

# School inspection report

14 to 16 January 2025

## **Pocklington School**

West Green

Pocklington

North Yorkshire

YO4 2NJ

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>5</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....	5
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>6</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE .....	7
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	9
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....</b>	<b>10</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	11
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>12</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	13
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>14</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	14
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>17</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. School leaders are well-trained and highly effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. Consequently, the quality of education is consistently high. Governors are an integral part of the school community. They support and challenge leaders to continue to improve. The school works closely with external agencies. They offer additional guidance which helps to secure pupils' wellbeing.
2. Leaders are strong role models. They promote a sense of personal and social responsibility. Leaders' work is closely aligned with the Pocklington values of courage, truth, and trust. The school's inclusive ethos underpins pupils' good behaviour. The systems promoting this good behaviour are subject to regular reviews based on feedback from pupils, parents, and staff.
3. The implementation of policies and procedures, including those linked to risk management, is checked carefully. Complaints are resolved effectively. Governors are trained in safeguarding. The safeguarding sub-committee meets regularly with school leaders to discuss any concerns. Meeting outcomes are then reported for careful follow up in full board meetings.
4. The school's varied and engaging curriculum meets pupils' needs. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education. The curriculum is designed to provide diverse pathways, including through access to vocational qualifications post-16. Overall, pupils typically achieve well. However, in a few lessons, they do not get enough opportunities to deepen their understanding by asking questions and exploring their ideas with their teachers and peers. In these lessons, sometimes progress slows.
5. In the early years, children make rapid progress in a stimulating environment. They are guided and encouraged by skilled staff. Effective collaboration between teachers and parents means that learning in school is reinforced at home.
6. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported so that they learn effectively alongside their peers. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effectively targeted interventions, including one-to-one support. Consequently, they achieve well. Leaders check the quality of teaching and learning systematically. Staff training is regularly updated. A comprehensive co-curricular programme is in place, including the POCK Challenge. Through this challenge, pupils receive recognition for attempting different activities. This boosts their personal growth and confidence. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress through detailed reports and meetings with school staff.
7. The school fosters a respectful and inclusive culture. This supports pupils' wider development through positive relationships and mutual respect. Individual differences, including those linked to protected characteristics such as race, religious beliefs and disability, are celebrated across the school's curriculum and reflected in its ethos. Pupils explore spiritual and moral growth through assemblies, chapel services, and an appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme. Relevant themes consider important topics such as personal finance, health, career choices, and online safety.
8. The co-curricular programme, designed with pupil input, further encourages pupils' interests in creative, physical, and academic activities. The programme impacts positively on their overall wellbeing. Pupils' feedback contributes regularly to school and wider curriculum development.

9. The school's core values of courage, truth, and trust are integrated into lessons and activities. The curriculum is designed to support British values, respect diverse perspectives and to avoid partisan views. The international nature of the school means that pupils are exposed to various cultures, languages, and religions. Through their experience in the school community and wider learning activities, pupils build an appreciation for diversity.
10. Economic education provides pupils with practical life skills. Opportunities to work in teams, participate in cultural trips, as well as in community activities, reinforce respect, teamwork, and social responsibility. Pupils' leadership roles assist social development in the prep school and in the sixth form. However, opportunities to experience these roles in the middle school are limited. As a result, pupils miss out on the chance to build new skills. In other experiences, pupils engage in volunteering, charity work and community outreach. They enjoy helping others. Early years co-curricular activities such as swimming and forest school are enjoyed. They contribute well to developing children's physical and social skills.
11. The careers education programme prepares pupils for future study and employment. The comprehensive support offered helps pupils to make their subject choices and to plan career pathways. The school promotes open, impartial debate on complex topics, encouraging critical thinking and respect.
12. Pupils display respectful behaviour, guided by clear expectations. Boarding facilities are welcoming, secure and well-maintained. Boarders are supported effectively by boarding staff and the staff in the health and wellbeing centre.
13. All staff receive thorough safeguarding training, including in sessions led by external agencies. The school's safeguarding team, together with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), provide regular support and important updates. Staff use effective systems for promptly reporting and tracking safeguarding incidents. Safeguarding procedures are well supported by securely maintained records and information-sharing protocols. The DSLs monitor patterns to assess any further action needed to keep pupils safe.
14. The safeguarding governor supports the safeguarding team through regular meetings. Pupils are encouraged to report concerns. They are confident in the support available to them. Well-developed staff recruitment processes ensure that all the necessary pre-employment checks are completed. Leaders review the effectiveness of the process at regular intervals.

## 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 pupils in the senior school have enough opportunities to ask questions, while exploring their ideas with their teachers and each other, so that they deepen their learning and achieve consistently well across all aspects of their studies
- further enhance the range of leadership opportunities in middle school so that more younger pupils can begin to build their skills in similar experiences to their older peers.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

15. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They ensure that the standards are met consistently. Governors know the school community well. Their diverse skills and knowledge mean that they are well equipped to challenge leaders on all aspects of the school's work, including in their oversight of pupils' wellbeing.
16. Pupils' wellbeing is a priority. They are supported to leave school with a strong sense of personal and social responsibility, together with the skills and attributes to lead happy and fulfilled lives. This success is underpinned by the Pocklington values of courage, truth and trust.
17. Leaders model the Pocklington values across daily life in school. They understand and celebrate the school's important characteristics. This includes in the inclusive way that they cater effectively for pupils of different backgrounds and abilities. Pupils' good behaviour is encouraged. This is supported by leaders' routine checks on the effectiveness of behaviour improvement strategies. The regular feedback from pupils, parents and staff informs ongoing improvement actions when necessary. Leaders embrace the school's Christian ethos while welcoming individuals of all faiths and none.
18. Governors have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and opportunities for ongoing development. They work closely with leaders to secure the shared vision for the school. Leaders are reflective in their self-evaluation and in inviting stakeholders' views. These views are central to leaders' actions to continue to improve the quality of education that the school offers.
19. The school's policies are reviewed regularly. Leaders check that effective procedures are implemented as required. Each policy is owned by a member of staff and overseen by a governor. All policies are audited for regulatory compliance. The requirements of the Equality Act (2010) are met and reviewed annually. A suitable accessibility plan is in place. Leaders have created effective partnerships with several outside agencies. These organisations provide additional support for pupils' wellbeing. The school's health and wellbeing centre, for example, has links with external healthcare professionals who support individual pupils when needed.
20. The school's website provides accessible and clear information for parents of current and prospective pupils This includes through school policies and advice for boarders.
21. Boarding leaders are well trained. This training includes guidance from external professional bodies, so the wellbeing of boarders is secured. Any relevant information about boarders' welfare needs is shared is shared appropriately with teachers so that boarders are supported in lessons.
22. Any potential health and safety risks are managed carefully. Leaders maintain effective oversight of the school's risk management register. Risk assessments for activities and trips are checked by senior leaders. The risks assessed are reviewed systematically. This is so that future trips continue to be well planned and safe. Any ongoing risks are carefully managed. Checks by external experts supplement those completed by the knowledgeable team of maintenance and estate staff.
23. Leaders manage complaints effectively. Most concerns are resolved at an informal level. The complaints policy is in line with requirements. All concerns, including at the informal level, are recorded and reviewed by governors. Trends or patterns are discussed with school leaders to identify and to act on issues arising. Appropriate information is provided to the local authority for those pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

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

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

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

25. The curriculum is varied, engaging, and tailored to meet pupils' needs. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education as they move through year groups. They develop essential linguistic, mathematical, scientific, and technological skills through well designed learning programmes. The range of pathways provide effectively for pupils' different abilities, skills and interests, including through a suite of post-16 vocational qualifications.
26. Teachers employ a range of resources to support pupils' learning, such as podcasts and plays for revision purposes. Interactive videos in mathematics in the senior school help pupils to identify errors and to assess their understanding. These different approaches allow pupils to focus on specific areas of difficulty, while supporting their overall good progress.
27. In the early years, highly skilled practitioners deliver a broad and stimulating programme of activities. This promotes children's rapid progress across all areas of learning. Leaders collaborate closely with parents and external specialists. This ensures that children's early learning needs are fully met. Teachers select engaging activities which are based on children's interests. As a result, children become inquisitive and well-motivated learners.
28. Pupils learn well when they have the chance to explore their thoughts and ideas with their teachers and peers, such as in the early years and in the prep school. However, progress is more limited in some senior lessons where pupils have fewer opportunities to ask questions or to develop their ideas with their teachers or with each other. Overall, pupils are motivated to learn and engage willingly in lessons. They are respectful of their teachers and classmates, which leads to calm learning environments.
29. The curriculum includes comprehensive support for pupils who speak EAL. The EAL support team collaborates effectively with subject teachers to ensure that pupils who speak EAL can access the curriculum. This inclusive approach ensures that pupils, regardless of language proficiency, can engage with learning and achieve academic success.
30. The curriculum supports the diverse needs of pupils who have SEND. Intervention strategies, such as one-to-one time and extra departmental sessions, are applied after detailed analysis of checks on learning, teacher observations and scrutiny of pupils' work.
31. School and subject leaders monitor teaching and learning. They collaborate with teachers to identify and provide focused update training as needed. Leaders' recent work on improving responses to teachers' feedback, supports pupils' further progress and helps them to reflect more deeply on their learning.
32. The school's values and virtues are threaded through the curriculum. Routine reviews ensure that these principles are embedded and understood by pupils and staff. British values, such as democracy and tolerance are well promoted, fostering a respectful and inclusive school culture.
33. The school's assessment framework includes regular checks on learning from individual pupils' starting points. Teachers identify and support pupils who need extra help quickly, so they achieve well. Early years practitioners communicate between school and home effectively through an online learning platform. They ensure that children's experiences, progress, and achievements are shared regularly with their parents.



34. The school offers a wide range of extracurricular activities that pupils value. They enjoy a variety of physical, creative and academic opportunities. In participating, pupils gain a sense of self-esteem and confidence. The POCK challenge in the senior school encourages pupils to follow an enrichment programme which promotes their personal development. The programme builds their knowledge and skills in areas such as debating, esports, photography and mindfulness. Boarders join in additional activities to meet their needs in the evenings and at weekends. They also have plenty of free time to pursue their own interests.
35. There is a comprehensive programme of written reports to parents and parent-teacher meetings in place. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress and achievement.

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

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

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

37. Pupils' wellbeing and wider development is promoted by a respectful culture and positive relationships between pupils and staff. The school community is committed to fostering an inclusive culture. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) alliance group and its appointed pupil advocates, for example, reflect this.
38. Individual differences, including protected characteristics, such as gender, disability and different beliefs are respected. A culture of mutual respect is woven through the curriculum and embedded in the school's ethos. Pupils develop their spiritual and moral understanding through a comprehensive programme of assemblies, chapel services, and the PSHE programme. This is structured to meet pupils' needs and is responsive to current issues.
39. The extensive opportunities offered through the co-curricular programme support pupils to further develop their interests in creative, academic and physical activities. The design of the programme, with pupil input, meets individual needs and talents. It impacts positively on pupils' wellbeing and wider development.
40. The PSHE programme is well-planned and comprehensive. It includes personal finance education, career choices, personal health, and online safety. Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is delivered by well-trained teachers in accordance with current guidance.
41. School leaders take account of pupils' views through school councils, surveys, and other forum. Pupils' ideas on changes needed are valued. Leaders use them to inform the school's operational and strategic development. However, pupils do not always know how their views influence the improvements and changes made.
42. Pupils behave maturely and respectfully. The positive way in which they meet the school's high expectations of their behaviour is rewarded. Any sanctions are used fairly, with time for reflection built into the system. Appropriate logs of behaviour incidents are kept. Pastoral leaders look for patterns and themes, which they act on to prevent further occurrence. The "Spot and Speak Up" initiative, for example, for anonymously reporting concerns, has been introduced following leaders' scrutiny of behaviour records and discussions with pupil groups.
43. The school educates pupils effectively to prevent bullying behaviour. Bullying is regularly discussed in assemblies and through anti-bullying week activities. Pupils have multiple mechanisms to report concerns. They appreciate staff's accessibility, knowing that their concerns are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.
44. The school's premises, including the boarding houses, are meticulously managed. Maintenance is consistently completed to a high standard, with thorough records kept of all checks. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and updated as needed.
45. Staff responsible are rigorous in completing admission registers, as well as in supplying the necessary information to the local authority when pupils join or leave the school. Attendance is accurately logged. Any emerging absence patterns over time are investigated. The school's system records the whereabouts of all pupils during boarding time.

46. Boarders enjoy a welcoming, happy, and supportive home-from-home experience in their boarding accommodation. Houses are maintained to a high standard. Staff work diligently to meet the boarders' needs consistently. Systems for managing boarders' welfare and safety are effective. The boarding houses are warm, well-lit and secure. They provide a conducive environment for both study and recreation. The induction programme ensures boarders are well-prepared for boarding life. Boarders have access to kitchen facilities in the boarding houses where they can prepare snacks and light meals. This complements the nutritious meals provided to all pupils at the school.
47. The health and wellbeing centre offers support for pupils who feel unwell. The centre is also staffed by experienced healthcare professionals with diverse medical expertise. Pupils know that they will receive the help that they need. Medicines are securely stored. Healthcare information is appropriately shared with boarding staff. There are counsellors and psychologists available for pupils who need mental health support.
48. Pupils receive adequate supervision, including during unstructured times. Prefects are well-trained. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, communicated to pupils, and widely understood.
49. Children in the early years engage in a variety of carefully selected recreational activities. These include both indoor and outdoor opportunities, such as forest school and swimming. These activities are tailored to their individual needs, while supporting the development of their physical and social skills.

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

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

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

51. The school delivers a comprehensive and well-structured curriculum that reflects the core values of courage, truth, and trust. These principles are well established in daily school life. Leaders check regularly to ensure that the curriculum supports British values, avoids partisan views, and fosters respect for individual differences. Programmes are enhanced by external speakers' contribution to pupils' learning.
52. The school encourages pupils to show mutual respect through its curriculum, assemblies, and co-curricular programmes. Pupils learn about diverse cultures, languages, and religions. This fosters a deep appreciation for diversity. Religious and cultural festivals are celebrated, including in the boarding houses. Assemblies, church services, and form periods address social, cultural, and human issues within and beyond the school community.
53. Pupils learn about financial matters such as tax, mortgages and loans. In the sixth form they plan a personal budget so that they understand the importance of balancing any future salary with expenditure.
54. Pupils have many opportunities to help them to develop respect for and understanding of diverse societies. In the Year 7 art project, for example, in exploring masks in different cultures, and through the history trip to Alabama, which supports studies on American civil rights. These opportunities reinforce the school's commitment to exploring diversity and social responsibility. Pupils learn to collaborate and show empathy through a range of activities which foster teamwork, such as choirs, drama performances and sport. They also enjoy debating, engagement in pupil councils and charity work.
55. In lessons and discussions with pupils, teachers emphasise the value of democracy as a fundamental principle of governance. Pupils' understanding is reflected in the respectful way they listen to and consider opposing viewpoints. These concepts are also reinforced through practical experiences, such as elections to various representative bodies. Boarding houses and the wider school foster environments where the distinction between right and wrong is evident. Adherence to rules and respect for staff are naturally upheld.
56. Pupil leadership opportunities are available, particularly in the prep school and sixth form. These include opportunities to lead in volunteering, community action projects, charity work and in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). There are fewer opportunities in the middle school for pupils to take responsibility. This reduces their exposure to the skills needed in managing and leading groups of people or events.
57. Sixth formers engage with local care homes, organise lunches for elderly residents and assist with coaching young people with physical challenges. Through programmes such as the combined cadet force, pupils participate in community outreach. Activities such as the biennial school walk and annual charity week promote fundraising efforts.
58. The school's extensive careers programme ensures that pupils are well-prepared for future study and career choices. Online careers programmes in the senior school help pupils to explore university pathways, apprenticeships, and employment routes. Pupils make appropriately informed GCSE

subject choices. Sixth-form study choices are supported by departmental talks, taster days and parents' evenings.

59. In the early years, children engage in a programme of co-curricular activities which help to develop their social skills through exploratory play, cooperating in games and in observing their peers. Children build self-awareness in a supportive environment while developing their understanding of right from wrong. They are kind and inquisitive learners.
60. The school fosters strong, unbiased debate. Pupils explore complex and sensitive topics such as inheritance tax changes for farmers and the situations in Gaza and Ukraine. Staff understand the need for impartiality in these discussions. They are mindful of pupils who may have close connections to discussion topics.

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

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

## Safeguarding

62. All staff undergo comprehensive safeguarding training, some of which is delivered by external specialists. Staff are well supported by the school's safeguarding team, so they are confident in their knowledge to ensure pupils' safety. Consequently, staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities whatever their role in the school. The DSL provides regular updates and verifies that everyone understands what they need to do if they have a concern.
63. Staff are trained to report safeguarding incidents promptly. The systems in place track individuals and incidents effectively. Detailed, securely maintained records ensure that information is appropriately shared, and that the necessary support is provided for pupils who need it. The DSLs in the prep and senior schools monitor patterns of events to determine if further action is required to ensure that pupils are safe.
64. All Governors are trained in safeguarding. This training is updated regularly. The safeguarding governor is trained in current safeguarding practices. The governor provides well-received support to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements is maintained. Regular meetings are held between a safeguarding sub-committee of governors and the school's safeguarding team. The minutes of meetings are appropriately shared and discussed with the full board of governors.
65. The school's wellbeing centre plays a central role in the robust support programme in place. Pupils understand the importance of reporting concerns, including about their peers. They are aware of trusted adults they can approach for help and know that they will receive the necessary support.
66. Pupils learn about online risks and how to stay safe through PSHE lessons, assemblies and talks. Some of this learning is enhanced by external speakers' contributions. The school has effective internet monitoring and filtering systems to improve online safety.
67. Staff recruitment processes are thorough. Leaders involved in recruitment are well trained. All the required checks are completed before new staff or volunteers begin working at the school. These checks are accurately documented in the single central record. This information is reviewed and checked regularly by the safeguarding governor.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Pocklington School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	811/6003
<b>Registered charity number</b>	529834
<b>Address</b>	Pocklington School West Green Pocklington North Yorkshire YO4 2NJ
<b>Phone number</b>	01759 321200
<b>Email address</b>	mainoffice@pocklingtonschool.com
<b>Website</b>	www.pocklingtonschool.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Pocklington School Foundation
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jonathan Tilsed
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Toby Seth
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	730
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	73
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 October 2021

## Information about the school

69. The Pocklington School Foundation comprises Pocklington School (11-18) and Pocklington Prep School (2-11). The Foundation is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in Pocklington, around 12 miles from York. The school is a charity, overseen by a governing body. The current chair of governors was appointed in 2023.
70. Boarding is provided in four different boarding houses, all of which are onsite.
71. There are 50 pupils in the early years setting.
72. The school has identified 233 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
73. English is an additional language for 64 pupils.
74. The school states its aims are to uphold the Pocklington Values of courage, truth and trust, to broaden pupils' horizons and raise their ambitions and to work closely with families in educating their children. Additionally, the school seeks to nurture innovation and adaptability, to take pride in their tradition and to be a great place to live and work.



## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

14 to 16 January 2025

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

76. 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 head, 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.

77. 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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