

School inspection report

20 to 22 January 2026

Stanborough Secondary School

Stanborough Park

Watford

Hertfordshire

WD25 9JT

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. The aims and values of the school are clear to pupils and staff. The governing board holds leaders to account through regular contact and effective oversight and leaders have the skills and knowledge to ensure that the Standards are met. They engage in comprehensive ongoing self-evaluation and take effective action when necessary. Leaders demonstrate a clear and ongoing commitment to improving the consistency of teaching and learning across the school. At the start of the inspection, exam results from the previous year were not made available to parents as required but this was rectified during the inspection.
2. The school's curriculum is suited to the ages, prior attainment and needs of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A wide variety of subjects is available that enable pupils to experience different aspects of learning. Most lessons are well planned and have clear success criteria. Lessons focus on building knowledge and skills over time so that pupils make good progress. However, in some lessons teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently and, as a result, pupils demonstrate less interest and motivation. In these lessons pupils' progress is more limited. Assessment and feedback support progress effectively as pupils consistently act on advice given. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and constructive and pupils engage positively and respectfully with their work.
3. Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-confidence and mutual respect for their peers and adults. Leaders promote emotional support and personal development through positive relationships throughout the school community so that pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted. Spirituality is successfully woven through all aspects of school life.
4. Pupils behave well and engage positively in the school's purposeful, learning environment. There is an effective anti-bullying strategy, and minor conflicts are addressed promptly by staff.
5. The school's values of excellence, courage, respect and resilience are clearly evident in pupils' interactions and in their wider participation in community projects. Respect for diversity and inclusion is consistently reinforced and pupils from varied backgrounds learn together with tolerance and understanding, reflecting the school's Christian ethos.
6. Careers education includes work experience and a variety of talks throughout the school. However, explanation of post-16 options and the specific detail of certain qualifications is not consistently comprehensive and is delivered late in the application cycle.
7. There is a robust culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff understand how to support the safety of pupils within the school community and are well trained in managing emerging situations with empathy and care. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding fulfil their roles effectively in line with local guidelines and national statutory legislation.

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 school's recent examination results are consistently made available to parents of current and prospective pupils
- ensure that in all lessons teachers consistently enable pupils to develop self-motivation, interest and the skill to think and learn for themselves
- ensure that detailed qualification-specific advice with regards to post-16 options is delivered in a timely manner.

Material change request

8. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include boarding for pupils aged 11 to 16.
 - Leaders have appropriate understanding of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS) and have drafted suitable policies and documentation. The impact of boarding life on pupils and the links between boarding and the day-to-day activities of the school have been considered.
 - Boarding accommodation is in place, with separate floors for boys and girls, and the school's existing catering facilities will be utilised to provide breakfast and evening meals. The accommodation includes common rooms to benefit pupils' social development alongside well-furnished en-suite bedrooms. Toilet and washing facilities are sufficient. The boarding accommodation provides a safe and secure environment for pupils.
 - Leaders have carefully considered the staffing that will be needed in boarding to ensure pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted. Safeguarding arrangements in the school are effective and sufficient consideration has been given to ensuring the welfare of pupils who will be living away from home.
9. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors ensure that leaders have the skills and knowledge to ensure that all the Standards are met. The board meets regularly to understand school procedures and policies and to support and challenge leaders appropriately. Visits by governors include scrutiny of records, reviews of procedures, visits to lessons and discussions with pupils. Leaders, with the support of governors, carry out regular self-evaluation of progress across all aspects of the school. Through this they effectively identify successes and any areas for development.
11. Leaders ensure that the aims and ethos of the school are fully embedded in the curriculum, in activities and in all that pupils experience within the school. Tolerance and equity, underpinned by the school's Christian ethos, are prevalent throughout the school. Leaders ensure that the ethos of the school is clear to staff who incorporate it in their areas of responsibility and make sure that classroom practice has pupils' wellbeing at its core. Staff create a hospitable and inclusive environment for all pupils. All policies and procedures are in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the school has a suitable accessibility plan in place to further develop access both to the curriculum and to the site.
12. There are effective processes in place for collaborating with local authorities. Education, health and care plans (EHC plans) are annually reviewed with external professionals, as required, and leaders ensure that details of pupils joining and leaving the school at non-standard transition points are given to the appropriate authority.
13. Leaders identify risks with care and there are comprehensive procedures in place for assessing risks on the school site, for activities, day trips and residential visits, some of which include travel abroad. Well-trained staff effectively identify ways to mitigate such risks and written risk assessments are regularly reviewed by leaders to ensure they are updated and fit for purpose.
14. The school's website is comprehensive in its coverage of school policies and procedures. Parents receive regular reports on pupils' progress including termly attainment grades as well as written reports. At the start of the inspection, recent national examination results were not made available to parents but this omission was rectified during the inspection.
15. Leaders have implemented an effective three-stage process for the handling of complaints. There is a comprehensive log of complaints that identifies the stage at which they are resolved. Governors and leaders regularly review complaints to identify any patterns and implement suitable change.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The curriculum is well planned to consider pupils' prior attainment, aptitudes and needs. It includes the teaching of three separate sciences from Year 7 and a variety of pathways at GCSE, including separate and combined sciences. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum includes food technology, horticulture and preparation for London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) examinations as a discrete subject for all. Pupils sit external examinations at differing but appropriate stages to support their academic and personal development needs. For instance, pupils complete their religious studies GCSE at the end of Year 10.
18. Schemes of work detail carefully planned programmes of activities which ensure that pupils can learn and make progress. Small class sizes enable teachers to adapt teaching to ensure that every pupil's experience of the curriculum is appropriate for them. The most effective teaching enables pupils to make progress and develop critical thinking skills. For instance, in religious studies pupils can listen and respond to their peers' arguments and effectively defend a point of view. Real applications of previous learning are commonplace. Pupils can draw on examples and evidence from prior lessons, such as when pupils use previous learning about complementary colours to inform their discussion about impressionistic art. In many subjects, teaching methods are varied so that pupils are engaged and interested in their learning but, in some lessons, teaching does not sufficiently challenge pupils to think and learn for themselves, or promote interest. This can lead to some pupils being less engaged with their learning.
19. Teaching considers pupils' aptitudes and prior attainment, using information gained from regular and thorough assessment of pupils' work. This includes annual reading age tests to gauge pupil progress, alongside end of term assessments and end of year examinations. Newly implemented assessment frameworks using data upon entry to the school are successfully improving outcomes in many subject areas. Pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations is used to inform leaders' decisions around curriculum design. As a result of well-guided subject choices, pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.
20. Pupils are responsible and motivated to succeed. They respond positively to clear and measurable targets shared by their teachers so that they make sustained progress in their chosen subjects. Pupils are also invited to think for themselves and be responsible for their learning by setting their own targets and commenting explicitly on how their teachers can help them, enabling teachers to provide further targeted support.
21. There is well-planned support in place for pupils who have SEND. Clear recommendations are made available to all staff to ensure that they are able to support pupils through adaptations to teaching methods. These are consistently implemented to allow pupils to learn successfully alongside their peers. Additional targeted strategies are provided when needed, using adult support and small groups within the class setting.
22. There are a small number of pupils who require support for English as an additional language (EAL). They are sufficiently fluent to access the full curriculum and receive additional support from English staff and via an online platform. Regular testing and monitoring of their progress shows that they make good progress from their starting points.

23. Teaching supports democracy by including pupils' views in planning. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons and pupils understand that if they try hard consistently, they are likely to succeed.
24. Pupils have access to a range of recreational spaces during break and lunchtime and they use them effectively. These include the indoor gymnasium and outdoor play areas, typically used for football while other pupils make use of the library area for quiet reading and the computer suite for research. There is a range of extra-curricular clubs available that are well attended and all pupils in years 7 to 9 study a musical instrument from a wide range of choices, including piano, guitar and harp.

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

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

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

26. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other and with adults. Leaders actively promote a culturally diverse mindset and are keen to ensure that all feel safe and welcomed and that there is no discrimination within the school. Spirituality is woven through all aspects of school life and Bible verses are frequently used to initiate discussions among pupils. Assemblies are regularly devoted to themes promoting pupils' spiritual and moral understanding. Pupils are encouraged to lead prayers at the beginning and end of every lesson, and they consider the school values during assemblies and class discussions. Through regular entries in their journals, pupils reflect on examples of where they have seen the school values in practice.
27. Pupils have the opportunity to engage in individual and team sports through timetabled physical education, which includes swimming, basketball, football and cross country. Events such as the annual sports day and health week actively promote the development of pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence as well as their physical health. Pupils understand the importance of staying healthy.
28. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is described by leaders as a 'curriculum for life' and includes topics which pupils will find useful in later life such as personal safety, social responsibility and health matters, alongside economic education. The school uses a combination of taught lessons and external speakers to deliver material in an age-appropriate way. The clear impact of this programme is seen in pupils' understanding of the life skills learned and in their positive interactions with each other.
29. The school has a clear relationships and sex education (RSE) policy which includes the opportunity for parents to withdraw their child for some topics if they wish to. Parents and pupils have been engaged in the programme's development. Pupils receive suitable education across a wide range of topics about relationships, the importance of consent and keeping themselves safe as well as age-appropriate sex education.
30. Typically, pupils behave well and understand the importance of doing so. Teachers respond swiftly to any reported behavioural incidents. Bullying incidents are rare and there are effective systems of pastoral support in place to support any pupils involved. This includes communicating clearly to potential bystanders that a failure to challenge bullying behaviour is not in line with the school values. Leaders keep clear records of sanctions imposed for serious misbehaviour. In these cases, leaders adopt a proportionate response depending on the needs and context of the individual pupil. Where behavioural incidents raise concerns about pupils' wellbeing or safety, leaders ensure that measures are put in place to safeguard individual pupils. As a result, pupils trust the adults who look after them and form positive relationships with them and each other.
31. Schemes of work clearly signpost the school values, with a particular emphasis on respect and tolerance. The school merit system actively encourages the expression of these values, with merits awarded for good citizenship alongside quality of work and academic effort. Celebration of pupil achievements at the final assembly of each term highlights effort as well as attainment, ensuring that all pupils are included and have the opportunity to celebrate each other's successes.
32. Admission and attendance records are kept in line with statutory guidance and there are procedures in place for reporting extended absences to local authorities as required. Attendance levels and

patterns are monitored regularly both for the benefit of individual pupils and to implement procedures that will benefit specific groups.

33. Systems in place to support pupils' health and safety throughout the school are robust, including regular fire drills and electrical safety checks. Maintenance procedures are comprehensive and regularly monitored, and appropriate fire precautions are in place. Fire-fighting equipment is regularly serviced. Adequate drinking water is available for pupils throughout the school day, and first aid is effectively delivered when necessary. Pupils are diligently supervised throughout the school including during breaks, on trips and during activities.

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

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

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

35. Mutual respect is promoted throughout the school both within the classroom and in other activities and pupils learn and understand the importance of respecting those from other faiths and cultures. The Christian ethos of the school promotes respect, equality and tolerance and these are central features of the induction for new pupils. Each school year begins with a range of assemblies focused on tolerance and acceptance of all people, irrespective of their religion, race or any other protected characteristic. The school celebrates the cultural diversity of its pupils and staff community with a cultural evening which is enjoyed by all. Because of the school's approach, pupils learn about, appreciate and respect each other's heritage.
36. There are many activities and visits that enable pupils to connect with the wider world and learn from it. For instance, groups of pupils, who have worked on projects together, take part in an educational technology show. Pupils learn about the benefits of co-operative working when carrying out research through visits to universities in the UK and abroad. The weekly whole-school choir practice enables pupils to recognise that their progress and achievement in performing requires collaborative effort and recognition of other pupils' contributions. Pupils also work collectively to decide which team sports to pursue and they learn the benefits of teamwork in competitions against other schools.
37. Pupils support local and global community projects in several ways including volunteering at foodbanks and supporting younger children's development at local primary schools. Charitable fundraising and the collection of useful items is conducted through the global support arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
38. Careers education begins in Year 7 and is delivered through the PSHE programme. Year 10 students have access to a wide range of work experience opportunities through the school's own programme and pupils comment positively on the opportunity to learn about a variety of different careers. In Year 8, a programme of talks from external speakers includes information about accountancy, graphic design and paramedic work. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are advised about the application process for post-16 education through talks and individual meetings. However, the availability and subject-specific detail of post-16 qualifications are not always communicated consistently to pupils, meaning that some of them remain unsure about possible future pathways.
39. Pupils have the opportunity to gain understanding about the value of money and the importance of budgeting through food technology lessons. For example, pupils in year 8 and 9 take part in challenges which involve preparing a meal on a very limited budget. Budgeting and planning are also covered in the PSHE curriculum, which includes modules such as 'money and earnings' and 'money and debt'.
40. Within PSHE, pupils learn about how laws are made and how democratic processes work. Democracy is experienced in school through pupil elections that take place every year for class president, class pastor and class treasurer. The election process includes written applications, speeches and campaigns from the candidates, after which their peers vote at the ballot box.
41. Pupils can distinguish right from wrong and maintain positive relationships through acts of kindness and supportive listening. They understand the importance of right behaviour and how their conduct

may affect others. Older pupils support younger ones effectively and it is common for pupils to self-report their own actions to teachers if they are concerned about their own impact on the school community.

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

42. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

43. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training, including with regard to the 'Prevent' duty, through external local authority providers. Staff also receive a weekly reminder of safeguarding responsibilities and updates regarding local and national contextual risks. Staff understand the importance of their code of conduct, whistleblowing procedures and how to report any concerns they have about colleagues, including low-level concerns.
44. Pupils are aware of who has responsibility for safeguarding, and they report wellbeing concerns about themselves and their peers with confidence. As a result, staff can provide the appropriate support for pupils.
45. Safeguarding records are detailed, accurate and securely stored. They include evidence of the decision-making process regarding actions that support pupils' wellbeing. Records are regularly monitored for links with behaviour and patterns are identified.
46. There is comprehensive oversight by governors of safeguarding policies and the implementation of an effective safeguarding culture. Governors join staff in the regular training opportunities and engage in regular scrutiny of the work of safeguarding leaders.
47. Leaders and governors are effectively trained in safer recruitment and meet regularly to oversee recruitment processes. All the required pre-appointment recruitment checks for governors, staff and volunteers are conducted in a timely manner, and these checks are recorded diligently.
48. Suitable measures are in place to reduce the risk of radicalisation to pupils and recent assemblies have included external speakers whose individual experiences are valuable in increasing pupils' understanding of radical behaviour.
49. Robust filtering and monitoring of the internet is in place and leaders ensure that filtering arrangements are tested appropriately. Digital safety is embedded in the curriculum and in assemblies and pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe online.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Stanborough Secondary School
Department for Education number	919/6154
Registered charity number	1044071
Address	Stanborough Secondary School Stanborough Park Watford Hertfordshire WD25 9JT
Phone number	01923 673268
Email address	info@spsch.org
Website	www.spsch.org
Proprietor	The British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Chair	Pastor Eglan Brooks
Headteacher	Mrs Jeanetta Liburd
Age range	11 to 16
Number of pupils	50
Date of previous inspection	4 to 6 October 2022

Information about the school

51. Stanborough Secondary School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years. It is owned by the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It occupies a 40-acre site in Garston on the outskirts of Watford. Governance is provided through a board of governors, some of whom are members of the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The headteacher was appointed in October 2022.
52. The school has identified 16 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
53. The school has identified English as an additional language for a very small proportion of pupils.
54. The school states its aims are to be a Christ-centred school where every child is nurtured, valued, and inspired to reach their God-given potential.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

20 to 22 January 2026

55. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

56. 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
- tours of the proposed boarding accommodation.
- 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.

57. 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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