

School inspection report

15 to 17 September 2026

Oxford International College

1 – 5 London Place

Oxford

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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 of the school promote the school's ethos effectively and, together with governors, ensure the Standards are consistently met. Leaders combine academic challenge with individualised academic, pastoral and careers support. Boarding is integral to the school's provision and supports pupils' academic study, personal development and preparation for independent living.
2. Leaders and governors know the school well and discharge their responsibilities effectively. They use a wide range of evidence to evaluate provision and take action where improvement is needed. Recent work to enhance provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and to enhance pupils' boarding experiences, demonstrates a culture of active review and improvement.
3. The curriculum is ambitious and prepares pupils well for examinations, higher education and future careers, particularly in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) fields. Teaching typically enables pupils to engage successfully with demanding work. Assessment and individual support help pupils understand how to improve. Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is well established and well integrated into classroom practice.
4. Pupils benefit from supportive pastoral and boarding arrangements, effective health and safety systems and clear expectations for behaviour. They understand how to seek help and are well supported by staff. The school offers a broad range of physical and recreational activities. However, some pupils in the sixth form do not take part in physical activity regularly enough to gain fully from its benefits for their health and wellbeing.
5. Leaders develop a school community which emphasises respect for different cultures and backgrounds. The school's life skills programme, careers education, volunteering and community activities prepare pupils for adult life and encourage them to contribute positively to society. Careers guidance is individualised and impartial.
6. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff understand how to identify and report concerns, including concerns about adults. Leaders take account of contextual risks associated with a city-centre school and boarding provision, work effectively with external agencies and maintain robust safer recruitment arrangements.

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 all pupils regularly take part in physical activity to support their physical and mental wellbeing.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders demonstrate secure knowledge of their responsibilities and actively promote pupils' wellbeing. They know the particular characteristics of the school and use information from academic performance, safeguarding, pastoral work, boarding, surveys and pupil views to effectively evaluate provision. Governors receive detailed reports and challenge leaders appropriately. This oversight helps leaders to identify any areas for improvement that are required and to take prompt action.
8. Governors maintain effective oversight of the Standards, including those that apply to boarding. Boarding reports identify strengths and areas requiring further attention, such as staff development or changes to accommodation. Leaders respond to these findings through action plans and follow-up checks. This gives governors a sufficiently detailed view of boarders' day-to-day experience and supports informed challenge of leaders.
9. Leaders monitor the academic performance of pupils carefully and implement a range of strategies to enable pupils to succeed. Analysis of examination outcomes and information about progress made from starting points, quickly identifies any variation in performance in subjects and in teaching quality. Where changes need to be made, leaders strengthen quality assurance through a range of targeted activities such as learning walks, formal observations, curriculum reviews and professional development. As a result, leaders identify any variations in teaching quality promptly and take appropriate action to address them.
10. Leaders ensure they are successfully developing provision for pupils who have SEND. They take a phased approach and ensure a school-wide, flexible and responsive approach to pupils' needs. Weekly discussions bring together specialist, pastoral and health staff so that pupils' academic, social, emotional and wellbeing needs are considered together.
11. Risk assessment and management are effective. Leaders understand risks associated with pupils moving between sites in central Oxford, boarding, practical subjects and off-site activity. In boarding, audits have led to developments in staff training, in furnishings, and in evacuation procedures and health and safety checks. Leaders monitor actions through regular boarding walks and operational meetings. This cycle of identification, action and review reduces risks to boarders and supports their welfare.
12. Policies are implemented effectively and staff understand procedures relevant to their roles. Leaders make a wide range of required information available to parents on the school's website and on demand. Communication with parents is regular and includes regular updates on their child's academic performance and welfare, as well as formal written reports.
13. Where issues do arise, the school is responsive and works with parents and pupils to find resolution quickly. Leaders use a range of methods to ensure good communication with parents, the majority of whom live overseas. There is an appropriate three stage complaints procedure. This supports an effective relationship between all parties and parental feedback is typically positive about the school.
14. Leaders maintain constructive links with external agencies, including safeguarding partners and health professionals. The school has an accessibility plan and leaders make reasonable adjustments for individual pupils. Teaching and wider provision promotes respect for protected characteristics and meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

15. Pupils are able to contribute to leaders' evaluation of the provision. Pupils raise practical and educational matters through surveys, the student council, boarding meetings and informal discussion. Recent examples include proposals about movement time between lessons, peer mentoring, food and boarding facilities, teachers' feedback, and support with university admissions. Leaders consider these views alongside safeguarding and operational requirements. This helps pupils understand that their views can influence provision, while also recognising why leaders sometimes need to maintain current arrangements.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and appropriate to pupils' ages, aptitudes and future plans. It provides a careful balance between leaders' focus on a STEM curriculum with appropriate options to study and experience arts and humanities. The curriculum for secondary age pupils is accelerated to enable pupils to access GCSE examinations in a single year. Leaders plan learning carefully so that pupils acquire appropriate subject knowledge and move towards greater independence and application as they progress through the school.
17. Leaders provide a wide range of challenging extension activities which extend learning beyond examination specifications and help prepare pupils for research-led university futures. Activities for pupils include designing a GPS-enabled drone, using three-dimensional modelling, and exploring artificial intelligence applications and robotics.
18. Teaching typically enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills and to make good progress. Teachers know their subjects well and use a range of suitable resources and methods. In mathematics, clear explanation, visual representation and explicit teaching of terminology enable pupils, including those who have SEND, to access unfamiliar statistical concepts. In English, pupils use digital and printed texts and responsive questioning to explore complex ideas and language. In science, engaging practical work enables pupils to apply knowledge safely, interpret results and develop disciplined investigative skills.
19. Assessment is frequent, informs support and aids pupils' progress, and is regularly communicated to parents. Leaders use baseline information, regular assessments and information from teachers to identify pupils who are not progressing as expected or who would benefit from further challenge. Academic clinics, individual support and tutoring then provide additional help. Pupils understand their academic goals and are highly motivated to improve. In English, for example, teaching is designed to directly focus on weaknesses identified via assessment of previous work, enabling pupils to practise the precise skills they need to make progress. As a result of effective targeted support pupils achieve success in their external examinations. Their performance at A Level supports their aim to go to research-led universities and those with the highest entry requirements.
20. Pupils who have SEND are identified through admissions information, assessment, staff referral and pastoral monitoring. Specialist staff use a phased and sensitive approach and share information regularly with teachers. Pupils receive study support, specialist coaching and classroom adjustments according to need. These arrangements are effective and leaders continue to strengthen training and quality assurance.
21. Most pupils speak English as an additional language. Specialist provision assesses language proficiency carefully on entry and develops academic vocabulary, grammar, written and spoken English and communication. Teachers adapt support to pupils' different starting points. English language preparation also supports pupils' to transition into A-level study, as well as helping with university applications and preparation for interviews. Provision enables pupils to participate confidently in the wider academic life of the school. Pupils enjoy the use of English as the common school language in social areas.
22. Boarding contributes to pupils' education and recreation. Almost all pupils board, and boarding staff communicate with academic and pastoral colleagues regularly and use mentoring to support pupils'

organisation, study and wellbeing. Boarders can take part in cultural, social and recreational activities, including house competitions and sport. The enrichment programme includes a range of sports, such as football, basketball, and gym activity, as well as the use of local museums and arts for pupils' wider personal interests. The common room contains a piano and guitars which are regularly and freely used by pupils. These opportunities develop relationships and wider skills.

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

23. Relationships across the school are typically respectful and supportive. Pupils value the school's international character and form friendships across different backgrounds. The school delivers personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) through regular life skills sessions, and this, together with relationships and sex education (RSE) develops pupils' understanding of respectful relationships, health, personal safety and moral decision-making. In lessons, pupils listen to one another and discuss sensitive issues respectfully. Staff follow up any inappropriate behaviour when it is identified and use reflection and restorative justice approaches to ensure a harmonious atmosphere is maintained.
24. The pastoral structure supports pupils' self-knowledge, confidence and emotional wellbeing. Tutors meet pupils individually and consider attendance, academic progress, behaviour, wellbeing and future plans for each pupil. Heads of year, counsellors, nurses, specialist staff and boarding staff share relevant information so that support is co-ordinated. Pupils can identify adults they would approach for help and describe staff as accessible. Boarders are supported by resident staff throughout the day and night and have structured mentoring alongside informal access to trusted adults, so that they are always able to talk if they have concerns, or if they need help with a personal issue such as banking or travel. This enhances pupils' enjoyment of boarding and the care they receive.
25. Personal, social, health and economic education is relevant to the needs of the ages of pupils in the school. The Year 13 life skills programme includes independent health choices, recognising serious illness, medicines and drugs, relationships and intimacy, financial decision-making and mindfulness. As a result, pupils are well prepared for greater independence. The school's arrangements for mobile telephones are understood by staff and pupils and are implemented consistently. Pupils value the way these expectations reduce distraction and encourage social interaction, while maintaining appropriate means of contact with parents when needed.
26. Pupils behave well. They are courteous, focused and strongly motivated to learn. Clear expectations help maintain calm classrooms and boarding houses. The anti-bullying approach centres on the school's values of tolerance and inclusivity and is well understood by staff and pupils. Any concerns pupils may have can be raised through several routes, such as direct contact with tutors, or anonymously through a bespoke messaging system. Leaders analyse pastoral and safeguarding information so that patterns of behaviour or welfare concerns can be identified and followed up.
27. Health and safety arrangements are effective across the school's multiple sites and boarding houses. Risk assessments are appropriate and staff understand how risks vary according to pupils' ages, activities and circumstances. Fire, access, maintenance, food hygiene, electrical safety and contractor arrangements are routinely checked. First aid and medical arrangements include nursing support, trained boarding staff, clear medication procedures and systems for monitoring pupils who are unwell. Boarders receive suitable meals, can prepare snacks themselves and have access to appropriate laundry and domestic arrangements.
28. Attendance is promoted and monitored effectively. Electronic registration, senior oversight and clear absence procedures enable leaders to identify unexplained absence and establish pupils' whereabouts promptly. Boarding check-in and signing-out arrangements provide additional security

while allowing age-appropriate independence. Pupils understand the purpose of these arrangements. Admission and registration of pupils is well administered by knowledgeable staff who understand their responsibilities to report to the local authority any transitions to or from the school at non-standard times.

29. Boarding accommodation is clean and suitably maintained and pupils know how to obtain help at night. Daily welfare oversight, room checks and clear routines support boarders' safety and personal responsibility. Boarders contribute their views through house meetings, surveys and informal discussion. Some older boarders would prefer greater freedom, but leaders understand this tension and balance pupils' growing independence with safeguarding and supervision requirements. Pupils have private rooms and areas, but boarding staff also live on site and there is always someone on hand to monitor visible entry and access points. Common areas also have staff on hand who are effective in providing social support.
30. The school provides varied opportunities for physical activity. Pupils in Year 11 receive timetabled physical education and the school has implemented a new curriculum, which ensures that pupils of secondary school age receive compulsory weekly timetabled lessons. Older pupils can choose from a range of optional sport and exercise opportunities, and house basketball and volleyball competitions have increased recent levels of participation. However, some sixth-form pupils prioritise academic work to the extent that they do not participate regularly in physical activity. Consequently, these pupils do not benefit as fully as they could from the contribution regular activity makes to physical and mental wellbeing.

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

31. School leaders actively support pupils in developing respect for people from different cultures and backgrounds, and actively promote British values. Pupils describe the school's diversity as a strength. Teaching in PSHE lessons and individual subjects, as well as boarding activities reinforce mutual respect and regard for protected characteristics. For example, the study of *Othello* is delivered by teachers in a way that allows pupils to discuss sensitive issues such as racism. In boarding, staff encourage activities which enable pupils to share food, music and traditions from their home countries, thus helping them to develop curiosity about cultures different from their own.
32. In politics, pupils compare the political systems of the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States, including the workings of Parliament and Congress, which develops their understanding of democratic institutions. Teaching presents political material in an educational context and supports pupils to develop informed views. Where political issues are taught, leaders ensure teachers present material in a balanced way rather than promoting a partisan view. This enables pupils to discuss contrasting perspectives, form their own opinions and understand how democracy operates within modern society.
33. Pupils develop an understanding of right and wrong and accept responsibility for their actions. Behaviour expectations, safeguarding education, relationships education and teaching about online conduct provide practical contexts in which pupils consider the consequences of choices. Pupil leadership and student council activities give pupils experience of representing others, proposing solutions and contributing to decisions. Boarding routines similarly develop punctuality, organisation, consideration for others and age-appropriate independence.
34. Economic education is delivered across the curriculum and is age appropriate. Pupils receive information about mortgages, pensions, credit cards, savings and investment accounts, financial decision-making and the risks of online scams. They are supported to open their own bank account when they arrive in the UK. This helps pupils develop practical knowledge which they can apply as they move towards university and independent living.
35. Careers guidance supports preparation for the next steps after school. A planned programme from Year 11 onwards develops self-awareness, research skills, employability and understanding of future pathways. Pupils receive individual guidance about university courses in the UK and overseas, as well as information about apprenticeships and employment. Specialist advisers understand different admissions systems in both the UK and overseas and help pupils make realistic choices. Pupils appreciate the guidance they receive.
36. Pupils contribute to the local community and wider society through volunteering and social-impact work. Examples include supporting a local hospice and a local food bank, and taking part in environmental and community projects. Older pupils support younger pupils through mentoring and peer initiatives. These experiences develop empathy, initiative and an understanding of responsibilities towards others.
37. Leaders welcome the engagement of pupils in developing the community within the school and pupils are able to contribute in a number of ways. For example, student council members raise matters such as lesson-transition times, peer mentoring, food, facilities and careers support, and

propose practical solutions. Boarders contribute through house meetings, surveys and feedback. These opportunities help pupils understand community participation in practice.

Safeguarding

38. Leaders establish a positive culture of safeguarding throughout the school and its boarding provision, and as a result safeguarding is effective. Senior leaders and governors demonstrate suitable skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They ensure that staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and that it runs as a thread through all aspects of school life to support pupils' wellbeing.
39. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding. Regular reports to the board and a suitably trained designated safeguarding governor ensure proprietors are well informed of any incidents or developing trends. As a result, governors are able to support leaders in effective decision-making.
40. The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy that takes account of current guidance. Staff receive regular updates on changes to guidance and are aware of how to refer concerns if they have any, including in boarding. Staff understand the context of the school well; its international pupil body, urban setting, and boarding environment. As a result, they are aware of particular risks to young people and demonstrate appropriate awareness and care. For example, they ensure that pupils joining the school receive guidance on how to keep themselves safe when in the city and how to avoid scams and other online risks.
41. Leaders ensure that pupils are safe when moving independently between boarding accommodation and the main teaching site. Buildings have effective controlled access arrangements, and all staff, pupils and visitors to the site have visible lanyards which are colour coded to support identification. Pupils state they feel safe in school.
42. Pupils know how to ask for help if they are worried about themselves or someone else, including an adult in the school. They know how to contact trusted adults, including tutors and support staff. Boarders have additional support from boarding mentors, and from two independent people, who visit the school regularly. Pupils are also able to raise anonymous concerns.
43. Leaders respond quickly and effectively to any safeguarding concerns that arise, including low-level concerns regarding adults in the school. Record-keeping and decision-making by leaders is clearly aligned to statutory guidance in order to ensure the welfare of pupils. This includes regularly reviewing safeguarding records to ensure ongoing support is effective. Leaders have close links with local safeguarding partners and refer appropriately, and staff regularly attend local safeguarding training to understand contextual risks or any developing themes such as county lines in the local area.
44. For boarders whose parents live overseas, the school has appropriate arrangements to monitor educational guardianship and for checking alternative living arrangements if these are used. Boarding procedures effectively cover holiday periods, travel, missing pupils and contact with parents or guardians.
45. Safer recruitment processes are in place for all adults who work or volunteer in the college. Required checks are completed before staff take up employment, and are recorded accurately on a single central record of appointments (SCR). Leaders scrutinise gaps in employment, verify references and undertake appropriate checks relating to criminal records, barred status and right to work.

School details

School	Oxford International College
Department for Education number	931/6022
Address	1 – 5 London Place Oxford OX4 1BD
Phone number	01865 203988
Email address	admissions@oxcoll.com
Website	www.oxcoll.com
Proprietor	Nord Anglia Education Ltd
Chair	Mr Richard Davies
Headteacher	Dr Sarah Watson
Age range	14 to 19
Number of pupils	96
Number of boarding pupils	91
Date of previous inspection	2 to 3 April 2025

Information about the school

46. Oxford International College is a co-educational boarding school located approximately one mile from the centre of the city of Oxford. The school is part of the Nord Anglia Education group who provide governance through their directors and locally appointed governors. Oxford International College was previously inspected by Ofsted. This is its first inspection by ISI.
47. Boarding accommodation is on two sites which are a short walk from the teaching centre. One accommodation block is for pupils already over the age of 18, the other for younger pupils and those who will become 18 in their final year.
48. At the time of inspection, 8 pupils were of secondary education age.
49. The school has identified 26 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.
50. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
51. The school has identified English as an additional language for 91 pupils.
52. The school states its aims are to create pioneers who excel in the world's most competitive universities and go on to become leaders who use science with compassion to solve humanity's greatest challenges.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

15 to 17 September 2026

53. A team of 5 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

54. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- 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 boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work including with staff and pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

55. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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For more information, please visit isi.net