

# School inspection report

29 April to 1 May 2025

## Queen's College

Trull Road

Taunton

Somerset

TA1 4QS

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

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

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors' active oversight of the school and focused support ensures that leaders have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively. Governors' and leaders' shared vision for a holistic education that prepares pupils for their future lives successfully provides direction for the school's development and improvement.
2. Leaders provide a wide range of information to parents about the school's performance and operations. However, at the start of the inspection not all required inspection reports were available on the school website. This was remedied during the on-site inspection.
3. Leaders implement an approach to learning that centres on a set of key attitudes and skills they intend pupils to acquire. Teachers plan and teach lessons that are generally appropriate to pupils' needs and aptitudes. In most lessons, activities engage and challenge pupils to learn more. However, in some lessons, activities selected by teachers are less effective because they are not matched well enough to pupils' different needs. This limits the progress that some pupils make.
4. The well-designed curriculum and co-curricular programme support pupils to achieve well both academically and in terms of their personal development as they move through the school. Leaders take care to ensure a smooth transition between different phases of the school so that pupils continue to make good progress. Subject leaders work across the school to ensure pupils experience a joined-up educational journey that is monitored closely.
5. Leaders have created a warm and open culture in the school which enhances pupils' health and wellbeing. Staff have high expectations for how pupils should behave and relate to each other. There is an environment of mutual respect and pupils feel valued.
6. An extensive programme of physical and outdoor education is threaded through the curriculum. Pupils gain a range of practical skills and an understanding of how to stay healthy. Pupils develop high levels of resilience and self-confidence.
7. The Reception class provides a warm and welcoming environment which supports children's development and wellbeing. Lessons provide a range of activities which cover the required areas of learning.
8. Boarders are well looked after at the school. Boarding accommodation is of a high quality and provides a comfortable 'home from home'. Boarders' health and wellbeing needs are met effectively. A range of evening and weekend activities give boarders the opportunity to learn more about the local area and develop sporting and creative skills. Many of these activities are also attended by day pupils, which helps to build firm friendships between day pupils and boarders.
9. Leaders place a high value on service to the community. Pupils develop a sound sense of social responsibility and an awareness of the needs of others.
10. Leaders prioritise the safety and wellbeing of pupils. Staff are well trained and vigilant in monitoring pupils' wellbeing. Any concerns are acted upon rapidly and appropriately. The school works effectively with external agencies and local safeguarding partnerships. Procedures for the safer recruitment of staff are robust.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the school website includes all required inspection reports so that the website gives a full and accurate picture of the school
- develop the sharing of best practice in the planning and delivery of lessons so that lessons are consistently well matched to pupils' different needs and pupils make the best possible progress.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Governors and leaders prioritise providing pupils with a broad and balanced education that gives pupils the skills, knowledge and confidence to thrive in their future lives. Leaders have identified a set of skills and attributes for pupils to acquire which prepare them for work and further study. The promotion of these is embedded across the curriculum.
12. The school's structures and organisation emphasise pupils' continuity of experience from the Reception year to sixth form. Leaders have made a conscious decision to soften the transition points between different phases of the school, for instance by deliberately separating boarding house changes from academic transitions. Staff work across the prep and senior school and many leadership roles operate across the different phases of the school.
13. Governors know the school well and ensure that leaders are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their responsibilities successfully. Governors receive regular reports on all aspects of the school's operations. These are scrutinised and discussed in a variety of termly committee meetings. Governors check the information given to them through regular visits to the school and by talking to staff and pupils, including children in the early years.
14. Leaders are committed to evaluating and continually improving the school. They make well-considered use of data to monitor the effectiveness of the school's provision. Leaders include the views of pupils in their decision-making through regular surveys and meetings with the school council. A well-organised development plan supports governors and leaders to monitor the impact of their actions and adapt these as necessary.
15. A positive boarding experience for pupils is central to the school's ethos. Leaders take the needs of boarders into account in school development, for instance by using technology to develop collaboration between day pupils and boarders. There are ample opportunities for day pupils and boarders to work together outside of school time. Many day pupils choose to attend Saturday morning activities which provide opportunities to develop friendships between day and boarding pupils.
16. Leaders understand the risks faced by pupils and take robust action to manage these risks. They keep abreast of local and national trends, for instance those that arise on social networks, and respond promptly. Governors monitor leaders' response to risks and challenge them to explore any potential negative impact of decisions made.
17. Regular meetings and reports keep parents informed about the work of the school and their children's progress and wellbeing. Policies and other relevant information are shared with parents through the school's website and various handbooks. At the beginning of the inspection the information on the website did not include all the required inspection reports. Leaders rectified this during the course of the inspection.
18. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders have put in place a suitable accessibility plan which links closely with other policies to ensure that pupils who have specific needs can access the curriculum and the school premises.
19. The school has an appropriate complaints policy which is followed by leaders. When complaints do occur, leaders respond promptly to address any issues. Boarders are able to raise their own concerns

through a number of formal and informal channels. Governors regularly scrutinise the detailed records and ensure appropriate action is taken in response to any emerging trends.

20. Leaders communicate regularly and openly with external agencies and other partners to promote the wellbeing of all pupils. This includes reporting the use of funds for pupils who have education, health and care (EHC) plans to local authorities as required.

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

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

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

22. The curriculum emphasises preparation for life beyond school. Across subjects there is a clear coherence and progression from what pupils learn in Reception through to the sixth form. Pupils study the same subjects up to the end of Year 9 and the curriculum is designed to enable flexibility for pupils who need additional support. Older pupils choose from a variety of GCSE, A-Level and BTEC subjects and qualifications that provide a range of experiences and assessment styles to prepare them for future study and employment. Pupils learn successfully and achieve above national averages in GCSEs, A Levels and equivalent qualifications.
23. Children in Reception are taught a core curriculum that includes literacy, communication and mathematics. This gives them a firm grounding in the basic skills and prepares them well for Year 1 and beyond. Teachers encourage children to express their thoughts and this helps them expand their vocabulary and improve their articulation. Teachers monitor children's progress and provide additional support as necessary. The core curriculum is supplemented with well-planned activities to develop children's personal skills and understanding of the world. Almost all children achieve the early learning goals at the end of Reception.
24. Alongside the academic curriculum pupils learn a defined range of personal and social skills and attitudes. Pupils learn to make connections between different subjects across the curriculum. In mathematics lessons, pupils apply a range of skills to practical examples such as postal weights or computational problems. In the scholarship programme, pupils study approaches to miracles in both religion and literature.
25. Pupils throughout the school make good progress. Typically teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons that are appropriate to pupils' ages and aptitudes. In most lessons, teachers choose activities that engage and challenge pupils to learn successfully. For instance, in science, pupils work through practical tasks that include elements of competition and enable pupils to apply what they have been taught to complete more complex work. This deepens pupils' learning and supports them to make rapid progress. However, in some lessons the activities chosen by teachers are less successful at engaging pupils and moving their learning on. The content and how it is taught does not consistently support pupils to acquire new skills and knowledge nor embed their understanding. On these occasions, pupils do not make the progress that they could.
26. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their aesthetic and creative skills through the curriculum. Lessons in the performing arts give pupils the ability to learn new skills and express themselves through an ambitious selection of music, theatre and dance. Teachers of art, textiles and photography encourage pupils to explore their interests, and pupils produce high-quality work which often combines techniques from different subjects.
27. Teachers track pupils' progress using a regular testing framework that identifies what pupils have learned and pinpoints any pupils or groups who require extra support. Shared systems and transition meetings enable pupils to be well supported as they move from one phase of the school to another. This is constantly being refined, for instance by improving the moderation of English assessments within the prep phase to enable more effective tracking as prep pupils move into the senior school.
28. Teachers in the learning support department identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and use this information to plan the right support. Detailed pupil

passports contain clear guidance for teachers, who adjust their teaching accordingly to support pupils' learning. Where necessary, additional sessions are provided to give pupils personalised help. Throughout the school, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their different starting points.

29. Support for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is targeted and responsive. Younger pupils receive in-class help from teaching assistants who support their language development and enable them to access the curriculum. Pupils are supported to take appropriate qualifications and make rapid progress in their English-language skills. Teachers know the language needs of their pupils well and tailor their teaching accordingly, for instance by using more accessible language when giving feedback to pupils.
30. A broad programme of co-curricular activities is fully integrated into the daily timetable. The diverse range of activities enables pupils to develop creative, practical and sporting skills. Teachers monitor pupils' choices to ensure that they all participate and gain a range of experiences whilst also encouraging experimentation. This means that pupils avoid over-specialisation and learn to embrace unfamiliar experiences positively.
31. The co-curricular programme continues into the evenings and weekends, providing boarders with stimulating and engaging recreational opportunities. These are supplemented by weekend visits which range from go-karting to walks on the beach. The breadth offered ensures that pupils have an opportunity to explore their own interests and develop new skills.

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

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



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

33. The school's encouraging and open culture leads to positive, trusting relationships between pupils and staff. In Reception, teachers greet children warmly, making them feel welcome and valued. Staff set high expectations and clear boundaries whilst giving pupils the freedom to build their independence and self-regulation. Staff are deployed efficiently around the school site to ensure appropriate supervision is in place, including in the evenings and at weekends.
34. Pupils in all year groups benefit from a wide range of outdoor activities. Older pupils take part in challenges such as the 'Ten Tors', and develop self-knowledge and self-confidence as a result. Younger pupils, including children in the Reception class, gain an understanding of how to keep themselves safe when outside and learn how experiencing the natural environment can improve their mental health. All pupils study first aid, which brings an additional awareness of how to balance risks in their daily lives.
35. The broad curriculum for physical education (PE) enables pupils to explore a wide variety of sports and activities. Children in the early years engage in physical play and develop confidence and movement skills. Older pupils develop greater agility and an understanding of the importance of physical fitness to health. Pupils understand the technical and physical demands of different sports, and know how to consider the safety requirements, for instance when practising the shot put.
36. Specialist teachers deliver personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education to pupils throughout the school. This arrangement supports a continuous and well-planned learning experience from Reception through to sixth form. Pupils gain a good understanding of how to stay healthy in school and beyond. Older pupils understand a range of risky behaviours and how to avoid them. The curriculum is delivered with sensitivity, for instance by informing pupils in advance of any challenging topics.
37. The curriculum for relationships and sex education (RSE) is relevant and well-thought through. Younger pupils are taught to understand the qualities of positive relationships and the importance of seeking help if concerned. Older pupils learn about puberty and intimate relationships in a trusting, mature environment. Opportunities such as an 'ask with confidence' form make this programme accessible to pupils and supports them as they progress into adulthood.
38. Staff understand the school's expectations and systems for managing behaviour. They model the clear school rules and apply the school's systems consistently. This means that pupils know how to behave well during lessons and when moving around the school. A system of rewards, linked to the school's skills and attitudes for learning, encourages positive behaviours in pupils. Where behaviour falls below expectations, any sanctions are accompanied by support so that pupils reflect and learn from their mistakes. Pupils are respectful of adults and each other and teachers respond to any rare instances of bullying promptly and appropriately. Detailed records are kept of rewards, incidents and sanctions as well as actions taken. Leaders look out for any trends and respond appropriately, for instance by adapting the content taught in the PSHE curriculum.
39. Leaders have established a robust approach to health and safety across the school. Regular, systematic checks and clear reporting systems enable any concerns to be identified and resolved promptly. Clear fire safety policies, including regular external audits and fire drills, are implemented

effectively. Regular internal audits provide an additional check that all systems are being used as intended. Staff know the part they must play to ensure the school is safe for everyone. They keep detailed records of incidents, including near misses, and use these to improve provision. Rigorous risk assessments are in place for all relevant activities and understood by staff.

40. A well-appointed medical centre provides support for any pupils who become ill or suffer an injury. Medical staff are trained to manage a range of conditions, including the careful management of controlled medication. Boarders have exclusive access to the medical centre at certain times and have access to suitable accommodation should they become unwell. The medical centre works closely with the wellbeing centre and pastoral leaders to provide holistic support for pupils. Suitably qualified first aiders are available during school activities when required, including staff with specialist training such as paediatric and outdoor first aid.
41. Boarding accommodation is well designed and maintained. Boarders have access to social and recreational spaces in their houses, in addition to their study-bedrooms. Facilities for making light meals are available which supplement the regular, balanced meals in the dining hall. Boarding staff create a warm and friendly community. New boarders are welcomed into the community and access a full induction programme. Boarding houses are well supervised and pupils know how to find help at any time.
42. The prefect and house council systems in the prep and senior schools give appropriate responsibilities to pupils. They contribute to the running of the school by organising a range of events and representing pupils' views in discussions with senior staff. Pupils develop skills such as public speaking and managing meetings, which builds their self-confidence and prepares them for adult life.
43. A clear approach to monitoring pupils' attendance is in place and consistently implemented by staff. Staff undertake scenario-planning sessions which ensure that they are well prepared to deal with any pupils who may go missing or do not arrive at school. Staff inform the local authority of any prolonged absence and any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.

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

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

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

45. Leaders create an inclusive community within the school and pupils treat each other with mutual respect. There is an emphasis on demonstrating empathetic attitudes during pupils' activities. Prizes and peer recognition systems reinforce this. This is further developed through assemblies where pupils listen attentively and offer considered responses during discussions about social and ethical topics.
46. Leaders have embedded the school's methodist foundation within a modern, multi-faith context. Pupils are encouraged to explore their spirituality in assemblies and religious studies lessons. There is an emphasis on practical ethics and the importance of service to others. The majority of pupils are involved in serving others on a weekly basis, for instance by reading to younger pupils or coaching sport in local clubs. Boarders undertake shared tasks and contribute to the smooth running of the boarding houses.
47. Pupils develop social responsibility and an awareness of social issues. Persuasive letter writing in English encourages critical thinking about society. In the school's prep phase, cross-curricular topics such as refugees and sustainability give pupils increased levels of ethical and cultural awareness. In food and nutrition lessons, pupils learn about sustainable food production by exploring the school's locally sourced kitchen suppliers.
48. Lessons and other activities in the school enable pupils to develop an appreciation and respect for different cultures. Children in Reception are taught to think about the viewpoints of others and respect individual opinions. Younger pupils in the prep phase learn about myths and legends from different cultures and compare them to their own. The broad choice of texts in English lessons promotes empathy, inclusion and a respect for diverse viewpoints. Pupils develop an appreciation of diversity and the effect of discrimination.
49. The curriculum actively promotes respect for democracy and the rule of law. Pupils learn how the law applies to topics in PSHE such as recent legal changes to online privacy legislation. Older pupils learn how modern law has roots in ancient Jewish and Christian laws. Pupils develop a mature understanding of the threats to democracy, for instance when learning about recent attacks on Members of Parliament.
50. The school's 'living in the wider world' programme provides pupils in the senior school with an understanding of financial decisions, including budgeting and the impact of debt. Younger pupils learn about exchange rates in mathematics lessons and study the origins of money in history. Older pupils learn about student finance and the labour market for young people, which helps them to make decisions about their next steps.
51. Careers education is integrated into the curriculum throughout the school. Staff take opportunities to link class topics and activities to future occupations, for instance linking the green power racing activity to mechanical engineering careers. Older pupils take part in regular careers assemblies which include a diverse range of speakers that broaden their horizons. Tutors and careers specialists help pupils to consider and plan their next steps beyond school. This includes one-to-one support for all pupils.

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

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

## Safeguarding

53. Governors and leaders have developed a safeguarding staffing structure that ensures consistency and comprehensive oversight across the whole school. The safeguarding lead co-ordinates the work of the safeguarding team. The team fully understands the needs of different groups of pupils across each phase of the school, including day pupils and boarders. Regular safeguarding meetings and a culture of professional curiosity ensure that concerns are identified early and addressed effectively.
54. Staff on the safeguarding team undertake specialist training and liaise closely with local agencies and schools to share relevant information. They understand the safeguarding risks for pupils well. All staff within the school receive annual safeguarding training, supplemented by regular meetings where additional information around pertinent issues or vulnerable individuals is shared. Staff throughout the school understand the procedures for reporting concerns and use these systems effectively.
55. Where concerns are identified about a pupil, the safeguarding lead determines the most appropriate response. The whole-school approach enables staff to work with families to support siblings in different phases of the school. Where necessary, staff involve local agencies to support pupils, including social services and the police. Leaders have close links with internal and external specialists, for instance mental health professionals.
56. Comprehensive and accurate safeguarding records ensure that all those involved can work together efficiently to support vulnerable pupils. These records are analysed regularly to identify any trends and action is taken promptly to support individual pupils or groups as necessary.
57. Staff with responsibility for boarders understand the procedures for supporting the welfare of boarders and implement these consistently. Staff are watchful and quick to notice changes in pupils' behaviour or attitudes. Staff understand the specific needs of younger boarders or those from overseas. Boarders have access to a range of support, including from people and organisations independent of the school.
58. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They learn about a range of risks to their welfare in PSHE lessons. The school's open culture means that pupils are able to raise concerns with any member of staff. Staff pass on any safeguarding concerns which arise promptly and on a need-to-know basis.
59. An up-to-date system for filtering access to the internet is in place which is sensitively tailored, for instance by age group and time of day. This filtering is carefully monitored and any concerns acted upon by the safeguarding team. Leaders understand the risks of unfiltered internet access and have thoroughly integrated internet safety into the curriculum.
60. Robust systems are in place for determining the suitability of adults present in the school. An accurate record of these checks is maintained in the single central record of appointments (SCR).

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Queen's College
<b>Department for Education number</b>	933/6024
<b>Registered early years number</b>	2800333
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1142794
<b>Address</b>	Queen's College Trull Road Taunton Somerset TA1 4QS
<b>Phone number</b>	01823 272 559
<b>Email address</b>	contact@queenscollege.org.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.queenscollege.org.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST)
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Michael Gough
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Julian Noad
<b>Age range</b>	Birth to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	642
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	112
<b>Number of children in the early years registered setting</b>	72
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 to 24 June 2022

## Information about the school

62. Queen's College is a co-educational day and boarding school located in Taunton, Somerset. The school consists of a Nursery, prep and senior school, which includes a sixth form. These different phases of the school share the same site to the south of the town centre. The school is part of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust and is overseen by a local governing board. Since the previous inspection a new chair of governors was appointed on 1 September 2024.
63. Boarding is available in the prep and senior schools for pupils from the age of seven. Boarders are accommodated in three boarding houses on the school site. These comprise a mixed boarding house for pupils up to age 13 and two single-sex boarding houses for older pupils.
64. There are currently 18 children in one early years Reception class. The school also has an early years Nursery for children from birth to age four, which is registered with Ofsted. The nursery underwent a separate Ofsted inspection at the time of this Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) inspection.
65. The school has identified 168 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 158 pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to develop thoughtful, confident and resilient young people, equipping them to become future leaders and preparing them for life beyond school. The school aims to ensure that every individual in its care is nurtured to become the best version of themselves. The school aims to ensure that mutual respect and positive attitudes create an environment where pupils are encouraged to learn and grow in a supportive and empowering setting.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

29 April to 1 May 2025

68. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The on-site inspection was quality assured by a monitor for the first day.

69. 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.

70. 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)