

# School inspection report

9 to 11 December 2025

## **Royal Russell School**

Coombe Lane

Croydon

Surrey

CR9 5BX

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. Governors are well-informed and offer appropriate challenge and support to school leaders to ensure that the Standards are met. Governors and school leaders systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the school to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is promoted and to inform ambitious planning in keeping with the school's aims.
2. Skilful and knowledgeable senior leaders provide appropriate information to parents, the local authority and external agencies. Leaders routinely update and review their policies to ensure they reflect current statutory requirements. Reviews include those relating to accessibility and the school's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A minor administrative error in the information provided relating to the number of complaints in the preceding year was rectified during the course of the inspection.
3. Leaders provide a suitable and wide-ranging curriculum. Pupils develop appropriate linguistic, mathematical and scientific skills and use information technology well to access resources, record their learning and work collaboratively. Pupils benefit from well-planned lessons taught by knowledgeable teachers who regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching. As a result, pupils make good progress and achieve highly in public examinations at GCSE, BTEC National Diploma and A level. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress.
4. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility and successfully promote positive relationships and high standards of behaviour. As a result, pupils develop self-confidence and self-esteem.
5. Leaders promote pupils' health and physical wellbeing, including through appropriate health and safety, fire and first aid checks. Leaders ensure that the premises and boarding houses are well maintained. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons in the junior school and wellbeing lessons in the senior school provide pupils with the skills, knowledge and aptitude to promote positive mental health. A wide range of sports, physical education (PE) lessons and co-curricular activities after school and at the weekend promote pupils' physical wellbeing.
6. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about key social and political values such as democracy, the rule of law and personal freedom. A carefully structured programme of economic education teaches pupils about money, mortgages, taxation and entrepreneurship. A wide range of opportunities allows pupils to explore future careers options and prepares them for life in British society.
7. Leaders manage safeguarding concerns effectively in accordance with current statutory guidance. Children in the early years and pupils in the junior and senior schools learn how to keep themselves safe, including online, and know how to raise concerns with trusted adults, who respond promptly and supportively.

## 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 required information relating to complaints is made available to parents and external agencies.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. The governing body ensures that leaders are well trained and have appropriate skills and knowledge. Governors work closely with leaders to ensure Standards are met consistently. The promotion of pupils' wellbeing is central to the school's ethos and is at the heart of school culture. Leaders know their pupils very well and ensure that policies are implemented effectively. Pupils and parents have confidence in the school's leaders.
9. Governors' oversight of safeguarding and the diligent practice of school leaders ensure that a robust culture of safeguarding is embedded in the school. Governors appropriately challenge and support school leaders and ensure that leaders successfully fulfil their responsibilities.
10. Leaders in the early years ensure that there is a wide variety of activities matched to children's needs and interests to foster positive attitudes to learning and respectful behaviour. Through learning walks and regular monitoring of lessons, leaders throughout the school ensure that teachers effectively communicate their subject knowledge so that pupils make good progress. Careful analysis of lesson observations by school leaders informs strategic planning and the professional development of teachers.
11. Leaders communicate the aims and ethos of the school effectively and work collaboratively with parents to ensure that pupils know that the right thing to do is not always the easiest, effectively promoting moral and spiritual growth and encouraging pupils to be open and ambitious. Spiritual understanding is developed successfully, especially through chapel services.
12. Governors work closely with school leaders to identify and minimise risk, ensuring an effective approach to risk management. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to manage any risks. Leaders implement an appropriate risk assessment policy and review its effectiveness annually. Appropriate and detailed risk assessments mitigate a range of risks, including those associated with off-site activities, such as educational visits, curriculum provision and site security. Staff make appropriate use of risk assessments to identify potential hazards and to ensure that health and safety is appropriately managed.
13. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in British society and gently cultivate the discipline of respect and tolerance for all people. They actively promote pupils' wellbeing, in keeping with the aims of the school. They invest in and prioritise pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. As a result, pupils exhibit good manners, courtesy, self-confidence and self-esteem. Leaders work closely with external agencies, such as the local authority, when needed, to seek timely support for pupils' safety and wellbeing.
14. Leaders organise boarding supervision effectively and ensure that boarders have access to adults at all times of the day and night. Boarders form positive relationships with their house parents, with whom they can readily share concerns. Leaders ensure that boarders have good access to support services, including an independent person.
15. Leaders report to the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times. Leaders provide the local authority with an annual review of education, health and care plans (EHC plans).

16. Parents benefit from a well-maintained school website which contains the policies and information required by the Standards. Leaders provide parents with three written reports on their child's progress. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders ensure an appropriate complaints policy is implemented effectively. However, during the course of the inspection there was a minor administrative error in the policy relating to the number of complaints made in the preceding year. This was rectified before the end of the inspection.

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

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

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

18. Leaders throughout the school ensure that teaching covers all key areas of learning. The wide-ranging curriculum allows pupils to develop comprehensive knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils study for qualifications that reflect their abilities and interests. For example, pupils at GCSE have a choice of three modern foreign languages and sixth-form pupils can follow A-level or vocational pathways.
19. Teachers in the early years use a range of effective strategies to develop children's communication and language skills. Teachers plan lessons based on children's interests and model appropriate language to promote children's use of questioning skills. As a result, articulate children speak confidently with each other and with adults. Participation in assemblies, school productions and concerts enhances children's communication skills. Teachers manage behaviour well in class and use good-quality resources. As a result, children apply effort, act responsibly and show high levels of self-motivation.
20. In the junior school, subject leaders monitor pupils' progress by regularly looking at pupils' work, assessment tracking and engaging in reflective practice about effective teaching. As a result, pupils make good progress. In the senior school, leaders monitor teaching and learning effectively through data tracking and learning walks, and ensure good practice is shared across departments. Senior leaders support and monitor the work of departments and encourage regular self-evaluation and formal annual reviews to promote continued progress by pupils.
21. Pupils' progress is further promoted by teachers' secure subject knowledge and by their understanding of examination syllabus requirements. Teachers set high expectations, provide suitably challenging tasks and give pupils opportunities to work in a variety of ways, for example, through collaborative use of information and communications technology (ICT) or making presentations. Teachers provide appropriate support so that pupils can perform tasks at levels that are in line with their prior attainment and use question-and-answer techniques skilfully to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding successfully.
22. Pupils' progress is closely tracked by leaders who have detailed oversight of assessment information. Data is systematically evaluated by leaders who use the information gathered to provide additional support and challenge to pupils, so that the identified learning needs of each pupil are met. Leaders ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported so that they can access the curriculum effectively.
23. Leaders endeavour to support and challenge pupils at all levels of prior attainment so that pupils' progress is consistent across different groups. Leaders provide an extensive range of additional opportunities to extend learning for all pupils, including those who have higher prior attainment. These include linguistics workshops and an independent research project. The 'gender gap programme' supports underachieving male pupils by providing advice, time and a buddy to support their progress. Pupils who have SEND are identified and assessed on entry to the school to ensure that appropriate individual support plans are put in place and needs are met.
24. An extensive range of recreational and co-curricular activities, visits and trips supports pupils to develop additional skills and talents. Pupils participate enthusiastically in activities such as choir, Combined Cadet Force (CCF), school musicals, football, gym and inter-house hockey. Subject-based

activities such as media, economics and coding clubs develop pupils' intellectual, social, and creative skills.

### **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. Leaders in the early years and in the junior school actively promote the mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils through a well-developed PSHE programme that supports pupils' understanding of mental health. Pupils discuss strategies to deal with their concerns, such as owning up to mistakes, and understand that if things go wrong, they can be put right. PSHE is supplemented positively by a variety of events, themed weeks and workshops, such as 'mental health week' and online safety workshops.
27. Regular chapel assemblies which, while broadly Christian, are inclusive of all faiths, foster spiritual development. Pupils participate in chapel activities and discuss topics such as spirituality and themes such as 'you are not alone', which help pupils to explore their own beliefs and reflect on the non-material aspects of life.
28. Leaders ensure that pupils receive appropriate relationships education in the junior school and appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) in the senior school. A comprehensive programme of training for specialist teachers involved in teaching wellbeing (PSHE) lessons, and the teaching of some more sensitive aspects in single-sex classes in the senior school, enables these topics to be taught well.
29. Teachers implement the behaviour policy fairly and consistently so that good behaviour is promoted throughout the school. Instances of poor behaviour and bullying are rare and staff deal with any issues that arise promptly and effectively. Effective deployment of staff during breaktimes and extra-curricular activities supports pupils' play and recreation and further supports pupils' typically good behaviour. Leaders ensure that the required adult-to-child ratios are maintained in the early years.
30. Leaders ensure that admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Leaders systematically monitor attendance and liaise with parents when attendance issues give cause for concern.
31. Leaders maintain boarding and school accommodation to an appropriate standard through regular checks and servicing of equipment, including fire safety equipment. Fire safety policies and measures such as regular fire drills, including overnight in the boarding houses, ensure that pupils know how to respond appropriately in the event of an emergency. Leaders support pupils' medical needs through the provision of suitable accommodation. Pupils who are injured or unwell benefit from the administration of first aid and medication by staff suitably qualified in first aid, including paediatric first aid.
32. Leaders provide boarders with secure, comfortable and well-maintained accommodation. Boarding leaders promote good behaviour through the use of suitable rewards systems. Leaders organise boarding supervision effectively, including overnight and during weekends. Regular meetings with their house parents ensure that pupils can express their opinions on life in the boarding houses and secure appropriate changes. If they have concerns about their own welfare or that of others, they can talk privately to boarding staff or contact suitable support services, including an independent person, anonymously if they wish. There are many opportunities for boarders to contact their parents by phone or email. A full programme of evening and weekend activities promotes the physical and mental health of boarders.

33. Children in the early years and older pupils benefit from activities that are suitably planned to develop their physical skills. Leaders in the early years ensure that children's physical development is promoted, including the development of gross and fine motor skills, through cutting and sticking activities and playing with large construction toys. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils throughout the school to develop their personal health and fitness. Weekly PE and games lessons, competitive inter-house fixtures and matches against other schools teach pupils a range of skills and develop their understanding of teamwork and tactical thinking.

### **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. Leaders actively promote fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty, through wellbeing (PSHE), theology and philosophy lessons, chapel, and school and house assemblies. Elections to representative bodies such as the school council and food committee provide pupils with an understanding of how democracy works in practice. Understanding of democracy is further promoted through elections of pupils to positions of responsibility. Leaders' careful oversight of visiting speakers ensures that pupils are presented with a balanced perspective on political views.
36. Children in the early years learn about money through numeracy lessons and role-play activities. In the junior school, pupils in Year 6 learn financial literacy through activities such as the 'lottery project', which provides practical experience in budgeting and decision-making. A fundraising enterprise initiative to support a children's charity in Sierra Leone builds economic awareness and fosters global citizenship. Staff promote economic education for older pupils through PSHE and through business studies and economics lessons in the sixth form. A house competition which involves pupils pitching new business ideas to a judging panel and a 'young enterprise' activity further help pupils to learn about money management and budgeting.
37. Junior school pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of equality and protected characteristics, with discussions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues in Year 6 reflecting the school's commitment to inclusivity. In the senior school, displays focusing on diversity and inclusion, as well as LGBT themes, serve as visible reminders of the school's ethos, fostering mutual trust and respect and supporting pupils with protected characteristics. The 'diversity pairs' initiative, led by sixth-form pupils, fosters understanding across cultures, and gender bias is challenged through school publications and podcasts produced by members of the sixth form.
38. The focus of leaders on respect and relationships as part of a whole-school strategy ensures typically positive relations between staff and pupils and a warm, friendly atmosphere. Staff teach children in the early years to share and take turns. Pupils' understanding of right and wrong is developed further through discussions in wellbeing (PSHE) lessons, reinforced in assemblies and underpinned by the school's code of conduct.
39. Leaders in the junior school promote values such as kindness, respect, generosity and integrity by encouraging pupils to think about their moral compass. As a result, pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of the school's motto 'not for oneself but for all'. They provide real-life examples of how they can put this motto into action, by showing empathy with others on the playground and through their support for charities.
40. Leaders lay the foundations for effective careers guidance in the junior school through talks from police officers, for example, and the teaching of mathematics as a life skill with applications across a range of careers. In the senior school, assiduous planning ensures that careers education is linked to curriculum areas. Geography, for example, introduces careers in meteorology. Design and technology focuses on careers in engineering. Pupils receive careers guidance to inform their choices at GCSE and A level and beyond school, including university, apprenticeship, vocational and overseas opportunities. Leaders further promote careers education through events such as 'law breakfasts'

and regular careers newsletters. In these ways, leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in British society.

41. Leaders actively promote charitable activities and foster links with the community. For example, older pupils fundraise in order to take part in a trip to Uganda, where they help to renovate a school. Leaders' emphasis on the school's motto 'not for oneself but for all' encourages pupils to contribute to fundraising and house events to support local and national charities.
42. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility, which they willingly accept. For example, prefects in Year 6 welcome morning visitors to the junior school and ambassadors in Year 12 mentor younger pupils. Leaders encourage pupils to produce, film and broadcast events such as a talent show and take active debating roles in a Model United Nations international conference.

### **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 ensure effective management of safeguarding arrangements in line with current statutory guidance. The governor with responsibility for the oversight of safeguarding regularly reviews the school's safeguarding procedures, including the single central record (SCR) of staff appointments. Regular reports to the full governing body, including a comprehensive annual review of safeguarding, ensure that governors fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.
45. Appropriately trained leaders with safeguarding responsibilities ensure that all members of staff receive suitable training, including at induction. Leaders provide staff with regular updates about safeguarding issues so that they know how to respond to any concerns about pupils' wellbeing.
46. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding respond effectively whenever safeguarding concerns are raised and maintain suitable safeguarding records. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies, including the local authority, and respond promptly to any allegations or concerns about adults working at the school.
47. The school teaches pupils how to stay safe, including online and when using public transport. Online safety is embedded throughout the curriculum and taught, in particular, in wellbeing (PSHE) lessons. The school's internet filtering and monitoring systems block harmful content. Leaders monitor online activity effectively.
48. Appropriately trained leaders implement safer recruitment procedures effectively. All required pre-employment safeguarding checks on staff, volunteers and governors are completed before they begin working at the school. Leaders maintain the SCR accurately. Staff files contain the information required by current statutory guidance.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Royal Russell School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	306/6009
<b>Registered charity number</b>	271907
<b>Address</b>	Royal Russell School Coombe Lane Croydon Surrey CR9 5BX
<b>Phone number</b>	020 8657 4433
<b>Email address</b>	reception@royalrussell.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.royalrussell.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Russell School Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Merriman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Hutchinson
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1282
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	169
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 to 29 September 2022

## Information about the school

50. Royal Russell School is a co-educational day and boarding school. It was founded in 1853 and moved to its current parkland site in Croydon in 1924. The school has two sections; the junior school (including Early Years) and the senior school. They are located in distinct buildings and share some facilities. The school is a charity and is overseen and governed by the Russell School Trust.
51. There are 65 children in the early years, comprising two Nursery and two Reception classes.
52. There are four boarding houses in the senior school, two of which are for male pupils, and two of which are for female pupils, with an additional boarding annex currently used for male pupils.
53. The school has identified 289 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Seven pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
54. The school has identified English as an additional language for 191 pupils.
55. The school states its aims are to provide an outstanding academic education and to nurture pupils' intellectual and personal development. The school seeks to be ambitious, open, distinctive and courageous so that each pupil understands who they are and who they might strive to be.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

9 to 11 December 2025

56. A team of ten 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 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 and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- 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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