

# School inspection report

21 to 23 January 2025

## **Royal Grammar School Worcester**

Upper Tything

Worcester

Worcestershire

WR1 1HP

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 governors and leaders of the school have created a learning environment that promotes pupils' progress and achievement and prioritises their personal wellbeing. Pupils, staff and parents embrace the culture created by leaders. The school is a harmonious environment where pupils are supported to make the most of their potential.
2. Pupils experience well-planned and engaging lessons and activities across the curriculum, as well as through an extensive extra-curricular programme. Pupils thrive in a welcoming environment where pupils use mistakes as an opportunity to learn more. They make good progress and attain strong outcomes, including in formal qualifications by the end of Years 11 and 13. Pupils benefit from teachers' deep understanding of their needs, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school-wide approach to the use of technology is embedded in lessons through a digital learning programme and contributes to pupils' learning and achievement.
3. Leaders prioritise the best interests of pupils in all their decisions and ensure that this permeates all aspects of the school's work. Leaders invest heavily in making sure that pupils' daily interactions are incredibly positive. They provide high-quality pastoral support for pupils. Leaders and staff role model important values, such as respect, in all their interactions. There are exceptionally supportive relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff. This leads to an environment where pupils flourish. Pupils develop exceptional levels of confidence academically and personally, which creates a highly focused learning atmosphere and supports pupils' success in their learning, including in national examinations. This is a significant strength of the school.
4. Pupils involve themselves willingly in the life of the school and refer to it as a family. They take on roles and responsibilities that help other people, both within the school and beyond the school gates. Teamwork is a valued aspect of the school's work. Pupils develop valuable leadership and collaborative skills in the classroom and in the many opportunities available through the extra-curricular programme. The school has put in place a programme to prepare pupils for each stage of their school education and beyond, including a careers provision which enables pupils to choose a variety of pathways for their futures. While younger pupils are effusive about the value of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, older pupils are not as positive about some parts of the PSHE programme.
5. Pupils in the early years are happy and well supported by the ethos that every child in the school matters. Children enjoy an environment rich in opportunities to develop their independence and learning skills.

## 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:

- consider how to enhance pupils' experiences of the PSHE programme within the senior school, so that older pupils value the programme as highly as younger pupils do.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders provide a positive learning environment where academic achievement and pupils' wellbeing are equally valued and where pupils flourish, in keeping with the aims and values of the school. This includes in the early years, where leaders organise and implement policies and procedures which create an effective learning environment, putting the children's wellbeing at the centre of all they do.
7. Experienced and knowledgeable governors ensure the school's leaders have the skills and training to carry out their roles appropriately and promote pupils' wellbeing, learning and personal development. There is a comprehensive range of policies in place, which is monitored regularly by the governors to ensure that the procedures match the policies. Governors undertake their checks in a range of ways, including through visits to the school, through scrutiny of paperwork and documentation, and by talking to pupils and staff and with the governors' committees. Governors ensure that the Standards are met.
8. Governors and leaders constantly review how they can improve the school to benefit the pupils. For example, they have developed a comprehensive programme for digital learning where the use of a range of devices is embedded in lessons, contributing to effective learning. Staff and pupils are confident users of the technology and the school's leaders have ensured that the infrastructure necessary for consistent use is in place and reliable, including technical provision and training for staff and pupils.
9. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the range of risk that they need to identify and mitigate. This includes managing risks related to the site, curriculum, trips, visits and off-site activities, as well as for individual pupils, where needed. Leaders make effective use of external professionals to carry out regular reviews of the school's procedures. They ensure that all aspects of the school's provision are well managed and there is a rigorous programme of reviewing and updating risk assessment processes.
10. Leaders have created a complaints policy that fulfils the requirements of the Standards. They use this policy to manage and record complaints appropriately. The record of complaints is kept suitably, including any actions taken by the school. Leaders ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the complaints policy and prioritise the wellbeing of pupils. They routinely review complaints so that they can identify any emerging patterns.
11. The information, often relayed through the school website, reflects the organised approach of the school's leaders and a full awareness of their responsibilities. This includes ensuring that they work positively with external agencies where needed, for example in the event of any safeguarding concerns. The school also sends out reports of pupils' progress and attainment to parents throughout the year. The school provides the local authority with appropriate information relating to any pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, including that relating to additional funding.
12. The school's governors and leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. There is a suitable and detailed accessibility plan in place which identifies actions needed to enable those with a disability to use the premises, access the curriculum and receive information relevant to the school.

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

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

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

14. Leaders ensure that there is a breadth to the curriculum offer available to pupils across the school, including the youngest in the early years and the oldest in the sixth form. The curriculum builds year-on-year to support pupils' foundational knowledge, ensuring that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. This curriculum leads to a range of qualifications and accreditations for pupils by the end of Years 11 and 13.
15. Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge and structure their lessons effectively. Lessons are well-planned and engaging, and consist of a wide range of activities. Teaching builds upon pupils' prior knowledge, actively engaging them through varied activities, including focused questioning. Teachers address individual learning needs, enabling pupils to develop their learning and respond successfully to new challenges. Pupils develop a range of digital skills which they use confidently in their learning.
16. Children in the early years benefit from effective curriculum and teaching, which engages the children and supports their good progress. Children become confident communicators and display high levels of independence. Teachers model communication and language for children in planned activities and during play opportunities. Teachers listen to and then repeat or extend children's speech. Number work is incorporated into play activities, such as counting out the number of balls at playtime, as well as talking about the different sizes. Staff develop an in-depth knowledge of what children know and can do through careful observation, discussion with parents and regular assessment of progress.
17. Teachers build positive relationships with pupils, in a supportive classroom environment, and have high expectations for pupils. Pupils are well-motivated, and they persevere when faced with challenging tasks. Pupils make full use of their devices as a normal way of working and this extends their experience of learning, promoting independence and encouraging collaborative skills. There is a calm and reflective atmosphere in classrooms. Discussions are conducted with good manners and mutual respect for each other's ideas.
18. Teachers make effective use of a range of assessment approaches and provide precise feedback to help pupils' learning, including through the use of digital programmes, which supports pupils in developing their understanding. This feedback encourages pupils to take responsibility for their learning, fostering their academic development and independence. Pupils recognise the value of written and verbal feedback from teachers and how it helps them to improve their understanding and their work.
19. Leaders track pupils' progress over time, ensuring that they have a thorough understanding of what pupils know and can do. The youngest children get off to a strong start and many are very well prepared to move into Year 1. This continues as pupils get older, through to the oldest pupils in Years 11 and 13. Pupils take a range of qualifications and achieve results at GCSE, IGCSE, A level and BTEC that are above national averages.
20. Pupils who have SEND are well supported to learn effectively alongside their peers. Leaders make use of a range of approaches to identify pupils' needs speedily and accurately. Pupils receive a range of precise support in lessons, including specific interventions. Pupils are confident to ask for help

when they need it. They are supported to make effective progress over time, through individual support and personalised learning programmes where needed.

21. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported to learn effectively and make good progress over time, in line with the rest of the cohort. Teachers are adept at using a range of strategies and screening tools to establish pupils' language needs as well as any additional needs, and to support them as required. Pupils benefit from a range of effective support through their lessons and through extra help when they need it.
22. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer throughout the school, including for pupils in the sixth form, who often lead these activities. The breadth of this programme provides ample opportunities for pupils to develop new skills and talents, with over one hundred clubs available. These include activities to promote creativity, intellectual pursuit and physical development. The programme also helps to develop collaborative teamwork skills, in areas such as sport, drama, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE).

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

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

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

24. The curriculums for PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) are well-constructed and cover a range of topics in an age-appropriate way, including consent, safety and wellbeing, and healthy relationships. They are delivered by well-trained and knowledgeable teachers. Pupils access a range of information. For example, the youngest children are taught about the importance of their parents, family and other responsible adults, and as they get older, pupils learn about the importance of fostering positive relationships with those around them to support their mental health. Pupils provide feedback which helps leaders to develop the ongoing planning of the curriculum. However, while younger pupils are effusive about their experience of the PSHE curriculum, older pupils are not as positive about what some parts of the PSHE programme teaches them.
25. Leaders and staff provide considerable support for pupils' mental health with a host of initiatives across the school, including calm spaces, workshops and counsellors. Leaders prioritise developing pupils' confidence. Pupils are taught to embrace their individuality and to learn from their mistakes. This encourages their sense of self-esteem and helps promote their wellbeing. There is an effective strategy in place to prevent bullying, and leaders respond quickly to any concerns. As a result, pupils show respect for each other's views and bullying is rare. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive and supportive.
26. Pupils are clear about the school's high expectations and why these are important. Behaviour around the school and in lessons reflects pupils' strong sense of mutual respect. School leaders and staff have embedded an ethos where hard work and commitment to study are normalised and regarded as positive behaviours, alongside the development of their personal qualities. Pupils thrive in this atmosphere of mutual respect, which helps create a high level of self-confidence and sense of wellbeing. Pupils understand the expected codes of behaviour. Staff encourage pupils to reflect on the kindness and moral correctness of actions, especially when there have been any friendship issues. Prefects and peer mentors play an active role in upholding this supportive community. There is a suitable level of staff supervision which supports leaders' approaches to behaviour.
27. There is a comprehensive programme of physical education (PE) that pupils enthusiastically embrace, experiencing a healthy sense of competition as part of their enjoyment of sport, exercise and fitness. This is delivered by well-trained teachers. The inclusive nature of the sporting provision, both within the curriculum and in the extra-curricular activities, provides opportunities for pupils to develop physically, mentally and socially.
28. Leaders ensure that the physical, emotional and personal development of children in the early years is well supported. The warm and positive relationships between children and their staff lead to high levels of confidence and happiness in their setting. The children benefit from an environment that encourages physical and emotional wellbeing, stimulated by being able to move easily from indoor to outdoor areas. They involve themselves actively in their physical exercise. Children are helped by adults to learn to regulate their own behaviour from an early age, using the quiet areas when needed.

29. The admissions and attendance registers are maintained appropriately. Leaders prioritise and promote the importance of attendance with pupils and their families. They ensure that they inform the local authority of any pupils who arrive or leave the school at non-standard transition times.
30. The school's governors and leaders create a physical environment that meets the needs of pupils and staff. They effectively manage risks and ensure pupils' health needs are met, promoting both their physical and emotional wellbeing. The team responsible for the site conducts regular health and safety audits and checks. They use diligent record-keeping and auditing to uphold high standards across the campus. These systems are monitored by the governors. Staff supervision is appropriate, providing pupils with readily available adults during social times, and helping to ensure that the sites, corridors, pathways, classrooms and green spaces are well monitored. Pupils learn and play safely.

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

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

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

32. The curriculum actively promotes respect and tolerance for those of different faiths, lifestyles, beliefs and viewpoints. This helps pupils' understanding of the wider world and their place within it. Pupils understand the importance of being positive role models and the potential for individuals to effect change. Pupils understand the mutual benefits of sharing ideas and learning from one another. This helps create a harmonious school community where relationships are based on mutual respect and acceptance. Pupils positively value their differences. They say that staff encourage them to be themselves.
33. Pupils are taught about right and wrong in an age-appropriate way and the importance of accepting responsibility. They understand the importance of values such as the rule of law, democracy and the role of important institutions, such as the government and public services. This starts with the youngest children, who learn about the role of nurses, the police and fire services. The PSHE curriculum helps pupils as they get older to learn about the workings of society, including the structure of Parliament and the role of politicians and the voting system, as well as different perspectives and viewpoints on how society works.
34. Pupils in the prep schools receive guidance on careers within the PSHE curriculum, supplemented by talks from guest speakers. As pupils get older, there is a well-organised programme of careers guidance on offer, where pupils learn about the wide range of options and make reasoned decisions about their futures. Pupils go on to a variety of appropriate post-16 and post-18 destinations, including university, apprenticeships and employment.
35. Pupils take on roles and responsibilities that include opportunities for leadership, such as the recent chance to present their use and understanding of technology in school at a national conference. School leaders encourage pupils to participate in the running of the school in various ways, for example through committees such as the environment and charity committees, or through a day of events celebrating different cultures, organised by pupils. A programme of house competitions promotes a sense of belonging and respect among pupils.
36. Leaders prioritise developing the social skills of the youngest children. Staff help children to use routines to develop their independence. Staff role model social skills such as listening and taking turns. Children learn the importance of helping each other. Children develop an understanding of their roles within the school community, especially through their involvement in whole-school events. A programme of visits from external professionals, such as dentists and the police, helps to broaden their understanding of the wider community.
37. Economic education begins in the early years and continues throughout the school, providing pupils with opportunities to develop their understanding in an age-appropriate way. For example, the PSHE programme in the senior school covers areas such as budgeting and how to recognise financial online scams. In the sixth form, the life skills programme includes topics on economic preparation beyond school, such as bank accounts, saving money, student loans and tax.
38. Pupils enthusiastically take on opportunities to involve themselves in the local community. They work with pupils in other local schools, or sometimes pupils from other schools visit them for a science day or a sporting event. Pupils support a range of charities through fund-raising events for

national and local organisations, such as foodbanks or the local support centre for vulnerable young adults.

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

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

## Safeguarding

40. School leaders are fully aware of the importance of creating a safe environment and have established a clear culture of putting pupils' wellbeing at the centre of all they do. Leaders and governors are well trained, experienced and knowledgeable about their statutory responsibilities to safeguard pupils. Across the three schools, leaders work together effectively and prioritise the wellbeing and safety of pupils. There is a detailed safeguarding policy on the school website which is supported by a range of other related policies and procedures.
41. Leaders provide comprehensive training for adults working with pupils. Staff are well trained and follow school procedures appropriately, reporting any concerns that they have. These records are kept securely and reviewed regularly by leaders to ensure that pupils receive timely support. They work appropriately with external services to secure appropriate support for pupils, when required.
42. Governors are well trained and check on leaders' work to safeguard pupils. A governor with specific responsibility for safeguarding undertakes a range of activities, such as visits to the site and discussions with pupils and staff. Governors review a range of information about the effectiveness of leaders' work, including through reports at board meetings.
43. Leaders and governors ensure that they make appropriate checks on adults working with pupils. Recruitment checks are carried out in line with statutory guidance. The register of these checks is kept appropriately. Leaders and governors undertake regular checks on this register to ensure its accuracy.
44. Pupils are taught, in an age-appropriate way, about how to keep themselves safe, including online. There are effective monitoring and filtering systems in place to safeguard online activities in the school. These activities are monitored daily, and external specialists run regular checks on the systems to ensure that they are appropriate.
45. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are confident to report their concerns. Leaders provide several ways in which pupils can express any concerns, including through pupil mentors and buddies, or for younger pupils through the use of a 'worry' box. There is also an anonymous online system, which is monitored by senior pastoral staff, where leaders can address any concerns.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Royal Grammar School Worcester
<b>Department for Education number</b>	885/6028
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1120644
<b>Address</b>	Royal Grammar School Worcester Upper Tything Worcester Worcestershire WR1 1HP
<b>Phone number</b>	01905 613391
<b>Email address</b>	office@rgsw.org.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.rgsw.org.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Royal Grammar School Worcester
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Greenway
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	Mr John Pitt
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1449
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 to 18 March 2022

## Information about the school

47. The Royal Grammar School Worcester is an independent co-educational day school, based in Worcestershire. The school is spread across three sites in the city. Two sites are for pupils aged 2 to 11, called RGS The Grange, located in Claines, and RGS Springfield, located in Britannia Square. These sites both have Nursery, Reception, pre-prep and prep departments. The third site, RGS Worcester, is based in Upper Tything and is for pupils aged 11 to 19, consisting of a senior school and sixth form. At the end of the summer term RGS Springfield will become a Nursery only. The proprietor is a charitable trust overseen by a governing body. This school shares its governing body with another local school, RGS Dodderhill, which is registered as a separate school. All four schools form a group collectively known as the “RGS Family of Schools”.
48. There are 154 children in the early years, consisting of two Nursery classes, two pre-school classes and two Reception classes on the RGS The Grange site, and two Nursery classes and one Reception class on the RGS Springfield site.
49. The school has identified 440 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
50. English is an additional language (EAL) for seven pupils.
51. The school states its aims are to provide an excellent all-round education for children from two to nineteen years, supporting them in their passage to adulthood by developing character, intellect, physical wellbeing and aesthetic sense within a scholarly community. The school and its staff aim to cultivate an ethos in which each individual is cared for and valued equally.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

21 to 23 January 2025

52. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

53. 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

54. 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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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)