

# School inspection report

1 to 3 July 2025

## **Howe Green House School**

Great Hallingbury  
Bishop's Stortford  
Hertfordshire  
CM22 7UF

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, and teaching is matched to pupils' different needs. The academic curriculum is complemented by a co-curricular programme of activities and clubs which develop pupils' social, emotional and communication skills.
2. Pupils are well behaved. Leaders promote a culture of inclusion based on kindness and respect towards others. Pupils and staff demonstrate these attributes throughout the school day.
3. Leaders' pastoral systems are embedded in all aspects of school life. Weekly pastoral meetings and regular briefing meetings ensure that staff are kept up to date with any problems or concerns regarding pupils' safety and wellbeing. Pupils benefit from using the calm wellbeing space. They learn how to develop their confidence and support their mental health.
4. Pupils are taught their responsibilities as British citizens through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum. They understand the importance of helping others and do so willingly.
5. Leaders of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) identify pupils' additional needs quickly. They put support in place according to pupils' individual learning needs. This enables pupils who have SEND to make good progress.
6. Leaders in the early years create a safe and encouraging environment. Children's needs are met by well-trained and kind staff. Children learn successfully. They develop their physical and personal development, including their independence and self-esteem.
7. Leaders have revised the school's feedback and marking policy to better support pupils to improve their work through verbal and written feedback from teachers. This policy is not yet fully in place across the school.
8. Leaders provide a wide range of information to parents about the school's policies and procedures. At the start of the inspection, the school's policy for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) was not available on the school website. This was remedied during the on-site inspection.
9. The school keeps pupils safe. Staff receive comprehensive training so they know what to do and when. Leaders seek and act upon advice from external agencies when required.
10. Leaders ensure that risk assessment, health and safety and fire safety requirements are understood by all staff. A robust system of checks is in place so that the Standards are consistently met over time.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

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

## Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the latest policy for pupils who speak EAL is published on the school's website as required
- ensure that the revised feedback and marking policy is applied consistently so that pupils in all year groups understand how to improve their work.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders and governors share the same determination to ensure that the school's aims, alongside its values of respect, tolerance and kindness, permeate all aspects of school life. Leaders collaborate well to improve the school and support the wellbeing of pupils.
12. The governing body uses their specialist knowledge in education, safeguarding, health and safety and finance to provide strategic oversight and make sure that the school's policies and systems are put in place effectively. Governors regularly evaluate the school's educational and pastoral provision and ensure that those with leadership responsibilities have the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles effectively. The school has a detailed development plan which sets out the actions required to move the school forward.
13. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught a wide-ranging curriculum and are suitably challenged and supported according to their individual needs.
14. Leaders for pupils who have SEND are confident and knowledgeable. They play a central role in shaping provision and contribute to decision-making so that pupils who have SEND are supported effectively and achieve well. The school provides an annual report to the local authority which includes the use of funds for pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
15. Leaders in the early years have a secure understanding of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) requirements. They prioritise the professional development of early years staff and guide them through ongoing training to develop their knowledge and practice.
16. The school's health and safety systems are comprehensive. Leaders make sure that everyone understands their responsibilities. Leaders and governors check that systems are fit for purpose through regular audits and inspections. Record-keeping and documentation are meticulous.
17. Leaders manage risk effectively and instil the importance of risk management across the staff team. Staff receive training so they know how to identify and mitigate risk. All risk assessments are reviewed by senior leaders and recorded on a central tracking system with alerts in place to indicate when the risk assessments should be reviewed.
18. The complaints policy is followed closely. Leaders respond to complaints in a timely manner and records are kept of the outcomes and actions taken. A range of information for parents and prospective parents is made available on the school's website, as required. The school's policy for pupils who speak EAL was not available on the website at the start of the inspection. This was rectified during the inspection.
19. The school fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan highlights leaders' actions to make sure that pupils who have additional needs can fully access the curriculum and the school premises.

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

**20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

21. Pupils experience a well-rounded education that integrates academic learning with co-curricular and enrichment opportunities. Pupils learn to challenge themselves and develop responsibility for their learning within the school's positive and nurturing learning environment. Pupils are attentive, articulate and keen to learn. Pupils make good progress and achieve well across different subjects.
22. The curriculum supports pupils to develop their linguistic, mathematical, scientific and technological skills and knowledge. Leaders review the curriculum regularly and adapt it to ensure it is in line with the school's values and meets pupils' needs. For example, leaders have added philosophy lessons to the curriculum, which develop pupils' oracy and debating skills.
23. The early years curriculum includes the required areas of learning for EYFS. Children learn well through a variety of indoor and outdoor activities, including the use of a dedicated woodland area. Leaders and staff focus on developing children's language and vocabulary. This supports children to explain their ideas and opinions from an early age. Children learn basic number skills through many opportunities to count and order numbers, for example during registration time. Children listen carefully to staff and readily follow instructions. They are encouraged to develop their independence and collaborative skills through choosing their own activities and sharing resources and ideas with each other.
24. Staff in the early years keep a close eye on how well children learn new knowledge and skills. They provide extra help for those children who need it. Across the school, leaders and staff check pupils' progress through regular analysis of tests and assessment information. Specific support is put in place for those pupils who need to catch up. The school has improved the feedback and marking policy and clarified the systems teachers should use. Neither are embedded across the school so pupils do not benefit from teachers' feedback and guidance as much as they could.
25. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and teach well-planned lessons using a range of resources which take into account pupils' different needs. Teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and academic performance. Teachers encourage pupils to enjoy learning, to think for themselves and to develop their independence. Teachers provide additional challenges for those pupils who are ready. Enrichment activities such as German language lessons before school are open to all pupils and offer further opportunities for pupils to extend their learning and to participate in local and national competitions.
26. In the early years and pre-prep, children are taught basic literacy skills, including phonics, through well-planned programmes. Older pupils apply what they have learned in other subjects to complete more complex work. For example, pupils in Year 5 use research from their PSHE lessons on bullying to write extended pieces of writing using a range of conjunctives.
27. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their communication skills and self-confidence. Pupils take part in assemblies and school productions. Pupils enthusiastically discuss different topics in pairs or small groups. They are confident when asked to feed back their ideas to their class.
28. Leaders develop pupils' creativity through art, music and drama lessons. Pupils learn how to express themselves and to be sensitive to the needs of those around them.

29. The school is quick to identify the additional needs of pupils who have SEND. This enables staff to design and deliver the right support and personalised interventions so that pupils who have SEND learn successfully over time.
30. Pupils who speak EAL are given individualised support to develop their fluency and use subject-specific vocabulary correctly. They make good progress and increase their confidence.
31. The school keeps parents up to date with their child's progress and achievements through regular reports. These are detailed and provide a clear picture of pupils' academic and personal development.
32. The school's co-curricular programme provides a varied range of activities to develop pupils' physical, social and creative skills. Activities cater for pupils' diverse interests and abilities. Through sporting, dramatic and musical activities as well as clubs such as yoga and gardening, pupils build teamwork and communication skills in a supportive setting.

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

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

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

34. Pupils' wellbeing is a core part of the school's ethos. Leaders recognise that pupils' physical, mental and emotional health supports pupils' learning and personal development. Leaders and staff teach pupils strategies to manage their emotions and behaviour. This, along with the provision of an easily accessible wellbeing room, therapy dog walks and comprehensive pastoral support, helps pupils to develop their self-esteem, self-reflection and self-confidence.
35. The PSHE curriculum is age-appropriate and is regularly updated to take account of societal issues and pupils' circumstances. From the early years, the curriculum is designed to help pupils reflect on and understand their place in the world, covering topics such as keeping safe, valuing difference, and rights and respect. The PSHE curriculum is taught by form tutors who are supported by specially trained teachers and supplemented by visits from outside speakers to enhance pupils' understanding.
36. In their relationships and sex education (RSE) lessons, pupils are taught about healthy relationships and the physical and emotional changes involved in growing up. Teachers encourage open discussion but provision is made for pupils to ask questions anonymously so that pupils are comfortable to explore and participate in sensitive topics.
37. Throughout the school day and across activities, pupils and staff follow leaders' clear expectations and systems for positive behaviour. Pupils use their personal 'toolboxes' of self-regulation strategies and benefit from the input of trained peer buddies and approachable, confident staff. Children in the early years use 'colour monsters' to explain and understand their feelings. Consistent routines and nurturing practices create calm, inclusive classrooms where pupils engage fully in their learning. This results in very few behavioural incidents and high parental confidence in the school's guidance and care.
38. Incidents of bullying are rare and staff address any issues promptly. Any upsets or conflicts are resolved quickly by well-trained and trusted staff. They help pupils to take responsibility, reflect on their actions, and understand the impact of their behaviour on others.
39. The school premises are safe, well-managed and compliant, with potential risks effectively minimised. Leaders' thorough approach to health and safety, fire safety and security ensures requirements are met to a high standard. A comprehensive system of weekly, termly and annual checks is firmly in place and covers different aspects of the school site. The discreet supervision of pupils throughout the school day enables pupils to keep safe but also develops their independence.
40. Attendance procedures are robust and consistently followed. Attendance registers are completed twice daily using the required attendance codes. Leaders understand and carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. The safeguarding team closely monitors attendance trends and patterns and supports pupils and their families when concerns arise. The school informs the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.
41. Teaching staff are trained in paediatric first aid and provide first aid appropriately when pupils are injured or unwell. Staff keep clear records of medication dispensed to pupils and parents are informed if their child is ill or injured.



42. The school offers a wide range of sporting activities designed to promote pupils' physical health, social connection and emotional resilience. Pupils enjoy physical education (PE) lessons led by subject specialists. Pupils develop a range of technical skills and enhance their physical health through the many sports taught, such as football, netball, rugby, dodgeball and karate. In the early years, children are encouraged to develop co-ordination, balance and agility through basic ballgames that incorporate a variety of physical movements. Older pupils participate in regular sports fixtures with neighbouring schools as well as local and national competitions. These experiences build pupils' understanding of teamwork, leadership and self-confidence.
43. Pupils learn about the importance of a healthy diet through PSHE and science lessons. A range of healthy and nutritious foods are available at lunchtimes, where pupils are allowed to have a free choice with staff oversight.
44. In the early years, staff provide carefully planned activities to develop children's personal and social skills. Children learn to make appropriate choices when they select equipment and resources, for example to make miniature gardens or build bridges. Children invent stories, rehearse vocabulary and explore different ideas when they engage in imaginative play.

### **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. Pupils learn to respect and appreciate those with different cultures and faiths during PSHE and RSE lessons and assemblies. Pupils' understanding is deepened through experiences such as a visit from a holocaust survivor and followed up with meaningful discussions in form groups. Throughout the school, pupils listen to each other carefully and consider a variety of views. Topics are adapted to reflect current issues in society, and open, balanced discussions are encouraged. Pupils develop their understanding of the ways people can be different in philosophy, RE, and PSHE lessons. This prepares them well for their future lives.
47. Pupils are well prepared for each stage of transition as they move through the school. Leaders in the early years plan meaningful transition activities so that children move seamlessly from the Nursery classes into the Reception class. For example, children in the Nursery classes are taught snack time and outdoor play routines that mirror what they will experience in the Reception class. Older pupils are given additional mathematics enrichment lessons to prepare them for the demands of their senior school curriculums. Pupils gain places in a variety of schools, including those with higher academic entry requirements. Pupils in Year 6 appreciate the guidance they are given about future careers through careers events and visiting speakers, who talk about a variety of professions.
48. Pupils have many opportunities to take up leadership roles and support others, including as part of the school council. Older pupils act as positive role models for the younger pupils, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 read to younger pupils.
49. Pupils develop their understanding of democracy through practical examples in school such as developing and voting on the class charter. Pupils in Year 6 design their own political parties and hold mock elections. These activities, along with the teaching of British values through PSHE lessons and the academic curriculum, prepare pupils well for life in British society.
50. Leaders develop pupils' social and economic understanding and encourage their active contribution to society. Pupils raise funds for their designated charity through a variety of activities such as bake sales. They make regular donations to the local foodbank. Items are brought in to school then packaged and distributed by the pupils. This teaches pupils the value of contributing to others through their own efforts. During 'skills for life' week, pupils learn, for example, about the role of banks and how to budget for a birthday party.
51. Pupils enhance local areas and support local communities by planting and growing flowers and selling tomato plants. These activities help pupils to understand responsibility and the benefits of helping others.
52. The local community are welcomed into the school for events such as Remembrance Day and musical concerts and plays. Pupils visit the local care home and provide support and companionship to the residents.
53. Pupils develop an understanding of what is right and wrong through discussions in PSHE lessons and during assemblies when, for example, they hear talks from the local police. Pupils discuss the impact of their actions and work together to uphold the school's values of mutual respect and social responsibility.

54. Leaders make sure that pupils are taught a balanced perspective on political views through monitoring teaching plans, observing lessons and checking pupil surveys. All external speakers are vetted before being invited into school and their presentations are viewed in advance.

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

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

## Safeguarding

56. Leaders prioritise safeguarding and make this a shared responsibility across the school community. Leaders embed safeguarding principles in all aspects of school life, which are underpinned by a culture of vigilance and the mindset that 'it could happen here'.
57. The school ensures that pupils are safe and valued. Those with responsibility for safeguarding receive regular training so they have the skills and knowledge to undertake their responsibilities effectively.
58. The safeguarding policy is written in line with statutory guidance. It is updated annually and reviewed by the governing body. The designated safeguarding governor oversees all aspects of safeguarding in the school, providing advice and guidance as required.
59. Staff training is comprehensive and includes training on the 'Prevent' duty to reduce the risk of radicalisation. Any current issues are alerted to staff via the regular morning briefing sessions. Staff understand how to report and escalate concerns. The school makes timely referrals and seeks advice from local agencies as appropriate.
60. The school premises are closely managed to support safety, with secure perimeters, monitored visitor access and rigorous site inspections.
61. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the PSHE curriculum and assemblies. Pupils understand that they can speak to staff about any concerns and appropriate action will be taken. Pupils have access to an anonymous system for sharing their concerns on paper via the worry monsters in every classroom.
62. E-safety education is integrated into the curriculum to equip pupils with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the online world safely. The school employs robust filtering and monitoring systems to protect pupils from harmful content and to ensure safe online activity. Staff receive regular training on e-safety issues and the appropriate measures to take should an incident occur. The school maintains an open channel of communication with parents, offering resources and workshops to support online safety at home. Mobile phones are not allowed in school.
63. The school recognises its responsibilities regarding the recruitment of staff. Senior staff take part in safer recruitment training. The school's single central record of staff appointments (SCR) is properly maintained, and all required pre-employment checks are carried out.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Howe Green House School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	881/6038
<b>Registered charity number</b>	297106
<b>Address</b>	Howe Green House School Great Hallingbury Bishop's Stortford Hertfordshire CM22 7UF
<b>Phone number</b>	01279 657706
<b>Email address</b>	schooloffice@howegreenhouse.org
<b>Website</b>	www.howegreenhouse.org
<b>Proprietor</b>	Howe Green Educational Trust Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Samantha Bristow Mr Ed Fielding
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Anna Lipani Mr Paul Bailey
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	143
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 to 24 June 2022

## Information about the school

65. The school is located on a fifteen-acre site on the Hertfordshire and Essex border, close to Hatfield Forest. It was founded in 1987 by a group of staff and parents. The school is owned by the Howe Green Educational Trust and is overseen by a governing body. The school consists of the nursery phase for children aged between 2 and 4 years, the pre-prep phase for pupils aged between 5 and 7 years and the prep phase for pupils aged between 8 and 11 years. Since the previous inspection there have been changes in the leadership of the school, with the appointment of co-headteachers and a restructuring of the leadership team.
66. There are 40 children in the early years comprising two Nursery classes and one Reception class, which has its own specific indoor and outdoor accommodation on the school site.
67. The school has identified 24 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
68. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for a very small number of pupils.
69. The school states its aims are to create a nurturing and stimulating school where pupils can thrive academically, personally, and through the co-curricular programme, laying the foundation for future success in secondary education and beyond. These aims are based on a strong sense of community, providing high-quality education and preparing pupils for their future lives.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

1 to 3 July 2025

70. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

71. 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 co-chairs of the governors
- discussions with the co-headteachers, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

72. 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)**.

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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