

School inspection report

10 to 12 October 2023

Mander Portman Woodward – Cambridge

3–4 Brookside
Cambridge
CB2 1JE

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 ensure that the school's aims to encourage pupils to have high academic aspirations and make good progress are met. They promote a culture which is supportive of all pupils whatever their background and ability, with tailored learning and individualised care.
2. Leaders evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses every year and present these to the board in a comprehensive and detailed annual review. The governing body maintains regular dialogue with all levels of management within the school to ensure that all feel supported and informed regarding the educational and strategic direction of the school.
3. Staff ensure that relationships between pupils and staff are highly respectful. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others. They co-operate with their teachers and collaborate with each other. Their behaviour in and around the school and in lessons is exemplary. Pupils are mature in their conversations and attitudes which supports their preparation for the world of work and their future contribution to wider society.
4. Pupils value the independence they are given to plan and implement their individualised learning strategies. However, because the primary focus of the school is academic, opportunities for recreational activities such as team sports, clubs and societies are limited.
5. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is effective and well understood by staff. Key to this is the role of the tutors and the one-to-one personal tutorials (PT) that occur weekly. Leaders carry out a termly mature pupil risk assessment; however, this is not implemented for all pupils over the age of 18.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards:

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

Recommended next steps

- Leaders should ensure that risk assessments are implemented for all pupils over the age of 18.
- The school should extend the range of enrichment activities available to the pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leadership at all levels is successful in promoting the wellbeing of pupils and at implementing policies which support the aims and ethos of the school. Development planning is carried out by the board in partnership with the senior leaders of the school. The governing body ensures that appropriate advice and support are offered to school leaders.
7. Leaders are committed to continuous improvement. They take a proactive approach to self-evaluation to ensure the needs of pupils are met and staff are appropriately trained. Leaders identify areas for improvement and take a critical view of the curriculum to ensure it is appropriate for all pupils.
8. Leaders establish caring and supportive relationships with pupils at a very early stage and take into account the differing needs of each new cohort. They consult regularly with parents and pupils and use the results of assessments and surveys to manage any risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing. Management of risk, including contextual and situational, is discussed at board level and senior manager meetings. A culture has been established within the leadership of the school where the principal knows that risk needs to be shared, and that support will be offered where needed.
9. As a result, staff overseeing risk assessments and safety of the school site are alert to potential risk. They have the knowledge and skills to mitigate such risk and have introduced online systems which record checks and oversee risks. Leaders' assessment and management of risk is also systematic in relation to the school premises, activities and trips and visits. Staff are vigilant to potential physical risks on a daily basis.
10. The school's leaders are open to feedback from pupils. Feedback is actively sought via the QR code for catering and through an active and well-established pupil council. Scrutiny of the complaints log confirms that the school leadership implements its complaints policy effectively.
11. The school leaders ensure that an accessible website is in place. They ensure that the provision of the information requirements are met regarding academic performance, admissions and key school-related information and that these are provided to parents of current and prospective pupils.

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

12. Leadership at all levels ensures that a broad curriculum which offers bespoke pathways for a diverse pupil body is implemented effectively. As a result, pupils make good progress.
13. Teachers' secure subject knowledge, well-prepared lessons and effective teaching methods take into account the aptitudes and needs of all pupils. Frequent assessment enables all pupils to gauge their acquisition and understanding of new knowledge, in turn enabling good progress according to their ability.
14. Typically, lessons have clear learning objectives and promote effective learning and skills acquisition. Pupils are engaged, articulate and motivated contributors who enjoy their learning and demonstrate exemplary levels of behaviour. This is particularly evident when teachers ask open-ended questions and structure activities that enable pupils to develop their arguments and ideas.
15. Pupils are supported to organise and revise from their notes effectively. They are confident, independent learners who take pride in their research and gain confidence from the rich resources provided by their tutors in all subjects. Teachers provide high-quality feedback which enables the pupils to improve their work and make good progress. Pupils describe the timed assessments and individual feedback as significant contributors to their progress. The data from these assessments informs clear progress monitoring by teachers and prompts early interventions if required.
16. Leaders analyse external examination results and regular internal attainment testing in detail, and this analysis helps staff to manage pupils' performance and provide detailed feedback to the pupils. External examination results at both GCSE and A level show that pupils achieve results well above national standards. Results analysis at both A level and GCSE reflect that those pupils with SEND are well supported to make good progress in relation to their peers.
17. Leaders demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge when considering the needs of pupils who have SEND. The school actively promotes the wellbeing of these pupils. Individual learning plans (ILP) clearly highlight strengths, alongside areas for improvement. Strategies for inside and outside the classroom are drawn up in collaboration with the pupils, their families and teachers.
18. An enrichment programme develops pupils' emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills and interests. This programme benefits from pupils' suggestions and has recently been expanded to meet the needs of the younger pupils. As a result, these pupils use their unstructured time positively. Although middle leaders and personal tutors encourage individual pupils to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the locality, more could be done to develop pupils' academic and personal interests outside the classroom.

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

19. Leaders support pupils' mental health and their physical and emotional wellbeing. Their effective monitoring of schemes of work and assessment enables them to adapt plans dynamically and manage risk. Leaders collaborate closely and meet frequently with pastoral staff to ensure all pupils are gaining a consistent experience and that any mental, emotional and physical needs of individuals are supported. Pupils take part in regular physical exercise both inside and outside of the school environment.
20. Pupils appreciate the culture of kindness in which teachers and leaders are approachable and supportive. The high-quality rapport between pupils and teachers promotes pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. This is best demonstrated in the mature way in which pupils collaborate with each other, contribute to discussion and engage with adults.
21. Leaders prioritise pupils' pastoral concerns. Leaders ensure that the behaviour policy is effectively implemented. Pupils confirm that the application of rewards and sanctions is fair, and they know who to turn to if there are instances of bullying. They are confident that leaders would deal with bullying promptly and effectively. Data systems are used effectively to record behavioural and bullying concerns when they occur.
22. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) are implemented effectively by experienced, skilled practitioners. They plan and regularly update schemes of work that prepare pupils for life beyond school.
23. Pupils' moral and spiritual understanding is evident. Teachers develop cohesive relationships which support the noticeable culture of trust and respect. Pupils show respect for other faiths and cultures. Leaders ensure that pupils from a range of cultural backgrounds integrate well within the school community. Pupils confirm that they value the non-judgemental nature of their discussions.
24. Leaders ensure that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner. A qualified nurse and team of first aiders ensure consistent and high-quality care for all pupils. A one-to-one meeting with the nurse during the pupil induction process supports the pastoral provision at the school. Practical and safe arrangements are in place, and information is shared effectively in the triangulation of care. With specialist training, the nurse teaches key topics related to health and RSE. Effective measures are taken to mitigate risk in all high-risk areas, and actively protect pupils from harm. The school site is secure and well maintained and reviewed at regular points. All spaces are clean, tidy and well organised. Pupils know how to stay safe online and feel safe and secure in school.
25. Leaders have developed comprehensive, robust and detailed processes to ensure that all the standards relating to health and safety, fire safety and first aid are met. The school premises and accommodation are suitable and well maintained. Health and safety policies are implemented effectively and with a systematic approach. Precautions are in place to reduce the risk from fire. Attendance and admission registers are maintained as required. Leaders ensure information is obtained about the destinations of pupils who leave the school. Suitable supervision of pupils is ensured throughout the school day.

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

26. Leaders promote principles and implement plans effectively that support a respectful, inclusive and tolerant culture in a school where pupils come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Collaboration between the highly active school council and curriculum leaders has encouraged an inclusive approach, for example, through Black history month and celebrating women in science. Pupils are aware of issues relating to inequality and express these most effectively through pupil-led whole-school charity work organised by the pupil council. They raise funds for local charities such as foodbanks and care homes as well as national and international charities.
27. Pupils enjoy the PSHE programme which prepares them effectively for life beyond school. They are encouraged to discuss and consider the views of others in a non-judgemental way. They receive lessons on racism and homophobia and develop a keen awareness of right and wrong, and societal rules in general. As part of the pupil induction process, the English for academic purposes (EAP) curriculum focuses on ethical topics, such as climate change, crime in the UK and the role of the police force. Pupils explore cultural differences and make use of a wide range of resources to develop their knowledge and understanding.
28. Leaders ensure there is a thorough programme of career advice which is appropriate for different ages enabling pupils to make informed choices. Advice is impartial, detailed and tailored to the needs of pupils from diverse settings and ambitions. The majority of pupils gain places at their first-choice university in the UK and internationally. Increasingly, pupils are also gaining places on degree apprenticeships. Pupils are identified early and given support in admissions testing to access careers in medicine, dentistry or veterinary science. Pupils are very positive about the advice they receive.

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

29. Governors ensure that leaders frequently monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements and the implementation of statutory guidance to ensure pupils are safe. An annual conference for those with designated safeguarding responsibilities in the three schools in the organisation enables the sharing of good practice, expertise, support and guidance.
30. Recruitment of staff and the maintenance of the school's central record of appointment checks is thorough and robust. An online audit check is used as part of the safer recruitment checks for all prospective members of staff.
31. Staff know how to record and report concerns about pupils. Leaders respond to these appropriately and in accordance with local guidance. The school liaises appropriately with parents and external agencies when required. Leaders include guidance on behaviour in relation to their interactions with pupils and use of the internet, including social media in the staff code of conduct. As a result, staff understand the school's expectations.
32. Training on safeguarding is regular and recorded centrally. This is at least annually with termly reminders, and safeguarding is an agenda item for all meetings, keeping the matter at the forefront of staff thinking. Staff know how to raise concerns, including whistleblowing. The school liaises appropriately with parents and external agencies when required.
33. There is efficient, comprehensive and detailed logging of any safeguarding concerns with detailed tracking of trends and patterns through appropriate use of the school's safeguarding platform. A thorough and in-depth annual safeguarding audit takes place which encompasses staff file checks. Safeguarding concerns about pupils are recognised and managed in accordance with local procedures. Leaders have developed appropriate links with a range of external agencies and developed systems which ensure compliance with the standards and the creation of a culture of safety.
34. A mature pupil risk assessment is carried out termly for pupils who are aged 20 or older. These pupils complete a termly confirmation form to verify that this risk assessment has taken place. However, pupils aged 18 to 20 are not required to complete these forms.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant standards are met

School details

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| School | Mander Portman Woodward – Cambridge |
| Department for Education number | 873/6017 |
| Address | 3–4 Brookside Cambridge CB2 1JE |
| Website | www.mpw.ac.uk/locations/cambridge |
| Proprietor | Mander Portman Woodward Limited |
| Chair | Mr Steve Boyes |
| Headteacher | Mr Tom Caston |
| Age range | 14 to 20 |
| Number of pupils | 188 |
| Date of previous inspection | 19 to 21 November 2019 (Ofsted) |

Information about the school

35. Mander Portman Woodward – Cambridge is a co-educational day school located in Cambridge, Cambridgeshire. The school is based in two buildings in Cambridge. The main building is on Brookside, where the management of the school is based, and there are additional teaching rooms in Panton Street, 200 metres from the main school site. The school is overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, a new principal and chair of governors have been appointed in August 2020.
36. The school has identified 53 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
37. English is an additional language for 108 pupils.
38. The school states that its aims are to:
- encourage pupils to have high academic aspirations
 - Work in partnership with parents to encourage a strong work ethic and the confidence and self-belief to achieve those aspirations
 - Provide a broad and flexible curriculum that allows bespoke programmes of study which reflect individual needs and allow pupils to cultivate their specific academic interests and aptitudes
 - Provide a system of pastoral support that is geared towards individual needs and recognises the personal and emotional challenges faced by 14- to 20-year-olds
 - Guide pupils to make informed choices about educational progression in such a way as to maximise their chances of securing places on competitive and prestigious courses
 - Provide a friendly and informal environment in which pupils are encouraged to develop personal discipline and values, lead fulfilled lives and make a positive contribution to society

Inspection details

Inspection dates 10 to 12 October 2023

39. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
40. Inspection activities included:
- observation of lessons
 - discussions with pupils
 - scrutiny of samples of pupils' work alongside pupils and staff
 - discussions with members of staff
 - discussions with a group of governors
 - scrutiny of the curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.
41. 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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