

School inspection report

26 to 28 November 2024

James Allen's Girls' School

East Dulwich Grove

London

SE22 8TE

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 governing body maintains appropriate oversight to ensure that the school meets all the Standards. Governors collaborate successfully with leaders and provide appropriate challenge to help ensure the school's aims and vision are supported.
2. The wellbeing of pupils guides leaders' decision-making. Thorough self-evaluation is used effectively by senior leaders to identify, develop and implement provision to support development of the pupils. Having empathetic adults available for pupils to talk to is part of the school's welfare provision. However, some pupils feel unable to talk to an adult at school.
3. The well-designed curriculum challenges and cultivates the pupils' potential. Subjects from which pupils select at GCSE and A Level are broad. Teachers support pupils to make good progress from their starting points, through well planned, engaging lessons that emphasise critical thought and analysis.
4. The notable breadth of co-curricular and enrichment opportunities allows pupils to broaden their experiences and promotes their physical, emotional and social wellbeing. Consequently, this helps pupils achieve a balance between their academic studies and their recreational interests.
5. Health and safety policies are up to date and related systems are implemented consistently. The school site and premises are well maintained. An issue with access was identified but resolved during the inspection.
6. Pupils are polite, considerate, and well behaved. Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils understand and value diversity and, as result of consistent guidance from leaders and teachers in assemblies and form time, respect different cultures and beliefs. Leaders proactively encourage inclusivity and promote respect for all. The acceptance of differences between people is a fundamental characteristic of the school's culture.
7. The age-appropriate content and teaching of relationships education (RE) in the junior school, and relationships and sex education (RSE) in the senior school, meets pupils' needs. In conjunction with the personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education, pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their lives.
8. Pupils organise fundraising for a range of charities. They also participate as volunteers in long-term local projects which helps pupils develop their leadership skills and to understand their role in supporting the local community.
9. Pupils take up positions of responsibility or start clubs, helping to build their self-esteem and confidence. Such opportunities foster self-worth and a sense of belonging to a community, and readies pupils for participation in wider society The extensive range of co-curricular trips enriches pupils' subject experience and develops social skills and cultural awareness.
10. Pupils develop an awareness of democratic processes through school council and form captain selections, and elections of pupils to key positions of responsibility. Taken together, these provide opportunities for pupils to influence the decision-making processes and to represent the views of their peers.

11. Detailed careers and university advice which is tailored to the needs of pupils helps ensure they are well informed and prepared for the next step beyond school and into society.
12. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to report their concerns. The safeguarding policy is implemented well and leaders respond promptly to support pupils. Effective links with external agencies help to ensure pupils get the help they need.

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:

- Review ways in which pupils can access support to ensure pupils feel more able to talk easily to an adult
- strengthen the risk assessment process of the premises to ensure access to and from buildings is consistently addressed.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Senior leaders and governors have a vision that is clearly focussed on delivering the school's aims. Communication of this vision to pupils, parents and staff is unambiguous and widely understood. Decisions that foster pupils' academic success, confidence and empathy are woven through leaders' strategic and operational judgments.
14. Pupil wellbeing is of primary importance, and school routines and policies are shaped accordingly to help create a supportive environment and develop pupils' social and cultural awareness. As a result, interactions between pupils, and between staff and pupils are notably respectful, kind and positive.
15. Through well-established systems of scheduled reporting from senior leaders, self-evaluation, a range of committees and visits to talk to staff and pupils, governors know and understand the school community well. Governors and leaders meet regularly to reflect carefully on the school's provision and how to improve it. Senior leaders and governors are ambitious for the school's future and plan and respond accordingly, such as the move to a new senior school timetable that allows greater opportunities for enrichment to better meet the wider educational and wellbeing needs of pupils.
16. Governors draw on a wide range of expertise and experience that allow them to appropriately advise and challenge senior leaders. Through regular engagement and formal reviews, they ensure that senior leaders fulfil and successfully develop their roles to promote pupils' welfare.
17. Experienced early years leaders ensure, through regular oversight and provision of training, that staff have the skills and knowledge to deliver a well-balanced curriculum that is adapted and resourced to best serve the needs of the children.
18. Governors and senior leaders regularly consider, evaluate and manage risk to promote pupil wellbeing. Risk assessments are comprehensive and effective. The school premises are well maintained. Checks and policies are up to date, reviewed annually, and understood and implemented consistently.
19. The complaints policy is suitable and clear. Complaints are managed according to the published timeframes and records of correspondence and outcomes are appropriately kept. The school fulfils its obligations under Equality Act 2010, and leaders, governors, and external specialists contribute to the accessibility plan to ensure thorough consideration and implementation of adjustments. Leaders liaise with the local authority in the annual review of education, health and care (EHC) plans.
20. The school's website makes required policies and information available and parents receive regular and appropriate information through parents' evenings and written reports about the progress and attainment of their child.

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. Across all stages of the school, leaders have developed an effective curriculum. It is well balanced, broad and matched to the needs of the pupils. All required aspects are covered.
23. The curriculum is taught effectively with an emphasis on developing pupils' thinking. Consequently, pupils are interested in their work, persist when they encounter difficulties, analyse critically and work independently. Pupils throughout the school make good progress and typically achieve high grades in public examinations. They speak with confidence in an articulate manner about their progress and how they have been supported.
24. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are carefully assessed and appropriate support established via specialist provision or adaptations by subject teachers in the classroom so that they are helped to make good progress.
25. Pupils who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) have a command of English that allows them to fully access the curriculum and other educational opportunities without additional support.
26. Relationships between teachers and pupils in classes are relaxed, respectful and based on a shared belief in the value of learning. Good resources, coupled with teachers' deep subject knowledge allows pupils to grow in confidence and build on their prior attainment and understanding. Effective methods of feedback to pupils in the junior and senior schools strengthens pupils' understanding and helps consolidate their studies. Pupils accurately employ high-level vocabulary when discussing and explaining ideas, for example, articulate use of language in a Year 10 English class's analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*.
27. Subject leaders are given autonomy in planning schemes of work and assessment and tracking methodologies that work best for pupils in their subjects. Departments are well led and leaders monitor teaching and provide support to staff where needed to maintain effectiveness.
28. The development of the co-curriculum and further opportunities for enrichment has been a recent focus of leaders. The school day has been adjusted to give more time for enrichment opportunities, alongside the breadth of activities beyond the classroom, such as rowing, bouldering and the Combined Cadet Force. Participation rates are high and pupils are enthusiastic for the array of choices on offer which have a beneficial effect on the pupils' wider emotional, social and physical growth.
29. The curriculum for children in the early years offers extensive indoor and outdoor opportunities to explore and be curious about their world in an environment that strongly promotes personal and physical development and self-confidence. It is rigorous and thoughtfully designed with significant elements of music and French included in all years to help broaden the children's experiences and develop their language skills and sense of self. Well-trained staff carefully observe and assess the children to inform the planning of future activities to build upon previous learning. Activities make good use of time and are matched to pupils' needs. As a result the children make good progress, with most exceeding the early learning goals. An effective system of tracking pupil progress supports consistent development across the core skills of literacy and mathematics.
30. In the early years and pre-prep, play-based learning and being able to choose for themselves are key elements of provision that encourage social development and communication skills. Pupils

cooperate well and are respectful to one another, focus on complex tasks, and are helped to regulate their emotions.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. The pastoral systems support pupils well and they have ready access to the on-site school counsellors if they wish. However, whilst most pupils engage readily with staff when they are worried about something, for some pupils, talking to an adult they trust in school is something they feel less confident about.
33. Expectations around behaviour are high. Pupils develop a mature sense of responsibility and are polite and considerate. When misbehaviour occurs it is dealt with promptly and in line with the behaviour policy. Pupils understand the importance of rules for their community to run smoothly and understand that unkindness is unacceptable. Incidents of bullying are rare but when they do occur the school deals with them effectively, supports the pupils involved and monitors incidents over time for potential trends.
34. Leaders have implemented an effective personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education programme, integrated with relationships education in the prep and relationships and sex education (RSE) in the senior school. Outcomes for the pupils are assessed by staff to monitor the relevance to pupils' needs and the effectiveness of the courses. This and regular feedback from pupils and parents further allows adaptation of the approaches taken and the content. Lessons on mental health, wellbeing, and specialist-led sessions on relationships and issues such as consent and awareness of assault on public transport, help to empower pupils and develop their self-knowledge, self-awareness and confidence. Specialist staff deliver well-designed programmes of physical education and games that help pupils of all ages keep fit and enjoy exercise. There are opportunities for both competitive sport and participation in fitness and sport for recreation, allowing participation by all.
35. Health and safety systems are well managed, and the school uses appropriate external assessments as part of their quality assurance processes. Regulatory checks, fire training and drills, and policies are up to date and implemented consistently. The school premises are well maintained. However, there was an issue with an access to a building which was not as carefully considered as the rest of the site. This was resolved before the end of the inspection.
36. Through outdoor play and specialist provision, early years children are physically challenged and learn to take risks in a controlled environment. Cooperative activities and games help them develop self-knowledge and social skills as they interact with others.
37. Pupils in the prep develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence because of the culture of mutual support, kindness and generosity that leaders instil. Pupils demonstrate appreciation of the differences they have between themselves as both learners and individuals.
38. Leaders seek the views and experiences of pupils in the prep. Pupil wellbeing leaders bring ideas to staff and help to focus interventions. Pupils' ideas have been taken into consideration when redesigning the playground and in the use of a therapy dog. In the senior school, pupils take up a variety of positions of responsibility that foster a sense of service. The pupil heads of school, prefects and sixth formers perform various supervisory and organisational roles appropriate for their age and skills, such as break patrols and initiating and running societies. They are trained in safeguarding and

complement the role of staff in supporting pupils. They also act as role models for younger pupils who are inspired by and value the contribution the sixth form make to the co-curricular programme.

39. Admissions and attendance records are suitably kept and unexplained absences are followed up diligently. The local authority is informed promptly when pupils leave or join the school. Pupils' unstructured time is well supervised, and pupils of all ages feel safe at school.
40. There are suitable medical facilities and nursing staff on duty for the care of pupils who are injured or unwell. Medications are safely stored, and their administration methodically recorded and communicated to parents. Children in the early years receive appropriate care from paediatric first aid trained staff.

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

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

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

42. The different religious and cultural values and contrasts within the school community are respected deeply and valued highly. Leaders are responsive to the needs of pupils and through assemblies, PSHE and special events such as the African-Caribbean festival, mutual respect and inclusivity is promoted. Pupils develop a clear moral awareness and advocate strongly for understanding of the views and beliefs of all.
43. In the junior school, pupils also have a highly developed sense of respect and consideration for all. They understand the importance of rules and laws to keep people safe and happy. Prep pupils draw comparisons between the 'Bee Brilliant' values and the British Values such as 'being kind' and 'getting on with people', qualities that help them to be both good learners and socially responsible. Children in the early years show consideration towards each other, reflecting the junior school's pastoral values, and can articulate the importance of being thoughtful about the needs of others.
44. Pupils understand the importance of contributing to and improving society. Pupils in the sixth form take responsibility for coordinating the work of the charities committee. They lead on raising awareness and fundraising through events such as the 'Winter Wonderland', and work with younger pupils to support a range of local food banks, homeless shelters, youth poverty charities, and national causes.
45. Pupil involvement in charity work and commitment to projects in the South London community are extensive. Many pupils learn about, support and become active in these through the Southwark schools learning partnership (SSLP). Pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 organise and tutor at the literacy scheme hosted by the school every Saturday, and in maths and reading schemes in local primary schools. Pupils make a long-term commitment and it is heavily oversubscribed with volunteers. The wider school community is made aware of the work being done through pupil-led assemblies and displays on noticeboards, ensuring that the societal impact is widely understood.
46. Pupils throughout the school are provided with opportunities and information about the world of work. They use online platforms to increase their knowledge about careers, and former pupils present to the sixth form pupils about their own experiences. Pupils are ambitious for their futures and the school effectively supports them to plan their next steps and prepare for life beyond school. Careers guidance is thorough and not limited to university applications but encompasses apprenticeships and work-based options too. Many pupils go on to study a broad range of courses at universities, often with highly competitive entry criteria.
47. Financial education is delivered to pupils through PSHE and the curriculum and is matched appropriately to age. Pre-prep pupils experience paying for snacks with real money and having a target to raise sufficient funds to help protect a snow leopard, whilst prep pupils learn how to draw up a budget for a party. Senior school pupils take modules in economics and understanding finance in the 'curriculum plus' programme, and pupils in the sixth form take a course in financial literacy covering topics such as student loans, mortgages and budgeting at university.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. The school's safeguarding system is robust. Staff receive relevant, regular training in line with national guidance and understand their responsibilities and the need to report concerns they may have. The safeguarding policy is accessible, clear, and meets statutory requirements and is implemented effectively. Appropriate mechanisms are in place for staff to report low-level concerns or allegations against adults working or volunteering in the school.
50. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and their deputies are well trained. They have a deep understanding of contextual risks faced by pupils and take steps to mitigate these. Concerns about pupils are acted on promptly and suitable records are kept which are clear and detailed. The safeguarding team have effective relations with children's services, the local authority designated officers (LADO) and other external agencies. As a result, well-informed and co-ordinated responses help ensure pupils get the support they need.
51. Staff systematically record, assess and classify safeguarding and pastoral concerns, including attendance. Trends and possible patterns are analysed by the safeguarding team and responses are tailored to better support pupils' welfare.
52. Pupils know how to stay safe, including online. Appropriate network filtering and monitoring systems are in place. Pupils know what to do if they have concerns about themselves or their peers and how to report these. Pupils are able to raise issues anonymously with safeguarding leaders.
53. Statutory pre-employment checks are completed for new staff, and leaders and governors are suitably trained in safer recruitment. The single central record (SCR) is clear and accurately maintained.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	James Allen's Girls' School
Department for Education number	210/6002
Registered charity number	1124853
Address	James Allen's Girls' School East Dulwich Grove London SE22 8TE
Phone number	020 8693 1181
Email address	enquiries@jags.org.uk
Website	www.jags.org.uk
Proprietor	The Governors of James Allen's Girls School
Chair	Dr Jane Marshall
Headteacher	Mrs Alex Hutchinson
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	1214
Date of previous inspection	15 to 19 November 2021

Information about the school

55. James Allen's Girls' School is a day school for female pupils situated in Dulwich Village, London. The school was founded by James Allen in 1741 and moved to its current site in 1886 and is overseen by a board of governors. The school consists of a senior school and junior school. The junior school is made up of from a prep department (on the main school site) and a pre-prep, including the early years setting (located on its own site a short walk away). Since the previous inspection in November 2021, a new chair of governors has been appointed.
56. The early years provision comprises two Reception classes for 38 children aged four to five years.
57. The school has identified 200 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. These plans are not funded by the local authority.
58. English is an additional language for 370 pupils.
59. The school aims to celebrate a diverse and inclusive community, champion social awareness and sustainability, empower courage, respect, resilience, creativity and kindness in each pupil and to inspire aspirational and authentic lifelong learners and leaders.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

26 to 28 November 2024

60. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

61. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of co-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny and discussion of samples of pupils' work with pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

62. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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