

School inspection report

2 to 4 December 2025

Ratcliffe College

Fosse Way

Ratcliffe on the Wreake

Leicester

LE7 4SG

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 prioritise the pastoral care and welfare of the pupils in their care. Through a well-structured and supportive pastoral system and regular monitoring of pupils' wellbeing, consistent support is provided to ensure that pupils thrive socially and academically.
2. Through a well-structured curriculum and an effective approach to teaching, pupils are ready to learn, and are respectful and responsive in lessons. Over time, pupils learn and achieve well. However, there are limited opportunities in some lessons for pupils to apply their learning in more complex ways or with independence, when they are ready to do so. Pupils benefit from a wide range of co-curricular activities throughout the school, starting in the early years. Through these opportunities for sport, music, drama, art and academic support, pupils develop their self-confidence, resilience and leadership skills.
3. Boarding provision is of a high quality, where boarders build positive relationships with staff and each other and develop their independence in a safe and supportive community. There are effective channels for boarders to express concerns. These are considered carefully and appropriate action is taken. Boarding accommodation is well maintained, age appropriate and is well supervised. The boarding community is welcoming and fosters a sense of belonging.
4. The school has a rigorous approach to the management of health and safety and fire safety. The implementation of policies is monitored by regular checks of procedures and associated documentation. Staff are trained in their specific areas of responsibility and regular external audits take place, with any action points followed up within the required timescale. The school monitors and mitigates risks effectively.
5. Through chapel services, tutorials, school committees, volunteering opportunities and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), pupils develop an understanding of their responsibilities as future citizens. They understand the importance of recognising and respecting everyone as a valued individual who makes their own contribution to the community. In this way, pupils develop their empathy, understanding and respect for members of their diverse community and the wider world.
6. Safeguarding in the school is of the highest importance. Staff are well trained. Any concerns that arise are managed effectively and record-keeping is meticulous. Pupils access a range of adults whom they can approach if they have any worries. Appropriate pre-employment checks are undertaken. However, there were minor administrative gaps in the recording of the date of some of these checks on the single central record of appointments (SCR). This was remedied during the inspection.

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 dates of all pre-employment checks are recorded on the single central record
- create opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in more complex ways to foster curiosity and independent thinking.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders actively promote pupils' physical and mental wellbeing, ensuring that day and boarding pupils develop academically and pastorally and flourish within a safe and supportive environment, in line with the aims of the school.
8. Governors provide support and guidance in areas such as safeguarding, boarding, and health and safety. They ensure they are well informed about the school through a range of activities such as parental surveys, discussions with pupils and regular on-site visits. They monitor policies and their implementation to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
9. Leaders conduct thorough self-evaluation of how the school's ethos and aims are delivered. Leaders ensure that the views of parents, staff and pupils are sought and considered in their planning. Senior leaders monitor the impact of their actions, set clear development plans for their areas, reflect on current strengths and track their progress with key indicators.
10. Leaders in boarding are experienced and proactive in providing a warm and welcoming environment for the pupils in their care. Leaders ensure that boarding pupils and their parents receive appropriate and relevant information. Leaders actively promote pupils' physical and mental wellbeing through individual care, pastoral and medical support and a well-planned programme of activities in the evenings and at weekends.
11. Senior leaders within the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and the preparatory school implement robust quality assurance systems, including learning walks, lesson observations, work scrutiny, pupil and staff discussions and peer coaching. Monitoring outcomes are closely linked to staff appraisal and subject action plans are used to track progress. Pupils benefit from a positive learning environment where they learn and develop well.
12. Leaders display a comprehensive understanding of risk and its mitigation. Staff receive both general and specific training tailored to their individual responsibilities. Thorough risk assessments are conducted for all areas of the site, all activities, educational visits, and for pupils with welfare needs, ensuring the safety of the pupils and staff.
13. The required information for parents of current and prospective pupils is available on the school's website and parents receive regular newsletters to ensure that they are well informed. Parents receive regular reports on their child's academic progress and personal development so that they can support areas for improvement and celebrate success. Complaints are handled in a timely manner in line with the school's policy. Detailed records are kept of all concerns, the investigation, outcome and actions taken.
14. Leaders work effectively with external services, when needed, such as safeguarding and mental health teams. They inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points. They also inform the local authority with relevant regular information related to pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including information related to finance and funding.
15. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met. The school has a comprehensive accessibility plan, which outlines support to enable all pupils to access the curriculum.

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 have embedded a broad and balanced curriculum, carefully designed to reflect the unique context of the school and the needs of its pupils. The curriculum is coherently aligned, promoting a seamless transition between year groups, planning for the careful development of pupils' foundational knowledge and skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The teaching of important school values, such as mutual respect, tolerance, democracy and individual liberty, is woven into the curriculum planning.
18. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They use an appropriate range of good-quality resources and activities, such as retrieval practice, modelling, visual prompts and scaffolded tasks. Teachers promote the use of precise technical and subject-specific language. Lessons include varied activities such as practical experiments, discussions, debates and creative tasks. Opportunities for speaking, listening, literacy, oracy and numeracy are embedded through questioning, presentations and subject-specific tasks.
19. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils respond appropriately, work hard and take pride in producing neat, well-organised written work. They actively engage with practical learning experiences, as seen in Year 7 music where pupils work together collaboratively and respectfully to perform an a capella version of a song. Pupils express enjoyment in their lessons, particularly valuing the occasions when they can work independently and apply their learning in more complex ways. However, these opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in more independent and challenging ways, when they are ready, are not as well developed across some lessons.
20. The management of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is highly effective. Pupils' needs are well identified and supported. Leaders provide precise guidance to teachers so that they support pupils effectively in the classroom, through adaptive teaching, targeted support and the use of assistive technology. For example, in Year 4 English, pupils effectively use voice-to-text technology to write reports about healthy living. Where needed, pupils receive additional one-to-one support. Over time, pupils access the curriculum successfully, learn and achieve well.
21. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are assessed on entry to the school and support is provided according to need. For example, teachers use specific strategies in class or one-to-one or small-group lessons. Progress is tracked and monitored through half-termly assessments to check on the progress that pupils are making. Staff receive training in EAL strategies and have regular updates through an EAL newsletter. The weekly EAL club supports pupils in the development of their social skills and associated language.
22. An assessment framework is in place to evaluate pupils' work and performance regularly and thoroughly. Teachers and leaders use this information to identify what pupils know and can do, and where some need extra help. Pupils are well supported by their teachers when they encounter difficulties or require additional assistance, including through individual support and in extra revision clinics. Over time, pupils acquire new knowledge and make good progress.
23. In the early years, experienced practitioners provide a broad and stimulating carousel of activities to support children's development. Children engage in tasks to develop early foundation knowledge, such as using dough to develop fine motor skills, designing and colouring advent calendars,

developing communication skills in a shop activity, using an interactive alphabet game and practising early numeracy through the use of number lines. Each child is recognised as an individual, with learning tailored to their specific needs and interests. Progress is monitored daily and systematically recorded on an online platform, allowing for regular tracking against the early learning goals and ensuring that each child's development is closely supported.

24. Younger pupils access a range of co-curricular opportunities such as clubs for Lego, cookery, film, book club, sign language and London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA) accreditation. Older pupils have access to a wide range of co-curricular activities such as sport, drama, music, art, chess, Combined Cadet Force (CCF), The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and subject-specific support clubs, promoting social, physical and emotional development. Boarders experience a structured, engaging environment with access to diverse facilities and a wide range of supervised activities including sport, fitness and weekend trips. The programme balances skill-building and social interaction, and endeavours to build on pupils' interests.

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

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

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

26. Pupils' mental health, emotional wellbeing and self-esteem are very well supported in a range of ways. This starts in the early years, where the youngest children are taught to express their feelings and think caringly about the emotions of others. Through a range of activities such as opportunities for leadership roles, co-curricular activities like DofE, celebration assemblies, and PSHE, pupils are taught how to manage their feelings, build mental agility, gain confidence, develop skills and be resilient. Boarders benefit from high-quality pastoral care, where systems for expressing their views and concerns are well used, and acted upon promptly, including using independent listeners and additional external services, when needed.
27. Pupils develop an appreciation for non-material aspects of life through religious studies (RS) lessons, art, music and drama. They develop their spirituality through chapel services where all faiths are welcome and through talks and homilies such as 'the importance of peace through solidarity'. Pupils are taught the value of gratitude and the importance of respect and what it means for relationships. This latter value is prevalent across the school community.
28. Physical education (PE) is well planned and well taught. The youngest children in the early years benefit from a programme of activities designed to develop skills such as balance through hopping and jumping and motor skills through throwing and catching. Pupils learn about a range of sports. For example, in the senior school, pupils take part in sports such as hockey, rugby, netball, football, tennis and athletics. A high proportion of pupils participate in co-curricular sport and represent the school in matches and in local and national competitions. Sport is part of the school's commitment to a healthy lifestyle and includes advice and guidance on nutrition.
29. There are comprehensive and well-taught PSHE programmes and relationships and sex education (RSE) courses, which are age appropriate. Discussion and debate are encouraged. Pupils' understanding is checked using online surveys and feedback forms. Leaders think carefully and listen to pupils' views about the best way to teach topics such as menstruation. They use up-to-date resources to support the teaching of sensitive material to pupils. The course content is shared with parents in advance and they are consulted over any changes to the RSE policy and curriculum.
30. Pupils are polite and well mannered. Poor behaviour is rare and pupils clearly understand the system of rewards and sanctions. Incidents of poor behaviour are logged and analysed for patterns and trends so that action can be taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the pupils. The school takes a proactive approach to preventing and addressing bullying, embedding strategies in PSHE lessons and tutorials, and reinforcing them through focus weeks and assemblies. Pupils report that bullying is rare and managed swiftly and fairly.
31. Boarding accommodation is maintained to a high standard. Communal areas facilitate social interaction. Pupils are well supervised to ensure their needs are addressed and their safety is a priority. The boarding provision features diverse and adequate meal options, including an 'allergy bar' to accommodate dietary requirements. Pupils have access to food and beverages outside scheduled mealtimes, and their laundry and hygiene needs are addressed daily.
32. The school has appropriate systems for recording and monitoring admission and attendance. Leaders work closely with families and external agencies to support pupils where there are concerns.

Pupils attend well. Leaders inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.

33. There is a robust and thorough approach to health and safety, including fire safety, underpinned by comprehensive policies and effective monitoring of their implementation. Record-keeping is thorough and maintenance is prompt and effective. Staff training ensures the safety of the whole school community. Pupils are well supervised.
34. Medical facilities for day pupils and boarders are suitable and sufficient. Staff are trained to deliver appropriate treatment. There is an effective accident reporting process in place, which monitors trends in accidents and near misses. Staff are appropriately trained, including in paediatric first aid.

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

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

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

36. Pupils are taught about the importance of diversity, equality and mutual respect. The school's equality, diversity and inclusion group is an important part of the community. Pupils and staff engage in meaningful dialogue, raise awareness on key issues and celebrate cultural and individual diversity. International pupils are warmly welcomed and fully accepted into the school community, with their cultures celebrated, such as in themed assemblies, for example, on Ramadan. As a result of these inclusive practices and activities, pupils consistently show respect for one another and actively celebrate each other's differences, contributing to a positive and supportive environment.
37. The school's ethos is rooted in a culture of mutual respect, responsibility and service. This is supported by the consistent promotion of pupils' engagement in volunteering and charity work. Pupils value the opportunities they have to contribute to the communities in which they live. Pupils volunteer by visiting the local learning support group, helping with Parkrun and giving choir performances in the local care home. Pupils also donate gifts to support the homeless and contribute to the local foodbank. In this way, pupils gain an awareness of their responsibilities as future citizens.
38. Prefect systems and leadership opportunities help pupils develop confidence and responsibility. In the senior school, roles such as student listeners and prefects enable pupils to be highly positive role models across the school. Pupils within the preparatory school take on leadership roles, such as library ambassadors and story club readers for Nursery children, which build responsibility and confidence.
39. The school council gives pupils opportunities for roles, responsibilities and a meaningful voice in school life, actively promoting democratic principles. Pupils' views result in tangible changes, such as adjustments to the sixth-form café provision, and uniform policies regarding the option for girls to wear trousers. The school council and other leadership roles, including prefect duties, encourage pupils to act as role models for younger pupils and practise accountability within the school community.
40. In the early years, children develop their social skills through the variety of well-planned activities, such as acting as a postman. Teachers model social behaviour so that the children develop an understanding of how to interact with each other and with adults.
41. The school actively prepares pupils for life in British society. Through the PSHE curriculum and history and RS lessons, pupils learn about important values, such as democracy, the rule of law and civil liberty, through discussion of such topics as immigration and artificial intelligence. The school ensures that pupils gain a balanced perspective on political views through the monitoring of schemes of work and the checking of outside speakers and their presentations.
42. Younger pupils learn about economic education through a range of well-planned activities, such as learning how to save and budget when looking at buying plants for a garden. Older pupils learn about finances and economics through PSHE, the careers programme and entrepreneurial activities where they design, cost and market a product. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of other opportunities. For example, pupils in the sixth form take part in initiatives through Young Enterprise

and the Tycoon Enterprise Competition. As a result, pupils develop economic understanding in preparation for their future lives.

43. The school provides a comprehensive careers programme. The curriculum, taught through PSHE, is enhanced by visiting speakers from a range of careers, such as doctors, lawyers and dentists. Older pupils also gain information and guidance through initiatives such as careers week, inspire talks and the school's 'what we want to be' project. Pupils attend careers fairs and take part in employer-led activities. They receive tailored guidance on applications, writing a curriculum vitae and interview techniques. The careers programme prepares pupils effectively for university, apprenticeships, employment and life beyond school.

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

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

Safeguarding

45. The school has a thorough approach to safeguarding, which is well understood and used by pupils and staff. The safeguarding policy is written in line with local and statutory guidance. It is updated annually, approved by the governing body and accurately reflects processes used by leaders. The governor with designated safeguarding responsibilities is in regular contact with the school, providing advice and guidance.
46. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are well trained. They have the knowledge and skills required to carry out their duties effectively. They ensure that staff are well trained and that they use the school's reporting systems effectively. They make timely, considered and informed decisions to support the wellbeing of pupils. Referrals to external agencies are timely and appropriate.
47. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and receive regular training. This includes in-person training on induction and annual refresher training, including about the 'Prevent' duty. In addition, staff receive regular updates throughout the school year and topics are revisited on a regular basis to refresh their knowledge. Staff also complete online training and testing, where their understanding is checked. As a result, staff are proactive in reporting safeguarding matters, including low-level concerns.
48. Boarding staff are trained in safeguarding, understand their responsibilities and actively promote pupil welfare across the boarding provision. Clear systems are in place to ensure pupils are safe and supported, including safeguarding information, posters displaying child-specific support services and structured feedback mechanisms via an online system. The wellbeing of boarders is checked following visits to guardians and staff act promptly on any issues raised, with processes documented and monitored. Boarders are made aware of how to contact the independent person, should they need to.
49. Pupils are taught how to raise concerns through multiple channels, such as an online anonymous reporting system, tutors, those with designated safeguarding responsibilities, the chaplain, medical staff and an independent person. Sources of support are well advertised around the school. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including online, through PSHE and computer science lessons.
50. The school has appropriate internet monitoring and filtering systems in place. Leaders are alerted to any concerns and take timely and effective action. This approach to supporting pupils to be safe online extends to boarding, where boarders are well supported and monitored when using the internet and phones. Parents receive regular safeguarding newsletters, including advice on how to keep their children safe online, and are invited to attend online safety events in school.
51. Safer recruitment processes check appropriately on the suitability of staff, as required, before staff begin working at the school. The records of these checks are maintained on a suitable single central record of appointments. At the time of the inspection, checks had been undertaken correctly but there were some minor administrative gaps in the recording of dates on the record. These omissions were rectified before the end of the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Ratcliffe College
Department for Education number	855/6001
Registered charity number	1115975
Address	Ratcliffe College Fosse Way Ratcliffe on the Wreake Leicester Leicestershire LE7 4SG
Phone number	01509 817000
Email address	enquiries@ratcliffecollege.com
Website	www.ratcliffecollege.com
Proprietor	Trustees of Ratcliffe College
Chair	Reverend Father Tom Thomas
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Reddin
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	929
Number of boarding pupils	105
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 May 2022

Information about the school

53. Ratcliffe College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in Ratcliffe on the Wreake, Leicestershire. The school is registered as Catholic denomination. It admits pupils from secular and non-secular backgrounds and beliefs. The school comprises an early years foundation stage, a preparatory school, a senior school and a sixth form. The school is owned by a proprietor body. There is also a board of governors who act in an advisory capacity for the proprietor body. A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2025.
54. The school has two single-sex boarding houses based on the school site. The facility accommodates 105 boarders aged from 11 to 18 years.
55. The early years setting accommodates 52 pupils in two Nursey classes and two Reception classes. The setting is located on the same school site.
56. The school has identified 109 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
57. The school has identified English as an additional language for 59 pupils.
58. The school states its aims are to educate young people in the spirit of the Gospel and the traditions of the Catholic Church, seeking to nurture the God-given talents and potential of each child so that they may become confident, responsible and useful members of society. Whilst the school operates as a Catholic school, it welcomes children of other denominations and faiths whose parents feel they can share in, and benefit from, the ethos and environment of the school.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

2 to 4 December 2025

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

60. 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.

61. 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