

# School inspection report

26 to 28 September 2023

## **Red House School**

36 The Green  
Norton  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS20 1DX

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. Proprietors ensure that leaders discharge their responsibilities effectively. The wellbeing of pupils is a priority and potential risks are identified and well managed. Leaders ensure that the school successfully meets its aims and pupils make good progress.
2. Leaders ensure pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well across the range of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, aesthetic, creative and technical subjects. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils of all ages and aptitudes and is well balanced. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to practice reading, writing and public speaking so that pupils develop effective communication skills. Teaching enables pupils to make good progress, as evidenced by the school's GCSE results where pupils often obtain grades in line with or higher than those indicated by their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also make good progress because teachers identify and meet their needs. Sometimes teaching is not well matched to pupils' abilities, and this slows learning for some pupils.
3. Leaders have developed an ethos which successfully encourages mutual respect for different groups of pupils. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme covers the required range of content. However, the teaching of RSE is not always appropriately timed, to ensure it is relevant to the emerging needs of senior pupils. Behaviour is generally good, and bullying is rare. When it occurs, staff deal with bullying effectively and promptly. Rigorous health and safety procedures promote the wellbeing of the pupils.
4. A well-planned curriculum covering all aspects of human, social and economic education prepares pupils effectively for life in modern British society. Pupils understand right and wrong and show respect for the law and for other cultures. The school had identified in its development planning that careers guidance is not always effectively tailored to the needs of individual pupils.
5. Safeguarding procedures are effective. Leaders ensure that staff are appropriately trained, and governors, with relevant knowledge and skills, have close oversight of the school's safeguarding processes. They support and challenge to ensure that procedures are robust. Pupils feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have any 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 all teaching builds on previous learning, enabling pupils in all subjects and year groups to make consistently good progress
- review the timing of the relationships and sex education teaching in order to make it as relevant as possible to the needs of senior pupils
- ensure that careers provision allows pupils to understand the full range of choices open to them for their future careers and education and provides more individual guidance to pupils.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Effective governance ensures that the school fulfils its aims and the Standards are met consistently. Governors are knowledgeable, understand their roles and carry out effective monitoring of all aspects of the school. Through their oversight, including using an effective committee structure, governors gain a good insight into the life of the pupils. All major policies are scrutinised by governors to ensure that they both follow the relevant guidance. Governors' scrutiny of the school's safeguarding is rigorous.
7. Leaders oversee all aspects of the school efficiently and ensure that its aim of providing pupils with a safe and happy environment within which they can fulfil their potential are met. Pupils achieve well at the school. Leaders have the appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to discharge their responsibilities. They ensure that their understanding of regulatory requirements is up to date and that policies are implemented to fulfil these requirements.
8. Children in the early years are well cared for and learn within a safe and happy environment. Leaders work together with staff to create a shared vision for the setting. Effective oversight of teaching and learning by leaders ensures that children make good progress during their time in the setting. Regular supervision meetings for staff enhance classroom practice and identify suitable training for practitioners to develop their skills further.
9. Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of risk and manage it effectively. Suitable policies and risk assessments ensure measures are taken to mitigate potential risks and so promote pupils' safety and wellbeing. Staff liaise with other agencies where appropriate, and in a timely manner. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act. All required information is made available to parents, helped by an informative website.
10. The school has a suitable complaints process, and any concerns are handled effectively and in accordance with the published timescale. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

11. Leaders have devised a balanced curriculum which offers pupils opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in a wide range of subjects. As a result, pupils have well-developed linguistic and literacy skills and communicate well both orally and in writing. They are aided in this by the many opportunities from early years onwards to take part in drama productions and to speak in public. Pupils' numeracy skills are well developed and are used effectively across a range of subjects, particularly in science when pupils draw on their learning in mathematics to present their results in appropriate formats.
12. Most teaching is well planned, tailored towards the needs of the pupils and considers prior learning and attainment. Classrooms are well resourced, and teachers use these resources effectively to stimulate pupils' interest and to challenge their thinking. Consequently, pupils are actively engaged in their lessons, assimilate new concepts and develop their understanding and skills. Teachers also build pupils' confidence, by setting high expectations and by establishing an atmosphere based on respect for all and where pupils are able to take risks. For example, pupils in Year 6 confidently share their knowledge and language skills when responding to questions posed in French.
13. Teachers have good subject knowledge and motivate pupils to engage positively with learning. For example, in a senior school art lesson, the teacher carefully guided pupils through demonstration and instruction about drawing techniques to produce high-quality outcomes
14. Leaders monitor the standard of teaching and learning by observing lessons and scrutinising pupils' work. This helps to ensure high standards and good progress, but such monitoring is not always effective. There are some variations in the quality of teaching and learning. In some subjects, teaching lacks challenge when it is not matched effectively to pupils' abilities.
15. Pupils who have SEND often exceed expectations and make good progress. Teachers understand and meet the needs of pupils. Pupils in the junior school receive effective support in lessons and in small groups outside of lessons. Older pupils have additional support, which often focuses on core skills in mathematics and English to help pupils access the wider curriculum. The early identification of pupils' needs and support strategies which are regularly reviewed ensures teachers are effective in supporting pupils to make good progress.
16. Leaders have devised and implemented an effective marking and feedback system. Pupils find teachers feedback helpful in helping them understand how they can improve their work and they attribute much of their progress to this supportive guidance.
17. Leaders plan plentiful opportunities for aesthetic expression in a range of forms and this encourages pupils to be creative thinkers. High standards of artwork and photography are displayed in the school, celebrating pupils' achievements. Music plays an important part in school life and is a compulsory part of the curriculum until Year 9. As a result, many pupils sing and learn a range of musical instruments including piano, electric guitar, flute, drums, clarinet and trumpet, and are successful in national music examinations. Pupils develop theoretical and practical technical skills effectively in areas such as coding and technical drawing.

18. The programme for the early years provides a wide range of learning opportunities. As a result, children make good progress from their starting points. The outside learning environment provide an extra dimension to children's learning experience, helping to stimulate their imagination and creativity. Well-planned lessons consider children's needs and prior attainment. Staff regularly assess children's progress and identify next steps which are communicated clearly to parents. Enthusiastic teaching and a wide range of stimulating activities maintain the children's interest and challenges them to think for themselves. When involved in role play or construction activities, children are encouraged to explain what they are doing, which promotes language development and helps children to consider improvements which could be made to ensure greater success.
19. Leaders have devised a broad and varied extra-curricular programme which includes craft activities, sports clubs, and, for older pupils, technological pursuits such as robotics. Pupils, including those in the early years, enjoy participating in the extra-curricular activities which enable them to develop skills beyond the classroom. Teamwork activities such as those provided by The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme help to develop pupils' life skills and leadership.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

20. Leaders ensure there is a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). This programme includes teaching about physical and mental health and on other cultures and faiths. There is a suitable programme of relationship and sex education (RSE). However, this programme is delivered largely at the end of each school year. This means that its timings do not always coincide with the emerging needs of senior pupils.
21. Leaders strive successfully to develop the principals of tolerance and respect for others and to ensure that these are understood and embraced by pupils. Pupils show respect for others. On the rare occasions where discriminatory language is used, teachers are quick to take effective action.
22. The school has continued to develop its mindfulness programme and has 'Zen' clubs, wellness ambassadors and a wellbeing dog. Pupils throughout the school keep an 'attitude of gratitude' journal in which they record good deeds they have performed or received. These have a positive impact on behaviour and attitudes in the school community. Pupils' good mental health and wellbeing are a clear priority for the school, and pupils are supported effectively in these areas.
23. Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is developed including through an effective religious education curriculum. This includes discussions of both spiritual and moral issues and includes a study of the major world religions. This helps pupils to develop an empathetic understanding of different cultures and beliefs. The school has links with a local church and pupils enjoy supporting a range of events including Remembrance services and Easter celebrations. Moral issues are routinely discussed in PSHE lessons and pupils reflect on these issues because they are encouraged to talk, ask questions and challenge points of view.
24. Through both the PSHE and the physical education (PE) curriculums, pupils recognise the importance of healthy eating and exercise. There are many opportunities for sport, both in organised games, in PE lessons and in fixtures against other schools. In addition, extra-curricular clubs such as yoga and karate provide alternative opportunities for physical exercise.
25. Leaders have drawn up a behaviour policy which is understood and supported by the pupils. Pupils behave well, and lessons are periods of focus and determined application, reflecting the high expectations of teachers. Pupils are quick to apologise if their behaviour drops below these expectations. Incidences of poor behaviour are infrequent and are dealt with appropriately by the school. When rare incidents of bullying occur, staff act swiftly and sensitively to address them.
26. Children in the early years learn to manage their emotions and are encouraged by teachers to take turns and to share. Children develop positive relationships with staff who know the children well and understand how to help them to learn how to regulate their emotions. Children show good skills of co-operation including when, in response to hearing the rhyme *The house that Jack built*, the youngest children exchanged ideas and shared sensibly when constructing a house from plastic bricks. Children have well-developed fine-motor skills as they handle pencils using the correct grip when writing short sentences. Opportunities to learn and play outside, including in the woodland environment extend the children's experiences and learning. Children explore and follow their own



interests while developing social skills such as sharing and listening to others. They learn that in less formal settings, expectations of good behaviour remain.

27. Pupils of all ages are appropriately supervised, and this helps to ensure that play never becomes rough or confrontational. On the rare occasions that disputes arise, staff are quick to intervene.
28. Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored. Staff follow up any unexpected absences and when pupils leave the school their destination is recorded according to local procedures.
29. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained. Health and safety policies and procedures are implemented effectively, and precautions are taken to reduce the risk of fire. Fire evacuation drills are held termly, and the outcome is recorded so that any issues can be resolved. Staff receive regular fire safety training.
30. Pupils have a suitable space to use if they become unwell or are injured. Staff receive regular training in first aid and many of them are trained in paediatric first aid.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

31. Pupils, including the youngest children, show respect for others. Respect is a topic which is regularly revisited through the PSHE curriculum, a major part of the school ethos and is modelled by staff and repeated frequently in the day-to-day life of the school. Pupils plan and lead assemblies on the topic of respect, which resonate with their peers. Leaders deliver a curriculum which provides opportunities for pupils throughout the school to learn about their own and other cultures. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the beliefs and traditions associated with different world faiths.
32. From an early age pupils learn the difference between right and wrong and progress to considering why the rule of law is important. They appreciate the need for rules both in society and within school and take responsibility for their actions. Pupils learn about democracy and begin to understand it in practice when electing members for the school council.
33. After Red House, pupils move to a range of other independent schools and local sixth-form colleges to pursue their sixth-form studies. Pupils learn about managing money, their personal finances, budgeting and taxation, which prepares them for life after school. The current careers programme, 'Be Inspired', sees guest speakers including alumnae and parents coming into school to raise pupils' awareness of the world of work and possible careers. There are also a number of clubs which inform pupils about various career paths and further education opportunities. However, the specific guidance to support an individual pupil's subject choice or future careers is not as well developed. This is recognised in the school's development plan.
34. Pupils are aware of their social responsibilities and readily make contributions to society in several ways. Within school they act as prefects, class monitors and team captains. The pupil council consists of two representatives from each form who are elected to the role, and this provides them with opportunities for service. Beyond the school, pupils perform at a local care home and those enrolled on The Duke of Edinburgh's Award undertake the service element. The school has established a Community Action Group which allows pupils to show their social responsibility through a range activities including litter picking, sweeping leaves in the churchyard ahead of important services and delivering cards and chocolate to local residents at Christmas and Easter. Pupils support a range of local, national and international charities, and raise money for these via a range of activities.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

## Safeguarding

35. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. Leaders have established a culture of vigilance so that staff are alert to any signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. When concerns arise, external agencies are consulted in an appropriate and timely manner. Leaders work effectively with the police, the local authority designated officer and other agencies, when appropriate. Well-managed systems are used to record and share appropriately any concerns raised.
36. The school's child protection policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance and sets out suitable procedures for protecting pupils from harm. It is implemented effectively so that potential risks of harm are managed effectively.
37. Leaders ensure that staff and volunteers receive suitable safeguarding training when they join the school and this is updated regularly, so that adults are kept informed of the latest guidance. Safer recruitment checks are undertaken on staff, volunteers and governors and an accurate central record of appointments is kept.
38. Governors conduct regular checks on the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures including termly scrutiny of staff recruitment records and an annual review of safeguarding practice and policies.
39. Pupils feel safe at school, know how to stay safe online and have numerous trusted adults they can turn to if they have any concerns.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

## School details

<b>School</b>	Red House School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	808/6000
<b>Registered charity number</b>	527377
<b>Address</b>	36 The Green Norton Stockton-on-Tees TS20 1DX
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.redhouseschool.co.uk">www.redhouseschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	Red House School Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Miss Victoria Duncan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Rebecca Ashcroft
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 16
<b>Number of pupils</b>	356
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 – 10 May 2019

## Information about the school

40. Red House School is a co-educational day school located in Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham. The school consists of a junior school, which includes an early years section, and a senior school which takes pupils to age 16. The junior school is located on a separate site close to the senior school.
41. Since the previous inspection, the age structure of the school has changed with the junior school now catering for pupils from nursery to Year 5 while the senior school takes pupils from Years 6 to 11.
42. In September 2021, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed. The school's governing body is comprised almost entirely of parent members.
43. The Early Years caters for 35 children aged three to five. It comprises one Nursery and one Reception class.
44. The school has identified 53 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
45. English is an additional language for one pupil.
46. The school states that its aims are to provide a high-quality education based on Christian values. It seeks to provide a happy and stimulating environment within which children succeed and fulfil their potential in all areas. It aspires to develop pupils' confidence so that they can use their talents, skills and knowledge effectively.

## Inspection details

**Inspection dates**                      26 – 28 September 2023

47. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.
48. Inspectors:
  - observed lessons, held discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work
  - held discussions with members of staff, with the chair of governors and other governors
  - undertook learning walks and held meetings with staff to review pupils' work and progress
  - observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities, form meetings and assemblies
  - visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas
  - examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.
49. 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 2023

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