

School inspection report

9 to 11 September 2025

Princethorpe College

Leamington Road

Princethorpe

Rugby

Warwickshire

CV23 9PX

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. Leaders have a clear vision for school development based on effective monitoring and self-evaluation. Governors maintain efficient oversight of the school, enabling them to ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders have a strategic approach to the management of risk and take effective and appropriate action to mitigate the risks identified.
2. The school's Catholic ethos is central to its approach to promoting pupils' spiritual learning and their sense of social responsibility. As a result, pupils have a growing understanding of faith and ethics.
3. The curriculum is suitably broad and designed to meet the needs, interests and aptitudes of pupils. Leaders have a clear strategy for the development of teaching. Teaching is closely monitored and consequently all pupils have the opportunity to make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress because of the care which is taken in considering the support they receive. Pupils' performance is systematically monitored, and this information is used by leaders to ensure that support is targeted effectively.
4. Parents receive reports that provide information about their child's attainment, progress and attitudes to learning. However, in a small number of cases, where pupils are underperforming, written comments do not provide clear information on what pupils need to do in order to improve.
5. The curriculum is complemented by a well-resourced co-curricular programme, which benefits pupils of all ages and abilities. The programme is wide ranging and well co-ordinated. It supports pupils' skills, interests and personal development effectively.
6. The relationships and sex education is comprehensive and effective. As a result, pupils are well informed. However, the school's policy does not fully describe the extent of the school's curriculum. Consequently, parents are not given a full picture of the programme.
7. Leaders implement clear policies and procedures to ensure that behaviour is good around the school and in lessons. An effective strategy to prevent bullying is in place. Pupils' emotional, physical and mental health are successfully supported. Pupils are confident that there are adults with whom they can share any concerns.
8. A high proportion of pupils participate, and achieve well, in physical activity.
9. Leaders have a systematic approach to the management of health and safety, including fire protocols. Appropriate first aid is readily available when required.
10. Pupils are well equipped and prepared to make financial decisions. They understand the importance of tolerance and respect for others. The careers education programme enables them to make informed choices about their next steps.
11. Governors maintain rigorous oversight of safeguarding practices at the school. Staff understand and implement the school's procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns that might arise. Leaders carry out recruitment checks as required by current statutory guidance, and these are recorded appropriately. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including when online.

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 reports to parents always contain clear information about what pupils need to do in order to improve their progress and attainment
- ensure that the school's policy on relationships and sex education accurately reflects how the school develops pupils' understanding in this area.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders and managers have the required knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Governors assure themselves that the Standards are met by effective scrutiny and monitoring of the school's practice and procedures. They receive detailed reports, visit the school regularly and scrutinise documentation. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.
13. Leaders have an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school and areas for further development and carefully consider the impact that their actions have on pupils' wellbeing and success. They are methodical and detailed in their self-evaluation which informs their strategic school development planning. This planning focuses on improving the impact on pupils' wellbeing in all areas of the school's provision.
14. Leaders ensure that the school's ethos is embedded and understood by pupils. Links with the local diocese are effective in supporting the high quality of the moral and spiritual education that the school provides.
15. Leaders manage any parental complaints appropriately and keep thorough records of these and any actions taken by the school in response. Complaints are dealt with within the timeframes stated in the school's policy.
16. Parents receive reports which provide them with information about their child's attainment, progress and attitudes to learning. However, in a small number of cases where pupils are underperforming, written comments do not accurately reflect the extent of the relative weaknesses of the pupils' work. Consequently, parents are not always sufficiently well informed about what their children need to do in order to develop their progress and attainment further.
17. Required information about the school, including its aims and ethos, is made available to parents, largely through the school's informative website. However, the school's policy on relationships and sex education does not fully reflect how the school develops pupils' understanding in this area. The school reviews provision annually for any pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) and provides the local authorities who fund these with an annual statement of income and expenditure.
18. Leaders have a comprehensive and robust approach to risk management. They have an effective understanding of physical, welfare and safeguarding risks and respond with urgency and diligence to mitigate areas of potential risk when these are identified. Risk assessments identify potential hazards thoroughly and detail appropriate steps taken to reduce or remove these. Leaders systematically monitor risk assessments to check their continued effectiveness.
19. Leaders foster effective links with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils. In particular, they maintain an effective working relationship with local safeguarding partners.
20. Leaders have developed a detailed accessibility plan that includes actions to facilitate access to the curriculum and facilities for any pupils who have SEND, for example the provision of software to make text more accessible and altering toilet entrances to make them easier to use. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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. School leaders understand the need to provide a balanced curriculum that addresses the needs, interests and prior attainment of pupils. A suitable range of vocational courses runs in parallel with A levels. At GCSE there is flexibility in which science qualifications pupils follow. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their creative and aesthetic skills. This means that pupils are offered a broad curriculum which prepares them for a wide range of opportunities in their next steps in education or employment.
23. Effective teaching in English and foreign languages develops high levels of literacy, with pupils readily drawing on a wide range of background contextual knowledge. Teaching in science successfully promotes high levels of numeracy and pupils competently apply their knowledge to calculations. Through carrying out research projects, pupils are encouraged to think critically, work independently, and engage with real-world contexts. Pupils express themselves articulately in lessons and listen carefully to others.
24. Leaders set high expectations for inclusive, high-quality teaching and make judicious use of data to support the progress of all pupils. School leaders have spent significant time and resources to train teachers on the importance of providing clear instruction, high-quality feedback and eliciting appropriate responses from pupils. These practices are well embedded. Teaching is characterised by effective planning, responsive classroom practice, and the use of varied strategies that promote engagement and skill development. As a result, pupils learn well, make good progress over time, feel supported and challenged in their learning, and gain the confidence and competence needed to thrive. Pupils typically achieve high standards at GCSE, A level and in BTEC National Diploma courses.
25. Pupils' performance is systematically assessed and monitored. Assessments are carefully planned to provide leaders with important information about what pupils know and can do. Underperforming pupils are readily identified and effectively supported, including pupils who need additional help. Assessment information is used to inform leaders' decision-making about curriculum planning, such as the expanded provision of BTEC courses. Leaders' planning of parents' evenings after assessment points ensures that parents are informed of their child's progress and attitudes to learning in a timely manner.
26. Pupils who have SEND are well supported throughout their time at school. An assessment of needs is carried out prior to pupils arriving in the school. Teaching is then informed by comprehensive profiles of these learners. Staff are appropriately trained to support pupils' needs. Consequently, these pupils make good progress.
27. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported by the provision of revision booklets, topic and subject specific glossaries and additional help to improve reading and literacy. These pupils make good progress as a result.
28. Leadership ensures that the programme of recreational activities is broad, inclusive and purposefully designed to support the development of a wide range of pupil skills beyond the academic curriculum, including for pupils in the sixth form. This includes a broad range of opportunities for pupils to engage in sports, all of which promote pride and perseverance. The school has introduced a sporting talent development programme to support and develop its more able performers. There is a wide range of other activities which develop pupils' skills and interest such as music, knitting and

photography. The programme is thoughtfully constructed to respond to pupils' views and choices. Staff demonstrate clear intent in shaping activities that foster moral development and resilience. Pupils value the opportunity to choose activities and individual pathways to success.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. In developing its curriculum, leaders recognise the importance of a holistic education, which incorporates values of tolerance and respect for all. Pupils are proud of their school community and frequently refer to the culture of kindness in the school. As a result, pupils are able to be themselves and to develop their own personalities.
31. Leadership promotes spiritual and moral understanding through an approach that encourages pupils to reflect on a range of issues including identity, the nature of time and personal responsibility. In lessons, teachers foster inclusive dialogue. This is characterised by a sensitive acknowledgement of diverse perspectives and the encouragement of reflective thinking. The termly Eucharist service, assemblies and tutor time allow for self-reflection. As a result, pupils demonstrate an awareness of moral issues, show respect for differing viewpoints and engage with spiritual concepts in a manner that contributes to a reflective school culture.
32. Leadership places emphasis on fostering pupils' self-knowledge and self-esteem through an inclusive approach. This is evident in tutor time activities, which create a welcoming and relaxed environment for pupils. Lunchtime clubs support those who are less confident socially. Initiatives devised by older pupils to befriend younger pupils help to develop their self-confidence. Staff ensure that activities contribute meaningfully to pupils' sense of self and belonging. Pupils are secure in their environment and demonstrate growing confidence in accessing support and participating in both academic and co-curricular aspects of school life.
33. Leadership is strategic in ensuring that physical education (PE) supports pupils' physical health and emotional wellbeing. An extensive curriculum that spans formal PE and games lessons, extra-curricular activities and competitive fixtures is designed to maximise participation and individual progress. Recent refinements, guided by pupil feedback, demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and inclusivity, with a clear focus on embedding character development and wellbeing into the sporting ethos. Pupils benefit from a busy and varied sporting offer that supports physical fitness and social confidence. Some pupils perform successfully at representative levels, including nationally, in a number of different sports.
34. The school's curriculum in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is wide ranging. It is delivered through assemblies, form time and talks by external speakers. The programme encourages pupils to develop self-awareness, resilience, and healthy decision-making skills. Pupils engage with topics including relationships, mental health, substance awareness and moral values. Teachers create a supportive environment where pupils feel safe to ask questions and discuss sensitive issues openly. Leaders regularly review and adapt the curriculum in response to pupils' needs and community concerns, ensuring relevance and impact.
35. The RSE curriculum is progressively structured across the age range to ensure age-appropriate understanding of health and relationships. Younger pupils are introduced to making positive choices. Older pupils explore topics related to appropriate relationships, including intimacy and the concept of consent. As a result, pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of societal issues such as misogyny and prejudice, and they show empathy and respect for others.

36. The school environment is calm and purposeful. Pupils benefit from a supportive learning environment where behaviour is well managed. High expectations across the school are underpinned by the school aim of 'Be kind and do your best'. Behavioural data is monitored to identify patterns and inform targeted support. Effective PSHE teaching and visible leadership around the school promote a respectful environment. Leaders respond effectively to emerging concerns, such as vaping, by adjusting curriculum content, taking preventative measures and applying appropriate sanctions.
37. The school's preventative approach to bullying is underpinned by a culture of kindness, which is clearly communicated by leadership. There is a proactive approach to addressing issues as early as possible to avoid conflict. Posters of the anti-bullying and harassment charter are prominently displayed around the school and pupils are confident that the school deals swiftly and effectively with incidents when they arise.
38. Leadership has ensured that there is effective supervision of pupils during breaks. There is an understanding of patterns of pupil behaviour, including in less visible areas. Staff are highly visible in the corridors and in the playground. This enables pupils to feel supported across the site.
39. Appropriate procedures are in place to maintain the school's registers of admission and attendance. Attendance is assiduously monitored, and the local authority is notified correctly of any issues relating to attendance as well as of any pupil who joins or leaves the school at non-standard transition points.
40. There is a culture of safety in the school. Leaders ensure that the school premises and accommodation are well maintained and conducive to learning. Systematic procedures and structures facilitate monitoring and appropriate action. There is a robust process of review by the health and safety committee to ensure that this is effectively managed.
41. First aid provision is effective. There is a well-resourced medical centre. First aid kits are well stocked and managed. Accidents are suitably recorded, and trends are appropriately identified and addressed. Well-qualified staff monitor pupils who have ongoing medical conditions. Pupils are well cared for during the school day.

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

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

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

43. The school fosters pupils' understanding of human and social issues. Pupils are effectively taught about moral choices and ethical decision-making. In lessons, they explore concepts such as justice and fairness. Topics are framed through a values-based approach, helping pupils recognise consequences and understand right from wrong. This is informed by the Catholic values of the school which pupils link with positive behaviour and respect for others.
44. Financial literacy is integrated into the PSHE curriculum. Pupils receive age-appropriate lessons about risks associated with gambling, money management, budgeting and economic responsibility. These equip pupils with practical skills for life beyond school, foster financial awareness and support their ability to make informed and responsible decisions.
45. Leaders actively promote British values through explicit teaching on democracy, the rule of law, liberty and tolerance. Respect for all is actively promoted, which fosters an understanding of other people. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures through assemblies, an annual interfaith week and cultural days. Staff encourage pupils to discuss personal beliefs and explore diverse perspectives, including sensitive treatment of issues such as gender identity. As a result, pupils engage thoughtfully with differing viewpoints.
46. Leaders have devised opportunities to develop pupils' cultural awareness through curriculum time, enrichment opportunities and specific events. The sixth form 'Global Alliance' group has established links with schools overseas. The school organises visits to a partner school in Malawi and study trips to France and Spain.
47. Leaders consistently reinforce the school's ethos of kindness, respect and doing one's best in tutor groups, lessons and enrichment activities. The arrangement of having tutor groups consisting of pupils of all ages promotes a family and community spirit in the school, which contributes positively to pupils' personal development.
48. Careers guidance is relevant, impartial and personalised. The school organises a range of speakers to share their knowledge of a variety of jobs. Pupils benefit from a number of local businesses which contribute to the school's work experience programme. Pupils from Year 11 receive individual interviews and support. Lower down the school, pupils cover careers as part of the PSHE curriculum. Pupils in the sixth form explain what they have learned to younger pupils. As a consequence, pupils are well supported with appropriate guidance when choosing subject options for GCSE and A level. Teachers offer support to pupils in preparing CVs and throughout the university application process. This encourages pupils to choose varied pathways, including university, apprenticeships or immediate employment.
49. Pupils take responsibility through initiatives they lead themselves, such as volunteering for environmental groups like 'Planet Princethorpe', sixth-form mentoring and fundraising activities. These encourage pupils to take responsibility for their actions and contribute to the school and wider society.
50. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to be democratically elected by their peers into positions of responsibility. They ensure that members of staff and visiting speakers present a balanced

perspective on political issues. Pupils learn about human rights, voting systems and justice, for example by organising a mock election prior to the UK and American elections. As a result, pupils are well informed about democracy and can make informed judgements.

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. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that arise. They consult with external safeguarding partners, such as local children's services, and refer safeguarding concerns to them when required. Suitable arrangements for the handling of allegations, including low-level concerns, against staff or senior leaders are in place. These are well understood by staff and followed when required. Leaders keep suitable records of safeguarding concerns and the decisions and actions taken in response to these.
53. Governors maintain effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The safeguarding governors visit the school regularly to ensure that safeguarding procedures are suitable and carried out effectively. All governors undertake training in safeguarding.
54. Safeguarding training for staff and the safeguarding team is thorough, regular and in line with local requirements. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to escalate concerns when required. A suitable induction process is in place to ensure that new staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
55. Leaders maintain awareness of potential contextual safeguarding risks facing pupils beyond the school, including those relating to radicalisation and extremism. Staff receive training about the 'Prevent' duty that relates to such risks and how to respond to them.
56. Leaders provide a number of ways for pupils to raise any concerns that they might have. Pupils are informed of whom they can go to should they wish to share any concerns.
57. Leaders ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment checks on adults are made in a timely manner and are accurately recorded in a suitable single central record of appointments (SCR). Staff files are well organised and accurate.
58. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place. These systems are tested regularly by the school and any alerts are immediately reviewed by members of the safeguarding team who take action as required.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Princethorpe College
Department for Education number	937/6084
Registered charity number	1087124
Address	Princethorpe College Leamington Road Princethorpe Rugby Warwickshire CV23 9PX
Phone number	01926 634200
Email address	post@princethorpe.co.uk
Website	www.princethorpe.co.uk
Proprietor	The Princethorpe Foundation
Chair	Mr John Fisher
Headteacher	Mr Grove du Toit
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	914
Date of previous inspection	26 to 29 April 2022

Information about the school

60. Princethorpe College is an independent co-educational Catholic day school which was established in 1966. It educates pupils of all faiths and none. The school is the senior school of the Princethorpe Foundation, which is responsible also for two preparatory schools and a nursery. The Foundation is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster was appointed in January 2023. The chair of governors took up his role in December 2024.
61. The school has identified 275 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan)
62. The school has identified English as an additional language for 20 pupils.
63. The school states its aim is to treat every pupil as an individual, supporting them as they grow into mature, confident, resilient and well-rounded young people with a strong set of moral values to guide them through adult life.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

9 to 11 September 2025

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

65. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with a group of 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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