

# School inspection report

18 to 20 March 2025

## **Mander Portman Woodward School**

90–92 Queen's Gate

London

SW7 5AB

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. Governors maintain robust oversight of leaders, ensuring they carry out their responsibilities effectively. Leaders manage risks to pupils' wellbeing with care. They anticipate challenges and put clear mitigating strategies in place. Leaders' strategic planning results from thorough evaluation of the work of the school. Leaders promote the shared ethos of support for pupils that is 'tailored, not uniform'.
2. The broad and balanced curriculum reflects the school's ethos of providing a range of opportunities and qualifications. Leaders align the extensive range of courses with pupils' interests, create individual pathways and support their aspirations. Pupils make good progress and achieve well at GCSE and A Level. They go on to highly appropriate next-step destinations, including a high proportion to university and to degree level apprenticeships.
3. Staff teach well-planned lessons, adjust to individuals and give personalised feedback, addressing misconceptions and extending learning. Personal tutors regularly meet with individual pupils, closely monitoring academic progress and arranging support when appropriate. Effective systems for identifying and supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) ensure these pupils typically progress well. However, some teachers do not provide effective support to pupils, impacting their engagement and achievement in some lessons.
4. Leaders foster a school culture that respects individuality and celebrates differences. Pupils confidently express their identities and engage in thoughtful discussions about inclusion and equality. Staff model respectful behaviour and pupils reflect this in their interactions with their peers. Policies and practices support individuality, fostering a cohesive, happy and accepting school community.
5. Leaders ensure premises are well maintained and effective health and safety routines are in place. Fire safety procedures are clear and rehearsed regularly, including for boarders. Medical facilities are suitable; suitably trained staff administer first aid when needed.
6. Pupils behave well, underpinned by clear expectations and effective anti-bullying strategies. Leaders promptly address behavioural concerns, ensuring a calm learning environment.
7. Leaders support pupils' emotional wellbeing through a coherent pastoral care system. The personal tutors liaise with leaders continually to create effective support networks. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum explicitly addresses stress management and emotional intelligence, developing pupils' self-awareness, emotional regulation and overall wellbeing.
8. Boarding provision is effectively organised and regularly monitored. Accommodation is comfortable and suitably maintained, with clear routines that promote pupils' wellbeing. Staff are appropriately trained and conduct regular check-ins to support boarders' emotional and physical safety.
9. Robust policies and procedures ensure that safeguarding is effective. Staff receive regular training and act quickly on concerns. Pupils trust staff and feel confident reporting issues. They learn how to keep safe online, and staff maintain effective internet filtering and monitoring systems.

## 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 all staff adapt their teaching to consistently meet the needs of pupils who have SEND.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to their roles. They understand the unique needs of the pupils and provide an individual educational experience. They prioritise the wellbeing of pupils in their work. They make significant efforts to support pupils as individuals. Leaders collaborate effectively with external agencies to support pupils. This collaboration includes partnerships with medical services, education psychologists and safeguarding partners.
11. Governors maintain detailed oversight of leaders' work through regular review of reports, visits to the school to listen to pupils and staff, and close monitoring of boarding, pastoral and academic data. They provide leaders with support and challenge as appropriate. They ensure that leaders effectively and consistently promote pupils' wellbeing and meet the requirements of the Standards.
12. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of the school against the school's aims. They use information from lesson observations, academic data, and pupil and parental feedback to review school performance. As a result, they accurately understand the school's effectiveness and make calculated plans for improvements.
13. Leaders maintain a culture of openness and value of difference among staff and pupils. They listen to pupils through personal tutors, the school council and anonymous suggestion systems. As a result, pupils are confident to share their views. For example, leaders recently adapted mock examination timings to address pupil concerns about stress.
14. Leaders ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met. They regularly review the accessibility plan to ensure that the curriculum and the premises are accessible. Leaders of boarding maintain effective house arrangements that support boarders as individuals and reflect the needs of the diverse, multinational community.
15. Risk assessment and management procedures are robust and effectively implemented. Leaders continually consider potential risks to pupils' wellbeing and proactively implement mitigation strategies. Staff are suitably trained. They identify potential hazards, such as those related to the curriculum, the site and those related to individual pupils.
16. Parental concerns, including those related to boarding, are addressed effectively. There is an appropriate published policy in place and, when formal complaints occur, it is followed consistently. Leaders and governors carefully review complaints records to identify where changes to practice are required.
17. Leaders provide all required information on the school website, including policies such as those for safeguarding, curriculum and anti-bullying. Parents are informed regularly of the achievement of their child. Appropriate information is provided to local authorities regarding pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, including information related to funding.

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

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

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders plan a broad and balanced curriculum, which leads to a range of GCSEs and extensive post-16 qualifications. Pupils opt for one- or two-year courses, including A levels, a pre-university course in the arts and an international university pathway. Leaders provide a range of options that ensures pupils can access the courses they wish. Pupils value this individual approach and recognise leaders' efforts to accommodate their needs and wishes. This range provides pupils with a rich experience across a wide variety of subjects.
20. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge. They teach well-planned lessons that use a good range of resources, including high quality reading materials. Clear explanations enable pupils to access tasks quickly and successfully, and lessons are structured to allow pupils to build on prior learning. Questions are used to check understanding and to develop pupils' thinking. Teachers make the most of the very small class sizes to provide individual feedback to pupils in lessons, correcting misconceptions and developing pupils' understanding.
21. Learning environments are calm, focused and purposeful. Pupils work hard and are mostly self-motivated. Teachers ensure pupils receive individual feedback and respond appropriately. Boarding pupils have supervised prep sessions led by teachers, which provide structured academic time in the evenings. As a result, pupils are well supported to develop their understanding and learn independently outside of their lessons.
22. Assessment is systematic and integrated into teaching. Teachers use a range of assessment information to plan subsequent lessons and identify pupils requiring additional support. When necessary, pupils attend academic clinics and workshops to have additional individual time with teachers, enabling them to fill gaps or extend learning. Leaders regularly report pupil achievement to parents, sharing test results, evaluative comments and attendance information.
23. Leaders use a range of information to support pupils who have SEND. Leaders use ongoing assessment, either in school or externally, to review pupils' learning and development, and to determine suitable strategies for support. Typically, teachers use this information to adapt lessons, focus their questions, modify resources and encourage varied methods of pupils recording their work. However, in a small number of cases, teachers lack awareness of the precise needs of pupils and suitable strategies for supporting them. Some teachers do not make sufficient adaptations or provide effective support to pupils. When this happens, pupils find activities too difficult and lose interest in their learning.
24. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) access the English for academic purposes programme. Functional English and computing sessions develop pupils' core skills to access the curriculum and social interactions further. Teachers support pupils precisely to acquire subject-specific vocabulary. Bilingualism is valued and pupils are supported to also develop literacy in their home languages. Pupils who speak EAL learn and achieve well.
25. Leaders use a range of assessment information to ensure that pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. Over time, pupils make good progress from their starting points. Pupils' examination results are in line with national averages at GCSE and often above national averages at A level. Pupils go on to highly appropriate next-step destinations. A large proportion of students go

on to attend university, either in the UK or internationally, while a number follow the degree level apprenticeship pathway.

26. Pupils develop a range of physical, observational and analytical skills through the school's recreational provision. They participate in clubs and co-curricular opportunities such as botany, boxing, debating and Model United Nations. Currently all pupils access one session per week.

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

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

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

28. Relationships within the school community are notably positive, contributing significantly to pupils' emotional security and overall wellbeing. Staff model respectful and caring interactions, creating an environment characterised by mutual respect, happiness and trust. Leaders ensure that the curriculum directly champions protected characteristics, the importance of inclusion and the harmful impact of discrimination. Pupils respect, and are empathetic towards, peers and staff. Leaders consult with pupils when developing policies that affect specific groups.
29. The PSHE curriculum is well planned, well delivered and supports pupils thoroughly for life in British society. Pupils learn about topics such as staying safe in London, the psychology of belief and the negative impact of drug misuse. Staff develop pupils' resilience, addressing stress management and emotional intelligence. Tailored personal tutoring and structured lessons develop crucial life skills, addressing issues such as responsible decision-making, civic engagement and consent. Pupils engage actively with these topics, enhancing their self-awareness and understanding.
30. Leaders effectively support pupils' emotional wellbeing. Pupils' personal tutors, provide a first point of contact and organise additional support for pupils, when they need it. Staff receive regular training to be vigilant to pupils' needs, promptly providing targeted support when required. Pupils access trained counsellors, either by staff- or self-referral, and benefit from strategies explicitly taught for developing emotional resilience.
31. Pupils participate in physical activity, including compulsory sport for under-sixteens, fitness circuits, gym, yoga and competitive games for older pupils. Teaching about healthy lifestyles extends beyond physical activity, including the effective delivery of nutritional education. Pupils gain practical knowledge on balanced diets, healthy eating habits and the significance of nutrition for maintaining overall health.
32. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities across the curriculum where they debate spiritual and moral issues in a mature and considered way. Opportunities to discuss morals and ethics are planned through the curriculum to best fit with GCSE and A level subjects. For example, in Years 10 and 11, pupils develop an understanding of Christianity and Islam, comparing spiritual beliefs and practices, while others study the moral implications of the outcomes of genetically screening unborn embryos.
33. Relationships and sex education (RSE) is comprehensive, current and subject to parent consultation. Pupils learn, in workshops, about a broad range of topics, including consent, redefining masculinity and challenging abusive behaviours, often led by external experts. Pupils are assessed and personal tutors follow up to support pupils' ongoing learning.
34. Pupils are aware of the responsibility of being treated as individuals and having the freedom to make choices such as what they wear to school. Behavioural expectations are clear and consistently reinforced, resulting in a calm and orderly learning environment. When issues occur, staff consistently apply policies to resolve them effectively.
35. Anti-bullying strategies are clear, understood, and successfully implemented by staff and pupils alike. Leaders promptly address incidents and deal with them effectively, ensuring pupils feel secure



and supported within the school environment. They analyse records and identify trends, using the information to inform planning. As a result, incidents are infrequent.

36. The school premises and accommodation, including boarding, are suitable and well maintained. Leaders arrange for health and safety checks and maintenance to be carried out regularly and systematically. Fire risk assessments are up to date and mitigations are applied. Fire evacuation drills, including during boarding time, are regularly rehearsed, and fire safety equipment is suitably maintained.
37. The boarding accommodation provides a welcoming and comfortable environment, which contributes positively to boarders' wellbeing. Pupils use frequent opportunities to make decisions about the provision and their daily lives, accepting the responsibility given to them. Pupils' self-reliance is developed through their use of the kitchens, access to wash clothes independently of the laundry service and access to local facilities. This responsibility enhances the development of their self-confidence.
38. There is suitable medical accommodation to care for pupils who are unwell or injured, including in boarding. Staff are appropriately trained to deliver first aid. Procedures for the storage and administration of medicine are appropriate. Records are well maintained and reviewed regularly.
39. Leaders effectively supervise pupils and maintain accurate admission and attendance registers. Attendance monitoring systems are proactive, addressing concerns quickly to promote consistent pupil attendance. The quick addressing of problems has led to recent improvements in pupil attendance and reduced lesson lateness. Leaders inform the local authority when they have concerns about pupils' attendance, or when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

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

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

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

41. Pupils have a secure understanding of their social responsibilities, actively promoted through the explicit teaching of fundamental British values. Through PSHE and subjects such as history, politics, and psychology, pupils critically engage with values including democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. Pupils compare democratic systems with alternative governance models. This curriculum is enriched by guest speakers, including police officers discussing crime prevention and councillors explaining local governance structures. This practical engagement deepens pupils' respect for public institutions and their understanding of civil and criminal law in England.
42. Through diverse case studies, pupils explore global perspectives and complex social issues. For instance, in German lessons, pupils discuss the rise of the far right, while English literature lessons address themes of patriarchy and masculinity in classic texts. History of art lessons provide opportunities to engage critically with the societal impacts of war and conflict. Structured co-curricular programmes, including Model United Nations and debating clubs, further enhance pupils' critical thinking, teamwork and global awareness, exemplified by pupils' successful participation in regional and national debating competitions.
43. Pupils actively contribute to school life through structured leadership roles and committees, successfully supporting initiatives such as anti-bullying campaigns and mental health awareness weeks. Pupils demonstrate initiative, making meaningful contributions to society. Charitable activities, such as outreach projects with local churches, food banks, and organisations supporting homeless communities, foster active citizenship and social responsibility. Pupils organise regular fund-raising events including bake sales and sponsored runs, reflecting their commitment to societal wellbeing and community engagement.
44. Mutual respect, including awareness of protected characteristics, is explicitly promoted by staff. A clear equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy, supported by activities and clubs such as the LGBTQ+ group, nurtures acceptance and inclusivity. Staff foster a cohesive environment where pupils actively challenge disrespectful behaviour, reinforcing a robust culture of mutual respect and tolerance. Pupils frequently engage in PSHE sessions that explicitly discuss issues, such as neurodiversity and the importance of respecting differences.
45. The distinction between right and wrong is clearly promoted through reflective learning and moral discussions across subjects. Debates encourage pupils to critically assess ethical issues, from, for example, historical comparisons of the Munich Agreement to contemporary geopolitical events, and the moral implications of scientific practices, like genetic testing, in Biology.
46. Careers guidance is systematic and inclusive, structured around the school's own 'next steps' programme. Regular, personalised sessions with their tutors, university application support, interview practice and tailored guidance for creative arts and international study, prepare pupils effectively for higher education, apprenticeships and employment. Pupils access practical experiences such as mock interviews, visits to universities and career fairs.
47. Economic education, integrated within PSHE, equips pupils with essential financial literacy, covering a range of topics including personal budgeting and taxation. The PSHE curriculum is supported by

other subjects, such as geography, which develop pupils' understanding of broader economic issues like climate change and the impact of mass migration.

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

**48. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

49. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and aligned fully with current statutory guidance. Those with designated safeguarding responsibility are suitably qualified and experienced. An appropriately trained team works in collaboration with the safeguarding lead to provide specialist knowledge such as mental health, self-harm and support for international pupils.
50. Training for all staff is comprehensive and regularly updated. New staff receive induction training that ensures they understand their responsibilities, including the school's procedures for reporting and managing concerns. Regular briefings reinforce staff knowledge, particularly in response to emerging potential risks such as online safety, child-on-child abuse and the safe use of public transport. Staff recognise and respond appropriately to safeguarding issues.
51. Boarding staff are trained appropriately, ensuring boarders feel safe and supported. Evening meetings and pastoral check-ins regularly monitor boarders' emotional and physical safety. Boarders access an independent listener to report concerns they may feel they cannot report elsewhere.
52. Leaders engage proactively with external agencies, including local safeguarding partners and mental healthcare providers, to ensure timely support and effective interventions when needed. Record-keeping practices are meticulous and secure.
53. Pupils are confident to report concerns. They use various accessible methods, such as confidential messaging systems, instant access to the safeguarding team and counsellors, and personal tutor contact.
54. Staff follow the procedures for reporting low-level concerns about the conduct of adults. Leaders maintain suitable records of these concerns, review them regularly to check for training needs and take suitable action when required. Appropriate procedures are in place to respond to any concerns about adults working with pupils.
55. The school follows appropriate recruitment procedures, with all necessary pre-employment checks completed and recorded accurately in the single central record, which senior leaders audit regularly.
56. Through PSHE, pupils are taught how to stay safe, including online. Topics include cyberbullying, spotting scams and the risks of posting photos online. The programme is age-appropriate and responsive to emerging risks. Suitable systems for filtering and monitoring online activity are in place, regularly tested and any concerns are acted upon swiftly.
57. The proprietor is suitably trained in safeguarding and maintains effective oversight of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. Governors listen to pupil and staff views, scrutinise reports from leaders and review records. They ensure that leaders take all appropriate action to keep pupils safe.

## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Mander Portman Woodward School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	207/6363
<b>Address</b>	Mander Portman Woodward School 90–92 Queen's Gate London SW7 5AB
<b>Phone number</b>	020 7835 1355
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@mpw.ac.uk
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.mpw.ac.uk/locations/london/">www.mpw.ac.uk/locations/london/</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mander Portman Woodward Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Steve Boyes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Sally Powell
<b>Age range</b>	14 to 20
<b>Number of pupils</b>	567
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	59
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 December 2022

## Information about the school

59. Mander Portman Woodward School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. The main school building is based at Queen's Gate in South Kensington. There are two additional sites used by the school, both based in South Kensington, 0.1 miles and 0.2 miles from the main school building. The school is run by a limited company, which owns two other schools, in Cambridge and Birmingham. Governance is administered through a management board comprising both executives and non-executives of the group. Following a material change inspection in December 2022, the school introduced a boarding provision. The current principal has been in post since September 2023.
60. The boarding house, which also contains teaching accommodation, and a cafeteria is situated approximately 0.1 miles from the main school, based in South Kensington. The boarding facility accommodates a maximum of 72 pupils aged 16 to 18.
61. The school has identified 248 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Eight pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language for 122 pupils.
63. The school states its aims are to encourage pupils to have high academic aspirations, working with parents to help them achieve those goals. It aims to provide a broad and flexible curriculum with bespoke programmes of study and a pastoral system focussed on individual needs. It seeks to do this through providing a friendly, informal environment in which pupils develop individually and as members of society.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

18 to 20 March 2025

64. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

65. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)