

School inspection report

4 to 6 November 2025

Essendene Lodge School

Essendene Road

Caterham

Surrey

CR3 5PB

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors and leaders act together to promote pupils' wellbeing consistently effectively. They ensure that all policies meet the legal requirements and that correct procedures are carefully followed. The school's values and ethos underpin leaders' decision-making and are reflected in all aspects of school life.
2. The curriculum is well structured and coherent. It includes a focus on the core skills of literacy and numeracy and an appropriate range of subjects, including creative subjects and sports. Curriculum design takes account of pupils' needs, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
3. Teachers structure lessons well, with thoughtfully planned activities that engage pupils' interest. Occasionally, too much focus on adult-led activities in the early years inhibits the development of children's natural curiosity and independence. Overall, teachers support pupils of all abilities to achieve well from their starting points. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who take pride in their work and their achievements.
4. The school's personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is well planned and implemented. As a result, pupils understand the importance of respect for individual differences. The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe online but is not fully effective in teaching them to be aware of the possibility of misinformation on websites. The PSHE curriculum includes the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme, so pupils understand how to form positive and healthy relationships. The programme effectively supports the development of pupils' self-knowledge and self-esteem.
5. Leaders set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils live up to these. Consequently, incidents of misbehaviour are rare and, should they happen, they are managed appropriately. Effective teaching means that pupils fully understand that bullying is unacceptable.
6. Suitably managed health and safety arrangements result in the school's secure, well-maintained and welcoming environment for learning.
7. The school's ethos promotes the importance of respect and the right of all to be treated fairly and kindly, irrespective of background, belief or ability. Pupils understand the importance of these values as the basis for modern British society.
8. Leaders teach pupils to think responsibly about how they can contribute to their school and to wider society. The PSHE programme encourages pupils to develop their understanding of financial matters as well as their thinking about future careers.

Measures to promote pupils' safeguarding and wellbeing are effective because leaders and staff at all levels are well trained and understand their responsibilities. Leaders ensure that all the required recruitment checks are completed before individuals are allowed to start work at the school. The results are accurately recorded in a single central record of appointments (SCR).

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:

- strengthen teaching on misinformation and fake news so that pupils understand how this can result in opinions being manipulated through inaccurate reporting
- ensure that the good practice in early years teaching is shared so that children are supported to develop their curiosity, through independent play and exploration, consistently well in all classes.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors understand their duty to ensure that school leaders have the skills and knowledge necessary, so that pupils' wellbeing is promoted effectively. Leaders are well trained and experienced. They provide governors with thorough and informative termly reports submitted to regular board meetings. These analyse the school's progress and put forward proposals for future developments. Governors gather first-hand insight into the school through on-site visits and discussions with staff and pupils. They draw on this experience, alongside leaders' reports, to provide helpful support and challenge towards ongoing improvements.
10. The school's ethos and aims are published widely. They appropriately underpin leaders' strategic decision-making. Leaders complete rigorous self-reviews of the school, assessing its success and highlighting any improvements needed. Consequently, they consistently meet their aim to provide a welcoming educational environment in which pupils feel supported to fulfil their potential. Their work with subject leaders ensures that there is a coherent curriculum and consistency of expectations across subject areas.
11. Policies pay due regard to statutory guidance. They are understood by staff and carefully implemented, promoting pupils' wellbeing effectively. Governors and school leaders are well trained in safeguarding. Leaders maintain thorough systems for recording and tracking any concerns about pupils' wellbeing. Leaders take swift action in response to pastoral concerns. They liaise with external agencies, including social services and the police, as needed, to ensure that there is appropriate support for pupils when required.
12. Leaders have a clear understanding of the potential risks to pupils. There are stringent checks of the safety and security of the school site. Risk assessments, including those for the early years setting and for activities that involve the use of facilities not owned by the school, are thorough and regularly reviewed. Leaders initiate changes to practices in response to their reviews. Protocols and risk assessments for activities taking place off site are thorough. Leaders ensure that there are always suitable levels of vigilance and supervision to protect pupils from harm.
13. Much information for parents is provided on the school's website and is available from the school office. This includes all required policies. Regular and informative newsletters provide parents with further insight into school life. There are meetings between parents and teachers to discuss their child's progress, in addition to regular written reports. A suitably implemented policy ensures effective management of any parental complaints. Leaders take any expression of discontent seriously and follow the policy meticulously.
14. Leaders consistently reiterate the school's values of respect, kindness and empathy. Pupils live up to these values and refer to them naturally in discussions. The result is a positive and supportive school environment in which discrimination of any sort is seen as unacceptable. Respectful friendships between pupils flourish. Leaders create a physical environment that encourages calm, thoughtful behaviour and is sensitive to the needs of pupils who have SEND. They have a suitable accessibility plan covering the required areas, including plans for appropriate improvements within the constraints of the school site. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

15. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. The curriculum is broad, covering creative as well as academic areas of learning. Leaders regularly review the school's offer, making sure that it is responsive to individual pupils' needs. Pupils acquire knowledge and understanding across the curriculum so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
17. In the early years, children develop their language and communication skills swiftly. Their vocabulary grows as they discuss their ideas and feelings with their teachers. They make good progress in their basic literacy skills. In the Reception year, children confidently write short sentences and improve their reading as they link letter shapes with their sounds. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils are assured readers. They are enthusiastic writers, taking pleasure in using a broad vocabulary. Their imaginative use of a range of sentence structures creates high-quality work in prose and poetry. They are confident to use technology to research and to present work. Pupils' numerical skills grow steadily across the years. Children in the Reception class, for example, count up to five with ease and older pupils confidently work with fractions and percentages.
18. The curriculum design encourages pupils' creativity effectively. They work with imagination, enthusiasm and self-discipline in drama lessons and develop their understanding of musical notation and different genres in music lessons. Their growing understanding of colour and design is evident in their artwork and in the various items they create in projects.
19. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They provide well-resourced and well-planned lessons with varied activities, which keep pupils well motivated to learn. This includes using technology, for example, to share video clips, or setting up 'treasure hunts' that involve pupils moving around the classroom to find clues for more information on a topic. Such activities help pupils of all abilities to become actively involved in their learning. Teachers in the early years are typically skilled in supporting children's progress. In some early years classes, however, opportunities to develop children's natural curiosity and explore their ideas in activities they choose for themselves is occasionally limited. This is because adult-led activities dominate.
20. Teachers control pupils' behaviour in the classroom adeptly. They make occasional references to the school's values of kindness and inclusivity to remind pupils to work together and to help each other. They keep pupils' eagerness and excitement focused on the task through skilful time management.
21. The regular, thorough and supportive system for monitoring pupils' progress provides important information that is shared appropriately across year groups and with the team with oversight of pupils who have SEND. Teachers use the information effectively in lesson planning. Consequently, these pupils make good progress, including children in the early years, who attain at least the expected levels of development. Annually, pupils in Year 6 achieve places at their chosen senior schools, with some winning scholarships.
22. The team with responsibility for pupils who have SEND informs teachers of the specific needs of pupils identified as having SEND and of strategies that will best help to support them. Additional support is offered in individual or small group sessions as necessary, for example in reading or spelling. Teachers adapt their lessons sensitively, setting the same task for the class but providing different resources for different groups of pupils as needed. This helps all pupils to complete the task successfully. Pupils who have SEND make marked progress from their starting points. Leaders

place considerable focus on supporting pupils' social and emotional needs. Teachers consistently encourage pupils of all abilities to feel proud of themselves and their achievements.

23. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are fluent in English and access the curriculum with minimal help. Extra help is provided as needed for children in the early years, for example using images with words in English and their home language written below, so that their English vocabulary grows.
24. Throughout the school, pupils show uninhibited enthusiasm and joy in learning. They are self-motivated, work industriously when set a task on their own and collaborate effectively in groups. They respond positively to teachers' verbal and written feedback on their work and take great pride in seeing their work improve.
25. Pupils appreciate the programme of extra-curricular activities. They enjoy these and the additional opportunities to develop skills such as logic and resilience.

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

26. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

27. In PSHE, pupils consider the importance of the school's values of respect and kindness in personal relationships and in society. They develop a deep-rooted understanding that discriminating against others on the basis of differences, such as background, ethnicity or ability, is unacceptable. Children in the early years learn to consider others' feelings. They know that using kind words matters. Pupils learn to express differences of opinion respectfully, acknowledging others' rights to their own views. Their behaviour is naturally inclusive. They are swift to step in to offer help to others and to make sure that no-one is left out. The school's supportive, friendly and inclusive atmosphere helps pupils to develop self-knowledge and self-confidence. They know that they are valued as individuals.
28. The school's ethos draws on Christian values, including respect for other faiths. Pupils confidently speak about the beliefs and traditions of their own faiths, explaining these to others. Trips and visits to various places of worship enhance pupils' understanding and respect for others' beliefs. Leaders encourage pupils to be self-reflective and to take the time to appreciate natural and created beauty. In form times, teachers create opportunities for pupils to think with gratitude about the love of families and the simple pleasures of everyday life.
29. The PSHE programme is well structured. Pupils learn the importance of taking care of their mental wellbeing and strategies to cope when they are feeling under pressure. They study basic first aid and how to keep themselves safe by being alert to physical risks in the home. They also learn about keeping safe when working online and the importance of not sharing passwords or passing on personal information. Pupils are alert to online risks such as that of being scammed. However, they are less astute in understanding that some websites may be presenting false information potentially intended to manipulate their views.
30. The RSE programme helps pupils to learn in age-appropriate ways about relationships and how bodies change in adolescence. Pupils learn how to recognise and resist pressure from peers. They understand the importance of respecting personal boundaries and of consent in relationships.
31. Pupils have regular opportunities for physical exercise. Children in the early years develop their gross motor skills in physical education (PE) lessons as well as in energetic use of climbing and balancing equipment and ride-on toys in the playground. All pupils have swimming lessons throughout the year. A structured programme for PE develops pupils' skills in athletics, gymnastics and ball games over the year. Pupils are enthusiastic participants, enjoying the physical activity and its benefits for their mental health.
32. Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. These are always based on the need to be respectful and kind in dealing with others. Pupils' thoughtful behaviour reflects their understanding of this need. Consequently, they move around the school calmly and respond promptly to their teachers' instructions. Leaders' approach, should misbehaviour occur, is to help pupils to understand why an action was wrong and to apologise, so that they learn from their mistake. Pupils are unanimous in their knowledge that bullying has no place in their school.
33. Leaders ensure that pupils are well supervised on the school site and when they are engaged in off-site activities. There are careful procedures to ensure pupils' safety, including when eating, or

moving around the school carrying trays of food. Provision for first aid is appropriate and suitable numbers of staff are trained in paediatric first aid.

34. Admission and attendance registers are well maintained. Local authorities are informed when pupils join or leave the school outside normal transition times.

35. Leaders make sure that the school complies with relevant health and safety laws. Premises and accommodation are clean, pleasantly decorated, well maintained and secure. Staff training in health and safety issues is thorough. All the required health and safety checks are carried out at recommended intervals. Procedures for the prevention of fire are rigorous and there are regular evacuation drills.

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. The curriculum is underpinned by schemes of work reflecting the school's belief that all people have the right to be treated with respect and kindness. Pupils learn how society and attitudes have changed over time, and that there is no place in modern Britain for discriminatory or prejudiced attitudes. They know that all have the right to personal liberty and to make their own decisions in matters such as faith and personal relationships, regardless of differences in background, gender or ability. Pupils grow in self-esteem and self-confidence in school because they know they are valued and respected by their fellow pupils and by their teachers.
38. Leaders directly link the school's values to those that are fundamental to modern British society. Children in the early years learn about the importance of considering others' feelings and making sure that everyone is included in activities. Form time discussions for older pupils are used to reflect on current affairs and social injustices. Teachers ensure that discussions on political issues that emerge are kept balanced and impartial. Pupils are naturally inclusive and respectful of different cultures and traditions. Their understanding of how people live in different countries is enriched by the school's link with a school in Malawi.
39. Pupils know that respect for the law is essential if society is to be kept safe. They understand that those who break the law should face justice. In PSHE lessons, pupils develop an understanding of the various structures that support society, including the police and health services. They learn how Parliament functions, experiencing democracy in action through election for various school and house leadership roles.
40. Pupils are eager to apply for responsibility posts in the school and those elected take their roles seriously. Playground 'buddies' are entrusted to carry out surveys to rate pupils' satisfaction with matters ranging from school food to the different strategies teachers use in lessons. Pupils manage these surveys responsibly because they know that the results are used by senior leaders in making decisions that affect them all. The work of the eco-committee has helped the school to attain accredited 'Eco-School' status.
41. Pupils learn the importance of helping others. Leaders make sure that pupils are involved in regular charitable activities in the local community, such as singing in a home for the elderly and collecting food items for a Harvest Festival. They encourage pupils to think beyond the local area to support national or international charities, for example raising money to support pupils in a school in Malawi.
42. In PSHE lessons, pupils start to think about their future lives and places in society. In a dedicated careers week, pupils learn about different jobs and to challenge stereotypes in career choices. Older pupils learn some of the realities of entering the workplace by applying to spend a day shadowing members of staff, including the headteacher, teachers or office manager.
43. Economic education is built into the curriculum from an early stage. Pupils in Year 1 learn addition and subtraction using coins. Teachers build real-life financial calculations into mathematics lessons, such as asking pupils to work out how a percentage discount in a toy sale will impact on how they spend their pocket money. Pupils in Year 6 attend a financial planning workshop run by an external

company, learning the benefits of planning and saving. Such activities provide the pupils with useful skills in preparation for the future.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Leaders create a robust culture of safeguarding. Governors are well trained. They provide helpful support, as well as careful oversight, of safeguarding processes. Those with specific responsibility for safeguarding within the school are appropriately trained at the required intervals. They understand the requirements of their roles.
46. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that all staff are trained in safeguarding on joining the school, with routine follow-up training scheduled as required. Regular quizzes check understanding of safeguarding matters, including how well staff understand leaders' expectations of professional behaviour. Leaders are informed of any concerns about adult behaviour that could be misconstrued and manage these promptly. Staff know the importance of telling leaders with responsibility for safeguarding about any worries and are confident about the correct procedures to follow in doing so.
47. The small class sizes ensure that teachers know their pupils well and are alert to any concerning changes in behaviour. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are informed swiftly of any emerging issues. They investigate as necessary and take action, including working with external agencies if needed.
48. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding keep careful records of any concerns, so that any trends or patterns can be identified. Information is stored confidentially, noting actions taken in response to concerns as well as the rationale for decisions.
49. There are rigorous procedures to make sure that all required checks on adults' suitability to work with children are carried out when individuals apply for jobs at the school. Leaders make sure that these checks are satisfactorily completed before anyone is employed. Governors' oversight ensures robust recruitment processes and the accuracy of pre-appointment checks in the SCR.
50. Systems for filtering and monitoring internet use are stringent. Action is taken should records show any concern about material being accessed on the school equipment and devices. Leaders review the records of internet filtering regularly so that they are confident that systems are secure.
51. In PSHE lessons, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Worry boxes in classrooms allow them to pass on worries anonymously if they wish. Pupils know they can approach any adult of their choice in school to discuss any concerns. They are confident that staff will listen and help them when needed.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Essendene Lodge School
Department for Education number	936/6528
Address	Essendene Lodge School Essendene Road Caterham Surrey CR3 5PB
Phone number	01883 348349
Email address	office@essendenelodge.surrey.sch.uk
Website	www.essendenelodge.co.uk
Proprietor	Inspired Learning Group (UK) Limited
Chair	Mr Amit Mehta
Headteacher	Mrs Kishwar Ali
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	104
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 November 2022

Information about the school

53. Essendene Lodge School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged 3 to 11. The school is situated in a residential area in Caterham, Surrey. It is owned and governed by the Inspired Learning Group.
54. There are 46 children aged between two and five in the early years. The majority are in the Nursery and pre-school classes.
55. The school has identified 13 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
56. The school has identified English as an additional language for seven pupils.
57. The school states that its aims are to provide a caring and friendly learning environment, so that all pupils can achieve their potential and feel a sense of achievement. It sets out to encourage its pupils to develop resilience, kindness, good manners and respect for others.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	4 to 6 November 2025
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58. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

59. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons
- observation of registration periods
- 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
- visits to the learning support area
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

60. 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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