

School inspection report

4 to 6 November 2025

S. Anselm's School

Stanedge Road

Bakewell

Derbyshire

DE45 1DP

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 and trustees share a commitment to promote the school's ethos and the importance of pupils' wellbeing. They are passionate advocates of the school and lead by example. Leaders are active listeners who foster a collegiate sense of purpose and they support and empower teachers effectively. As a result, pupils are well cared for and happy at the school. They represent the school's motto 'to be rather than to seem to be' proudly.
2. Leaders demonstrate a knowledgeable insight to the school's strengths and weaknesses. An ambitious development plan has been created which sets out areas for improvement within appropriate timescales. Leaders are committed to improving the educational experience for all pupils.
3. Leaders ensure that detailed policies are in place which govern the school's operations and keep children safe. The policies are regularly updated, monitored and effectively implemented. Leaders do not always ensure that relevant policies are provided or made available to parents consistently.
4. A broad curriculum is effective in enabling pupils of all ages and abilities to learn new skills and make progress. Children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) are set targets appropriate to their individual development and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported, with dedicated strategies in place. The quality of teaching is variable and an inconsistency of approach to oversight and monitoring means that skills and knowledge are not always shared appropriately.
5. Pupils enjoy a varied selection of activities and physical education (PE) that enable them to develop new skills and interests. Pupils also enjoy opportunities they are given to play team sports in competitive fixtures, in tournaments and against other schools. Boarders celebrate that they can suggest activities and appreciate that their ideas are listened to.
6. Leaders have high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves. They monitor pupils' behaviour and have established a new framework to address any misbehaviour. Pupils understand what is expected of them and they behave respectfully as a result.
7. Leaders promote respect and inclusivity, and this is well developed through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationship and sex education (RSE) curriculums. Pupils are polite, courteous and considerate and this contributes to a positive sense of community and family within the school. Pupils' emotional and physical wellbeing are embedded across school life.
8. Children in the early years enjoy learning in a nurturing and positive environment. Adults make good use of their spacious classrooms and the ample outdoor space available. Teachers balance their input with developing children's own independence and problem-solving. Pupils in the pre-prep make good progress.
9. Leaders of boarding have created an environment that is homely and enjoyable. Pupils are positive about their boarding experiences and the activities provided during their recreation time. Boarders understand their routines and regularly make suggestions for improvements they would welcome. Boarding staff are supportive but would benefit from greater clarity about their roles and responsibilities. Resident adults who are not employed by the school also need clarity about the expectations of them while living in the boarding house.

10. Safeguarding procedures are thorough. All staff receive regular training and understand their responsibilities to share concerns about pupils. Members of the safeguarding team actively review safeguarding cases and keep detailed records of their actions. All appropriate checks are made for new staff when they are recruited, but the dates of these checks are not always accurately recorded on the single central record of appointments.

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 barred list recruitment checks for new staff are recorded correctly on the single central record
- ensure that all necessary information is provided or made available to current and prospective parents consistently
- ensure that the roles and expectations of boarding staff and resident adults are made clear
- improve monitoring so that there is a consistent quality of teaching that offers relevant and appropriate challenge to pupils of all abilities.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders have the requisite knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Trustees have appropriate oversight and receive regular updates and review progress at monthly meetings to ensure that Standards are consistently met. Leaders at all levels demonstrate a clear commitment to promoting pupils' wellbeing so that they are happy at school. Trustees wish for the school to prioritise pastoral care and mental health for all staff and pupils and they are effective in the support and advice they offer to leaders to achieve this. Pupils are happy at school and they appreciate the school's nurturing environment.
12. The successful fulfilment of the aims and ethos of the school is evident in the calm learning environment and respectful relationships across the school. Teachers offer support and care to the pupils who feel valued and safe as a result. Leaders demonstrate a knowledgeable insight into the school's effectiveness. They listen to the teachers, who feel well supported. This contributes to a purposeful environment where everyone can make a positive contribution.
13. Leaders ensure that policies are detailed and make expectations clear. Policies guide school life and are effectively implemented. As a result, appropriate conduct is clearly understood by staff and pupils. For example, a new behaviour system is fully embedded and has a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and their respectful interactions with each other and with adults.
14. Leaders ensure that relevant information is provided, and is made available to parents mostly through the school's website. Some policies were not provided or made available at the start of the inspection, but leaders ensured that this was rectified during the on-site inspection. Parents receive regular updates on their child's progress in written reports and in face-to-face meetings throughout the year. Parents of children in the early years receive more regular updates through a dedicated application that they can interact with.
15. Leaders maintain appropriate links with external agencies and ensure that any pupil referrals or allegations against staff are shared effectively and in a timely fashion. Leaders consult with external agencies, such as the local authority, family support services and a speech and language therapist, and act on the advice given to provide pupils with targeted academic and pastoral support.
16. Detailed risk assessments are in place and actions are taken to remedy identified risks swiftly. Leaders recognise the risks posed by an open and rural site and mitigate these effectively with physical barriers and clear guidance to pupils on safe boundaries. Appropriate follow-up ensures that the actions taken have been effective.
17. There is an effective policy in place for the handling of complaints. Few complaints are received, but when they are the policy is followed effectively and resolution is reached quickly. Leaders are committed to resolving matters so that pupils' education is not impacted.
18. Leaders in the early years ensure that the indoor and outdoor environment in which the youngest children learn and play offers many valuable learning activities. There is close co-operation between the staff so that all children can benefit from shared experiences and opportunities across Nursery and Reception. The classrooms are spacious and allow for focused and child-initiated learning.

19. Boarding leaders provide a positive and nurturing experience for the pupils who board. They listen purposefully to boarders' views and they act upon them. Pupils clearly enjoy boarding and the experience prepares them effectively for senior school.
20. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by ensuring that pupils across the school can participate and be included regardless of their ability or characteristics. An appropriate accessibility plan ensures that reasonable adjustments are made to allow access to the curriculum and facilities for pupils with specific needs. The school removes barriers and promotes equal opportunities to give pupils the best chance of thriving.

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 ensure that the school offers a curriculum that is broad and varied. Core skills are appropriately developed in English and mathematics and are supplemented by opportunities to develop linguistic skills in French, Spanish, Mandarin and Latin. Most lessons make effective use of the extensive facilities available. Pupils develop their artistic and creative skills effectively in a dedicated art studio, performance hall and music block. An innovation hub provides opportunities for pupils to acquire technological and problem-solving skills.
23. Teachers typically deliver subject content that is relevant to the age and aptitude of pupils. However, this is inconsistent, and the level of additional challenge is not always suitable for all pupils. Subject leaders demonstrate secure subject knowledge, but this is not always effectively shared with colleagues who teach the same subject. Because of a lack of appropriate monitoring by leaders, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning experiences can vary.
24. Most teachers plan lessons carefully and use a variety of methods to engage pupils enthusiastically in their learning. Pupils are keen to learn and make good progress in their lessons. This is most apparent when they are able to make connections across different subjects and apply transferable skills. Pupils respond well to trips that provide contextualised learning experiences, such as when they visited a local medieval hall as part of their combined art and history studies.
25. Teachers use effective questioning techniques to encourage pupils to think independently. Pupils respond well and articulate their ideas coherently. They justify their opinions effectively, for example when explaining how mnemonics can be used effectively to help spell tricky words or to predict what tools would have been made from, and used for, in the Stone Age.
26. Teachers ensure that learning tasks are appropriately adapted so that pupils who have SEND are well supported and can make good progress relative to their starting points. Effective strategies and resources are shared effectively amongst teachers so that pupils who have SEND can access learning aids such as laptops to develop literacy and subject specific vocabulary lists.
27. Teachers use an effective assessment framework to understand pupils' ability. Individual pupils' progress is tracked, and outcomes inform future teaching. Pupils are assessed from their own baseline against standardised measures and support is offered specific to areas of relative weakness.
28. Pupils of all ages can access a breadth of clubs and activities which extend and enrich the taught curriculum. They welcome the opportunity to learn new skills and challenge themselves through competition and physical activity. The activities programme effectively enables children to develop creative, intellectual, musical and physical skills.
29. Teachers are ambitious in their development of children's communication and language in the early years. This is adapted to the ability profile of each individual. Children are introduced to, and encouraged to use, vocabulary well beyond their age and maturity, and drawing is often used as an effective stimulus to inspire children to write in response to a story they have read. Varied activities develop their pencil grip for mark-making and writing.
30. Boarders have access to support with their work during prep time and enjoy a range of recreational activities in the boarding house which allow them to collaborate with one another and have fun. Activities are either themed, such as the 'zombie run' for Halloween, or specifically chosen by the

boarders themselves, based on their interests. Boarders welcome having this choice and feel listened to as a result.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. Leaders actively promote mutual respect and inclusion across all school activities and these are reinforced in assemblies. The PSHE curriculum is effective and enables pupils to learn about friendship, managing emotions, developing resilience and keeping themselves safe online. As a result, pupils fully embrace the importance of kindness and fairness and treat one another with respect. A comprehensive RSE programme is age-appropriate and enables children to learn about relationships, consent and how their body changes during puberty. Songs and music are used positively to reinforce key messages about consent and which areas of the body should remain private. Leaders have identified the need to broaden pupils' understanding of people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010 and this is gradually evolving within the school.
33. Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is developed through assemblies, classroom discussions and reflective activities. Pupils engage in conversations about right and wrong, empathy and forgiveness. Children in the early years develop notable spiritual awareness, for example when delighting at the colourful explosions arising from creating their own fireworks display. Pupils develop their self-confidence when good work is celebrated and they are encouraged to show it and discuss it with the school's senior leaders, who take a keen interest and award certificates of acknowledgement.
34. Pupils' physical development is achieved through a broad, well-structured PE programme that builds fitness, co-ordination and teamwork. Teachers encourage pupils to support one another in different challenges that involve balance and gross motor skills and they do so with great care. Younger pupils and children in the early years demonstrate agility when using apparatus. Pupils respond well to all physical activities and understand the importance of warming up and stretching before exercising. They relish opportunities to represent the school and they look forward to fixtures and national competitions with pride and excitement.
35. Leaders have high expectations of pupils, to which they respond positively. Pupils' behaviour is consistently of a high standard. Teachers conduct themselves professionally and model acceptable behaviours positively. In lessons, pupils listen attentively, follow instructions and work collaboratively with one another. During transitions between lessons, they move calmly and safely, with older pupils often exemplifying good conduct for younger ones. When required, teachers use calm reminders to focus pupils' attention. Pupils understand the behaviour policy and the different stages of warnings and consequences. They demonstrate self-control and responsibility, which contributes positively to the school's calm and purposeful ethos.
36. Leaders implement an anti-bullying strategy that is proactive and restorative. Bullying is rare, but if it occurs teachers deal with it fairly and quickly. Leaders record and review all bullying-related incidents and offer support to both the victim and perpetrator so that they can reflect on and learn from their actions. A culture of openness is encouraged so that pupils can share their concerns about bullying. Children in the pre-prep do so through 'Marvin, the worry monster' and older pupils approach adults within the school directly or use the concerns and suggestions box available to them.
37. Leaders actively promote the importance of regular attendance. Admission and attendance registers are accurately kept and leaders monitor attendance statistics diligently. They take effective action to

engage parents and improve attendance when a pupil's attendance falls below an acceptable level or where a pattern of absence is noted. Concerns regarding pupil attendance are appropriately shared with external agencies and the appropriate authorities are notified when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times.

38. The school's premises and accommodation are well maintained. Leaders ensure the school is a welcoming environment. Classrooms are calm, tidy and well lit and are conducive to pupils learning comfortably. Displays celebrate pupils' achievements and make a positive contribution to their self-worth and pride. Regular supervision in classrooms, corridors and outdoor spaces allows pupils to play, learn and socialise confidently within safe boundaries. Children in the early years are well supervised in the classroom and in their outdoor area.
39. Health and safety arrangements across the school are robust. Leaders ensure that appropriate policies are in place and implemented correctly to keep children safe. Regular fire drills and safety briefings ensure all staff and pupils understand procedures in the event of an incident. Appropriate documentation is kept and regular audits help maintain a culture of vigilance. Leaders respond to the advice of external consultants to ensure the school mitigates risks to safety, including those associated with façade cladding. Repairs are completed routinely once reported.
40. The school's medical and first aid procedures are well organised. Leaders ensure that sufficient staff are appropriately trained, including in paediatric first aid and the effective administration of medicines. Pupils are clear about where to go and who to see if they feel unwell, including boarders overnight. Records of staff training and the medical treatment of pupils are rigorously kept.
41. Leaders ensure that boarding accommodation is suitable for the needs of the pupils. Catering arrangements ensure that pupils are provided with appetising and nutritious food and mealtimes have an appropriate family feel. Boarding staff create a homely atmosphere that puts boarders at ease. Boarders show competent understanding of fire procedures and appreciate the opportunities they are offered to express their views.
42. Children in the early years make effective use of their outdoor area to develop their gross motor skills. They improve other areas of physical development through lessons in the sports hall. Teachers encourage them to prepare themselves independently by putting on their coats and wellies and assessing their own risks so that they can play safely.
43. Senior pupils are trusted to take on appropriate leadership positions which give them meaningful duties and responsibilities. Prefects offer valuable help during assemblies, support younger pupils effectively and regularly assist in organising school events like the 'mud run'. These opportunities help pupils develop maturity, independence and pride in contributing to the school community.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

45. Leaders ensure that the school's aims, ethos and motto 'to be, rather than to seem to be' apply across school life. Pupils display honesty, humility and compassion in their daily interactions. During mealtimes, they act responsibly, showing gratitude and respect when praying together and saying grace. Pupils take turns to help clear tables for one another and happily support, and chat with, their younger peers. The school's moral foundation and community spirit are evident at such times.
46. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about money and economic matters. Pupils show charitable intent when discussing what they would do with a large sum of money and children in the early years understand the purpose and value of money and how it is used in British society. Pupils discuss how economic factors shape the world, discussing for example the rights and wrongs of tourism and debating the financial benefit and environmental damage it brings. Older pupils discuss enterprise and careers, connecting personal aspirations with wider social and economic awareness. Pupils take great pride in organising charitable sales to fundraise for and support local charities.
47. Leaders provide appropriate opportunities for children to understand and participate in their local community through the school's 'History Hunters' club that encourages pupils to explore the history of Bakewell. Pupils often fundraise in support of local charities. These charitable efforts, combined with supporting younger peers and cultural exchanges with a school in France, help children develop cultural understanding and prepare them well to make successful contributions to British society.
48. Teachers help pupils distinguish between right and wrong through restorative conversations when they occasionally fall out and through classroom rules and discussions about morality. For example, pre-prep pupils thoughtfully consider alternatives to fireworks, acknowledging the environmental impact of debris and the distress caused to animals in rural areas, whilst older pupils consider the benefits and adverse impact of tourism on the environment. Pupils are quick to apologise, reflect on and learn from mistakes.
49. Leaders promote fundamental British values suitably through lessons, assemblies and poignant events like Remembrance. Pupils experience democracy when they vote on decisions in class and elect peers to positions of responsibility. They make positive contributions to their school community when contributing ideas to shape school policy and development through school council. Displays around the school reinforce pupils' understanding of the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance; these are further enhanced by individuals sharing their religious experiences of festivals such as Eid.
50. Pupils develop leadership skills and learn to take responsibility by assuming a range of prefect and other leadership roles. Pupils are democratically elected to these roles and are required to support younger pupils as class monitors, lead assemblies and assist as librarians. Pupils take their duties seriously and make a positive contribution to their school community.
51. Older pupils receive appropriate careers guidance through their PSHE programme. Regular parental presentations about their own careers also prove beneficial for introducing pupils to a wide range of possible future career paths.

52. Children in the early years benefit from short excursions to places of interest in their local community like the local park and shops. From such excursions, they develop familiarity and understand what facilities are available to different groups in the locality. They develop a sense of adventure and learn to show respect to other people and their surroundings. Their social development is fostered through play, where sharing and turn-taking are actively encouraged.
53. Boarders are encouraged to develop an awareness of positive relationships through discussion, and recognise that fellow boarders can be more sensitive when away from home. As a result, they show respect and understanding to one another in a supportive community in the boarding house.

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

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

Safeguarding

55. Leaders at all levels make a commitment to keeping pupils safe. Pupils' wellbeing is embedded across the school and is evident in practice. Trustees maintain a keen oversight of safeguarding procedures and contribute their own ideas so that risks are mitigated. For example, new gates have been added to the school car park to make the site more secure. In boarding, new curtains and blinds ensure that pupils have greater privacy.
56. A comprehensive safeguarding policy is in place and implemented effectively. It is updated regularly to reflect the latest statutory guidance. It provides appropriate advice on the recognition of and response to safeguarding incidents. Staff routinely adhere to the policy.
57. All staff receive regular training and they understand their safeguarding responsibilities for keeping children safe and sharing low-level concerns. Staff share their concerns about pupils effectively on a centralised system, monitored by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). They share their concerns about adults with the headteacher. Members of the safeguarding team discuss emerging issues on a weekly basis and share relevant information with appropriate staff so that pupils can be monitored and supported according to their need. Records are detailed and well maintained and include information about actions taken, the rationale behind the actions, regular reviews and follow-ups. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and safeguarding partners and make referrals promptly.
58. Pupils, including children in the early years, know how, and with whom, they can share their concerns when they have them. A 'worry monster' and concerns box provide age-appropriate opportunities to divulge concerns and access dedicated support. Boarders receive important information about the independent person and other agencies they can contact. The school nurse and a counsellor provide additional support where required.
59. An appropriate internet filtering and monitoring system is in place to prevent pupils and adults accessing inappropriate websites when using the school's internet and this is tested regularly to assess its effectiveness. The monitoring system alerts the DSL to pupils accessing inappropriate sites and conducting unsuitable searches. Prompt action is taken to investigate such alerts.
60. Pupils receive effective guidance in their PSHE lessons on how to stay safe. They understand consent and how to stay safe online and reflect on the kindness they must show when chatting online. Leaders are aware that safeguarding disclosures can arise during RSE lessons and they have effective systems in place for dealing with such matters.
61. Leaders conduct all appropriate checks on staff as part of their recruitment process. These are well documented on a single central record. However, the dates of barred list checks are not always correctly recorded. Agreements with adults who live on site but are not employed by the school are in place but do not clearly state the expectations on such individuals. Whilst not clear at the start of the inspection, this was rectified during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

62. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	S. Anselm's School
Department for Education number	830/6004
Registered charity number	1215318
Address	S. Anselm's School Stanedge Road Bakewell Derbyshire DE45 1DP
Phone number	01629 343434
Email address	office@anselms.co.uk
Website	www.sanselms.co.uk
Proprietor	S. Anselm's School Limited
Chair	Mrs Emma Harrison CBE
Headteacher	Mr Peter Cook
Age range	3 to 13
Number of pupils	96
Date of previous inspection	12 to 13 October 2022

Information about the school

63. S. Anselm's is a co-educational day and boarding school which occupies extensive grounds on the edge of the town of Bakewell in Derbyshire. The school has recently formed its own company, S. Anselm's Limited, after a terminated merger with Birkdale School. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.
64. Pupils may board as full-time or flexi-boarders from the age of seven years. Flexi-boarding is a common option that is taken up by a number of pupils. The school has a single boarding house with separate accommodation for male and female pupils.
65. The school has three sections: a pre-school, for children aged 3 to 4; a pre-prep, for pupils in Reception to Year 2; and a prep school, for those in Years 3 to 8.
66. The school has identified 25 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
67. The school has no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
68. The school seeks to encourage individuality, creativity, perseverance and tolerance; develop inquisitive thinking with a love of learning and independent thought; and foster self-understanding and contribution to society in each child. It aims to instil moral courage and inner strength in its pupils and encourage them to consider those in the wider community around them.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

4 to 6 November

69. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

70. 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.

71. 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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