoor learning so that pupils develop a range of skills. Skills such as gymnastics, dance and martial arts are taught in multi-purpose indoor spaces at each site. Leaders arrange for travel to suitable, nearby open spaces and public swimming pools to extend pupils' range of sports skills and ensure that the PE curriculum is broad. Pupils enjoy taking part in competitions and after-school clubs. They understand how keeping fit helps their physical and mental wellbeing.
44. The school has effective behaviour and anti-bullying policies which are reviewed regularly. The policies are shared with pupils at assemblies so that pupils have a clear understanding about the definition of bullying and expectations about behaviour. Staff are trained to promote positive behaviour. Strategies used in classrooms and around the school are discussed and evaluated for effectiveness. Any incidents of behaviour are recorded and dealt with appropriately and swiftly.
45. Every pupil has a record of academic and pastoral successes and areas of concern so that all staff know pupils individually. Weekly meetings ensure that any areas of concern are shared so that staff are vigilant and offer appropriate support to pupils.

46. Leaders and managers ensure that health and safety procedures are robustly recorded and monitored. The premises are well maintained, with regular safety checks in place to ensure the site is secure. Outside agencies are engaged to ensure statutory regulations including fire safety are met, and these are monitored diligently. First aid provision meets the statutory requirements, with appropriate spaces to administer first aid. Staff are appropriately trained, including in the early years.
47. Suitable and detailed risk assessments are in place and are updated regularly. Staff with overall responsibility for school trips ensure that risk assessments are appropriate and thorough. Pupils travel to learning experiences outside school with appropriate numbers of staff and are well supervised. Pupils who arrive at school early or stay late at clubs are well supervised. Consistent handover processes are in place to ensure safe arrival and departure times for pupils.
48. Children in the Nursery are provided with opportunities to develop their communication and language skills through positive interactions with staff and with their peers. They enjoy a range of learning experiences suited to their age. They follow routines and develop independence, choosing activities as well as taking part in teacher-directed learning. They use a range of age-appropriate equipment to develop their understanding of the world through role play and solve problems as they play and explore together with their peers.

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

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

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

50. Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility throughout the school. Prefects, school captains and sports captains are appointed to develop older pupils' leadership skills. Staff encourage pupils to lead initiatives. For instance, pupils edit a newsletter in which they include a variety of articles submitted by other pupils. Eco-council allows pupils to think about ways in which they can care for their local environment and promote sustainability. They make suggestions to school leaders which are followed up on, for example, the introduction of a meat-free day on the menu. Pupils suggest ways to improve their social contribution such as extending litter picking to include the park where they have PE lessons.
51. Pupils learn about charities supported by the school by listening to presentations made by the charity or by doing their own research and sharing it with others. Pupils vote on which charity they support through a democratic process. They take part in fundraising activities to contribute to these charities. Older pupils collect money by selling poppies to raise funds for veterans on Remembrance Day. Pupils collect food items for the local foodbank and pupils who deliver the items recognise the needs of people in their community.
52. Older pupils work with younger pupils in the school, especially when they are new, to help them settle in and develop friendships. For example, pupils are encouraged to teach younger pupils netball skills during netball club, or plan and teach a mathematics lesson to a different year group. Pupils take these responsibilities seriously, planning and improving their own knowledge and techniques. Pupils develop presentation skills by choosing and researching topics of interest to them, to equip them for the future.
53. In the Nursery, children learn about money through imaginary play in shops, where they pretend to buy and sell items. Older pupils have opportunities to calculate costs and learn about budgeting, whilst understanding terms such as value-added tax. Pupils learn about currency used in the past through historical texts in English. In science, pupils discuss ethics around the costs involved in pharmaceutical industry. In assemblies and during form time, pupils discuss current affairs such as the impact of inheritance tax and elections. They listen to their peers and offer their opinions, whilst appreciating the views of others.
54. Children in the Nursery learn about various careers, such as becoming a vet or a police officer, through active learning in role-play corners. Older pupils learn about their own aptitudes and are encouraged to think about what they might like to do when they grow up. A range of visitors are invited into the school to talk to pupils about their experiences and careers, including astronauts, Paralympians, and local and foreign politicians. Topics such as sustainability and artificial intelligence are discussed in assemblies and during form time. Both male and female pupils are prepared effectively for the next steps of their education. Leaders ensure that pupils on both sites benefit from talks and activities led by external speakers where possible.
55. Pupils know that rules are important to keep them safe. In Year 3, they learn about the rule of law through a mock trial. Older pupils understand the difference between rules and laws and recognise the importance of both. Trips to museums and institutions in London develop pupils' resilience and enable pupils to learn ways to navigate their way safely around the city, including on the underground.

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

56. Leaders ensure that safeguarding procedures are in place and that pupils and staff are well aware of these. However, the schools' safeguarding policy did not pay due regard to statutory guidance that the DSL should not be the proprietor. Although leaders took steps to rectify this during the inspection, the lack of knowledge with respect to this guidance did not allow for an objective review of safeguarding arrangements in the school.
57. The safeguarding team has at least one member who is independent of the proprietors at each site. Staff are aware of who they can approach if they have a concern about another person, including the proprietors. They know how they can report concerns directly to the local authority designated officer (LADO).
58. Members of the safeguarding team have regular and appropriate training and there is effective record-keeping and monitoring in this regard. The safeguarding team is in regular contact with the local authority education officer so that they receive regular updates and training.
59. Staff receive annual training and weekly updates about safeguarding information, including contextual risks relevant to the local area. They know ways to mitigate these risks. They are confident about procedures for reporting and logging concerns if pupils make a disclosure. Concerns about pupils are discussed weekly and actions are taken promptly, including working with parents. The safeguarding team makes referrals to other external safeguarding partners such as children's services when necessary, and do so without delay. Safeguarding logs are detailed and rationales for actions taken are clearly and securely recorded.
60. Effective filtering and monitoring systems are in place to prevent pupils and staff from accessing inappropriate content. The safeguarding team is informed of relevant information immediately by staff responsible for monitoring IT, and swift action is taken. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online in IT and PSHE lessons.
61. Staff understand that they have a collective responsibility to safeguard pupils and promote their wellbeing. They provide pupils with opportunities to communicate concerns. Pupils are confident to approach an adult with a worry. Safeguarding posters are displayed around the school so that pupils know who the updated safeguarding leads are.
62. Safer recruitment procedures are in place for pre-employment checks. Records on the single central record are accurate and maintained securely.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 63. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Safeguarding

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
7(a)	arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
7(b)	such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
EYFS 3.7	If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must immediately notify their local authority children's social care team, in line with local reporting procedures, and, in emergencies, the police. Providers must also take into account the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales'. All schools are required to have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to read this guidance.

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

School details

School	Falkner House
Department for Education number	207/6193
Address	Falkner House 19 Brechin Place London United Kingdom SW7 4QB
Phone number	02073734501
Email address	office@falknerhouse.co.uk
Website	Falknerhouse.co.uk
Proprietor	Falkner House LLP
Principal	Mrs Anita Griggs
Headteachers	Mrs Eleanor Dixon and Mrs Flavia Rogers
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	306
Date of previous inspection	5 to 8 October 2021

Information about the school

64. Falkner House is an independent day school for pupils aged between 2 and 11 years. The school is set on two sites, with female pupils and a co-educational Nursery on one site and male pupils on the other. The proprietor is the principal and there is a headteacher on each site. The school for female pupils first opened in 1954, while the school for male pupils opened in 2017.
65. The school has identified ten pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are no pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. English is an additional language for 82 pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to ensure that all pupils achieve a high standard of work across the curriculum, to provide a broad curriculum with progression through the years, to provide a caring and happy atmosphere, to provide an appropriate set of expectations for each individual pupil, to develop pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem, to encourage an ability to form easy relationships with both peers and adults, to encourage a sense of individual pride in all school and personal activities and to instil a variety of life skills.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

19 to 21 November 2024

68. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

69. 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 proprietors, who are the principal and headteachers, 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.

70. 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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For more information, please visit isi.net