

# School inspection report

14 to 16 October 2025

## **Derby Grammar School**

Rykneld Road

Littleover

Derby

DE23 4BX

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 proprietor body has ensured that leaders have the knowledge and skills to meet the requirements of the Standards effectively and promote pupils' wellbeing. The advisory board assists leaders in their roles and has effective oversight of all aspects of school life. Senior leaders have a clear strategic direction and ensure that they use a range of information to identify strengths and areas for development in the school's provision, and act promptly to address any issues identified.
2. Not all backup copies of the admission register have been retained as required by statutory guidance. A new approach implemented by the headteacher since his arrival is rectifying this gap in leaders' record-keeping. Risk management is generally comprehensive, although some risk assessment documentation was not in line with the school's policy and did not reflect the effective practice in the school. The gaps in risk assessment documentation were rectified during the inspection.
3. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is coherent, well planned and effectively monitored, including a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Most teachers use effective subject knowledge to plan and teach lessons that are suitably structured, using methods that engage pupils and promote independent thinking. Appropriate approaches to assessment and feedback support pupils' progress. Warm, respectful relationships foster a calm, purposeful learning atmosphere where pupils are valued and supported.
4. Leaders have identified areas for school development and have begun to implement change in the content and implementation across a number of policies. These changes have yet to be embedded across the school and some teaching does not yet identify when pupils are ready to be challenged to think harder or apply their learning in more complex ways. When this occurs, some pupils can lose interest, focus and disengage with their learning. Teachers do not always address this swiftly, which leads to some lost learning time.
5. An inclusive ethos promotes respect and tolerance, reinforced through curriculum subjects, assemblies and through the school's values. Pupils show kindness and empathy, engaging in initiatives such as kindness buckets and achievement assemblies. Reward systems of commendations linked with the school's values boost motivation and self-esteem. Overall, pupils gain a thorough understanding of the importance of emotional wellbeing and personal responsibility. They are confident, reflective and contribute to a caring community where pupils feel valued and happy.
6. Pupils demonstrate strong social awareness, co-operation and respect for others, contributing to a positive and inclusive school community. Across lessons and activities, they engage collaboratively, showing empathy, effective communication and a willingness to support one another. Through drama, sport, outdoor learning and residential experiences, pupils develop teamwork, resilience and confidence. In addition, music and engineering activities enhance self-esteem, commitment and mutual trust.
7. Leaders consider safeguarding in all aspects of their work and ensure that appropriate procedures to safeguard pupils are implemented effectively. Leaders and members of the advisory board ensure that statutory requirements within safeguarding are followed precisely. Staff are appropriately

trained and understand their responsibilities to help keep pupils safe, including online. Pre-employment and recruitment checks are systematically managed and recorded appropriately.

## 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 risk assessments consistently follow school policy in order to ensure that the level of risk is assessed consistently
- ensure that all backups of the admission register are retained in line with statutory guidance
- continue to ensure that all teachers challenge pupils to think carefully, apply their learning in more complex ways, and behave appropriately so that no learning time is lost.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. The proprietor body ensures that leaders' work is routinely and robustly quality assured, through their own checks and those made by the well-trained and experienced advisory board. Members of the board regularly visit the school to advise, support and challenge leaders to ensure that they are taking all reasonable action in the best interests of pupils. They take part in lesson observation, curriculum review and oversight of safeguarding procedures. Collectively, leaders, the advisory board and the proprietor body ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently.
9. Leaders promote a caring and inclusive atmosphere where pupils are kept safe, and their wellbeing is at the centre of the decisions made by leaders. Staff know pupils well and respond to their individual needs through effective pastoral care and through the array of support structures in place.
10. Leaders in the early years setting ensure that children's learning and developmental needs are met. This includes the implementation of an appropriate curriculum and effective pastoral care. Children explore the outdoor woodland environment and receive specific teaching from specialists such as in music and art. Children's physical development is well supported through a variety of activities and teaching about healthy eating choices.
11. Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development. The new headteacher has led a review of the school's policies and procedures. As part of this review, staff, pupils and parents participated in a discussion of the school's aims and ethos and a new set of school values. As a result, the values of kindness, courage, ambition and respect have been introduced across all aspects of school life.
12. Leaders have used their monitoring systems to review, identify and address some gaps in the effectiveness of teaching and behaviour. They have acted swiftly to implement changes in their approaches to behaviour and teaching. Leaders' strategies are bringing improvements in the provision for pupils. However, these changes are still relatively new and some approaches to teaching and behaviour are not yet implemented with consistent effectiveness in all areas of the school's work.
13. Leaders ensure that all information required by legislation is available to parents and other relevant external agencies. Much is available on the school's website, such as the accessibility plan that fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This plan reviews the current provision for pupils and where improvements are needed to ensure that pupils can access the site, the curriculum and their education in full. The complaints policy and procedures are in line with statutory requirements and a comprehensive log of resolution dates and stages is kept. Advisory board members review the complaints log regularly to ascertain any patterns and to ensure compliance with regulations.
14. Leaders share appropriate information with the local authority related to pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including information related to the income received and expenditure incurred for pupils. Leaders also liaise effectively with local authorities to inform them about any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.
15. Oversight of risk management by leaders is generally effective. Most risk assessments are detailed and include steps to reduce risk, which are implemented in practice. Not all areas of the school site and activities were effectively assessed as high, medium or low risk as specified by the school's policy, but this was addressed during the inspection.

## 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 school provides an appropriate curriculum that includes a range of subjects and activities. This curriculum starts in the early years, where the youngest children get off to an effective start to their education and development, including through regular shared learning experiences with older pupils. Leaders invest in subject specialist teaching for the youngest children and pupils in the junior school to help pupils develop an early rich understanding of a wide range of subjects. Leaders' regular reviews of the curriculum lead to changes and improvements in the offer to pupils, such as the recent changes to the drama curriculum. Pupils in the senior school are able to study a number of modern foreign languages and the curriculum in the sixth form widens the subjects on offer to study, including music technology, psychology and economics.
18. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They have a thorough understanding of what pupils know and can do and adapt their teaching accordingly. They use a range of effective teaching strategies to inspire pupils to be enthused by their learning. For instance, in A level music technology, pupils use an intricate understanding of wave forms to increase their understanding of how to improve the quality of performance. In GCSE German, pupils use recapping strategies to consolidate vocabulary and respond confidently in the target language.
19. However, in some lessons, teachers do not ensure that they challenge pupils to think or apply their learning in more complex ways. When this happens, some pupils lose interest in their work, go off task and distract themselves and others. Some teachers do not address this poorer behaviour, which leads to lost learning time. Leaders have identified this and have implemented changes to policies on feedback and classroom behaviour management, but these are yet to be embedded throughout all subjects.
20. Pupils' academic performance is regularly reviewed by teachers and leaders. They use the information to identify and support pupils who need additional help. This information is also reported to parents through written reports and parent consultation meetings. As a result, most pupils act on the advice and support they are given and learn effectively over time. Pupils, by the end of Years 11 and 13, achieve well in national examinations and transition to appropriate next steps in education, training and employment.
21. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported through careful monitoring and targeted adjustments, where needed. Leaders provide staff with precise guidance about pupils' individual needs, enabling personalised support. Leaders maintain detailed tracking of pupils' needs and progress, and act promptly to support pupils when needed. Pupils who have SEND are supported with an array of strategies in lessons, which ensure that they learn effectively alongside their peers.
22. Children in the early years engage enthusiastically and curiously in their learning. Staff are adept at identifying children who need more support or where there are early signs of additional needs. They use regular and precise observation and assessment to help children keep up in their learning and development. Teaching methods are highly effective, using a range of planned and play activities to support children to develop essential speaking, communication, early reading and early writing skills, as well as learning about the wider world through creative art, such as when making Diwali lamps using clay.



23. Support for those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) includes accurate identification of needs when pupils join the school. This identification process leads to appropriate adjustments being implemented in the curriculum and teaching. Over time, pupils who speak EAL develop appropriate linguistic skills, learn effectively and achieve in line with their peers.
24. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that extend learning beyond the classroom. In a cappella singing, pupils reach a high musical standard, performing in languages other than English and experimenting confidently with pitch and harmony. The school's 'formula 24' programme provides pupils with practical experience in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), promoting teamwork, problem-solving and innovation, along with the opportunity to use their skills in real-world situations at a racetrack. Sixth-form pupils engage with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, as well as taking part in, and leading, house competitions such as board games.

### **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' physical and emotional wellbeing are well supported through a strong culture of care and respect for all members of the school community. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm and encouraging. Pupils are taught a variety of strategies to support and develop their mental and emotional wellbeing, including how to be mindful and how to develop resilience. Teachers know their pupils well and this enables them to monitor pupils' wellbeing and, when necessary, to offer additional support. Most pupils are confident and interact positively with one another, actively engaging in the opportunities available to them.
27. The physical education (PE) curriculum is broad and inclusive, offering high quality equal opportunities to all pupils. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about fitness, health and nutrition, and competitive sport, through sports such as rugby, netball and hockey. Pupils are encouraged to use the school facilities to undertake additional daily activity. For instance, Year 11 and sixth-form pupils choose activities through afternoon games sessions, including volleyball and using the school gym. The PE curriculum, house competitions and inter-school competitive fixtures promote teamwork, leadership and resilience.
28. The youngest children's physical and emotional wellbeing are promoted effectively through close supervision, nurturing relationships and well-embedded routines. Staff build warm, trusting relationships, providing emotional support between adults and children. Children's physical development is well supported through the curriculum, where using a range of resources and activities helps them to hone and develop their motor skills, balance and co-ordination. Children also learn important lessons about health and hygiene, such as washing their hands and brushing their teeth.
29. There is a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme in place. The programme includes age-appropriate provision for relationships and sex education (RSE). Pupils learn about important topics in an age-appropriate way, such as identifying the features of healthy relationships and consent and, as they get older, considering sensitive topics such as coercive control. Teachers use engaging interactive tasks, such as scenarios, to help pupils understand their impact on others such as younger pupils. Assessments at the start and end of topics enable pupils to check their own knowledge and understanding. Teachers regularly review pupils' feedback on PSHE lessons to ensure that content is relevant and useful to pupils.
30. Behaviour is generally well managed, though there is some inconsistency in behaviour management. When a small minority of pupils act inappropriately, this is not addressed by some staff, which leads to lost learning time. Leaders have identified inconsistency in behaviour management as an area for development and improvements are starting to be made. Records of behaviour incidents are suitably detailed and appropriately kept. Leaders use records to address individual issues or to track wider concerning patterns or trends in pupils' behaviour.
31. A proactive approach to addressing bullying is evident through assemblies, PSHE and tutor programmes promoting respect and inclusion. Pupils receive guidance explaining how to report concerns and who to report concerns to. When rare incidents occur, the school responds promptly by investigating and recording these, and contacting parents when necessary. The school provides

support for all pupils involved, to ensure that incidents are dealt with effectively for all pupils and to reduce the chances of issues occurring again.

32. Leaders keep appropriate admission and attendance records. However, leaders historically have not ensured that the regular monthly backup of the admission register has been saved in line with statutory guidance. An appropriate procedure to address this has been implemented since the arrival of the new headteacher.
33. Leaders ensure that they maintain all aspects of the school's health and safety requirements. The site is well maintained with appropriate processes in place to manage any issues that may arise. Fire procedures, including fire practice and fire equipment, are fully compliant. Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are made on water facilities, including easily accessible drinking water. Requirements for the implementation of first aid and medical care are appropriate and in place, including general training for all staff and enhanced training for those providing first response and working with the youngest children.
34. Safety routines are clearly established for the use of equipment in a range of subjects such as science, design and technology, and art, contributing positively to pupils' physical wellbeing. All pupils receive clear guidance on conduct and safety, particularly before trips. All pupils in Year 9 complete a certified first aid course, strengthening their practical understanding of health and wellbeing.
35. Pupils take on a range of leadership responsibilities that help develop character and community spirit. Roles include house captains, school council representatives and various prefect positions within both the senior and junior schools. Sixth-form pupils are actively involved in mentoring younger pupils and assisting in the junior school. Leadership opportunities extend to pupil-led clubs, which are co-led by teachers to provide guidance and continuity. These responsibility roles help pupils develop teamwork, organisation and communication skills.

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

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

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

37. In keeping with the school's values, pupils are taught about the importance of respect, kindness, tolerance and inclusion. Through the PSHE curriculum, religious education lessons and assemblies, pupils learn about a wide variety of topics, including diverse cultures, beliefs and ideas, and the practices of other cultures. Through lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect on moral choices and respect for those of different faiths, backgrounds and beliefs. The curriculum is enhanced through a range of visiting speakers, celebrations, visits and trips, including to places of worship and cultural sites.
38. Children in the early years are encouraged to develop respect, co-operation and a sense of belonging. Children are taught about empathy and kindness towards others. They are taught about taking turns, listening to each other and being curious to learn about each other. Through shared experiences with the wider school and community, children participate in assemblies, visits and joint events with older pupils, reinforcing their social skills and community awareness. Staff use lots of opportunities to praise children, using the reward programme and achievement assemblies. Staff recognise and share children's successes at school and at home.
39. Pupils are taught about a range of British institutions that support society and the values that underpin them. For example, they learn about different political viewpoints, voting, elections, democracy and the role of laws, police and courts. They are taught about the difference between right and wrong and the consequences of people's actions. Pupils show an understanding of right and wrong and a respect for the law. They use this learning in their interactions with each other, developing important understanding of the value of kindness towards others and fairness in the wider world.
40. There are many opportunities for pupils to demonstrate leadership and to contribute positively to the local and national community. For example, many pupils take on proactive roles through leading inclusive events, such as the Tanzania project and intercultural exchanges, which reinforce their understanding of global citizenship and service.
41. Pupils are encouraged to understand economic education from an early age. The youngest children learn about the value of money when role-playing shops. Pupils' economic understanding is developed effectively, starting with the well-planned PSHE curriculum. This curriculum is enriched by mathematics lessons and events such as the school's young enterprise scheme and charity fundraising. Pupils learn about important topics such as money management, budgeting, inflation and, as they get older, more complex topics such as investment and taxation.
42. Pupils benefit from a broad, progressive careers curriculum integrated into academic and extra-curricular learning. They engage enthusiastically in leadership, enterprise and enrichment activities that enhance their employability skills. Pupils make informed choices about their futures, including when selecting curriculum options and for post-18 career pathways. Sixth-form pupils attend several careers-based events, where they receive guidance on writing personal statements, applying for student finance and exploring different career paths. Talks and workshops are held in the school to support university applications and apprenticeship routes. Pupils are well supported by the holistic careers provision and guidance available to them.

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

**43. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

44. Leaders have effective arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by ensuring that appropriate procedures and records are in place. Staff understand reporting procedures, including those for low-level concerns. They use the school's systems effectively and promptly when informing the safeguarding team of concerns. Staff receive regular updates and training on safeguarding themes that reflect national and local contextual risks to pupils, including the risks of radicalisation.
45. The proprietor has ensured that members of the advisory board are regularly trained in safeguarding to fully support the work of leaders. Leaders and members of the advisory board are trained in safer recruitment and meet regularly to oversee recruitment processes. All the required pre-employment checks are systematically implemented and these are recorded effectively on the single central record of appointments.
46. Leaders ensure that safeguarding records are detailed, accurate and securely stored. These records are monitored carefully to ensure that any other concerns, such as patterns or trends in behaviour, are identified. Leaders are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities, in line with statutory guidance. They work closely with the local authority to facilitate timely collaborative working and liaise with outside agencies effectively to support pupils when necessary.
47. Pupils are taught about how to report their concerns, including to staff. They are taught about how to keep themselves safe, including online, effectively through computing and PSHE lessons. The curriculum helps pupils to develop an awareness of safe behaviour and digital responsibility.
48. Appropriate arrangements for the filtering and monitoring of the internet and digital devices are in place. Leaders ensure that the systems are regularly tested and act quickly to address any concerns. Leaders use their routine checks on the system to effectively identify and support the learning and safety of pupils, such as a recent focused programme of education for parents, staff and pupils, in this area of online safety.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Derby Grammar School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	831/6004
<b>Address</b>	Derby Grammar School Rykneld Road Littleover Derby DE23 4BX
<b>Phone number</b>	01332 523027
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:schooloffice@derbygrammar.org">schooloffice@derbygrammar.org</a>
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.derbygrammar.org">www.derbygrammar.org</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	Inspired Learning Group Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Amit Mehta
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alistair Bond
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	207
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 to 15 September 2022

## Information about the school

50. Derby Grammar School is a co-educational independent day school for pupils aged 4 to 18 years old, located in Littleover in Derbyshire. It was previously run by Derby Grammar School Trust Ltd. The school was taken over by the Inspired Learning Group in March 2024 with a new chair of the proprietor body. This was not accurately reported on the government website Get Information about Schools at the time of the inspection. The school is proprietorial with a local advisory board. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2025.
51. Previously, the school had admitted male pupils from the age of four, and female pupils only in the sixth form. The school applied to the DfE to make a material change to the school's provision from single sex up to Year 11 to fully co-educational. Inspectors conducted an inspection at the request of the DfE in June 2023 and recommended that the material change be approved. Since September 2023, female pupils have been admitted into all year groups.
52. There are a very small number of children in the early years, comprising one Reception class.
53. The school has identified 37 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Nine pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
54. The school has identified 11 pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
55. The school states its aims are to provide children with a premium educational experience that enables each pupil to thrive academically, socially and personally through four distinct values which shape the community and culture: kindness, courage, ambition and respect.



## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

14 to 16 October 2025

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

57. 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 and members of the advisory board
- 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.

58. 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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