

# School inspection report

24 to 26 February 2026

## **Surbiton High School**

13 – 15 Surbiton Crescent  
Kingston upon Thames  
KT1 2JT

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’.

## Contents

<b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....	4
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE .....	6
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	8
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	10
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>11</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	12
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>13</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	13
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>16</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietor, local governors and school leaders share a clear vision for the school based on the values of compassion and respect for others. Pupils are ambitious and deeply proud to belong to a diverse and caring school community.
2. The proprietor and local governors ensure that leaders have the required knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles effectively. They check that policies meet the requirements of statutory guidance and legislation through focused visits and external audits. Leaders understand their roles and place pupils' wellbeing at the heart of decision-making. Pupils' wellbeing is monitored carefully by both pastoral and academic staff. As a result, pupils are happy and successful in school.
3. The early years setting is well led and managed. Staff carefully match activities to the needs of children to promote their development. Consequently, children make rapid progress towards their learning goals.
4. Pupils in the prep and senior schools make good progress. Senior pupils achieve highly in public examinations. Leaders are actively promoting initiatives to encourage senior pupils to think more for themselves in lessons. However, these initiatives are not yet fully embedded in all lessons.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress. Tailored support in the prep and senior schools enables them to access the curriculum fully. Pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) receive appropriate support to enable them to make good progress.
6. Pupils lead busy lives beyond the classroom. An inclusive sports programme enables elite athletes to achieve national success in their chosen sport, while offering provision for others to enjoy competitive matches or keep fit. Music and drama are popular options for many pupils. Participation rates in co-curricular activities are high. Pupils grow in self-confidence as they develop their skills and try new activities.
7. Pupils behave extremely well. Serious misbehaviour is rare and bullying seldom occurs. If it does occur, the school acts swiftly and effectively.
8. The school provides a comprehensive programme of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Pupils learn to respect one another, to value difference, and to understand themselves and their place in the world.
9. Pupils are well informed about career options. Expert guidance for subject choices and for courses beyond school enables pupils to choose appropriate pathways for their future.
10. Pupils have a strong sense of service. They enjoy supporting one another in school and raising money for charities. Such activities enable pupils to develop self-awareness and an understanding of the needs of others.
11. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are robust. Staff are well trained to recognise and report any safeguarding matters. Leaders have established close links with external safeguarding partners and refer any concerns in a timely manner. Pupils are confident to speak to adults about their concerns.

## 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 teaching in the senior school consistently enables pupils to think for themselves as effectively as possible.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. The proprietor and governors work closely with leaders to uphold the school's ethos and values of compassion and respect for others. They provide support and appropriate challenge to leaders through regular visits and committee meetings. They ensure that leaders undertake focused training so that they maintain the knowledge and skills required to carry out their responsibilities effectively. External audits in areas such as safeguarding and health and safety help the proprietor and governors to ensure that the school's policies and procedures reflect current statutory guidance. Through this oversight, they confirm that the Standards are met consistently.
13. Governors and leaders adopt a strategic approach to identifying and managing risk within the school. Detailed risk assessments for the school sites, and for high-risk subject areas such as science, are effective in assessing and mitigating any potential harm to pupils. For example, leaders have identified the potential risk associated with pupils crossing a busy road to access different buildings and so ensure that the main crossing point is always supervised by staff. Governors and leaders review near misses and investigate accidents carefully in order to determine whether any lessons can be learned. Risk assessments for off-site visits are comprehensive. Staff understand their responsibilities when supervising pupils beyond the school site.
14. The proprietor and leaders review the effectiveness of the school's provision routinely. Self-evaluation informs a development plan that prioritises pupils' wellbeing. Governors provide appropriate challenge to ensure that the development plan is realistic and supported by sufficient resources. For example, governors have commissioned a review of the use of space across the school's sites in order to inform strategic planning. Leaders consult widely to ensure that staff understand the agreed development priorities and reflect them in departmental development plans.
15. Leaders monitor pastoral concerns through the school's electronic recording system. They share relevant information appropriately with staff, and between the school sites, so that pupils' needs are identified and met consistently. Safeguarding oversight is supported by accurate and detailed record-keeping. Pastoral leaders maintain effective working relationships with external agencies to secure additional support for pupils when required. As a result, pupils are well cared for in school.
16. The early years provision is led and managed effectively. Leaders prioritise professional development so that staff understand and implement the latest guidance. Leaders promote children's individual progress and personal development within a safe and nurturing environment. Statutory requirements for the early years are met consistently and documentation is maintained appropriately.
17. The school manages complaints in line with its published procedures. Accurate logs are maintained, so that leaders and governors can identify any patterns or recurring concerns. If a complaint is received, the school investigates promptly. Leaders engage external specialists, where appropriate, to investigate any serious concerns. Any recommendations arising from investigations are implemented in a timely manner.
18. All required information for parents and prospective parents is available on the school's website. Parents receive regular reports about their child's progress, including information about attainment, and guidance for further improvement.

19. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Provision for male and female pupils in the separate prep schools is equitable. Teaching does not discriminate. An accessibility plan with realistic timescales informs appropriate adjustments, so that pupils who have disabilities are able to access the curriculum and the school site.
20. Leaders provide the required information to the local authority regarding pupils who have an EHC plan, including details of funding and provision. The school notifies the local authority of pupils who join or leave at non-standard transition points, in accordance with statutory requirements.

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

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

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

22. Leaders have established a broad and balanced curriculum, supported by detailed schemes of work, which meets pupils' needs effectively and covers the required areas. In the prep schools, pupils develop secure foundations in literacy and numeracy while also exploring scientific, creative, linguistic and technological subjects. Leaders promote study skills, including perseverance and curiosity, so that pupils develop increasing independence in their learning. In the boys' prep school, the curriculum prepares pupils effectively for entry into selective secondary schools. Pupils in the girls' prep school also move on to the next stage of their education with appropriate academic preparation and confidence in their learning.
23. In the senior school, pupils choose from a wide range of academic and practical subjects. Minority subjects, such as Greek, remain available even where numbers are small. This enables pupils to pursue particular academic interests fully. Leaders are flexible in allowing pupils with particular needs, such as a specialist or elite co-curricular commitment, to drop a subject in order to manage their workload. In the sixth form, pupils can undertake an independent research project or take an additional AS-level course. These opportunities provide pupils with the opportunity to broaden their studies, and to develop higher-level analytical skills.
24. In the early years, children are confident to try new tasks through play and exploration, such as learning to measure using their feet. Leaders promote children's communication skills by encouraging them to share ideas, such as when identifying pictures of local landmarks. Teachers prioritise children's acquisition of well-developed skills in phonics and numeracy. As a result, children demonstrate effective learning skills and make rapid progress towards their learning goals. They are well prepared to move up to Year 1.
25. Pupils in the prep schools achieve well from their given starting points in mathematics and English. Senior pupils achieve highly in public examinations, typically achieving beyond expectations when measured against standardised baseline tests. Most progress to universities with high entrance requirements.
26. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They plan lessons carefully and use a wide range of resources effectively. In the senior school, leaders are developing approaches to teaching that encourage pupils to think for themselves and engage more deeply with their learning. In lessons where these techniques are embedded effectively, pupils explore ideas with confidence and demonstrate intellectual curiosity. In some lessons, opportunities for pupils to think for themselves are less consistently developed, and pupils are less engaged with their learning as a result.
27. Provision for pupils who have SEND is co-ordinated carefully. Individual learning plans are reviewed at appropriate intervals and teaching strategies are adapted accordingly. One-to-one and small-group tuition provide targeted support. Pupils who have EHC plans receive appropriate support. These arrangements enable pupils to access the curriculum fully and to make good progress.
28. Most pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) require no additional support. Where support is required, it is focused on the development of subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils who speak EAL participate confidently in lessons and access learning effectively.
29. Leaders implement a highly effective assessment system that prompts staff to intervene in order to support pupils whose progress either exceeds expectations or gives cause for concern. Frequent

reporting cycles and close monitoring of pupils' attainment allow staff to identify pupils' underperformance at an early stage. Staff are readily available to help pupils outside lessons through subject clinics. Teachers' detailed feedback on pupils' work enables them to know how to improve. Consequently, pupils are confident learners and ambitious to meet their targets.

30. The co-curricular programme is extensive and well attended, with pupils often arriving early or staying beyond the school day to participate in activities. Pupils achieve success at national level in sports including rowing, football, hockey and gymnastics. Dance is popular, and pupils participate enthusiastically in music and drama. Artistic, creative and academic societies provide further opportunities for enrichment. Participation is particularly high in the prep schools and younger years of the senior school. Through sustained involvement in activities beyond the classroom, pupils develop confidence, team skills and resilience.

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

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

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

32. Leaders provide a comprehensive physical education (PE) programme across all age groups. In the early years, children develop balance and co-ordination through structured lessons and purposeful outdoor play. Teachers plan activities carefully, so that children build control and confidence in a safe environment. In the prep schools, pupils refine specific skills in activities matched to their stage of development. For example, pupils in the boys' prep school practise close fingertip control when handling a basketball, demonstrating increasing precision and co-ordination. Competitive fixtures in the prep schools, across a wide range of sports, allow pupils to apply their skills and develop teamwork and perseverance.
33. In the senior school, pupils have access to elite pathways in both individual and team sports. Some compete at national level, while others follow programmes suited to their interests and aptitudes. Leaders ensure that PE remains varied and inclusive so that pupils participate regularly. Pupils demonstrate physical confidence and understand the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
34. Through the PSHE programme and discussions with form tutors, pupils reflect on the importance of balancing academic work with recreation. Provision for pupils' mental and emotional wellbeing is structured and accessible. In the early years, children are encouraged to express feelings openly to trusted adults. In the prep schools, mentor sessions provide opportunities for reflection and discussion. Yoga lessons for prep and senior pupils offer practical strategies for relaxation and concentration. Pupils apply breathing techniques and demonstrate awareness of how this supports their emotional wellbeing. In the senior school, nurses and counsellors provide additional support. A therapy dog contributes to a calm and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils are confident to speak to an adult to access advice and support.
35. Leaders provide an effective PSHE programme, including relationships and sex education (RSE), for different age groups. In the early years, children learn to share resources and listen attentively to others. In the prep schools, pupils learn the importance of forming healthy and respectful relationships. In the senior school, through form tutors and a range of visiting speakers, pupils explore themes such as human rights, prejudice and personal responsibility. Pupils of all ages articulate their views clearly and demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of showing respect for all people in their relationships with others.
36. The school supports pupils' spiritual development through assemblies, the study of world religions and seasonal services. Lessons in art, music and English provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on the non-material aspects of life. Pupils from diverse backgrounds are confident to speak openly about their beliefs in lessons and group discussions.
37. Pupils behave well. Throughout the school, adults model good behaviour and set high expectations for pupils' conduct. Pupils respond accordingly. Teachers use praise and positive reinforcement when pupils behave well. As a result, poor behaviour is rare. If misbehaviour does occur, pupils are encouraged to reflect and learn from their mistakes. Bullying seldom occurs, and when it does, the school acts swiftly and effectively.
38. Pupils are well supervised throughout the school, especially when moving between sites. In the early years, staff pay close attention to the needs of children within a safe and secure environment. Staff

use effective systems to monitor pupils' attendance. Leaders take prompt action to follow up any individual concerns and report to the local authority as required. An accurate admissions register is kept.

39. The proprietor ensures that the premises are maintained to a high standard. Leaders ensure that the requirements of health and safety legislation are met, and that relevant policies and procedures are implemented effectively. Fire safety measures are effective across the school's sites. Termly fire drills ensure that pupils know what to do if the alarm sounds.
40. Leaders provide appropriate support for pupils who are ill or injured. The medical centre is well equipped, and staff are trained to offer prompt and appropriate medical and emotional support to pupils. A sufficient number of staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid.

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

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

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

42. Pupils understand the principles of fundamental British values. In the early years, children learn to listen to others during activities such as singing the 'funky voice' song. Such experiences help them to develop an understanding of fairness and mutual respect. In prep school mentor lessons, pupils discuss the difference between 'upstanders' and 'bystanders', reflecting on the importance of defending the rights of others. Through assemblies, PSHE lessons and visiting speakers, older pupils consider principles such as individual liberty, tolerance and freedom of speech. Pupils demonstrate respect for others and apply these principles in their daily interactions with adults and their peers.
43. Pupils accept and embrace difference within the school community. They speak openly about personal identity and cultural heritage in assemblies and lessons. Pupils support and participate enthusiastically in events such as International Women's Week, Pride Month and Black History Month, demonstrating a mature awareness of the importance of equality and tolerance.
44. Pupils of all ages have a good understanding of right and wrong, and learn to accept responsibility for their actions. In the early years, children learn to share and take turns. Older pupils understand and demonstrate the school's values of treating others with respect. Through their lessons in PSHE and in subjects such as history and classics, pupils discuss the merits of democracy and other governmental systems. Pupils actively practise democracy when electing pupil leaders, prefects and representatives to the school council.
45. Leaders are keen to gather pupils' views so that their wellbeing is prioritised. Equally, pupils are eager to contribute ideas to improve their school experience. For example, senior pupils have contributed to the development of a revised behaviour code, clarifying the system of rewards and sanctions. Prep pupils have successfully proposed additional board games and basketball nets. Pupils' participation in the various school councils helps them to develop self-confidence and gives them a wider perspective on school life.
46. Pupils mix well within and between age groups. Social interaction is fostered through the house system and in co-curricular clubs and societies. Older pupils support younger pupils through reading initiatives and subject mentoring. Regular interaction between the boys' and girls' prep schools ensures that pupils work together confidently in academic and co-curricular activities. Relationships between pupils, and between adults and pupils, are characterised by courtesy and co-operation.
47. Pupils are eager to serve and support the local community through fundraising and in other practical ways. For example, prep school pupils collect books to donate to a national reading charity. Older pupils choose to support a variety of local and international charities. Community-focused charitable work enables pupils to develop a sense of gratitude and a deepening awareness of the needs of others. By working together in houses to select and support good causes, pupils develop a sense of purpose and an understanding of their place in the world.
48. Pupils' economic understanding develops as they move up the school. In the early years, children handle money in role-play activities, such as purchasing tickets for a puppet theatre. In the prep schools, pupils run enterprise schemes and learn about budgeting and managing costs. In the senior school, pupils learn more advanced financial management through their lessons in economics and business. PSHE lessons include practical guidance about bank accounts and interest rates. In the

sixth form, pupils demonstrate a good awareness of student finance and budgeting for independent living.

49. Leaders provide an extensive programme of careers education. Visiting speakers introduce prep pupils to a range of professions. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 reflect on their interests and aptitudes. Year 11 pupils undertake work experience and use profiling tools to explore possible career pathways. Staff provide information at key transition points so that pupils make informed and realistic subject choices.
50. Throughout the school, leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next steps. Children in the early years are ready and confident to move into Year 1. In the boys' prep school, pupils are successful in gaining entry to local competitive secondary schools. In the girls' prep school, Year 6 pupils have taster days to familiarise themselves with senior school life. Pupils in the sixth form receive helpful guidance on university choices and apprenticeships from well-trained staff. Pupils leave school well prepared for life in British society.

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

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

## Safeguarding

52. Leaders promote a robust safeguarding culture throughout the school so that the wellbeing of pupils is prioritised. Through reviews, including external audits and regular reports, the proprietor ensures that leaders have the appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles effectively. Clear and detailed policies meet the requirements of the latest statutory guidance.
53. Leaders with safeguarding responsibilities have up-to-date and relevant training. Staff receive annual training and regular updates to ensure that they remain alert to the safeguarding needs of pupils. This training is supplemented by online courses, so that staff across the schools are knowledgeable about the risks relevant to the ages of the pupils in their care. Staff are confident to recognise and report any safeguarding concerns. Leaders promote a culture in which staff readily report low-level concerns about themselves or other adults working in the school.
54. Safeguarding leaders in each of the schools work closely together to ensure consistency of practice. Leaders share appropriate information with staff about the vulnerabilities of individual pupils, including pupils who have SEND, or who have an EHC plan, so that these pupils are cared for appropriately. Staff record safeguarding concerns accurately on the school's electronic reporting system. Detailed and confidential safeguarding records are maintained. Leaders identify and act on any trends or patterns. The school works sensitively and appropriately with parents if safeguarding concerns arise.
55. Leaders understand their responsibility to refer matters of concern to local agencies. They liaise appropriately with local safeguarding partners. Referrals are made in a timely manner. Leaders follow up referrals to ensure that external agencies respond promptly. Leaders know how to escalate a concern with the local authority if required.
56. Leaders and staff are aware of contextual risks for pupils, including radicalisation and any pressures arising from pupils' cultural backgrounds. Appropriate training equips staff to discuss issues sensitively with pupils in lessons or individually where necessary. Staff understand how to report concerns that may be linked to radicalisation, extremism or cultural pressures.
57. Arrangements to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are implemented in line with statutory guidance. Leaders are trained in safer recruitment practices. They carry out all the required pre-employment checks on staff and volunteers who work in the school. The school maintains an accurate record of these checks. The proprietor and school leaders review the single central record of staff appointments (SCR) each term.
58. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online, through the PSHE programme. Internet filtering and monitoring systems are in place to protect pupils from potential harm when using school systems. Leaders receive alerts and act promptly if concerns arise as a result of internet misuse in school. The suitability and effectiveness of these systems are tested regularly.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Surbiton High School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	314/6003
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1016538
<b>Address</b>	Surbiton High School 13 – 15 Surbiton Crescent Kingston upon Thames Surrey KT1 2JT
<b>Phone number</b>	020 8546 5245
<b>Email address</b>	principalsoffice@surbitonhigh.com
<b>Website</b>	www.surbitonhigh.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	United Church Schools Trust (UCST)
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Rosalind Given-Wilson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Matthew Shoults
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1539
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 to 16 March 2023

## Information about the school

60. Surbiton High School is an independent day school located in Kingston upon Thames, Surrey. The school is owned and governed by the United Church Schools Trust (UCST) and is a member of a group of schools overseen by United Learning. A local governing body acts in an advisory capacity. The school occupies eight sites in close proximity in Surbiton. It comprises a senior school and sixth form for female pupils, and separate prep schools for male and female pupils. Each prep school has an early years setting. Since the previous inspection a new headteacher has been appointed.
61. There are 45 children in the early years in four Reception classes across the two sites.
62. The school has identified 293 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are 17 pupils in the school who have an education, health and care plan.
63. The school has identified English as an additional language for 212 pupils.
64. The school states its aims are to inspire, encourage and empower pupils to become compassionate, respectful, courageous and inquisitive. It seeks to bring out the best in everyone, and to enable pupils to leave having an ambitious, yet grounded understanding of their place and purpose in the world.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

24 to 26 February 2026

65. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

66. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the principal, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and on-site facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

67. 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)**.

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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