ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

Material change inspection report

15 October 2026

St John's College School

73 Grange Road

Cambridge

CB3 9AB

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'.

Inspection outcome

The school has submitted a material change request to increase the age range from 4 to 13 years to 3 to 13 years.

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school Standards if the material change is implemented. It is recommended that the material change be approved.

Inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

ISSR paragraphs ISSR 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(f), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i), 2A(1)(a), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(c), 2A(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g), 2A(2), 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j) and 4; EYFS 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4

1. The school implements an appropriate curriculum policy and suitable schemes of work. The curriculum considers pupils' individual needs and includes all the required areas of learning. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the provision of additional support if any pupil is identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides pupils with effective opportunities to make good progress.
2. Leaders have developed suitable plans to ensure that the curriculum for children aged three and four is effective. They intend that children will have personalised educational plans based upon the seven areas of learning. These plans will be shaped and informed by children's individual interests and ongoing personal development.
3. The school ensures that pupils are provided with relationships and sex education (RSE) in line with current statutory guidance. In the early years, relationships education is taught through the personal, social and emotional development (PSED) programme. In advance of the proposed material change, leaders have prepared suitable PSED plans for teaching younger children. Staff intend to provide an emotional development programme that enables children to recognise, name and express their feelings. The programme includes stories, role-play activities and positive daily interactions through which staff model kindness and empathy. Teachers have also planned activities to help children recognise how others may feel, respect differences, build friendships and resolve problems together.
4. Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards their learning and make good progress due to effective teaching and engaging lessons. Children in the early years are supported by an appropriately qualified key worker so that they are helped to make good academic and personal progress. Leaders implement a suitable schedule of regular supervision meetings for all staff who work in the early years.
5. Leaders enable pupils to develop their knowledge and skills due to an ongoing, rigorous and thorough assessment of their needs. This approach carefully monitors and tracks pupils' progress. Staff in the new pre-school class have planned to conduct a baseline assessment for children when they join the setting. Staff also assess children's progress through regular observations of their conversations and work. This information helps leaders to understand each child's starting point and interests, identify curriculum planning and make appropriate adaptations to teaching and learning activities. Children's progress is reviewed and assessed at the end of each term across the seven areas of learning to identify where further support or additional challenge is needed.

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6. The existing programme of extra-curricular activities is suitable for younger children. Leaders plan to extend the breakfast club arrangements currently in place in the early years to include the new pre-school class, and to implement a suitable after school programme.
7. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

ISSR paragraphs 5(a), 5(b), 5(c) and 5(d)

8. Leaders actively promote fundamental British values and a school culture in which moral understanding, respect and tolerance is evident. Children are taught how to regulate their behaviour and differentiate between right and wrong choices.
9. Leaders in the early years have carefully considered how to develop children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding appropriately. Curriculum plans for younger children include opportunities to explore the natural world and to undertake a range of outdoor activities in the woodland area so that they begin to respect and appreciate the natural environment. Staff aim to support children's moral and social development through sharing appropriate stories that help them to understand how to build and maintain positive friendships. Leaders invite visitors who represent different traditions, faiths and cultures to share their experiences with children so that they develop cultural awareness.
10. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR paragraphs 7(a) and 7(b), 8(a) and 8(b); EYFS 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3

11. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing. The effective implementation of the school's safeguarding policy informs the school's thorough and robust safeguarding procedures.
12. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding hold appropriately senior positions and include staff with designated responsibilities for overseeing and implementing safeguarding procedures within the early years. Leaders and staff in the early years are aware of the specific safeguarding needs that relate to young children. In advance of the proposed material change, they have planned carefully to ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements throughout this age range continue to reflect current statutory requirements.
13. Leaders, governors and staff receive regular and appropriate training, including at induction. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding regularly consult with each other and share appropriate information with staff. Leaders ensure that staff understand safeguarding policies well so that they know how to confidently respond to any safeguarding concerns. They liaise constructively with external agencies, including the local authority and children's services, when required. The school manages effectively any reported low-level concerns or more serious allegations about adults working with children.
14. Governors provide ongoing and thorough oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. This includes visiting the school regularly to meet the safeguarding team and scrutinise safeguarding arrangements and documentation. Governors also check the effectiveness of the school's safer recruitment procedures. They ensure that appropriate and timely recruitment checks are carried out to confirm the suitability of adults before they begin working at the school.

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15. The school implements suitable processes that enable pupils to share with trusted adults any concerns they may have. Leaders act and respond promptly to any reported concerns from pupils and provide individual and effective support.
16. Staff take appropriate actions to mitigate potential risks to pupils, including those relating to online safety and radicalisation and extremism. Leaders have successfully established a mobile phone-free environment. Pupils are clear about the potential risks associated with online activity due to the helpful guidance they receive in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and computing lessons. Leaders ensure that effective internet filtering and monitoring systems are implemented.
17. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

18. Leaders publish the particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding, which meet current statutory requirements, on the school's website.
19. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

ISSR paragraph 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c) and 34(2)

20. Senior leaders and governors, including those with responsibilities for safeguarding and the early years, demonstrate requisite skills and thorough knowledge. They fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school Standards are met consistently. Leaders and staff work closely together to actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
21. Leaders, supported well by governors, have carefully and comprehensively planned for the proposed admission of children from the age of three. They have taken a range of well-considered actions so that the wellbeing of younger children continues to be supported and promoted effectively.
22. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

School details

School	St John's College School
Department for Education number	873/6004
Registered charity number	1194790
Address	St John's College School 73 Grange Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB3 9AB
Phone number	01223 353532
Email address	shoffice@sjcs.co.uk
Website	www.sjcs.co.uk
Proprietor	St John's College School, Cambridge
Chair	Mrs Lindsay Dodsworth
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Wright
Age range	4 to 13
Number of pupils	360
Number of boarding pupils	23
Date of previous inspection	30 January to 1 February 2024

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Information about the school

23. St John's College School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils situated in Cambridge. The school's junior department is housed in one building, and the senior school is accommodated in additional buildings further along Grange Road. The school appointed the current headteacher in September 2025.
24. The school provides boarding for male and female pupils in one boarding house. Pupils may board from the age of 7.
25. There are 25 children in the early years. They are taught in two Reception classes which are located within the junior department.
26. The school has identified 104 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
27. The school has identified 150 pupils for whom English is an additional language.
28. The school states that its aims are to foster the aptitudes and nurture the growth of each pupil to enable them to become their best selves. Respect for and faith in pupils and an ability to see the world through their eyes informs the teaching and care of pupils at the school.

Purpose of the material change inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection following an application made by the school to the Department for Education to make a material change to the school's provision. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about whether the school is likely to meet the Independent School Standards and Early Years Foundation Stage requirements if the material change is implemented.

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Inspection details

Inspection date	15 October 2026

29. One reporting inspector and one early years co-ordinating inspector visited the school for one day.

30. Inspection activities included:

- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school and information available on the school's website
- a tour of the school site to review arrangements for children in the early years
- discussions with the chair of governors and members of the governing body
- discussions with pupils
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff.

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**.

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CAP House, 9 – 12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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