

# School inspection report

21 to 23 January 2025

## **St James' School**

22 Bargate  
Grimsby  
Lincolnshire  
DN34 4SY

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 provide effective pastoral and academic support to enable pupils to adapt to school life and develop both personally and academically, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
2. The school plans its curriculum around the needs and aptitudes of individual pupils, adapting it as necessary so that pupils can achieve their potential.
3. Leaders evaluate all areas of provision and document recognised areas for development. However, leaders' self-evaluation is not as well informed by pupils' views as possible to support decisions made about next steps.
4. The effective deployment of staff, including teaching assistants, enables teaching to meet the demands of pupils, including those with complex needs. Teaching is characterised by advanced subject knowledge, patience and effective planning and resources.
5. The range of co-curricular activities likely to engage older pupils is narrow and does not enable them to explore and develop new skills and experiences as effectively as possible.
6. Staff are effective in their management of pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils conduct themselves well both in the classroom and around school.
7. Whilst the school plans appropriate age-related content for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE), its delivery for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is less effective in meeting pupils' needs than elsewhere in the school.
8. Arrangements for the management of health and safety and fire safety are robust. Leaders and staff have a secure understanding of risk, which they systematically identify and mitigate.
9. The boarding house provides a well-maintained, suitable and comfortable environment where pupils are made to feel at home and receive kind and caring support.
10. Pupils respond positively to the school's promotion of values such as respect and empathy.
11. The school's careers education programme is carefully tailored to pupils' individual needs and aspirations.
12. Arrangements for the management of safeguarding are effective. Leaders and staff are knowledgeable about current statutory requirements. They are vigilant and take prompt action when necessary.

## 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 the co-curricular programme promotes older pupils' engagement with activities that enable them to explore and develop new skills and experiences
- ensure that the PSHE and RSE programmes are implemented more effectively to meet the needs of older senior pupils
- ensure that leaders' self-evaluation is as well informed by pupils' views as effectively as possible.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. The proprietor provides leaders with appropriate support, training, guidance and monitoring to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge required to fulfil their roles effectively. This includes supporting leaders so that pupils' wellbeing is promoted and the Standards are met consistently. The proprietor maintains frequent contact with leaders to discuss and systematically review the school's provision in all areas.
14. Leaders work closely with the local authority, social services and other external agencies to ensure that pupils are appropriately supported. This includes close links with the local safeguarding hub which the safeguarding team regularly consults for advice and guidance, thus ensuring that pupils receive prompt help when required.
15. Leaders and staff actively promote the wellbeing of pupils by taking a cohesive and empathetic approach to pupils' academic and personal development. This creates an inclusive, calm and suitable environment where all pupils, regardless of their needs, are given the opportunity to achieve well and feel valued, as reflected in the school's aims.
16. Staff responsible for boarders' welfare are appropriately trained and qualified. They ensure that boarders are happy and well cared for through careful supervision and monitoring. As a result, the boarding house provides a secure, supportive and friendly environment for pupils away from their families.
17. The school meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place and effectively implemented. This plan addresses reducing physical and other barriers to pupils accessing the curriculum and ensures that pupils are provided with appropriate resources, including staffing. Leaders show insightful and agile planning in response to meeting the needs of pupils who have SEND. Leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND thoughtfully and effectively prepare individual education plans in consultation with pupils and staff.
18. Senior staff regularly analyse the effectiveness of the school's provision and have drawn up a suitable and realistic development plan. For example, they are mindful to ensure appropriate levels of stretch and challenge in lessons and monitor the quality of teaching and learning through regular observations, providing constructive feedback to staff. Leaders consult colleagues and parents to help them evaluate the effectiveness of the school. However, leaders' evaluation of the school is not as well informed by consideration of pupils' opinions as it could be.
19. Leaders demonstrate a suitable understanding of risk management, which is robust and systematic. They effectively identify risks associated with activities, locations, trips, visits and safeguarding, implementing suitable mitigations. Staff and pupils are well informed about these measures. Staff are encouraged to remain alert to less obvious risks, such as pupils withholding safeguarding concerns, and they recognise the importance of constant vigilance. Risk assessments are appropriately updated to reflect changes in the school's environment, circumstances and procedures, or unforeseen events.
20. The school provides all required information to parents and carers through its website and a range of other documentation. Parents receive regular reports on pupils' progress and attainment. Leaders share appropriate information with the relevant local authorities regarding pupils who have an

education, health and care (EHC) plan, including a review of their progress against the plan and a report of the deployment of resources.

21. The school has a suitable policy in place for the handling of parental complaints, consisting of a three-stage approach. The school manages complaints appropriately in line with this policy. Leaders adhere to the published timeframes and respond constructively to concerns.

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

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

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

23. The curriculum is sufficiently broad to cover all the required areas appropriately. It is carefully planned to ensure that it is adaptive to the needs, aptitudes and ages of pupils. The curriculum is well-constructed, aligned with the national curriculum and caters appropriately for progression as pupils move through the school. Through bespoke programmes alongside mainstream lessons, pupils are able to develop a broad range of functional and life skills that prepare them for their next steps beyond school.
24. Teachers have a sharp focus on meeting varied educational, emotional and behavioural needs effectively. Leaders support teachers in this through the effective deployment of teaching assistants, who help teachers to manage classroom behaviour and enable them to deliver lessons that benefit the class as a whole whilst sensitively supporting the needs of individuals.
25. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Empathetic, skilful and inclusive teaching supports the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, enabling pupils to make good progress in lessons and over time. Teachers provide pupils with personal attention and care so that they become reflective learners who can think and learn for themselves. Teachers make effective use of class time so that lessons are purposeful and productive. Stimulating resources and activities are employed to ensure that pupils are both engaged and motivated to learn, encouraged by teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects.
26. Support for pupils who have SEND, including those who have education, health and care (EHC) plans, is highly effective. These pupils make good progress because teachers and teaching assistants understand their needs, plan carefully to build on prior learning and support them sensitively. Behavioural and emotional needs are effectively met and sympathetically accommodated, including through the use of spaces where pupils can take time out for reflection if needed or undertake independent study. Staff are adept at sharing information to ensure that pupils' needs are identified early and closely monitored to ensure that provision remains appropriate over time.
27. Staff are patient and calm and encourage pupils to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour. They have high expectations. Consequently, behaviour in lessons is good, which contributes to a calm and positive working environment. A separate space, known as the Lodge, plays a key part in providing support for pupils with particularly complex needs. The one-to-one support provided by suitably qualified staff ensures that pupils learn skills that will equip them for life beyond school.
28. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress because, when required, they receive individual support outside the classroom. They also receive effectively targeted support in mainstream classes across the curriculum, including guidance on subject-specific vocabulary when needed.
29. An effective assessment system is in place to track pupils' attainment and progress and identify where additional support is needed. Leaders make effective use of standardised data to produce both minimum and aspirational termly targets which are recorded in pupils' workbooks. Marking and feedback helpfully sets out next steps for pupils' learning so that they know how to improve.
30. The co-curricular provision for younger pupils is effective. However, it is more limited in older years, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and the sixth form. It does not provide opportunities for older pupils

to engage in wider creative or practical activities in order to explore new skills and experiences. There is an appropriate programme of activities for boarders.

### **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' prioritisation of pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health underpins the school's approach to learning and pastoral care. Individualised support characterises the provision, building self-esteem and confidence, especially for the most vulnerable pupils. Staff use detailed knowledge of each pupil to provide support and encouragement that helps increase their resilience and self-belief.
33. Appropriate PSHE and RSE programmes are in place to for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of themselves and their relationships with society. Amongst other things, pupils learn about mental health, resilience, the risks of substance abuse, sexual health, reproduction and consent, and personal boundaries. Whilst there are effective lessons covering these subjects from Years 7 to 9, the nature of the school's methods of delivering PSHE and RSE content to older senior pupils is less effective in engaging their interest and meeting their needs. The content for RSE is in line with statutory guidance and the school consults appropriately with parents about this content, giving them the opportunity to withdraw their child from elements of sex education if they wish.
34. Leaders actively encourage exercise and sport throughout the school, including through effective physical education (PE) lessons. There is a focus on the synergy between physical and mental health, as exemplified by the time devoted to physical education theory as part of the Year 9 curriculum. Pupils are able to participate in a variety of games and activities which develop their fitness, skills and understanding of strategy. Staff effectively develop pupils' understanding of the wider benefits of exercise on their health and friendships, and management of anxiety and stress.
35. The religious studies curriculum enables pupils to learn about world religions, ethics and non-material aspects of life. English lessons enable pupils to explore ideas about of the human condition through the study of literary texts. The school community attends an annual Christmas church service and pupils of diverse faiths are able to pray in privacy if they wish.
36. Leaders have drawn up a clear behaviour policy which is well understood by all parties and implemented consistently. Teachers help pupils to manage their emotions and relationships with staff and each other. Senior staff have a deep knowledge of individual pupils' behaviour because of an effective system of communication and a heightened sense of vigilance for flashpoints when they happen. Detailed recording of behavioural concerns or incidents facilitates leaders' recognition of patterns so that they can put restorative conversations in place and pupils can reflect on their behaviour. The calm support and guidance provided by staff enable situations to be defused promptly and for teaching to continue as normal. High levels of supervision, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes, ensure that pupils are well supported.
37. Leaders and staff implement an effective anti-bullying policy. They use assemblies and form time to educate pupils about bullying so that they understand its harmful effects, which helps to ensure that incidents are rare. When incidents do occur, leaders respond to them fairly and effectively.
38. Leaders take a robust approach to health and safety, including fire safety. They commission external advice to help ensure that health and safety and fire safety policies and procedures are implemented consistently and effectively. Appropriate and comprehensive checks on plant and machinery, including equipment relating to fire safety, are undertaken and recorded systematically

to ensure that risks are not overlooked. Sufficiently frequent fire drills, including during boarding time, ensure that pupils are well-versed in evacuation procedures.

39. Premises are sufficiently well maintained. Boarding accommodation is clean, welcoming and comfortable. The school provides suitable toilet and changing facilities, as well as appropriate accommodation for treating pupils who are ill or injured.
40. First aid and medical support is promptly available to pupils, including boarders, when required. There are a suitable number of appropriately trained staff to cater for pupils' first aid needs. Procedures for dispensing medication or first aid are robust. The medical facilities are suitable and appropriately furnished.
41. The school's attendance policy reflects current statutory guidance, and the school maintains suitable attendance and admission registers. Leaders work effectively to minimise any absenteeism. They inform the local authority of any attendance issues, including when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

### **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 curriculum incorporates values such as democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty into schemes of work for subjects such as geography, history and English. Through the study of literary texts and lessons learned from history, pupils understand the damaging effect of prejudice, discrimination and the abuse of human rights. The programmes of study in religious studies enable pupils to learn the importance of showing tolerance towards those with different faiths and beliefs. This is reinforced by the school's focus in lessons and assemblies on its values of respect, working together and empathy, all of which are promoted and reported upon.
44. Educational visits in the United Kingdom and overseas are well established and develop pupils' learning about different cultures. All pupils, including those who have SEND, have the opportunity to widen their horizons while also learning about the diversity of British society. For example, in PSHE, pupils learn about multi-culturalism, different family structures, and issues of rights, such as those relating to people who are lesbian, gay and bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). The PSHE curriculum includes lessons on topics such as how laws come into being in Parliament, how the courts enforce those laws and the nature of democracy. Discussions about politics are conducted without bias.
45. Leaders and staff routinely encourage pupils to reflect on right and wrong, both individually when they make poor choices and on a broader scale when they consider conflict and moral dilemmas in specific curriculum areas. Pupils consider topics such as forgiveness, justice, loyalty and peer pressure in PSHE, climate change in geography and science, and power versus tyranny in English literature.
46. The curriculum provides suitable age-appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about financial literacy. Pupils' economic wellbeing is effectively supported by activities such as Young Enterprise, assemblies and lessons in life skills focusing on personal finance. Topics include making financial choices, planning for the future and the impact of materialism. They learn about the benefits of budgeting and saving, and how bank accounts work. Pupils in the sixth form receive specific guidance, for example on income tax and student finance, to support them as they become more financially independent.
47. Pupils develop a sense of social responsibility and learn about the importance of contributing to society and the local community through the school's promotion of its values. Pupils are engaged in supporting local and national charities such as Red Nose Day. However, the school provides limited opportunities for pupils to be involved practically with the local community beyond engaging with this support.
48. Leaders prepare pupils for life beyond school effectively. This not only relates to the acquisition of academic qualifications but also to their personal development. The school aims to 'build good people', and pupils aspire to achieve this in their efforts to be tolerant and respectful. Boarders are encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour and display independence, for example in the care they take for their possessions and living accommodation.
49. The school's careers programme is planned from Year 7 and implemented through assemblies, PSHE lessons and dedicated days. Pupils receive impartial advice regarding post-16 study at local colleges, and various careers platforms are used to enable them to make informed choices. Support and

guidance are available for pupils whether they wish to go on to higher education, go straight into employment or pursue an apprenticeship. Pupils make the most of opportunities to attend open days and local careers fairs as they prepare for their next steps in further education and the world of work.

50. Pupils develop leadership skills through house captaincy roles, representing their peers on the school council and qualifying and acting as sports leaders. The school's effective grouping strategies, including during form time, has the positive effect of enabling older pupils to act as role models for younger pupils and developing their social confidence and interpersonal skills.

### **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. The school has robust safeguarding measures in place. Members of the safeguarding team undertake appropriate training and are knowledgeable about statutory guidance. The proprietor holds leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities to account through regular consultation and reviews to ensure that the safeguarding policy is implemented effectively. Clear communication systems allow early identification and resolution of issues. Liaison with external agencies is decisive and prompt. Leaders communicate and work effectively with the local safeguarding partnership. Child protection records are detailed, clear and securely stored.
53. Staff receive regular training so that they are able to recognise and address issues such as potential abuse, neglect, mental health issues and radicalisation. Policies and procedures are clear and well understood by staff. They are vigilant to safeguarding issues in their day-to-day dealings with pupils and recognise the need to take prompt action to communicate or act upon safeguarding concerns should they arise. This includes managing allegations against staff.
54. Leaders are keenly aware of the risks that pupils face, including in the wider community. They are particularly alert to the vulnerability of pupils who have specific and often complex needs and boarders who are far from home. Leaders communicate such risks and the school's actions to mitigate them to the relevant staff effectively. The school takes suitable measures to ensure the appropriate safeguarding of pupils in the boarding house.
55. There are appropriate and adequate channels available for pupils to report concerns. There are trusted adults to whom pupils can speak if they have any worries, and prompt action is taken to support them when needed. The school educates pupils effectively about how to stay safe, including online. Appropriate network filtering and monitoring systems are in place in school, and leaders check these for effectiveness in line with statutory guidance.
56. The school's recruitment processes are rigorous, with all required checks completed before adults are allowed to begin employment at the school. These checks are accurately recorded on the school's suitably maintained single central record (SCR) of appointments.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	St James' School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	812/6000
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1099060
<b>Address</b>	St James' School 22 Bargate Grimsby Lincolnshire DN34 4SY
<b>Phone number</b>	01472 503260
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@saintjameschool.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.saintjameschool.co.uk">http://www.saintjameschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	Alpha Schools (Holdings) Ltd
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Trudy Harris
<b>Age range</b>	11 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	68
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	4
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	29 November 2022

## Information about the school

58. St James' School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. It is located close to the town centre of Grimsby. The school is owned by Alpha Schools (Holdings) Ltd, which appoints directors to oversee its operation. The school includes a small sixth form.
59. Accommodation for male and female boarders is provided in a single boarding house in close proximity to the main school site. At the time of the inspection, only female boarders were in residence.
60. The school has identified 29 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are 21 pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for a very small proportion of pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to help pupils to maximise their potential through personalised learning in a caring environment which is rich in opportunity. It strives to enable pupils to discover their strengths and talents in a setting that is intended to nurture creativity, encourage flexibility and embrace independence.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

21 to 23 January 2025

63. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. 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 proprietor
- 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.

65. 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)**.

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