

School inspection report

14 to 16 October 2025

City of London Freeman's School

Ashtead Park

Ashtead

Surrey

KT21 1ET

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. Governors oversee the school's educational activities effectively. They hold regular meetings in which they scrutinise leaders' reports. Governors visit the school frequently to observe how policies work in practice and seek the views of pupils and staff. Governors ensure that leaders have appropriate knowledge and skills so that the Standards are met.
2. Leaders maintain an informative website, which includes detailed information on the school's policies and procedures. However, at the start of the inspection, the school's website did not include all reports of previous inspections as required. Leaders remedied this during the inspection.
3. Governors and leaders take a strategic and highly effective approach to supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing in an academically ambitious environment. Senior staff work with academic researchers and external specialists to develop coherent support for pupils across the school. Extensive training for staff ensures that this is consistently implemented. Teachers make highly effective use of their awareness of pupils' pastoral needs in the classroom to ensure that these are always met, while at the same time promoting substantive learning. Staff challenge pupils academically within a supportive and psychologically secure environment. Pupils achieve high levels of academic success, are confident to take intellectual risks and develop high levels of emotional wellbeing. This is a significant strength of the school.
4. Teachers know pupils well and use this knowledge to plan lessons that are well adapted to their needs. They use their secure subject knowledge to provide clear explanations and check pupils' understanding with pertinent questions. Teachers provide pupils with useful feedback and offer additional support to pupils inside and outside of lessons.
5. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop their creative and aesthetic skills. Music ensembles and theatrical productions, often led by pupils, help them develop their performing and management skills. Enrichment activities provide opportunities for pupils to develop skills outside of the curriculum. Boarders take part in suitable evening and weekend activities, which enable them to socialise and learn new skills.
6. Pupils learn to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Physical education (PE) lessons and games afternoons develop pupils' physical fitness and skills in different sports. Pupils have the choice to compete, often at national or international level, or take part in non-competitive physical activities. Pupils learn about the benefits of exercise for health.
7. Staff successfully promote respectful relationships throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should treat each other and model this behaviour consistently. Pupils treat each other with respect and behave calmly in lessons and breaktimes.
8. Staff with responsibility for boarding maintain comfortable and good quality boarding accommodation and provide appropriate care for boarders. Boarders have access to appropriate facilities, including suitable sleeping accommodation, and develop positive, supportive relationships with other boarders and house staff.
9. Pupils understand their responsibilities towards others and are regularly involved in voluntary activities. Pupils visit local primary schools and nursing homes and work with groups such as refugees. Older pupils support younger pupils in homework clubs and by running charitable events.

10. Staff prepare pupils well for their next steps in education. The curriculum and teaching provide for a gradual transition in approach as pupils move through the school. Staff provide pupils with clear and useful advice so that they are well informed when choosing which courses to study. Careers education provides pupils in Year 11 and above with detailed, individual advice on their options beyond school. However, the careers guidance for pupils in Years 7 to 10 does not inform them of the range of potential careers as effectively.
11. Leaders maintain a robust safeguarding culture. Regular training ensures that staff understand their responsibilities. Pupils know how to raise a concern and leaders and staff respond promptly should they do so. Leaders carry out the required safer recruitment checks on all adults who live and work in the school.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

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

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the school's website consistently includes all previous inspection reports so that it provides a clear and accurate picture of the school
- develop careers education for pupils in Years 7 to 10 so that they gain greater knowledge about the potential careers available to them.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Governors maintain close oversight of the school's education activities. They consider detailed reports from school leaders in regular committee meetings. Governors invite members of staff across the school to present at these meetings, enabling governors to gain an understanding of how effectively school policies work in practice. Governors visit the school regularly to attend lessons and meet with staff and pupils, including boarders. They ensure that policies and procedures comply with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance. Their effective oversight ensures that leaders use their good knowledge and skills to consistently fulfil their responsibilities and successfully promote pupils' wellbeing. As a result, all the Standards are met.
13. Leaders ensure that staff understand and promote the school's aims. Governors challenge school leaders to ensure that these aims guide their decision-making.
14. Leaders use a wide variety of school data to undertake effective self-evaluation. They canvas the views of parents and pupils, including boarders, through regular surveys. Leaders use this information to plan effective and beneficial improvements to the school's procedures and provision. Leaders, supported by governors, take a strategic approach to school improvement. For example, they provide senior staff with time to research and plan effective action.
15. Leaders use their detailed awareness of pupils' pastoral needs to make effective decisions to ensure that these needs are always met. Their highly effective approach to teaching and learning has been developed in response to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Leaders have successfully trained staff to provide high levels of academic challenge within a consistently supportive environment. Leaders communicate this approach clearly to parents. The school's approach to teaching and learning enables pupils to develop high levels of emotional resilience and become highly successful academically.
16. Leaders maintain a high level of awareness of the potential risks facing pupils at the school. They regularly review all aspects of school life to assess risks and put in place appropriate mitigations, including in boarding. Staff develop appropriate risk assessments and implement them effectively. Governors maintain close oversight of the school's approach to risk mitigation by speaking with staff and scrutinising the risk register.
17. Leaders maintain a suitable accessibility plan that covers physical access to the premises and access to the curriculum. Leaders implement this effectively to make the school an inclusive environment. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
18. Leaders maintain close links with local agencies and other educational and health partners. They provide information to the local authority as required, including about the use of funds provided for pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
19. The school website provides pupils and parents with detailed information on the school's policies and procedures. Teachers provide parents with regular information about their child's progress in written reports and at parents' evenings. However, at the start of the inspection, the school's website did not include all required reports of previous inspections. This was remedied during the inspection.

20. Leaders implement a suitable complaints policy that provides a clear process for responding to parents' and boarders' concerns. Leaders respond promptly to any concerns and take effective action where necessary. Leaders maintain detailed logs of complaints, which are regularly reviewed by governors.

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. Leaders provide a curriculum that is coherent across the school and appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Subject leaders collaborate closely between parts of the school and ensure that the curriculum develops pupils' understanding methodically. Leaders plan schemes of work in different subjects so that pupils can understand the links between subjects and relate their learning across subject boundaries.
23. Leaders regularly review the curriculum and align it with the school's aim for pupils to experience a broad education. For instance, a recent change to the curriculum in the sixth form provides pupils with greater flexibility so that the subjects they study are well matched to their needs. In the junior school, pupils study courses that prepare them effectively for further study. For example, the modern foreign languages (MFL) course develops pupils' understanding of different languages and prepares them for focused language learning in the senior school.
24. Leaders work with a range of external professionals to develop a clear vision for teaching that combines high expectations with support for pupils' emotional wellbeing. Teachers encourage pupils to take risks in their learning by praising 'marvellous mistakes' in the junior school and encouraging pupils to reflect on their learning in the senior school. Teachers help pupils to understand the difference between being ambitious and being overly self-critical. Pupils tackle challenging problems and achieve at high levels, at the same time as avoiding risks such as perfectionism and examination anxiety.
25. Teachers use their detailed understanding of the pupils' attainment to plan effective lessons. Teachers use skilful questioning to probe pupils' understanding and encourage the pupils to think critically. Teachers use well-chosen resources and teaching methods to provide pupils with appropriate levels of challenge. Teachers provide effective feedback to pupils on their work and encourage pupils to reflect on their own learning. Teachers provide extensive support inside and outside of lessons for pupils who may require it. As a result, pupils make good progress.
26. Teachers use their high levels of subject knowledge to plan lessons for pupils in the sixth form that deepen their understanding about their subjects. Form teachers support these pupils to develop independence, for instance by helping them plan how they will use their self-study time. Teachers encourage pupils in the sixth form to extend their understanding and discuss their ideas. For example, pupils present on topics beyond the examination syllabus at lunchtime societies.
27. In English lessons, pupils learn to write creatively, using figurative language effectively in the junior school and producing sophisticated diary entries in response to texts in the senior school. Teachers throughout the school encourage pupils to use advanced vocabulary, for instance by providing time for pupils to plan their answers before replying to oral questions. Teachers in mathematics guide pupils through complex problems by encouraging them to apply their prior knowledge alongside newly acquired concepts. Pupils develop high levels of numeracy and mathematical skills.
28. Pupils throughout the school develop their creative skills. Pupils learn to use a range of techniques in art lessons including painting, sketching and photography. Pupils in design and technology (DT) lessons develop products to meet a particular brief. Teachers encourage pupils to try out new techniques and learn from their mistakes.

29. Pupils throughout the school engage in regular dramatic performances that help develop their physical skills and understanding of different types of character. Pupils develop theatrical skills by acting and taking charge of lighting, stage management and costume design. Pupils regularly visit professional productions, widening their understanding of performance beyond the school.
30. Pupils learn to work together in musical ensembles and choirs, which often involve collaboration between junior and senior school pupils. Pupils organise, promote and lead many of these groups and performances, including a boys' choir, lunchtime concerts and rock bands.
31. Teachers use their knowledge of the pupils' needs to adapt their teaching effectively for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers in the learning department provide specialist support to pupils, including through working with external providers where necessary. Teachers use detailed information provided by specialists to adapt their teaching methods, such as by using appropriate techniques to support pupils who may find it difficult to engage with classroom discussions.
32. Staff carefully assess the language needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and, when required, develop individual learning plans (ILPs), which may include one-to-one language lessons. Teachers adapt their teaching appropriately, for instance by utilising phonetic spelling of technical terms during in-class activities.
33. Leaders monitor pupils' progress effectively through standardised assessments. Subject leaders compare pupils' current performance to their expected progress and provide additional support to any pupils who may require it. Leaders use departmental and whole-school assessment information to identify any individuals or cohorts who require additional support and act promptly to provide this.
34. Leaders provide an extensive range of clubs and activities to develop pupils' interests and skills. Pupils take part in enrichment lessons during the school day, which give them opportunities to develop creative skills, such as by creating stop-motion animations. After-school clubs provide opportunities for pupils to develop their learning beyond the curriculum, for instance by taking part in science research projects. Pupils develop leadership skills through engagement with the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE). In the evenings and at weekends, boarders take part in events such as the 'Friday night quiz', play board games and have supervised access to the swimming pool and gym.

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

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

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

36. Leaders make promoting pupils' emotional wellbeing a strategic priority for the school. They work with academic researchers to devise and implement policies and procedures that support pupils' mental health extremely well. Leaders ensure that each member of staff in the school recognises their role in promoting pupils' emotional wellbeing. Pupils learn that first attempts are not always perfect and teachers support them in developing resilience. Pupils reflect on their learning, their successes and how they can improve. Pupils learn how to manage their workload to achieve at a high level, while at the same time improving their mental health. Pupils become able to identify unhelpful thoughts and behaviours in themselves and each other and they learn what action to take in response. They develop high levels of self-knowledge and self-esteem.
37. The PE programme develops pupils' understanding of fairness and integrity alongside their physical skills and fitness. Younger pupils learn functional movement skills and explore different sporting techniques. Older pupils have the choice to compete at a high level in team sports such as hockey, football or rugby. Other pupils opt for the 'participation' pathway and develop their strength and physical fitness by training in the gym, running or practising Pilates. A sports scholar programme provides pupils competing at national and international level with mentoring, to help them balance sport with their academic work.
38. Staff have high expectations for how pupils should treat each other. Staff model a respectful, calm approach to pupils and each other. Leaders use assemblies to teach pupils that each individual in the community matters and this creates an accepting, inclusive environment.
39. Pupils develop their spiritual understanding in lessons, assemblies and regular school events such as the remembrance and carol services. In junior school languages lessons, pupils learn about different religious traditions and festivals from around the world. In religious studies (RS) lessons, older pupils study religious thought more deeply, for instance considering Abraham's role in religious texts or the ideas of Thomas Aquinas.
40. Leaders and staff consistently implement the behaviour policy effectively. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave and communicate these clearly. Teachers make effective use of rewards to encourage good behaviour and apply any sanctions that are required fairly and proportionately. Pupils behave well and treat adults and their peers with care and consideration. When a pupil's behaviour does fall below expectations, teachers support them to reflect on their behaviour and learn from the experience.
41. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme develops pupils' social and emotional skills. Pupils learn to reflect on their own identity and understand the harm that can be caused by stereotypes. Assemblies and talks from a range of visiting speakers supplement these lessons and cover pertinent topics such as everyday sexism.
42. The PSHE curriculum includes relationships and sex education (RSE) that meets statutory requirements and contains appropriate content. Teachers of PSHE know pupils well and skilfully guide them through reflective discussions on sensitive topics. Teachers listen carefully to pupils' questions and respond appropriately. Pupils learn to share their thoughts and articulate their ideas clearly. Pupils learn about the characteristics of healthy relationships, including, for older pupils,

knowledge of contraception and sexual health. Leaders regularly review the RSE programme, including through consultation with parents and pupils on the effectiveness of the course.

43. Leaders implement a clear and effective anti-bullying strategy that focuses on education and prevention. Form tutors regularly repeat the school's key messages of treating each other with kindness and seeking help if pupils are unsure. Pupils learn the importance of not being a bystander but sharing any concerns about bullying with an adult. Staff encourage pupils to talk to their teachers or use an online reporting system to report any such concerns. Where pupils do raise concerns, leaders and staff respond sensitively to achieve positive outcomes. Leaders deal with any rare instances of bullying effectively.
44. Staff maintain the premises, including the boarding accommodation, through thorough and methodical procedures. They maintain detailed online records of maintenance and safety checks. Staff understand their responsibilities with regard to health and safety and implement the measures in risk assessments effectively. Maintenance staff make effective use of external expertise, including carrying out a fire risk assessment and checking electrical and gas installations. Where external reviews identify any actions to be taken, maintenance staff carry these out promptly. Regular fire drills, including in boarding time, ensure that pupils know what to do in the event of an emergency.
45. The dedicated boarding house provides a comfortable environment for boarders. Pupils are able to personalise their rooms, which include secure storage for any valuables. Boarding prefects assist with the running of the house and provide an additional point of contact for younger pupils should they have a concern.
46. Staff maintain appropriate supervision throughout the school site and pupils are easily able to find a source of help should they need it. Staff in the boarding houses are easily accessible, including overnight.
47. Leaders provide a well-equipped medical centre with appropriately trained staff. The medical centre provides appropriate support to pupils for their physical and mental health. Staff maintain detailed records of any illness or injuries. Staff review these records to identify any patterns for individual pupils or types of activities. Staff support pupils, including boarders, to access external specialist medical support where appropriate.
48. The admission and attendance registers are maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Heads of Year carry out regular reviews of pupils' attendance and identify any patterns or pupils who need additional support. Where a pupil's attendance falls below expectations, staff respond promptly. The school informs the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.

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

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

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

50. Pupils learn about diverse cultures and ways of life throughout the curriculum. In the junior school, pupils explore different cultures in languages lessons. Older pupils study a range of cultures and religions and consider a variety of different viewpoints on contemporary issues. Pupils consider the development of rights for marginalised groups, such as by studying historical lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) campaigners and their impact.
51. Leaders use reference to the school's aim for pupils to 'make a difference' to promote pupils' awareness of their responsibility to society. Pupils learn about local and global issues such as poverty and migration. Pupils volunteer in the local community during the school day, visiting local nursing homes and primary schools during enrichment lessons. Pupils provide support for local refugee families, helping them to learn English or with their homework. Pupils learn about the positive impact they can make on others and the benefits they can gain from such activities.
52. Staff provide extensive opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles within the school. Members of the school council from the junior and senior schools present ideas to school leaders. Staff make changes as a result, for instance recent changes to the junior school playground. Prefects and pupil ambassadors organise activities and provide support for other pupils. Older pupils volunteer at the junior school homework club and organise house events.
53. Pupils learn about the institutions and services of modern Britain. They study the criminal justice and court systems and develop an understanding of attitudes to crime and punishment, as well as ethical issues related to these. Lessons in English make links to these ideas, for instance through the study of poetry with themes of justice and cultural diversity in Year 6. Pupils learn about the role of democracy in government and gain experience of voting when electing members of the school council.
54. Pupils also explore social and cultural issues through music and drama. Pupils learn to perform music and plays from around the world. Pupils in Year 9 devise dramatic pieces that tackle social issues and perform them to younger pupils. Teachers choose texts in English that widen pupils' understanding of the world and awareness of the experiences of different groups.
55. Leaders provide an effective careers education programme in the senior school. Staff provide pupils in Year 11 with one-on-one interviews so that pupils' choices for sixth-form study align with potential careers. Careers events and external speakers provide pupils with an understanding of a range of careers options. However, careers guidance for those below Year 11 does not consistently inform pupils of the range of career open to them as effectively as possible.
56. Staff prepare pupils well for their next steps as they move through the school. The curriculum in the junior school prepares pupils for senior school teaching by gradually increasing the number of specialist teachers. Junior school pupils make a smooth transition into Year 7. Teachers in the senior school introduce core concepts and techniques early on, so pupils are well prepared for each new course of study. Staff provide clear guidance for pupils so that they can identify their aptitudes and future aspirations when making GCSE, A-level and post-school choices.

57. Leaders integrate economic education into the curriculum. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 learn about managing their money and older pupils learn more advanced financial topics such as saving for pensions. Older pupils learn about loans and university finance. Sixth-form pupils practise living independently in their final year, planning their budget for food and entertainment for the week.
58. Pupils develop business skills by taking on leadership roles in a range of activities. Pupils design, produce and sell items for charitable purposes, tracking their profits and learning to manage costs. Boarding pupils manage their house snack budget and collaborate together before placing orders with caterers.

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

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

Safeguarding

60. Leaders prioritise safeguarding and ensure that it has a prominent profile in the school. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding understand their role and the risks that could affect pupils. The safeguarding policy and procedures are in line with current statutory guidance.
61. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undertake regular and suitable training. Regular strategy meetings and case reviews allow leaders to identify areas for further training. Leaders provide effective training to staff on induction and regularly throughout the year. Leaders also provide staff with a regular safeguarding briefing, which focuses on current issues. Staff understand their responsibilities and fulfil them effectively, including reporting any low-level concerns.
62. Effective reporting systems enable staff to share any safeguarding concerns promptly. Leaders carefully consider any barriers to pupils reporting concerns and take action, for instance by bringing in an online reporting tool. Pupils understand how to report concerns to staff. Leaders respond appropriately to any safeguarding concerns effectively, including making referrals to local agencies where necessary. Staff work closely with other safeguarding partners in the local area, such as medical professionals and the local authority.
63. Leaders maintain detailed and suitable safeguarding logs and monitor individual pupils carefully. Fortnightly meetings bring together all staff involved with supporting a pupil and ensure that staff provide appropriate support. Leaders monitor the safeguarding logs for trends and respond by arranging additional training or changing school procedures, as necessary.
64. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. Leaders adapt the PSHE curriculum to the needs of pupils in the school and provide assemblies on current issues. Pupils act as online safety ambassadors to support their peers and reduce the barriers to them reporting a concern. A suitable internet filtering and monitoring system is in place. Leaders test the system regularly and respond promptly to any inappropriate internet use.
65. Leaders carry out all required pre-employment checks to ensure the suitability of staff working in the school. Staff record these checks accurately in the single central record of appointments (SCR). Leaders put in place robust procedures to ensure that any other adults living in, or visiting, boarding accommodation do not pose a risk to pupils.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	City of London Freeman's School
Department for Education number	936/6061
Address	City of London Freeman's School Ashtead Park Ashtead Surrey KT21 1ET
Phone number	01372 822400
Email address	HMOoffice@freemens.org
Website	www.freemens.org
Proprietor	City of London Corporation
Chair	Mr Jamel Banda
Headteacher	Mr Roland Martin
Age range	7 to 18
Number of pupils	963
Number of boarding pupils	57
Date of previous inspection	22 to 24 November 2022

Information about the school

67. City of London Freeman's School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school located in Ashted, Surrey. The school consists of a junior school, a senior school and a sixth form, each of which has its own building. The school is overseen by the City of London Corporation. The current chair of governors took up his responsibilities in July 2025.
68. One boarding house provides accommodation for male and female pupils. Pupils are able to flexi-board from the age of 11 and enrol in weekly or full boarding from the age of 13.
69. The school has identified 182 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
70. The school has identified 150 pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
71. The school states its aims are to enable pupils to learn, to lead and to make a difference. It seeks to support children in finding their path in whatever area of the curriculum or co-curriculum they wish to pursue. The school intends to give pupils the confidence, curiosity, independence and wisdom to succeed in the next stage of their life, whether it be preparing for senior school, sixth form or life beyond school.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

14 to 16 October 2025

72. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

73. Inspection activities included:

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

74. 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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For more information, please visit isi.net