

School inspection report

9 to 11 September 2025

The Stephen Perse Foundation

Union Road
Cambridge
CB2 1HF

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. School leaders and governors ensure that across each of the Foundation's schools the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted. They have created common policies that reflect the Foundation's core values. They check that these are suitably implemented so that all Standards, including those for boarding, are met.
2. The curriculum for children in the early years covers all required areas. The curriculum for older pupils is broad and well-planned and effectively meets the needs of pupils. The extensive extra-curricular programme is valued by pupils for the opportunities it offers for fun and development of different skills.
3. Teachers are knowledgeable, plan lessons well and use a range of effective strategies to manage behaviour adeptly. They form good relationships with pupils so that the atmosphere in classrooms across the schools is friendly, positive and productive. Pupils are motivated and eager learners. They make good progress and attain high grades in public examinations.
4. Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective and responsive to each pupil's specific requirements. As a result, these pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points.
5. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are provided with any additional support they need, especially in the early years. As a result, they become fluent and confident in English. International boarders are supported as necessary in their language acquisition.
6. Leaders actively support pupils' awareness of the importance of tolerance and mutual respect for all. There are well-structured programmes in place for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE). These help pupils to grow in resilience, self-confidence and self-esteem. The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' social awareness and as a result pupils are responsible and understand the need to contribute to their community and to society.
7. Leaders have established clear behavioural expectations and ensure that these are implemented consistently and fairly. Pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. Bullying incidents are rare, but if they occur, they are managed effectively by staff. There are suitable and detailed protocols for monitoring attendance levels.
8. Health and safety measures are thorough and rigorous. The physical structure of the playground in the Junior School, Cambridge presents some challenges for the supervision of pupils. In each school setting and in the boarding house, comfortable and well-maintained accommodation is suitable for purpose and free from preventable risk.
9. Leaders ensure that pupils' grasp of economic matters develops well as they mature. A comprehensive careers programme is in place to support pupils as they prepare for the next stage of their lives.
10. Safeguarding measures are robust and overseen by designated safeguarding leaders in each school. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities to report concerns promptly. Safeguarding records are meticulously kept and stored confidentially. Required checks are

completed before an individual is allowed to start work at the school, although there has been a lack of clarity in the process for verifying references.

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 processes for the verification of references are clearly understood and consistently implemented
- take steps to ensure that arrangements for outdoor playtime in the Junior School, Cambridge enable pupils of all ages to play safely under adult supervision.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. The proprietors and school leaders demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to manage the Foundation's complex structure. Senior leadership at all levels ensures that the values and aims of the Foundation are carefully considered and reflected in decision-making, while care is taken to respect the distinctive character of the individual schools. The result is an inclusive and united school community in which pupils thrive.
12. Governors are assiduous in providing appropriate challenge and support to school leaders. Senior leaders provide them with regular and comprehensive reports, giving governors a firmly grounded understanding of the issues facing the individual schools and the Foundation as a whole. Governors use these reports and visits to the school to ensure there is effective oversight of the different facets of school life by leaders, who have the skills and knowledge to discharge their responsibilities properly.
13. All senior leaders and governors reflect rigorously on the Foundation's success in meeting its aims across the different schools. Leaders are realistic, using information to underpin decision-making for the benefit of pupils, for example, the decision to consolidate boarding provision into a single site. Leaders at all levels monitor the effectiveness of the PSHE and RSE programmes so that they reflect the values of the Foundation and meet the needs of the pupils. Leaders have ensured that all required policies are in place. Policies are successfully implemented, so that all educational Standards and the Standards for boarding are consistently met.
14. Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides for the needs of all pupils, including those who have SEND and those who speak EAL. Leaders' inclusive approach and their arrangements for implementing the targets in the Foundation's accessibility plan ensure that the Foundation is meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
15. Leaders are alert to any actual or potential risks and take appropriate action when managing contextual risks. For example, they are conscious of the potential risks presented to pupils when using communication technology, and the possibility of pupils encountering online misinformation or conspiracy theories. They ensure that filtering and monitoring procedures are robust. Measures for health and safety are thorough, and as a result the school buildings and the boarding accommodation are secure and free from preventable harm.
16. Leaders contact outside agencies such as social services and the local safeguarding officer as necessary to promote the wellbeing of pupils. Information concerning pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) is provided to local authorities as required. Leaders inform the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the Foundation at non-standard times of the year.
17. There is a suitable complaints policy in place which is available on the school's website and which leaders follow scrupulously should the occasion arise. The policy includes the means for boarders or their parents to raise concerns specific to boarding. All other required information is available on the school's website or freely available to parents on request.

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 have established an ambitious and balanced curriculum. The programme for children in the early years is responsive to their developmental needs and includes well-planned and engaging activities. In the junior schools, a thematic approach encourages pupils to think flexibly and see connections across subjects. The curriculum for Year 6 pupils is structured to prepare them effectively for the transition to secondary education. The curriculum for secondary pupils provides a breadth of choice, including subjects such as classics and separate sciences, which meets pupils' needs and aspirations.
20. The curriculum enables pupils to make consistent progress in developing their subject knowledge and understanding. Children in the early years develop a good vocabulary and understand the connection between letter shapes and sounds. Pupils in the junior and senior schools are articulate. They confidently manipulate language orally and in writing. Mathematical understanding develops well, from the smallest children learning basic addition and subtraction to older pupils deftly solving equations. Leaders ensure that pupils develop the technological confidence and skills required to support their learning and creativity.
21. Any learning needs are identified swiftly when pupils join the school. Dedicated leaders liaise with teachers on appropriate strategies to support pupils who have SEND. This may include sessions outside the classroom, particularly for those in the early years and junior schools. Classroom strategies to support pupils in lessons are sensitively implemented and their effectiveness regularly monitored. The support provided enables pupils who have SEND to make consistently good progress in relation to their starting points. The specific needs of pupils who have an EHC plan are met, and plans are reviewed regularly.
22. The majority of pupils who speak EAL come from multilingual homes and are fluent in English. Children joining the early years whose first language is not English are given additional help to support their language development and vocabulary, so that their confidence in English develops well. International boarders speak English confidently and receive extra support from specialist staff as needed.
23. Leaders make effective use of assessment systems to analyse pupils' progress and the impact of strategies set in place to support or challenge pupils. Analysis of data, combined with the monitoring of teaching and learning, enables leaders at all levels to ensure that teaching is meeting the needs of different groups of pupils appropriately.
24. Children in the early years make good progress in all the required areas of learning. Junior school pupils make good progress across the range of subjects. In the senior school there is a consistent pattern over time of high levels of attainment in public examinations. In GCSE examinations in 2025, most pupils attained high grades. Almost all candidates at A level attained high grades in all their chosen subjects.
25. The enthusiasm of teachers for their subjects sparks pupils' interest, and the atmosphere in the classrooms is focused and engaged. Teachers know their pupils well, and relationships are positive and friendly. Teachers have high expectations and are typically adept at dealing with any temporary lapses in pupils' concentration. Teachers make imaginative use of resources appropriate for the age

of pupils, for example, by encouraging junior pupils to build Stonehenge out of biscuits or use chocolate bars to learn about fractions.

26. Pupils of all ages are motivated and eager to learn. They approach new challenges with genuine interest. Children in the early years become completely absorbed in activities, for example, discussing in imaginative outdoor play how to make soup without cutting or burning themselves. Pupils respond positively to teachers' adept use of questioning to extend their thinking. They are confident in hypothesising and are willing to take the risk of making an educated guess. Pupils make good use of their teachers' verbal and written feedback, reviewing and improving their work in response. Boarders appreciate the academic support available to them in the house in the evening.
27. Leaders provide numerous extra activities and clubs beyond the classroom. These are wide-ranging, from poetry and cricket to martial arts and crochet. Leaders respond to pupils' requests for specific clubs that engage their interest. Boarders enjoy access to games and organised social activities in boarding time. Pupils value the range of opportunities they have and there are high levels of enthusiastic participation.

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

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

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

29. Staff at all levels model the importance of forming positive relationships that are based on kindness and respect. This helps pupils develop a firm understanding of the importance of inclusivity and respect, regardless of differences of background, belief or abilities. Leaders' curriculum choices support this understanding. In Year 6, for example, a study of South Africa includes discussions of the unacceptability of the apartheid system and the impact of prejudice on the work of Black composers. In Year 12 psychology lessons, pupils reflect sensitively on their own cultural traditions and those of pupils from other backgrounds.
30. The PSHE curriculum is carefully constructed. Children in the early years learn to share and play together co-operatively. Skilful teaching helps them to learn to manage their own emotions. RSE lessons help pupils to grow in self-awareness and develop their sensitivity to others' emotions and needs as they mature. This is supported by leaders' proactive approach to supporting pupils' mental health. As pupils mature, they develop self-confidence and resilience because they are treated with respect as unique individuals. They learn strategies to deal with academic and personal pressure. Boarders have regular individual wellbeing meetings with boarding staff who support and guide them throughout their A-level years.
31. Pupils develop a spiritual awareness and appreciate that they are part of something bigger than themselves. Children explore the diversity and beauty of nature in outdoor play. Discussion of the work of artists encourages older pupils to reflect on humanity's place in the world. Their own artwork and their joy in music-making are evidence of their appreciation of beauty. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on different cultural beliefs and views on what is and is not morally acceptable.
32. Leaders ensure that RSE teaching is sensitive and age appropriate. Children learn the importance of family and friendships and to respect their own bodies and those of others. Older pupils learn about puberty, consent and contraception. PSHE lessons include discussions on what constitutes a healthy relationship. Pupils learn the importance of being alert to potential dangers of exploitation in the virtual world, so that they have the knowledge they need to keep themselves safe.
33. The curriculum provides regular opportunities for exercise in physical education (PE) lessons and in activities. Children develop their strength and gross-motor skills through climbing and jumping in play areas that provide suitably challenging equipment. PE lessons are timetabled throughout the week for all pupils, and expert coaching ensures that their skills develop well. Leaders make sport inclusive and enjoyable for pupils, for example by running sports teams for the full range of ability levels.
34. Fair behavioural expectations are implemented consistently, alongside appropriate sanctions should these be breached. Children in the early years learn to share and be considerate of others in activities that help them to develop their personal and emotional understanding. Older pupils typically behave well and with consideration for the needs of others. Boarders learn to be mature and thoughtful in communal living.
35. Overall, staff supervision of pupils' behaviour outside class time is appropriate. However, supervision of playtimes in the Cambridge Junior School is made trickier by the physical structure of the

playgrounds. This means that sometimes exuberant or inappropriate play by older pupils can go unnoticed, leaving some younger pupils feeling unsafe.

36. A culture of mutual trust and tolerance underpins the effective anti-bullying strategy. Incidents of bullying are rare. Should they occur, they are managed effectively by staff.
37. Attendance registers are maintained correctly and any attendance concerns are followed up effectively. The boarding house has effective systems for ensuring that staff know the whereabouts of boarders outside lesson times and in the evenings.
38. The grounds and premises in each of the schools are well maintained, clean and free from obvious hazards. Risk assessment procedures are thorough. Appropriate measures are in place to ensure that the sites are secure. Procedures to minimise the risk of fire are rigorous and there are regular fire drills, including in the boarding house outside the school day. There are appropriate medical rooms which provide for pupils' medical needs. Medical support is available for boarders at all times. Appropriate numbers of staff are trained in first aid and paediatric first aid.
39. Boarding accommodation is warm, clean, well maintained and welcoming, with comfortable bedrooms and areas for socialising. Boarding staff create a family atmosphere and form positive, supportive relationships with boarders. Boarders appreciate the degree of freedom and responsibility they are given, which helps them grow in independence and self-assurance.

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. The curriculum and schemes of work encourage pupils to appreciate and respect the diversity of their school and of the city. In the early years setting, display labels in several languages reflect and celebrate the multiplicity of pupils' backgrounds. Children in the kindergarten create a world map which reflects their own backgrounds. In the senior school, heritage societies celebrates pupils' cultural diversity and their pride in the richness it brings to Britain. Boarders live harmoniously with those from other countries, valuing their own backgrounds and respecting those of others.
42. Leaders actively promote pupils' understanding of the core values of tolerance and respect. Children in the early years develop their social skills and awareness of the needs of others in well-planned shared activities. They understand the need to listen to the opinions of others and to share resources. They learn to appreciate individuality and become empathetic, considerate friends.
43. In the junior schools, pupils learn about the rights of all in society to be treated equally. In the senior school, religious studies (RS) lessons look at the diversity of faiths in modern Britain while history lessons prompt further discussion on religious tolerance. The culture created by school leaders ensures that pupils assimilate the school's ethos and belief that all are equally deserving of respect regardless of age, faith, gender or orientation.
44. The careers programme for pupils in the senior school and sixth form is comprehensive and well structured. PSHE lessons encourage pupils in the lower years to start thinking about their own aptitudes and interests as well as practical matters such as what constitutes appropriate behaviour in the workplace. Tutors and heads of year provide guidance as pupils make subject choices for GCSE and A level. Visiting speakers and work experience help to deepen pupils' awareness of possible careers. Advice given by staff and careers advisors about potential routes to take after school are impartial. They cover university choices, taking up apprenticeships or moving directly into employment. Staff provide appropriate support to all pupils, day and boarding, as they make decisions for the next stage of their lives.
45. From an early age, pupils learn about the concept of democracy. Children in the early years vote for matters such as which story to read at the end of the day. Junior school and senior pupils vote for roles of responsibility such as positions on the various school councils and committees. Pupils know that voicing their opinion can have a direct impact, as leaders respond to requests made by the school council about the snacks allowed and which activities should take place.
46. Pupils are responsible and help each other instinctively. They are keen to contribute positively to their community. Children in the early years carefully tidy away at the end of a messy activity. Junior school pupils help kindergarten children, and sixth-form pupils visit the junior school to share their experiences and provide help, for example in mathematics.
47. Pupils vote for charities to support and work responsibly to support them. They perform in local care homes and organise fundraising activities. Local good causes supported include charities focused on children and families in crisis, a local hospital and animal rehoming.
48. Leaders ensure that pupils develop a keen economic awareness in lessons and through activities. Children visit local shops to buy fruit, helping them realise the value of money. A junior school

entrepreneurial challenge involves pupils in planning, creating and marketing a product. PSHE lessons and discussions introduce older pupils to the realities of income, expenditure, taxation and budgeting. Boarders manage their own finances and budgets for their social activities. Such responsibilities help pupils to understand the importance of financial matters for their future lives.

49. Pupils develop a clear understanding of Britain's political and legal structures and the nature of civil society in PSHE lessons. This is expanded on in other lessons, for example in discussions that cover social changes in post-war Britain and debates around Brexit. Pupils' knowledge of global affairs is extended by their involvement in a Model United Nations club and debates covering issues such as human rights and peaceful protest. When such contentious matters are considered, leaders take clear steps to ensure that teachers remain impartial.

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

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

Safeguarding

51. Leaders have established rigorous procedures for safeguarding. The team responsible for safeguarding is extensive and well trained, ensuring that the provision for safeguarding is equally robust across all schools within the Foundation. All staff are given comprehensive training in safeguarding, with regular updates. Training is effective, so that staff have a clear understanding of their responsibility to be vigilant and what action to take should they be concerned for a pupil's safety or wellbeing.
52. Safeguarding, pastoral, healthcare and boarding staff share key information regularly and effectively. Safeguarding leads maintain records of welfare concerns for pupils which are regularly reviewed and updated. They ensure that prompt action is taken as necessary, including liaison with outside agencies such as social services and referral to child and adolescent health services. Confidential records are meticulously maintained.
53. Governors are all trained in safeguarding. They receive thorough and analytical reports compiled by safeguarding leads of safeguarding issues that have arisen in school. This enables them to provide appropriate support and challenge.
54. Recruitment practices are robust, and all required checks are completed before an individual is allowed to start work at the school. Checking includes contacting referees for clarification if a reference raises an issue. However, the process used for verifying references otherwise is unclear.
55. Systems for filtering and monitoring the school's internet systems are robust, with regular reports to leaders regarding the effectiveness of these. Leaders ensure that pupils learn, through PSHE lessons, the importance of managing their online presence safely. They are taught to be discerning in their use of online material and alert to the possibility of misinformation or disinformation.
56. Pupils know how to report concerns to trusted adults and they do so with confidence. The positive, supportive relationships within the school help pupils to feel well-cared for and secure.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

The quality of the early years Foundation stage in the registered early years provision

Stephen Perse Nurseries – Dame Bradbury’s

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

58. The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is good.
59. Children demonstrate high levels of personal and emotional security, and the relationships formed between children and their key person are positive. Staff warmly welcome children and their families when they arrive, which ensures that children settle quickly at the start of each day. Staff promote a positive culture of mutual respect, and politeness is regularly reinforced and praised. Children listen to staff and follow instructions successfully.
60. Staff structure the curriculum to develop children’s skills in the prime areas of learning. They explain the importance of building children’s hand muscles in preparation for writing and the different ways they can do this. For instance, children are encouraged to use their fingers to squash dough into small cup cases and baking tins, developing their fine-motor skills and co-ordination as they do so. They also select other sensory materials to decorate their creations, supporting their curiosity and creativity. These activities help children become inquisitive learners.
61. Leaders’ thoughtful self-evaluation enables them to develop a clear vision for future development. They effectively support the work-life balance and wellbeing of staff. For example, leaders encourage staff to complete all of their duties within the working day. They ensure that staff are recognised for their work and provide opportunities to promote staff wellbeing.

Quality of education

62. The quality of education is good.
63. Leaders and staff are knowledgeable about how young children learn. They successfully organise a stimulating environment to promote learning in all areas of the curriculum. Leaders ensure that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are effectively supported so that they can access the provision. They promptly adapt and implement support plans when needed. Staff ensure resources are designed to provide challenge in children’s learning and play and enable children to make good progress. For example, children develop secure gross-motor skills when climbing large equipment or swinging on ropes.
64. Children communicate confidently and effectively with each other and with staff. For example, when reading a story, staff encourage children to listen carefully, talk about events and characters, recall details, and think about what might happen next. Staff ask questions about the story, invite children to predict outcomes, and help children make connections between the story and their own experiences. Staff interact purposefully with children. Through skilful questioning and thinking out loud, staff effectively move children’s learning forward throughout the day. Staff make good use of snack time to reinforce mathematical concepts and children’s language of number and shape when sharing food.

65. Staff provide varied experiences to support children's early literacy skills. For instance, children of all ages freely access mark-making resources. Children enjoy listening to stories read by staff and by their friends. Older children develop their early writing skills. This is demonstrated when they spend long periods making marks, sticking and gluing, and drawing. This helps children to strengthen their hand muscles and use tools with increasing control.
66. Children benefit from regular outdoor experiences, including woodland activities, where they explore the natural environment, build dens and engage in creative pursuits. Children learn to use tools such as a pestle and mortar to crush berries, which they then use to make paint. These activities support children's understanding of risk, promote their curiosity and encourage safe use of tools and equipment. These experiences also help children develop their fine- and gross-motor skills. Children also learn about plants and the natural world while following clear rules, which in turn helps them to understand boundaries and expectations.

Behaviour and attitudes

67. Behaviour and attitudes are good.
68. Staff maintain an effective key-person system, which helps children to build secure attachments. Staff know the children well and respond effectively to their individual needs. For instance, staff recognise when children require reassurance, or when they need food or sleep, and respond swiftly. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the relationships children build with staff and the positive atmosphere this creates.
69. Children are motivated, arriving happy and ready to learn. Younger children enter with confidence and quickly engage in activities, such as role play with dolls and prams, showing imagination as they care for their 'babies'. Younger children demonstrate positive attitudes, with high levels of curiosity and concentration. Overall, staff have high expectations, understand children's individual needs, and respond appropriately. Staff encourage children who are new to the setting to settle quickly.
70. Children behave well. They develop the skills to manage their feelings and show awareness of others. Staff model high expectations, praise achievements and reinforce indoor voices. Children take turns and show pride in helping others, which helps boost their self-confidence. However, teaching about caring for the environment is not always consistent for older children. At times this can lead to children not being clear about staff's expectations of their behaviour and the importance of working together.
71. Children benefit from a tailored settling-in programme. This includes visits to the next room prior to transition. Partnerships with parents are well established. This helps support children's emotional wellbeing as well as their learning. Staff communicate effectively with parents through daily updates on children's progress and regular parents' meetings.

Personal development

72. The personal development of children is good.

73. Staff respond effectively to children's individual needs and characters, for example recognising when children require reassurance, or when they need food or sleep. This helps build trust between children and adults.
74. Children show confidence and independence when moving around the rooms and selecting resources. They are successful at initiating their own learning. Staff enable children to take risks but are there to provide support when needed, such as when children are balancing on stepping stones. Younger children demonstrate well-developed fine-motor skills as they use whisks in water, scissors to cut paper and pens to make marks on white boards. Staff promote opportunities for children to be active, and children benefit from healthy and nutritious food which is prepared appropriately.
75. Staff help children to address their personal needs. For example, children learn to wash their hands competently and recognise when they need to manage their own personal hygiene.
76. Staff are aware of the importance of teaching children to value and respect others. They build on children's knowledge and interests to talk with them about the similarities and differences between each other. Children play well together and show good levels of respect and tolerance for others. For instance, children automatically celebrate each other's success, clapping when children successfully roll a hula hoop.

Leadership and management

77. Leadership and management are good.
78. Leaders clearly articulate their ambitious vision to provide high-quality, inclusive care and education for all children in the setting. Leaders are well trained and knowledgeable about the education of young children and work hard to establish their vision in practice. All leaders involved in the setting have evaluated their provision and have ongoing plans in place to support improvement. For example, they have effectively implemented their recruitment and training plan and have identified plans to further develop the use of outdoor spaces.
79. Leaders support staff well to deepen their knowledge and understanding through effective training. Children are fully supported to access the curriculum, and staff make appropriate adjustments as necessary, for example, to help develop children's speech and language skills.
80. Leaders ensure that effective systems are in place for the supervision and support of staff. Leaders positively engage with staff and understand the pressures that are on them. Leaders successfully engage with parents, for example through regular communication and special events.
81. Leaders have made accurate assessments about the strengths and areas of development for the setting. They are taking proactive steps to help staff develop their knowledge and practice. This support has helped staff gain a better understanding of how to plan a programme of learning that focuses on what children most need to learn next. However, this programme of support is not fully developed. This means that some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain. For example, new staff working with older children do not always engage them in sustained, independent exploration and deeper learning.
82. Partnerships with parents are very positive. These partnerships are successful because staff recognise that parents are children's first educators. Staff work successfully with parents to find out

about children's routines and interests, so they can provide the consistency of care that babies and children need.

83. Leaders support the wellbeing of staff effectively. Staff know that leaders are readily available to offer advice and words of encouragement. Leaders ensure that staff workloads are manageable. This helps establish a settled staff team, which in turn ensures consistency in the care that children receive.

Safeguarding

84. Safeguarding is effective.

85. Leaders ensure that staff complete regular training to keep their safeguarding knowledge and skills up to date. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They know the signs that a child may be at risk of harm or neglect and know who to contact if they have concerns about children or adults. Staff report any concerns they may have promptly so that leaders can follow these up in a timely manner.

86. Robust recruitment processes help to ensure that staff who are employed are suitable to work with children.

87. Staff have systems in place to ensure the environment is safe for children to learn and play. For example, they complete regular checks of the indoor and outdoor environments to identify and minimise any potential risks.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- strengthen consistency in how staff teach older children to care for and take responsibility for their environment
- strengthen arrangements for the ongoing evaluation of teaching and learning in relation to older children so that staff receive the guidance and support they need.

School details

School	The Stephen Perse Foundation
Department for Education number	6011/873
Registered early years number	2553123
Registered charity number	1120608
Address	The Stephen Perse Foundation Union Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB2 1HF
Phone number	01223 454700
Email address	office@stephenperse.com
Website	www.stephenperse.com
Proprietor	The Stephen Perse Foundation
Chair	Mr Michael Windmill
Headteacher	Mr Richard Girvan
Age range	0 to 18
Number of pupils	1460
Number of boarding pupils	24
Number of children in the early years registered setting	196
Date of previous inspection	12 to 15 October 2021

Information about the school

88. The Stephen Perse Foundation is a family of seven independent co-education schools and nurseries located across Cambridge, Madingley and Saffron Walden. These comprise two nursery settings for children aged 0 to 5, two nursery settings for children aged 2 to 5, two junior schools for pupils aged 5 to 11, one senior school for pupils aged 11 to 16 and the Stephen Perse Sixth Form for pupils aged 16 to 18. The schools are owned by a charitable trust and governed collectively.
89. The senior and sixth-form schools provide for boarders from the age of 16. Boarders are accommodated in a single boarding house located close to the sixth-form teaching buildings.
90. The registered early years provision in Madingley and Salisbury Villas is inspected by Ofsted. The registered setting in Dame Bradbury's for children aged 2 to 4 is inspected by ISI on behalf of Ofsted, as is the non-registered early years provision in Dame Bradbury's and Shaftesbury House. The Reception classes in both settings are inspected by ISI as part of the routine inspection. There are 196 children in the early years comprising 30 babies under the age of 2, 124 children aged 2 to 4, and 42 children in the Reception classes.
91. The school has identified 115 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
92. The school has identified 170 pupils as speaking English as an additional language (EAL).
93. The school states its aims are to recognise all pupils as unique individuals. It seeks to inspire them to achieve academic excellence while developing creativity, confidence and compassion. It aims to nurture resilience and a sense of responsibility so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

9 to 11 September 2025

94. A team of 14 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

95. 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 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 the boarding house, accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

96. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net