



STAHS

PREP SENIOR SIXTH

ISI 2024 INSPECTION REPORT HIGHLIGHTS



**THINK
BEYOND**

WELCOME

I am so proud of how the spirit of STAHS and the exceptional education we provide for our pupils shines through our inspection report. A new inspection framework was introduced in September 2023, and under new guidelines there are no longer single-word judgements for schools. The new inspection reports are deliberately measured in tone and certainly not designed to be a gripping read! Despite that, what is special about STAHS is evident throughout, from our innovative SuperCurriculum and Sixth Form Diploma, to the abundance of co-curricular choice and opportunity, to the compassion and respect within our community. Throughout the report, the inspectors' findings are underpinned by our unique Teach to 25 philosophy, dedicated to developing happy, resilient young people who will embrace opportunities and lead lives of consequence.

I am hugely grateful to our pupils, parents and staff for their contribution to the inspection process and outcome, not just over the three days of the visit, but every day, in being part of the whole school community that makes STAHS truly extraordinary.



Amber Waite, Principal, St Albans Education Group



INTRODUCTION

In February 2024, STAHS was inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). Over three days a team of 10 inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons across the school, had discussions with pupils, parents, governors, teaching and support staff and reflected on feedback from surveys of our pupils, parents and staff.

We are delighted to share the highlights from our perspective of our extremely positive inspection report, which reflects the exceptional experience we offer our pupils across academic, pastoral and co-curricular life.

It is worth noting that the new inspection framework which was introduced in September 2023 is significantly different from the previous approach. This means like for like comparisons cannot be made with our earlier inspection reports and with other schools' reports before September 2023.

ISI no longer gives single word judgements, such as 'excellent', instead, under the new framework a school is only awarded 'met' or 'not met' against five key areas:

- Leadership, management and governance
- Quality of education, training and recreation
- Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society
- Safeguarding.

STAHS has received an extremely positive report and met all five criteria.



SUMMARY

The school's Teach to 25 philosophy helps pupils gain the life skills and understanding to enable them to flourish long after they have left school. In this way, leaders promote the wellbeing of the pupils throughout their school careers and beyond. This approach is a distinctive aspect of the school.

The curriculum is extensive and carefully considered. Teachers guide pupils through the abundance of options to provide flexibility for later in their careers.

Attainment in terms of examination results, university and other career destinations is high compared to the national average.

All pupils make good progress, including those who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders and teachers support the wellbeing of the pupils as individuals with compassion and respect.

Leaders focus on broadening pupils' experiences and relevant life skills, many of which are delivered through the PSHE education programme referred to as Skills for Life.

Safeguarding practices and procedures are effective. Leaders carefully consider the safety and wellbeing of the pupils.

Governors ensure that leaders have the skills and understanding to fulfil their responsibilities well. They are well informed and have robust oversight of school policy and practice.

“The school's Teach to 25 philosophy helps pupils gain the life skills and understanding to enable them to flourish long after they have left school.”



LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Leaders have a strong approach to checking and reviewing the school's effectiveness. They frequently consult with staff, parents, alumni and pupils to guide the decisions they make about what needs to improve further. Leaders clearly and purposefully identify areas for development that benefit all aspects of pupils' wellbeing.

Although the Senior School and Prep School sites are separated both in distance and surroundings, leaders collaborate well to ensure a cohesive approach. This is so pupils experience a smooth transition from the Prep School to the Senior School and continue to thrive.

In the early years, leaders promote the wellbeing of all children effectively so that children behave well and are ready to learn. Exemption from the Statutory Framework to allow an earlier start for children to formal learning is proving successful. Young children flourish personally, socially and academically and are supported in all aspects of their development by effective teaching.

The wellbeing hub has been equipped and staffed and is making a positive impact. It has made access to counselling support or simply to a quiet space easier for pupils.



“Pupils experience a smooth transition from the Prep School to the Senior School and continue to thrive.”

QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION

Teachers demonstrate enthusiasm and secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They plan thoroughly and lessons are fast moving and challenging. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and work hard. They are highly motivated to achieve and aware of how to improve their individual understanding. Pupils appreciate the encouragement and feedback provided by the teachers in classwork and assessments.

The choice of subjects is sufficiently varied to provide opportunities for gaining a wide range of knowledge and skills. Pupils appreciate the abundance of options and the guidance on choosing the most appropriate ones for them to succeed.

Teachers know the pupils and their abilities well. They use appropriate information to adapt their approach for pupils who have SEND according to their specific needs. Regular review meetings between pupils and academic leaders allow for reflection on pupils' progress and the evaluation of any interventions. Pupils who have SEND make comparable progress with their peers.

There are a broad range of activities available during lunchtimes and after school. Pupils appreciate the abundance of choice and opportunity. The resulting high levels of participation and opportunities to explore something new promote pupils developing personal skills such as confidence and independence. Pupils also gain social and other life skills, such as personal organisation and prioritisation.

“Pupils appreciate the abundance of options and the guidance on choosing the most appropriate ones for them to succeed.”



PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

There is a nurturing atmosphere throughout the school which is based on strong relationships and mutual respect. Pupils behave well.

Effective pastoral systems enable pupils to feel safe and understood as individuals. The pastoral team addresses pupils' concerns with compassion and respect, suggesting strategies and working with pupils effectively to resolve issues.

Behaviour and antibullying policies are implemented effectively so that pupils feel secure and able to be themselves.

Pupils are socially adept. They express themselves well, and readily discuss and appreciate other points of view.

Physical education is at a high standard in terms of participation, enjoyment and inclusivity. A healthy balanced lifestyle is actively encouraged from the start, including consideration of mental wellbeing.



“Pupils are socially adept. They express themselves well, and readily discuss and appreciate other points of view.”

PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

Pupils behave well. Young pupils understand the principles of right and wrong. They learn to appreciate the importance of rules and laws as they go through the school. As role models, older pupils demonstrate the principles of justice and good citizenship, learned from discussion, debate and the example of their teachers.

In the Prep School, pupils have leadership opportunities which they fulfil with pride. With classroom responsibilities or as House or Sports captains, Eco or Wellbeing Ambassadors or pupil committee members, pupils learn to consider the views of others and work together to improve their school environment.

Careers education is well planned and tailored to the needs of the pupils. This is influenced by the Teach to 25 philosophy, particularly in the building of relevant skills for pupils as they progress towards university or further training.

Through SuperCurriculum sessions, teachers provide activities through which pupils develop different skills such as independent research, debating and exploring topics beyond examination specifications.

The Sixth Form STAHS Diploma also complements pupils' academic studies, providing additional wellbeing life skills, and opportunities for service and leadership. Consequently, pupils are well-prepared for life beyond school.



“Pupils are well-prepared for life beyond school”

SAFEGUARDING

Leaders and staff work hard to make this school a safe place for everyone.

Safeguarding is led and promoted well.

The safeguarding team ensures that a culture of promoting the wellbeing of every child is thoroughly embedded in the school.

Safeguarding training is robust and regular. The annual staff and governor training is appropriately updated throughout the year.

The school has a variety of robust systems in place to safeguard pupils, including the effective use of external agencies.

Leaders ensure that pupils, staff and as many parents as possible are well versed in keeping themselves safe online.



There is a nurturing atmosphere throughout the school which is based on strong relationships and mutual respect.





The full ISI report is at
<https://www.stahs.org.uk/about-stahs/inspection-reports/>



St Albans High School for Girls
Townsend Avenue
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL1 3SJ

Tel: 01727 853 800

Published June 2024