

School inspection report

7 to 9 October 2025

Mander Portman Woodward Independent College

16–18 Greenfield Crescent

Edgbaston

Birmingham

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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 and leaders work collaboratively to deliver an educational experience that prioritises individualised pathways, so that pupils benefit from provision closely matched to their circumstances and aspirations.
2. Governors exercise effective strategic oversight, drawing on a range of evidence to challenge and support leaders in maintaining alignment between the school's aims and day-to-day practice, so that pupils experience coherent support and purposeful learning.
3. Leaders have designed a curriculum with breadth and adaptability, particularly at post-16, where varied qualification routes enable pupils to experience appropriate challenge matched to their capabilities and future aspirations.
4. Most teaching is effective. It is characterised by good subject knowledge and positive relationships. However, effective teaching and learning strategies are not applied consistently across all lessons, so that not all pupils receive appropriate challenge and support in every aspect of their learning.
5. Leaders ensure targeted intervention for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). It is carefully structured and regularly reviewed, so that these pupils access the curriculum successfully and make progress in line with their peers.
6. Leaders have established a comprehensive personal tutor (PT) framework, providing individualised guidance through weekly contact, so that pupils develop self-confidence, self-awareness and clear academic direction throughout their time at the school.
7. Leaders address personal and social development through a planned programme covering themes of respect, relationships and responsibility. However, the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculums do not maximise pupil engagement or provide clear progression for older pupils, so that not all pupils benefit from age-appropriate challenge year on year.
8. Leaders maintain effective systems for monitoring attendance. They work closely with pupils and parents to promote good attendance. However, registration arrangements for pupils of non-compulsory school age did not initially fully comply with statutory guidance. This was rectified during the inspection, so that practice now aligns with requirements.
9. Leaders promote positive behaviour and mutual respect. However, policy and practice do not always align, leading to a lack of consistency for pupils.
10. Leaders have established a structured careers programme, providing diverse opportunities, so that pupils develop informed and aspirational plans for their futures.
11. Preparation for life in British society is embedded throughout the curriculum and wider school life. Leaders pay particular attention to supporting international pupils in adapting to their new environment, so that all pupils are equipped to contribute confidently as responsible citizens.

12. Leaders and governors maintain rigorous safeguarding arrangements, with comprehensive recruitment procedures, well-trained staff and effective partnerships with external agencies. Pupils' welfare is a priority. Concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately.

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 policies and practice relating to behaviour and attendance align and consistently reflect statutory guidance
- review and develop the RSE and PSHE curriculums to ensure they maximise pupil engagement and provide clear progression for older pupils
- ensure that effective teaching and learning strategies are applied consistently across all lessons so that all pupils receive appropriate challenge and support.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Leaders and governors ensure that the school's aims and ethos are realised through an approach whereby the individual needs of each pupil are at the centre of decision-making. Strategic leadership, underpinned by collaborative review and clear accountability, ensures that pastoral and academic provision reflects the school's values.
14. Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's strengths, challenges and strategic priorities. They provide informed support and robust challenge through regular engagement with leaders. Governors use a range of evidence including safeguarding audits, performance data and pupil feedback. Their oversight of key areas reflects a commitment to the school's aims and ethos, so that pupils receive tailored support to achieve their aspirations. As a result, they ensure that leaders possess the appropriate knowledge and skills to discharge their responsibilities effectively.
15. Governors regularly scrutinise policies to assure themselves that they have due regard to statutory guidance. Policy updates are typically actioned in a timely manner and in line with statutory guidance. However, attendance procedures did not reflect statutory guidance for pupils of non-compulsory school age. This was rectified during the inspection.
16. Established, systematic quality assurance processes, including lesson observations, learning walks and course review, enable leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and its delivery. Leaders draw on pupil and staff feedback to inform an evolving self-evaluation process. Professional development is supported through coaching and developmental dialogue. Leaders use this information alongside data analysis to plan targeted support for staff and pupils.
17. Pupil progress is rigorously analysed by leaders and teachers, including progress data relative to starting points by subject and pupil group. They have a clear understanding of individual and cohort performance. This analysis informs staff development priorities, ensuring continuous improvement in outcomes for pupils.
18. Governors and leaders work collaboratively to review progress and adapt provision. This ensures that the school meets both regulatory requirements and the aspirations of its community. Pastoral care and safeguarding are given high priority, supported by structured oversight and clear pathways for pupil development.
19. Leaders and teachers maintain open dialogue with parents and pupils. This collaborative communication ensures that leaders can take effective action to adapt provision and support pupil progress.
20. Leaders ensure that all required information is published and kept up to date on the school's website. This includes the school's aims, ethos, academic performance and statutory policies. Parents receive timely and relevant information. Detailed written reports are issued to parents on a half-termly basis. These reports clearly highlight pupil progress and include strategies to further enhance achievement. Regular informal communication with parents ensures positive engagement between home and school, so that pupils benefit from consistent support for their academic and personal development.
21. A culture of respect, inclusion and equality ensures that all members of the school community are valued and treated fairly. Governors and leaders ensure that they meet their responsibilities under

the Equality Act 2010. There is an appropriate accessibility plan in place, which considers access to both school accommodation and the curriculum.

22. Leaders have established a clear and effective complaints process, supported by transparent procedures. These meet statutory requirements and promote open communication between the school and parents or guardians. Complaints are addressed promptly and appropriately, with regular review and oversight from governors to ensure continued effectiveness.
23. Leaders take a rigorous approach to managing risk. They implement effective health and safety procedures, maintain secure site management, and ensure compliance with legislative requirements. Risks are further mitigated through comprehensive risk assessments for the site, activities and pupil wellbeing. Audits are conducted by external providers. A clear programme of review, monitoring and staff training ensures a sustained regard for safety.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

25. Leaders have established a broad, balanced and well-resourced curriculum. Alongside the core subjects there is a range of other options, including Chinese, photography, film studies, sociology and economics. This enables pupils to pursue their interests and develop a positive foundation across all academic disciplines.
26. Leaders' and teachers' planning ensure continuity, progression and age-appropriate challenge. In the sixth form the curriculum offers flexibility, providing a range of pathways including one-, two- or three-A-level routes, as well as pre-A level and one-year courses. This enables pupils to follow programmes suited to their individual interests, needs and aspirations. As a result, pupils benefit from a rich, engaging and pupil-centred learning experience that supports both academic achievement and personal development.
27. Teaching is underpinned by good subject knowledge and positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Effective use of assessment, including regular timed assessments and progress tests, enables pupils to understand their progress and identify clear next steps in their learning.
28. Most teaching across the school enables good progress, but in some areas lessons do not provide sufficient challenge or support for all pupils. Where teaching is effective, purposeful questioning, feedback and assessment to check understanding enable pupils to consolidate knowledge and develop new skills. Where support is tailored to the individual, pupils' learning is optimised. Regular assessments, combined with formative feedback, ensure that pupils clearly understand their academic progress and the next steps in their learning. This is reinforced through frequent one-to-one meetings with personal tutors (PTs), enabling individualised guidance. As a result, pupils make good progress at GCSE and A level relative to their starting points.
29. Leaders ensure that pupils who have (SEND) have their needs carefully assessed and addressed through individual profiles and tailored support plans. Strategies are regularly reviewed and communicated to staff. This ensures consistency, with a focus on fostering independence and removing barriers to learning. This personalised provision enables pupils who have SEND to achieve in line with their peers.
30. Leaders ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language are identified promptly and supported through targeted curriculum adaptations. These pupils are provided with clear guidance, including glossaries and pre-learning materials, and are encouraged to make regular use of tools such as word banks to enhance comprehension. This approach enables pupils to develop confidence in their language skills so that they can engage fully and independently in lessons.
31. The weekly programme of extra-curricular activities includes debating, medical society, chess club and book club. This provides opportunities for all pupils to develop interests, build confidence, and work collaboratively.

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

32. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

33. Leaders have established an effective PT system to support pupils' personal development. Leaders and teachers meet regularly to review pupil progress and wellbeing. Weekly individual PT sessions provide effective pastoral and academic support. Staff know pupils well, enabling them to provide individual guidance so that pupils develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge.
34. Leaders promote pupils' understanding of respect, responsibility and equality through the RSE and PSHE curriculum. Pupils explore topics such as prejudice, discrimination and consent in an age-appropriate manner. RSE is effectively integrated, with parental consultation and withdrawal rights respected. Assessment of pupils' understanding informs future planning. However, leaders do not maximise pupil engagement or ensure clear progression for older pupils. As a result, pupils often repeat similar activities and discussions to those already completed in the previous year. This limits opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge.
35. The school's culture of inclusivity and individual care reflects a deep respect for diversity. This culture is carefully fostered by leaders and ensures that all pupils feel valued and are equipped to engage thoughtfully with the wider world.
36. Leaders ensure that pupils develop a secure understanding of physical health through the PE curriculum. Pupils take part in football, badminton, table tennis and fitness activities off site.
37. Leaders provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their spirituality and moral understanding through religious studies lessons, observation of various religious festivals and participation in culture days. Pupils have access to the wellbeing room for prayer and reflection. This provision supports pupils' personal and spiritual development.
38. Leaders effectively encourage pupils to reflect the school's values in their behaviour through clear expectations, consistent role-modelling and recognition of positive conduct. Pupils engage positively in lessons and within the wider school community. Behaviour is tracked and monitored, enabling leaders to respond effectively to individual needs. However, greater clarity between policy and procedure regarding rewards would ensure consistency for all pupils.
39. Leaders ensure that a clear and effective anti-bullying strategy is in place so that bullying is a rare occurrence. Pupils are confident in raising concerns due to the systems in place to support their academic and pastoral progress. This approach fosters a safe and respectful learning environment, so that pupils can learn and thrive with confidence.
40. The school's admission and attendance registers are maintained accurately, and staff notify the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times.
41. Leaders ensure that the school's attendance policy is clear, accessible on the school website and communicated effectively to parents. Attendance is monitored through robust systems. The senior attendance champion oversees the analysis of attendance data. Trends are identified and patterns monitored. Leaders work closely with pupils and parents to support and promote good attendance so that pupils benefit fully from their education. During the inspection, it was noted that registration

arrangements in the morning and afternoon for pupils of non-compulsory school age did not fully comply with statutory guidance. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.

42. Pupils are appropriately supervised both on the school site and on school trips. Clear procedures are in place for pupils who leave the site at lunchtime with parental permission.
43. Pupils' physical wellbeing is actively supported by the school's robust approach to health and safety. A programme of effective systems of maintenance and checks is in place to enable the pupils to learn in a safe environment. The school carries out termly fire drills, and qualified staff administer first aid in a timely manner with appropriate facilities available to care for those requiring medical attention.
44. Leaders and governors ensure that the school's premises provide a suitable learning environment. Classrooms are well lit, appropriately ventilated and maintained to a suitable standard. Specialist facilities, including science laboratories and art rooms, are well resourced to support the curriculum.

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

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

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

46. Leaders ensure that the curriculum prepares pupils for life beyond school, enabling them to speak confidently about their understanding of British society. Fundamental British values are actively promoted and embedded across all subjects, alongside PSHE. This deepens pupils' understanding of key issues such as democracy. In PSHE lessons, pupils also develop respect for other cultures and a clear understanding of important laws, so that they are well equipped for life as responsible citizens.
47. Leaders actively recognise and celebrate cultural differences within the pupil body, including through PSHE and dedicated 'Culture Days'. They foster an environment that promotes respectful relationships. Pupils develop an awareness of the need to respect everyone, irrespective of difference. This approach supports the development of pupils' social and cultural wellbeing so that they can engage constructively in a diverse society.
48. Leaders recognise the international nature of their school community. They ensure that pupils are equipped with the skills needed to thrive in Britain. They provide tailored induction materials, targeted support for EAL learners and contextual cultural guidance. Pupils are also introduced to British public institutions and services, helping them develop a broad knowledge of civic structures and their role in society. This enables pupils to adapt well to their new environment and make good academic and personal progress so that they can contribute confidently to school life and society.
49. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong, which is reinforced by the school's code of conduct. Leaders facilitate this understanding through personal tutors and individualised support, which allow pupils to explore issues in a guided setting. The curriculum and co-curriculum offer opportunities, including debating, which enable pupils to discuss and reflect on ethical dilemmas. As a result, pupils' behaviour and interactions with each other and with adults in lessons and around the school site are positive and respectful.
50. Leaders support pupils to develop a wider sense of social responsibility. Pupils engage with their teachers through a school council to enact change and contribute positively to the school. Pupils also take part in projects in the local community and beyond, including the National Citizen Service, which enables them to make a meaningful difference and develop a sense of civic responsibility.
51. The careers education programme is coherent and well planned, firmly centred around the PT system. Careers education is effectively supported by the use of an online platform, which both pupils and their parents can access. Mapped against the Gatsby benchmarks, the programme provides pupils with opportunities to explore future plans through careers week, visiting speakers, university and apprenticeship links and engagement with alumni. Regular audits, staff training and close collaboration with parents ensure impartial, well-informed guidance, so that pupils make confident and aspirational choices about their futures.
52. Leaders ensure that the pupils receive economic education in order to acquire relevant and age-appropriate skills including guidance on banking, managing money and student loans.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. Leaders and governors place the highest priority on safeguarding. They demonstrate a thorough understanding of current statutory guidance and local thresholds.
55. Leaders have established a deeply embedded safeguarding culture in which all staff, including support staff, understand their responsibilities and contribute effectively to the protection and welfare of pupils.
56. Pastoral and safeguarding concerns are managed with care, sensitivity and rigour. Communication with families is open. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, such as the local authority, and understand early help processes. Low-level concerns relating to staff are handled appropriately with clear accountability and follow-up.
57. Leaders ensure safeguarding records are detailed and include a clear rationale for decisions, including engagement with external agencies. Systems and procedures are implemented effectively to strengthen oversight and the quality of record-keeping. This ensures appropriate support and clear documentation so that pupils receive timely, targeted and compassionate care.
58. Leaders ensure that all staff and governors receive suitable annual safeguarding training. Teachers and support staff have a secure understanding of statutory guidance and know how to respond appropriately to concerns, including those relating to online safety and child-on-child abuse. Staff demonstrate confidence in identifying and reporting issues to leaders with responsibility for safeguarding, ensuring consistent attention to the protection of pupils. Policies and procedures are implemented consistently, and staff take proactive steps to mitigate risks. As a result, pupils are well protected, and safeguarding arrangements operate effectively across the school.
59. Leaders maintain effective internet filtering and monitoring systems, regularly testing their effectiveness through system checks. The safeguarding team reviews alerts by the end of each day. The implementation of a clear mobile phone policy contributes effectively to the online safety of pupils during the school day, and clear messages from leaders ensure that pupils understand the safe use of personal devices.
60. Safer recruitment procedures are rigorous and consistently applied in line with statutory requirements. Leaders and governors maintain meticulous oversight of appointments through regular review of the single central record and associated staff files. Robust systems ensure that all pre-employment checks are completed before staff and governors commence duties.
61. Leaders maintain robust oversight of safeguarding, including through trend analysis and safeguarding audits. The annual safeguarding review is thorough and used to drive improvement. Governors play an active role in monitoring safeguarding practice, ensuring it is in line with statutory guidance and continually refined.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Mander Portman Woodward Independent College
Department for Education number	330/6079
Address	Mander Portman Woodward Independent College 16–18 Greenfield Crescent Edgbaston Birmingham B15 3AU
Phone number	0121 454 9637
Email address	birmingham@mpw.ac.uk
Website	www.mpw.ac.uk/locations/birmingham/
Proprietor	Mander Portman Woodward Ltd
Chair	Mr Steven Boyes
Headteacher	Mr Mark Shingleton
Age range	14 to 19
Number of pupils	138
Date of previous inspection	28 to 29 September 2022

Information about the school

63. Mander Portman Woodward Independent College is an independent co-educational day school located in Edgbaston, Birmingham. It is part of the Mander Portman Woodward group (MPW), a limited company which owns two other schools in London and Cambridge. Governance is administered through a management board comprising both executives and non-executives of the group.
64. The school is currently operating outside of its registration, as there is a very small number of 20-year-old pupils on roll.
65. The school has identified 54 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
66. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 60 pupils.
67. The school aims to provide a broad curriculum with flexible programmes of study and pastoral care geared towards individual needs. The school seeks to assist pupils in making informed choices about higher education and careers.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

7 to 9 October 2025

68. A team of three 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
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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?

1. The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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