

# School inspection report

21 to 23 January 2025

## **Sidcot School**

Oakridge Lane

Winscombe

North Somerset

BS25 1PD

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 demonstrate a clear commitment to addressing pupils' physical, emotional, and spiritual development alongside their academic progress. Through strategic oversight, targeted support and meaningful engagement with pupils and parents, leaders foster an inclusive environment.
2. Leaders promote mutual respect and wellbeing through sharing Quaker values and weekly reflection. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes promote inclusivity, social responsibility, and mental health awareness. Behaviour policies emphasise reflection over punishment, with an effective anti-bullying approach fostering a supportive environment. Physical health is encouraged through a diverse physical education (PE) programme and extra-curricular activities.
3. Leaders and governors ensure that policies are reviewed regularly and adhere to all relevant legislation. Thorough monitoring ensures that policies are consistently and effectively implemented.
4. The school has well-established procedures for identifying, supporting, and monitoring pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These procedures include individual education plans (IEPs), targeted interventions, and regular assessments. However, in some lessons, support provided for pupils is not always fully effective in enabling pupils to increase their understanding and develop their skills.
5. Pupils make good academic progress in both the junior and senior schools. Staff demonstrate secure subject knowledge, supported by well-planned lessons delivered in a calm and focused atmosphere that fosters pupils' enthusiasm for learning. The quality and regularity of feedback is consistent across the school with a level of detail that enables pupils to develop their learning independently and make good academic progress.
6. Children in the early years make good progress through staff facilitating learning based on detailed progression plans. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of each child which they use effectively to help them to take the next steps in their learning. A diverse range of activities enables children to engage confidently in group work, independent tasks, or one-on-one sessions with staff, helping them to meet individual learning targets.
7. Pastoral care is a priority and staff promote pupils' mental and physical wellbeing. Health and safety measures are rigorous and facilities are well maintained. Areas of high risk, such as the swimming pool and science laboratories, are kept secure. Pupils in the boarding school benefit from a well-staffed health centre, nutritious meals, and access to personal and stationery items.
8. In the early years, a carefully designed curriculum supports physical, mental and emotional development through engaging activities and tailored support, fostering resilience and confidence from an early age.
9. The school's 'STEPS' programme, rooted in Quaker values of simplicity, truth, equality, peace and sustainability, fosters self-confidence and cultural awareness. Pupils engage in leadership roles, environmental initiatives and pupil-led societies, developing responsibility and mutual respect. Leaders ensure that there are opportunities for pupils, particularly in the boarding houses, to participate in a diverse range of cultural activities. Boarders who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are given additional support to help them to integrate into the boarding community.

quickly and successfully. Careers guidance is comprehensive, financial education is embedded and charity initiatives encourage social responsibility.

10. The school site provides a secure and comfortable learning environment. Pupils receive regular instruction on how to stay safe and demonstrate an understanding of these principles. Boarding accommodation is well maintained, comfortable and homely, with experienced staff providing the support needed for pupils to flourish.
11. The school's safeguarding measures are comprehensive and effective, prioritising pupils' safety and wellbeing. Staff are well trained and vigilant. Pupils know how to share any concerns with staff. Safer recruitment practices are strictly followed to ensure the suitability of employees.

## 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:

- evaluate the effectiveness of additional support in the classroom, to enhance teaching and learning and the impact on pupils' progress

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school, firmly rooted in the Quaker principles of truth, integrity, respect, simplicity, equality and sustainability. These principles are embedded throughout the school, fostering an ethos of inclusivity and reflection that is evident in all aspects of school life.
13. Leaders set high academic expectations for pupils. They are clear in their aim to develop responsible citizens who are confident in their social skills, resilience and emotional intelligence. Leaders monitor pupils' wellbeing and listen to pupils' feedback, responding appropriately to their concerns and suggestions.
14. Boarding provision is managed with an emphasis on safety and wellbeing. Boarding staff are committed to the school's vision, ensuring that each boarding house reflects the school's ethos. Leaders of boarding maintain clear and accurate records of day-to-day matters and adhere to robust policies and procedures.
15. Leaders in the early years ensure that provision is rooted in Quaker values. Staff receive appropriate training. Supervision ratios exceed statutory requirements and key staff build meaningful relationships with the children. Oversight is well structured. Staff communicate with parents to ensure that support is tailored appropriately to the needs of each child. This creates a nurturing environment where staff foster children's progress and wellbeing effectively.
16. Leaders have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils who have SEND. Pupils' needs are promptly identified and thoroughly assessed. Leaders ensure that appropriate support plans are developed and implemented. Leaders with responsibility for SEND closely monitor these plans to promote pupils' wellbeing and support their academic progress.
17. Governors maintain regular engagement with the school community through the sub-committee structure and by gathering feedback from staff and pupils. They assure themselves that school leaders, including those with responsibility for boarding, have the knowledge and skills to fulfil their role effectively. Governors contribute to the school's evaluation process and, in collaboration with school leaders, identify key priorities for improvement. This strategic approach informs the school's development plan, resulting in enhancements that support pupils' wellbeing.
18. The school has a comprehensive accessibility plan and fulfils its duties under the requirements of the Equality Act, 2010. This is reflected in, for example, the widening of doorways and the provision of accessible boarding accommodation.
19. School policies, including those pertinent to boarding, are clearly accessible to parents where required, regularly reviewed, and updated in line with national guidelines and statutory requirements. Systems are in place to ensure policies are consistently implemented. Leaders with responsibility for boarding ensure that the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools are adhered to and that the health and wellbeing of pupils is effectively promoted.
20. The complaints policy is appropriate and applied effectively. Leaders respond promptly to complaints, maintaining accurate records. They also reflect on lessons learned from each case and implement necessary changes to improve practice.

21. Additional relevant information is readily available to current and prospective parents via the school's website. The school provides an annual academic report for each pupil. In addition, regular communication with parents helps to ensure that any concerns are addressed promptly.
22. Leaders complete and submit the required annual reports, including with regard to the use of funds, for pupils with an education, health, and care (EHC) plan who are fully or partially funded by a local authority.

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

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

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

24. The curriculum across both the junior and senior schools is broad and well structured. It is carefully planned for each year group, including the early years, with subject-specific schemes of work in place. Curriculum oversight is managed by heads of department in the senior school and subject leads in the junior school, ensuring effective assessment, monitoring, and development. Leaders offer multiple qualification pathways, including GCSEs, A Levels, BTECs, the International Baccalaureate (IB), and the extended project qualification (EPQ) to ensure that provision is inclusive of all pupils within the school. Academic results at GCSE and A Level are consistently above the national average.
25. In the junior school, education is planned with a focus on practical learning through regular science, technology and mathematics (STEM) and art sessions. Visits to the senior school provide opportunities to study computing and coding. Performing arts lessons and public speaking competitions further develop speaking and listening skills already embedded in the curriculum. Pupils participate in extracurricular activities, including sports, drama and charity work, enriching their personal development. Pupils in the junior school make good progress. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
26. Staff have secure subject knowledge appropriate to each age group. Teachers use effective questioning, observed in subjects such as modern foreign languages and English, to enhance engagement, recall and retention. Pupils who have SEND receive tailored support through the use of assistive tools, including technology and standing desks. Teachers provide consistent feedback and marking to help pupils identify positive aspects of their work and areas for development. In English and biology lessons, teachers use self-assessment alongside clear lesson success criteria to support pupils to understand exactly how to take next steps in their learning. The use of self-editing using a purple pen is consistently implemented across both schools and helps pupils to understand how to improve their own work reinforcing their good progress.
27. Pupils participate in thoughtful discussions and are encouraged to express their ideas. Teachers of Quaker peace and global studies lessons particularly encourage reflection and the articulation of views across both the junior and senior schools.
28. Both schools have well-structured assessment frameworks, managed by subject leads in the junior school and heads of department in the senior school. Academic tracking is thorough, effectively monitoring progress, identifying individual needs and addressing gaps in learning. Leaders use the analysis of data to inform subject development and guide targeted support such as subject clinics. In the senior school, pupils work towards aspirational target grades which are regularly shared with pupils and parents. Pupils who have SEND receive equally aspirational targets and make good progress.
29. The school management and SEND team have established effective procedures to support pupils who have SEND. Teachers can refer pupils to the learning support department, which conducts thorough assessments to identify learning needs. Pupils on the SEND register receive an individual education plan (IEP) detailing their specific needs, providing teacher guidance and setting measurable targets. Support is offered through individual or group sessions. Progress is monitored regularly and targets adjusted as required. However, in some lessons, support provided does not enable pupils to increase their understanding and develop their skills consistently well.

30. The school has effective support systems for pupils who speak EAL. Teachers provide individual and additional group lessons as needed. Leaders provide a 'Pathway Programme', a pre-GCSE intensive EAL provision, tailored to individuals' needs. Effective support is provided within lessons. Science teachers use carefully chosen language with repetition when needed and online textbooks provide immediate translations for complex vocabulary. Business studies teachers offer multilingual glossaries with explanations. These measures enable pupils to access the curriculum fully and achieve English qualifications necessary for further education. Boarding staff also support pupils who speak EAL in the boarding houses.
31. Both the senior and junior schools maintain regular communication with parents, providing updates on pupils' progress and attainment through written reports and parent meetings.
32. Children in the early years experience well-planned, stimulating learning tailored to their interests. Activities such as woodwork, outdoor exploration, and simple science experiments spark curiosity, sustain engagement and enhance numeracy and language skills. Leaders provide regular parent meetings giving guidance on supporting learning at home and ensuring children develop the literacy and numeracy skills needed for a smooth transition to Year 1.
33. Across the school, pupils benefit from a diverse range of extra-curricular clubs, activities and subject clinics offered at lunchtime and after school. This programme, encompassing music, sports, recreation, creativity, and academic enrichment, is also embedded into the upper school timetable as the 'Programme of Activities for Sidcot Students' (PASS). These opportunities encourage pupils to explore their interests beyond the classroom, fostering social skills, wellbeing and personal development.

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

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

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

35. The school promotes mutual respect by embedding Quaker values throughout both the junior and senior schools. Pupils can serve as Quaker representatives, sharing their cultures and beliefs with peers. Every Wednesday and Friday, they engage in a 30-minute silent reflection, guided by prompts, providing a moment of calm amidst their busy schedules. Pupils in the sixth form particularly value this time, often leading the sessions and recognising the benefits for their mental wellbeing.
36. The personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes are well structured. Progress is monitored through assessments, presentations and pupil-led assemblies. Leaders with responsibility for PSHE supplement the planned curriculum with talks from external speakers and they ensure that the health centre team contribute their expertise to the curriculum where relevant. Parents and pupils are encouraged to reflect on the PSHE content. The recent neurodiversity conference brought together staff, pupils and parents allowing them to develop their understanding and acceptance of each other.
37. In both schools, the RSE programme is an integral part of the PSHE curriculum. In the senior school, pupils explore healthy and unhealthy relationships and their impact on mental wellbeing. They learn about consent, resisting pressure in intimate relationships, and the legal aspects of sex, sexuality, sexual health, and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive manner. In the junior school, the focus is on healthy and happy friendships, families and committed relationships. As a result, pupils begin to recognise the qualities of positive relationships, how they evolve and how to nurture them. This foundation prepares them for the transition to senior school and beyond.
38. Leaders implement a clear and effective behaviour code, which pupils review and sign annually. Sanctions focus on reflection and making amends rather than punishment, fostering a positive and supportive culture. The anti-bullying policy is well established and regularly reinforced in form time, PSHE lessons and assemblies. Bullying is rare, and pupils feel confident in reporting concerns to a trusted adult. This extends to the boarding environment, where good relationships with staff create a supportive atmosphere. Staff use a well-structured reporting system and follow this up with prompt action. Leaders ensure that appropriate records are maintained for the very few incidents of serious sanctions.
39. Physical health is promoted effectively through a comprehensive physical education (PE) programme and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In lessons, pupils can choose from competition, health and lifestyle, or health and fitness streams, ensuring full engagement and encouraging lifelong participation in physical activity. Those in the competition stream are encouraged to join one of the school's many representative teams in a wide variety of sports, while activities such as archery, bouldering and surfing provide diverse opportunities for all. Specialist staff deliver age-appropriate activities across both schools, with early years children developing key coordination skills in preparation for their own sports day. Links with local sports clubs encourage pupils to maintain healthy lifestyles beyond school. Recent changes to the senior school sports day reinforce the school's commitment to inclusivity, ensuring all pupils can participate.

40. Leaders maintain effective oversight of attendance, monitoring absences closely. The school reports pupils who join or leave at non-standard transition points to the local authority. They also provide effective support for pupils experiencing school anxiety to help their early return to school.
41. Pupils' mental health and wellbeing are supported especially through Rose Cottage, the school's wellbeing hub, which offers a calm space for help and support. Leaders provide drop-in sessions, seasonal activities and individual counselling, with additional pastoral support if needed. The hub also offers crisis support, phased return assistance and resilience workshops. Working closely with the health centre, pastoral staff and staff with responsibility for SEND ensure that pupils always have someone to turn to. Rose Cottage is particularly beneficial for pupils who have SEND as it gives the opportunity for additional pastoral support to be provided if needed.
42. Health and safety measures are stringent, with comprehensive risk assessments and regular system checks across the school. Buildings, teaching spaces, and play areas are well maintained, and high-risk areas, such as the swimming pool, are securely managed when not in use. Fire safety records are carefully documented, and pupils, including boarders, participate in regular fire drills in accordance with statutory requirements.
43. Boarding pupils have access to a range of support services, including a well-staffed health centre, and healthy, varied meals that cater to different dietary needs. Boarders can also access essential items from the library and health centre and enjoy the opportunity to visit the local shop.
44. In the early years, leaders promote pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing through a curriculum that is appropriate, well designed and flexible. Activities such as woodwork and mud play, along with support for individual needs, foster resilience. Positive staff interactions help children to begin to recognise and manage their emotions.

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

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

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

46. The school's 'STEPS' programme, rooted in Quaker values of simplicity, truth, equality, peace, and sustainability, underpins much of the school's ethos, particularly within the PSHE, RSE, and religious studies curriculums. This approach helps pupils to develop self-confidence when interacting with both their peers and adults. They show kindness and acceptance in their interactions, making a conscious effort to include one another both during lessons and in their free time.
47. Leaders promote curricular and co-curricular activities which give pupils an understanding of equality and cultural awareness. Through the PSHE programme, pupils learn to respect and celebrate differences among people while understanding the importance of taking responsibility for their actions in caring for others. In the religious studies programme, pupils study faiths such as Quakerism, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, where the messages of respect and acceptance are reinforced. Beyond the curriculum, school societies host pupil-led forums, cultural events and assemblies, helping to develop cultural awareness.
48. The diversity of the boarding population is recognised through various initiatives, such as displaying multiple time zones within houses and maps identifying the home cities of boarders. Prefects play an important role in maintaining a supportive environment, ensuring younger boarders settle in smoothly.
49. Leaders ensure that the careers guidance programme is comprehensive, impartial and up to date. Careers provision is delivered through PSHE lessons, assemblies, tutor time and dedicated careers sessions. Events such as national careers week and the whole-school careers afternoon offer valuable insights, while specialised careers lessons for Years 10 and 11 focus on post-16 pathways. Additional one-to-one guidance sessions, along with contributions from internal and external speakers, ensure that the advice provided is tailored to each pupil.
50. Pupils across the school have the opportunity to become 'office holders', taking on specific leadership responsibilities in areas such as boarding, charity, international affairs, alumni and wellbeing. These office holders meet regularly with the headteacher and engage with the wider pupil body through groups like the boarders' forum, food committee, and eco-committee. As a result, pupils develop greater self-confidence and gain opportunities to serve their community.
51. Pupils contribute to environmental initiatives through the 'Eco Change Maker' club, which implements sustainable practices such as reducing food waste and increasing recycling efforts. Their research into the environmental impact of disposable versus reusable towels has resulted in the greater use of fabric towels in boarding houses. This not only reduces the school's carbon footprint' but also helps pupils to develop a deeper understanding of their responsibilities beyond school.
52. Staff provide pupils with the opportunity to learn to accept responsibility and serve others by applying for roles such as 'Lead Learners' and 'Subject Captains'. These positions provide opportunities for pupils to engage deeply with their academic interests while developing leadership skills. Pupils in these roles actively promote their subjects, lead assemblies, produce podcasts and gain valuable experience through an application and interview process that also enhances their understanding of democracy.

53. Staff work diligently to promote tolerance and respect. Pupils are encouraged to interact through a varied activities programme, while staff with specific training in supporting pupils who speak EAL help to overcome any communication barriers. Regular visits to local cities enhance pupils' understanding of British culture, and celebrations of international events such as Chinese New Year, Ivana Kupala Day and International Languages Day further broaden pupils' cultural awareness.
54. Economic education is well structured with financial awareness embedded in the junior PSHE curriculum and reinforced by a high street bank-sponsored programme in the senior school. Boarders receive guidance on managing their pocket money and charity officers handle budgets for community events.
55. Pupil-led charity initiatives, such as 'Crisis' lunches, raise funds for disaster relief while fostering global awareness, initiative and social responsibility. Collaborations with local schools and participation in sports clubs provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to contribute to their community.
56. Pupils' social and economic wellbeing in the early years is nurtured through collaborative activities, community engagement and the promotion of Quaker values. Outdoor education, including farm visits, introduces environmental awareness and social responsibility. Circle time activities, the charity Christmas fayre and environmental projects promote respect and reflection.

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

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

## Safeguarding

58. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders ensure that policies and procedures are well understood throughout the school. Leaders foster a culture of vigilance and accountability, encouraging staff to support pupils in sharing concerns and to be mindful of their own safety around the site. Staff use reporting procedures consistently and take prompt action as required. Governors maintain effective oversight with regards to safeguarding, ensuring that leaders hold the appropriate skills and knowledge to fulfil their safeguarding roles effectively.
59. Safeguarding in boarding is well managed. Supervision arrangements are effective, supported by electronically controlled door access and well-placed lighting to enhance security. Staff accommodation is separated from pupils' living areas to ensure privacy while still allowing appropriate oversight and boarders have access to a suitable independent person.
60. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that staff receive detailed and timely safeguarding training. Regular external and in-house training ensures staff remain alert to risks, including contextual challenges, such as county lines and international pupil concerns. Staff are also aware of the potentially heightened vulnerability for boarding pupils and pupils who have SEND. Staff make sure that pupils with additional vulnerabilities are aware of how to report concerns. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and senior leaders work closely with external agencies such as the police and the local safeguarding board to ensure a co-ordinated approach.
61. Governors receive safeguarding training and maintain oversight through termly visits and regular meetings with the leaders with responsibility for safeguarding. A comprehensive safeguarding audit is carried out by governors and leaders, and reporting procedures, including low-level concerns, are reinforced through induction and continuing professional development.
62. Safeguarding concerns are recorded, shared and referenced enabling trends to be recognised and dealt with effectively.
63. The single central record (SCR) is maintained accurately, ensuring compliance with safer recruitment requirements.
64. Leaders ensure that the visibility of safeguarding measures is high, with staff easily identifiable and support services well promoted. The wellbeing hub provides counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) services, accessible via referral pathways. Attendance monitoring is closely linked to wellbeing initiatives.
65. A robust system of monitoring and filtering reinforces the online safety messages delivered to pupils through PSHE lessons, assemblies and form time. As part of the safeguarding procedures, leaders regularly assess the effectiveness of the filtering and monitoring systems for the internet as well as pupils' understanding of the safety measures taught.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Sidcot School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	802/6002
<b>Registered charity number</b>	296491
<b>Address</b>	Sidcot School Oakridge Lane Winscombe North Somerset BS25 1PD
<b>Phone number</b>	01934 843102
<b>Email address</b>	headsoffice@sidcot.org.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.sidcot.org.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Sidcot School Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Jameson Miller
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Jones
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	616
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	135
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	03 November 2021

## Information about the school

67. Sidcot school is a co-educational independent day and boarding school for pupils aged between 3 and 19. It is overseen by a board of governors who also act as proprietors. The headteacher has been in position since January 2024
68. Boarding is open to pupils from the age of 11 and boarders are accommodated in five boarding houses.
69. The school comprises a junior day school, which educates pupils aged 3 to 11 years, including 12 children in the pre-school and 9 in Reception, and a senior boarding and day school for pupils aged 11 to 19. The junior school is in a separate building and overseen by the junior school head and the head of early years.
70. The school has identified 176 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
71. The school has identified English as an additional language for 133 pupils.
72. The school states its aims, guided by Quaker values, are to nurture students' curiosity, integrity, and sense of responsibility while encouraging them to 'live adventurously'. Core values include truth, equality, peace, simplicity and sustainability. The school aims to provide education that fosters independent thinking, confidence and a love of learning.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

21 to 23 January 2025

73. A team of 8 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

74. 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 vice-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.

75. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)