

School inspection report

13 to 15 January 2026

Edge Grove School

High Cross

Aldenham

Watford

WD25 8NL

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. Leaders are effective in fulfilling their responsibilities to promote pupils' wellbeing. Governors provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders to enable them to promote the school's aims and values effectively. Governors are rigorous in their oversight of the implementation of school policies so that pupils' welfare is effectively promoted.
2. Pupils learn effectively due to the breadth and quality of the curriculum and the expertise of well-trained teaching staff. Pupils experience a stimulating curriculum that deepens their knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders' rigorous tracking of pupils' progress and timely support ensures that pupils achieve well over time, including many achieving places at selective senior schools. However, some teaching does not support pupils, when they are ready, to build upon their prior knowledge, skills and understanding, so that they can apply their learning in more complex ways.
3. Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are well supported. Pupils develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence as a result of the effective reinforcement of the school's core values by leaders and staff, guidance given in lessons and assemblies, and knowledgeable support provided for pupils' emotional wellbeing. Appropriately trained staff implement the school's health and safety and fire arrangements effectively. The premises include suitable facilities for pupils, including for their medical care when required.
4. The school prepares pupils well for their future lives. Leaders and staff manage pupils' transition between year groups and phases effectively. Pupils gain a clear understanding about Britain's diverse communities and develop a well-developed sense of service towards others. Staff enable older pupils to gain appropriate insights into the careers they might pursue in later life.
5. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders and staff receive suitable training to enable them to respond to safeguarding issues effectively. The safeguarding team accesses timely advice and support from relevant external agencies when required. Pupils have appropriate mechanisms for reporting concerns and leaders respond effectively whenever concerns are raised.
6. Safer recruitment arrangements are appropriate and in line with statutory guidance. A very small number of checks related to teaching prohibition orders for new staff had not been completed in a timely way. This was rectified quickly following a routine check by governors.

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 teachers identify and support pupils when they are ready for greater levels of challenge, so that they make the progress of which they are capable
- ensure that checks related to teaching prohibition orders are consistently carried out for all relevant staff in a timely way.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. School leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing, which is central to the school's aims and values. Leaders ensure pupils' wellbeing is effectively promoted through the highly individualised understanding of and response to their emotional needs. This begins with the youngest children in the early years who experience well organised, secure and purposeful provision, through consistent routines and calm transitions between activities, enabling them to feel safe, confident and ready to learn.
8. Leaders' evaluation of the school's successes and areas for development contributes towards effective forward planning. Leaders promote the school's aims effectively. They regularly solicit the views of pupils, parents and staff and take these into account when planning school development. Leaders enable pupils to share their ideas and views in a variety of forums, such as the neuro-diversity champions' committee and the eco-committee, which result in positive improvements to the school and wider community.
9. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school. They support and challenge leaders effectively to assure themselves that they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively to promote pupils' welfare and ensure that the Standards are met consistently. Governors rigorously review policies prepared by leaders and ensure that their contents reflect current statutory guidance. Governors assure themselves that policies are effectively implemented through a range of activities, including lesson visits and regular meetings with pupils to discuss their school experience.
10. Leaders are knowledgeable and skilled in undertaking their roles effectively. For example, leaders of the early years have secure knowledge of the early years curriculum and expectations. They ensure effective staff deployment, clear roles and consistent practice through rigorous induction, supervision and ongoing support.
11. Leaders identify and manage risk appropriately. Senior leaders ensure effective oversight of the premises and off-site activities. Leaders' considerable knowledge of pupils enables them to mitigate risks that are particular to individual pupils' circumstances. There are a wide range of well-considered risk assessments in place, in line with the school's policy.
12. Leaders access advice from external experts appropriately, particularly to support pupils who have additional needs and when addressing safeguarding concerns. Children in the early years are supported in their educational journeys and wellbeing through leaders' work with other agencies, including liaison with speech and language therapists, play therapists and, where appropriate, educational psychologists, with recommendations applied consistently.
13. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The school's accessibility plan identifies actions to enable pupils to access the site and curriculum and is routinely reviewed. For example, the school's disability review committee has improved access arrangements for wheelchair users. The school's committee of neurodiversity champions meet regularly to discuss how to raise awareness and champion whole-school inclusion.
14. Parents are provided with required information, such as policies and previous inspection reports, via the school's informative website. Parents are provided with reports that include relevant information about their child's progress and learning. The school provides appropriate information to external agencies, when required. For example, they inform the local authority appropriately

about pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including information related to the annual review and finance and funding. Leaders also inform the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.

15. The school's complaints policy is appropriate and in line with statutory requirements. Leaders respond to issues raised by parents in line with school policy. The headteacher closely monitors concerns raised by parents through face-to-face meetings and surveys of parents' views.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Leaders provide pupils with a curriculum that is wide ranging in its scope and breadth. They prioritise planning programmes of study that carefully consider how pupils develop important foundational skills. This starts with the youngest children in the early years, who develop important vocabulary and knowledge to prepare them for more formal learning as they get older.
18. Pupils' interest in learning is enhanced through a rich and varied wider curriculum. They participate enthusiastically in an extensive range of clubs, including ancient Greek, chess, robotics, rock band and triathlon, building their skills in these areas as they do so. The varied programme of educational visits, residential field trips and visitors to the school enriches pupils' interest in learning while developing their knowledge and skills.
19. Teachers plan lessons that motivate pupils to learn. They provide stimulating subject matter and suitable resources, supported by their own expertise, enthusiasm and detailed subject knowledge. Teachers' typically effective use of assessment enables them to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. They provide effective guidance and feedback to support pupils to understand how to improve. However, some teaching does not identify when pupils are ready for greater challenge or to apply their learning in more complex ways. As a result, on these occasions, pupils do not learn as effectively as they could.
20. Leaders identify the needs of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in an effective and timely way. They provide appropriate guidance to staff about how best to support pupils' needs in lessons and around the school. Pupils are well supported to learn effectively in lessons, including through specific strategies such as targeted questioning, adapted resources and clear explanations.
21. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are effectively and promptly identified. When required, suitable support is provided in a range of ways, including through carefully adapted programmes of study, visual timetables and the effective use of technology. This support enables pupils who speak EAL to develop their linguistic skills, such as in their use of spoken and written English.
22. Leaders prioritise language and communication of the youngest children, including the development of their early phonetical understanding, reading and writing. Staff are adept at using a range of planned activities and children's interests to develop their confidence in articulating their views and thoughts. Staff check what children know and can do when they first arrive. They use regular observation and detailed ongoing tracking. Termly review points are used consistently to identify children requiring additional support or challenge. Information from assessment in the early years is used by staff to adapt teaching, support consolidation and ensure children are well ready to transition into Year 1.
23. There is an appropriate assessment framework in place. Leaders and staff monitor the quality and effectiveness of teaching and assessment and provide timely identification and support to pupils who need additional help. The monitoring of pupils' progress supports them to acquire knowledge and skills. Pupils apply well what they have learned when solving problems in mathematics and science, when undertaking creative writing tasks in English, when completing projects for the school's baccalaureate or when applying skills in performing and visual arts. Over time, pupils make

good progress, attain well, and are ready to transition to secondary school. Most pupils are successful in gaining places at senior schools with selective entry requirements.

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

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. Pupils are supported to develop their self-esteem, confidence and spiritual understanding. Leaders and staff promote the school's values consistently and effectively. They model and encourage constructive relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils' positive behaviour and achievements are regularly celebrated in assemblies and school publications, which supports their confidence. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on the importance of non-material experiences, such as through the study of different faiths and religions.
26. Leaders and staff are proactive in facilitating pupils' wellbeing. Pupils learn how to identify and regulate their emotions and how to respond effectively to the different emotional states they encounter in others. Pupils have access to trained mental health specialists when required. Children in the early years are supported to self-regulate, co-operate and respect others, supported by explicit teaching of emotional regulation strategies, such as movement breaks and guided breathing.
27. Staff deliver a comprehensive and effective personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme. The impact of the programme on pupils is regularly assessed by teachers and leaders and adjustments to lessons are made on the basis of pupils' feedback.
28. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme reflects current statutory guidance. The RSE programme of study is relevant to pupils' needs and enables them to gain a well-developed understanding of factors that contribute towards healthy relationships. Older pupils receive relevant guidance in subjects such as puberty and respecting the personal boundaries of others. Leaders consult parents appropriately about the RSE programme of study.
29. There are appropriate policies and processes for behaviour and anti-bullying. Staff apply the school's approaches consistently and motivate pupils to make positive choices in the way they behave. Leaders maintain effective oversight of behaviour and bullying logs to ensure that all pupils are well supported. Pupils gain a well-developed understanding of appropriate behaviour and the different forms of bullying, its impact and how they might deal with it were it to occur. When any rare incidents occur, leaders and staff address issues in a timely and effective way. As a result, pupils are well behaved, respectful, polite and kind.
30. There is an appropriately planned and delivered physical education (PE) curriculum. Through the PE curriculum, PSHE and science lessons, pupils learn about the health benefits to be gained from physical exercise and healthy eating. Pupils' regular participation in physical activities in games lessons, woodland activities, after-school clubs and competitive fixtures enables them to develop their fitness effectively. Pupils develop a clear understanding of healthy food choices, including through nutritious food options at lunchtimes.
31. The school premises are suitably maintained. Health and safety, site security and fire safety arrangements are appropriate and effective. Leaders ensure that required checks and maintenance are undertaken regularly and, when appropriate, by external experts. Staff receive suitable training in health and safety and fire safety. Arrangements for first aid and medical care are effective as a result of the rigorous implementation of school policy by well-qualified staff. Pupils are supervised effectively, both when on school premises and during visits and outings, including in the early years.

32. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in line with statutory guidance. Leaders inform the local authority whenever pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.

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

33. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

34. Pupils learn about different forms of prejudice and discrimination and the importance of respect and tolerance in a range of ways, including through PSHE lessons. Pupils learn to respect the viewpoints of others and about those with different faiths, beliefs and cultures. For instance, pupils learn about different world faiths in religious education (RE) lessons, assemblies and during talks about festivals such as Diwali and Eid given by representatives from different faiths. Pupils throughout the school are tolerant and respectful towards people representing diverse cultures and backgrounds.
35. Pupils develop a thorough understanding of important values in British society. They learn about parliamentary democracy in history and PSHE lessons. They experience democratic processes first-hand, when debating and voting for initiatives related to the school during eco-council meetings. They also learn about the rule of law and the consequences of right and wrong choices. Younger pupils contribute to the formation of class rules and older pupils learn about the role of the criminal justice system in the United Kingdom. Pupils gain a well-developed understanding of important public institutions, including through talks given by the police force and assemblies led by representatives from the medical profession.
36. Pupils support their school, local and wider communities by undertaking a range of roles of responsibility. For instance, pupils in Year 8 act as 'champions', enthusiastically advocating for different areas of school life, including archery, business and enterprise, and performing arts, and participating in the opportunities pupils have to share their views with leaders. Many pupils engage in projects designed to support a range of external communities, including by raising money each year in support of charitable causes, supporting a local foodbank and singing to residents in a care home.
37. From an early age, pupils receive a suitable economic education including learning about how effective financial management can contribute towards wellbeing. For example, children in the early years develop an understanding of money during imaginative activities in their role-play area. Older pupils learn about effective money management during online talks by leading businesswomen and when developing and selling their own products as part of an accredited business course.
38. Pupils are provided with age-appropriate careers guidance and an understanding of different career paths through PSHE lessons. Lessons are supplemented by regular visits to the school by a wide range of professionals, including representatives from the legal, business, writing and medical professions. The curriculum is enriched by trips and visits to places of work, such as television studios.
39. Pupils are well supported to transition between year groups. The youngest children are supported to develop important social skills so that they communicate, take turns and settle quickly into their classes. New pupils joining the school receive attentive support from peer buddies. Pupils at the end of each academic year meet their new form teachers and staff share important information that aids pupils' transition into the next year group. The oldest pupils are supported to be ready for secondary school, including developing independent organisational and learning skills and through guidance to help them prepare for entrance examinations.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

41. Leaders promote an effective safeguarding culture which prioritises the safety and wellbeing of pupils. The school's safeguarding policy reflects current statutory requirements and is implemented consistently and effectively.
42. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undertake their responsibilities effectively. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and safer recruitment arrangements are appropriately trained. They work closely with other leaders, such as pastoral leaders, leaders of SEND and early years staff. When required, they work effectively with external agencies, including the local authority, medical professionals and mental health experts to support pupils' wellbeing. Leaders ensure that safeguarding information is shared appropriately when pupils leave the school.
43. Governors' oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements is effective. Governors undertake appropriate safeguarding training. A nominated governor liaises regularly with the school's designated safeguarding leaders to provide appropriate support and challenge. Governors regularly visit the school to evaluate the impact of safeguarding policy and practice. These visits include a range of activity, including meetings with pupils to assess their experience of safeguarding arrangements.
44. All staff undertake regular and appropriate safeguarding training. Staff are regularly updated on changes to current statutory guidance and contextual safeguarding risks to pupils. Safeguarding training enables staff to be vigilant to the signs of concerns, including those related to extremism and radicalisation and to manage safeguarding disclosures effectively. Staff report concerns appropriately and records are stored securely and accessed appropriately.
45. Appropriate mechanisms are in place to enable pupils to report any safeguarding concerns. Pupils are encouraged to share concerns with adults. Pupils in younger year groups have easy access to worry boxes and older pupils use an online tool for reporting concerns. The safeguarding team acts upon any concerns that pupils bring to the school's attention in a timely and appropriate manner.
46. Pupils receive helpful guidance about how to keep themselves safe, including online, through computing and PSHE lessons, assemblies and special events. For instance, they learn how to use the internet safely, including how to identify misinformation. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding provide regular guidance to parents in how to help pupils to stay safe, including when online. The school has effective systems in place for filtering and monitoring pupils' online safety. Leaders address any issues of potential concern swiftly and robustly.
47. Safer recruitment procedures are effective. Staff with responsibility for recruitment and the management of the single central record of appointments are suitably qualified to fulfil their responsibilities. However, the checks related to teaching prohibition orders were not undertaken in a timely way for a very small number of staff who required this. This was identified and rectified by governors quickly and adeptly during their routine checks of pre-employment checks.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Edge Grove School
Department for Education number	919/6002
Registered charity number	311054
Address	Edge Grove School High Cross Aldenham Watford Hertfordshire WD25 8NL
Phone number	01923 855724
Email address	office@edgegrove.com
Website	www.edgegrove.com
Proprietor	Edge Grove School Trust Ltd
Chair	Mrs Miranda Barnett
Headteacher	Mr Richard Stanley
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils	311
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 February 2023

Information about the school

49. Edge Grove is an independent co-educational day preparatory school, located in Watford. The school comprises: a Nursery, for children aged two to four years; a junior department, for pupils aged four to six years; a middle department, for pupils aged seven to ten years; and a senior department, for pupils aged eleven to thirteen years. The school is a registered charitable trust whose trustees form a board of governors. A new headteacher was appointed in October 2024 and the chair has been in post since December 2024.
50. There are 49 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery class and two Reception classes.
51. The school has identified 72 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
52. The school has identified English as an additional language for 53 pupils.
53. The school states its aims are to cultivate a passion for discovery while nurturing integrity, fostering confidence, and empowering every child to achieve their full potential. Through a supportive and dynamic environment, the school aims to prepare pupils to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, equipping them with the values and skills to lead with purpose in an ever-changing world.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

13 to 15 January 2026

54. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

55. Inspection activities included:

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

56. 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**.

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