

School inspection report

11 to 13 November 2025

Terra Nova School

Jodrell Bank

Holmes Chapel

Crewe

Cheshire

CW4 8BT

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 work cohesively with each other and the governors. Collectively, they ensure that the Standards are met consistently by being reflective and through careful evaluation of their priorities.
2. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing in all aspects of their practice by developing nurturing relationships with the pupils. They demonstrate genuine interest in and knowledge of pupils' lives, experiences and families, fostering pupils' self-worth and belonging.
3. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a range of subjects which broaden their horizons and enable them to develop both breadth and depth in their knowledge, skills and understanding. The curriculum is enhanced by the co-curricular programme which affords pupils opportunities to try new activities and pursue their passions.
4. Teachers in the early years incorporate children's interests into their planning. This leads to children being motivated to join in activities, developing their oral language skills as they talk about their learning.
5. Teaching is effective because teachers are responsive to individual pupils' needs. Pupils of different aptitudes are supported well in lessons, with attention to detail in ensuring that pupils receive appropriate challenge to extend their thinking. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points.
6. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to make good progress. Leaders implement detailed learning plans and communicate effectively with all staff about how best to tailor their teaching to meet pupils' needs.
7. Leaders ensure that fair and transparent processes are consistently applied to promote high standards of behaviour and address bullying promptly.
8. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to look after their emotional and physical health. Through carefully planned assemblies and lessons, leaders ensure that pupils learn how to regulate their emotions. The physical education (PE) programme is an important part of the curriculum. It enables pupils to enjoy regular exercise and develop a range of skills to boost their fitness and co-ordination.
9. The school's nurturing ethos successfully encourages pupils to become active citizens and develop social responsibility. Pupils learn to show empathy for others through being involved in charitable endeavours that support the local community.
10. Pupils who board are looked after in a caring and stimulating environment where warm relationships with staff are evident and where boarders have access to a wide range of activities which they enjoy. Boarding accommodation meets all required Standards.
11. The careers programme forms part of the newly launched 'growth' curriculum. As yet, the careers programme does not enable all pupils to have a full awareness of the pathways they could follow.

12. Safeguarding is a key feature of the school's work. All staff and governors understand their responsibilities to safeguard pupils. This is as a result of effective training and regular dialogue between leaders and staff.

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:

- review the provision for careers education in Years 7 and 8 to enable pupils to develop their awareness of the range of future pathways available to them.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors have effective oversight of leadership and management at the school. They ensure that leaders have suitable knowledge and skills to enable them to write and implement policies effectively. As a result, Standards are consistently met.
14. Leaders create a nurturing ethos, within which pupils are valued as individuals. Leaders model kind and caring interactions with pupils, getting to know them well and using this knowledge to give pupils a genuine sense of belonging in the school community.
15. Governors and leaders make proactive and considered decisions about the strategic direction of the school, as demonstrated by the recent merger with Shrewsbury School. Within their strategic decision-making processes, governors and leaders reflect on potential risks and how to mitigate these. This ensures that actions taken are in the best interest of the pupils and that promoting positive wellbeing for the pupils remains at the heart of the school's practice.
16. Leadership in the early years ensures that children are nurtured and well supported in their learning. Staff observe children carefully so that they can plan play-based activities based on children's interests. This results in children being engaged in their learning and making good progress.
17. Leaders manage boarding provision successfully to enable pupils to enjoy their boarding experiences. Caring boarding staff and a variety of stimulating activities mean that pupils benefit personally and socially from their boarding experiences. Regular themed evenings are well attended and encourage more pupils to have a taster experience of boarding.
18. Leaders fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. They reflect on how they can make reasonable adjustments to make the school site and curriculum more accessible for any pupils with a specific educational need or disability.
19. The school ensures that there is a range of suitable information provided on the school's website, including relevant policies and contact information. Parents receive detailed reports about their child's progress and targets.
20. Leaders establish effective partnerships with external agencies so that they can work collaboratively to support pupils' needs. They provide the local authority with required information about pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including how finances are utilised. Leaders report pupils who join or leave at non-standard times to the relevant local authority.
21. Leaders demonstrate a systematic approach to risk management through proactive planning, clear responsibilities and compliance with statutory frameworks. Risk assessments are thorough, regularly reviewed and include those relating to safeguarding. Competent supervision and emergency procedures promote pupil safety, reflecting a culture of accountability across the school staff.
22. Leaders have suitable systems in place to manage parental complaints informally as well as formally. Parents can access the complaints policy via the school's website. Leaders follow appropriate stages and timescales, and ensure that any resulting actions are communicated, implemented and recorded. Governors know their role within the complaints process, should they be required.

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. Leaders implement a broad, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum that enables pupils to acquire new skills and build on their prior learning. The curriculum meets the different needs and interests of pupils so that they can acquire knowledge in a variety of subjects. As well as becoming literate and numerate, pupils become more technologically proficient in computer science and design technology, and develop skills in languages such as French, Spanish and Mandarin. The creative subjects of art, music and drama enable pupils to develop their imagination and curiosity when working collaboratively on practical activities.
25. Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to plan lessons well. They use their in-depth knowledge of individual pupils to ensure that their teaching incorporates strategies to meet the different needs and aptitudes of pupils. Teachers typically revisit prior learning during lessons, such as recapping high-frequency words in English and revising formulae in mathematics. This enhances pupils' recall and allows new learning to be securely connected to previous understanding. Teachers manage behaviour effectively, creating a calm, purposeful learning environment. They have high expectations so that pupils are challenged to think and extend their learning. Teachers give immediate and relevant feedback during lessons so that pupils know what they are doing well and how they could improve further. Consequently, pupils make good progress in their learning.
26. Children in the early years experience a broad range of well-planned, play-based activities that incorporate their interests. This enables them to be motivated to participate in activities, developing their knowledge and understanding in enjoyable ways. Teachers interact with children during play so that children develop their oral language and vocabulary, such as when talking about different textures, working with modelling dough and discussing words that describe fireworks. Formal learning skills, such as phonics and learning about numbers, are introduced incrementally so that children are ready to make a successful transition to Year 1.
27. Leaders collect and analyse assessment data to track pupils' progress. Teachers ensure that any emerging concerns are identified early, allowing timely and effective support to be put in place. Regular pupil-progress meetings enable teachers to have a clear picture of every pupil's development and to confirm that they are making progress from their starting points.
28. Leaders in the early years use a variety of assessment methods to review the children's progress. They use this data to set individual targets for each child. All staff are aware of these targets so that they can provide effective support to help children make further progress. Staff share information with parents about their child's progress and next steps. By the end of Reception, pupils make good progress on the early learning goals.
29. Leaders ensure that pupils who have SEND are provided with effective provision to meet their needs. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in supporting pupils who have SEND. Training at school gives them in-depth knowledge of how to recognise and respond to a range of additional needs. Leaders facilitate regular communication and provide detailed learning plans for individual pupils' needs. As a result, teachers provide timely and appropriate support so that pupils who have SEND make good progress.
30. Leaders implement a clear process for identifying pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils' levels of fluency are assessed to establish their stage of language development.

Communication with staff is effective so that they are aware of pupils' linguistic profiles and the strategies required to support them. As a result, pupils quickly gain confidence and make good progress in their English fluency.

31. Leaders provide a wide range of co-curricular activities, such as shooting, coding and debating. Boarders access a variety of activities in the evenings, such as cookery, crafts and games, as well regular visits off site. The co-curricular programme enhances the curriculum in enabling pupils to acquire new skills and interests, while further developing their social skills.

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

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

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

33. Leaders establish a nurturing environment based on empathy and respect. Staff model warm relationships so that pupils are supported emotionally and are valued as individuals. In turn, pupils treat each other with kindness, showing a sensitive attitude towards others and respecting each other's differences. They display well-developed moral values due to leaders' clear expectations for how everyone should treat each other.
34. Leaders and teachers ensure that pupils develop self-esteem by celebrating individual achievements. Pupils experience opportunities to speak and perform in public, such as in drama lessons, assemblies and when giving presentations in class, so that they gain confidence. Pupils take pride in their accomplishments and appreciate the achievements of others. Leadership roles, and the process of applying for one, promote further confidence as pupils undertake key responsibilities on behalf of the school.
35. Leaders implement a bespoke personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum, known as 'growth' to support pupils' personal development. The 'growth' curriculum is linked to the school's ethos so that pupils learn how to look after themselves within the school's expectations of being respectful and kind. Pupils learn about different strategies to promote their emotional wellbeing, such as being physically active and talking to someone about any concerns. Children in the early years learn about different emotions and how to manage these with adult support and then independently. Pupils know how to use the 'listening tree' to encourage them to talk to an adult and can see the school counsellor if required. Leaders raise awareness of mental health through biannual mental health weeks.
36. The 'growth' curriculum encompasses all aspects of relationships and sex education (RSE). Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to navigate conflict. In age-appropriate ways, they learn about the importance of consent. They understand how their bodies change as they grow, learning about puberty and conception in a timely manner. Teachers cover topics sensitively, giving pupils time to voice questions and discuss topics openly. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of the RSE curriculum, making changes as required and consulting parents in the process.
37. Within 'growth' lessons and assemblies, teachers help pupils to consider how gratitude is linked to wellbeing and spirituality. Pupils learn how to reflect on and be thankful for the positive aspects of their lives. Teachers use the outdoors for different aspects of lessons to enable pupils to appreciate and feel connected with the natural world around them.
38. Leaders promote the development of pupils' physical health. In the early years, physical development is a key area of learning and children have sessions in dance, yoga and outdoor learning to develop their co-ordination and stamina. PE lessons for older pupils enable them to develop skills in a range of activities, including swimming, cross country and gymnastics. Pupils learn how to play sports and apply their skills when playing fixtures in hockey, football, netball, rugby and cricket. At these times, pupils learn about teamwork and how to interact positively with others. Pupils' understanding of physical health is enhanced in science and 'growth' lessons, where they learn about topics such as healthy eating and misuse of drugs, in age-appropriate ways.

39. Leaders implement clear behaviour and anti-bullying policies which are understood by staff and pupils, ensuring consistency in expectations. Staff focus on rewards to help pupils understand the expectations for their behaviour. Sanctions are used effectively where required. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour so that they understand how their actions affect others. As a result, pupils behave well and incidents of bullying are rare. Leaders respond appropriately and swiftly when bullying does occur.
40. The site team maintains thorough health and safety protocols in order to promote safety on site. The premises are well maintained, with quick responses for any remedial works. Fire safety is well managed through regular fire drills, including while boarders are sleeping, and prompt action from fire audits.
41. Boarding accommodation is comfortable, clean and secure. Boarders have a safe area to keep their possessions and are provided with nutritious and balanced meals. Induction processes are effective for boarders, including a clear explanation of fire procedures and how to contact the independent person. Boarders have a suitable variety of activities and are supported with their academic work where required. Staff develop caring relationships with boarders which positively contributes to boarders' wellbeing and confidence.
42. Leaders provide close supervision of pupils throughout the school day, with round-the-clock supervision during boarding times. Appropriate ratios are in place for children in the early years.
43. Pupils have access to caring and qualified first aiders, including those with paediatric first aid training for children in the early years. Medical facilities are appropriate for day pupils and boarders.
44. Leaders comply with statutory requirements for admission and attendance registers. They ensure that families understand why attendance is so important and they monitor attendance so that they can respond appropriately if they have any concerns.

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. Leaders ensure that pupils develop skills in understanding money and financial matters. This is achieved through structured teaching within 'growth' lessons where pupils learn about topics such as budgeting, tax and pensions. Pupils apply their skills through meaningful activities, such as working out what they can buy from the tuck shop and developing a business plan for enterprise events. Teachers help pupils to think responsibly about spending and to consider the difference between what they might want and what they actually need. Pupils consider the ethics of money and whether money can make you happy.
47. Leaders ensure that fundamental British values are well taught within 'growth' lessons so that pupils understand how these have an impact on their lives. They learn about how democracy operates and apply this knowledge when fairly electing members of the school council. Pupils learn about the rule of law and link this to the expectations placed on them to be responsible members of their community. Within history lessons, they consider how crime and punishment from the past have influenced the modern-day justice system, such as 'hue and cry' being a foundation of community policing. Leaders arrange for visits from the police, fire service and the Armed Forces so that pupils develop an age-appropriate awareness of national institutions and services.
48. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures. Children in the early years listen to a variety of stories about cultures, backgrounds and traditions so that they can develop their understanding. As pupils progress through the school, the religious education curriculum enables pupils to learn about the practices and beliefs of world religions. This knowledge is enhanced through visiting different places of worship. Teachers encourage pupils of all ages to talk about their own faith and culture and develop a respectful curiosity about the culture and faith of others.
49. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of taking responsibility for their actions. Leaders have established expectations for how pupils should behave to help them to distinguish between right and wrong. Children in the early years develop their social skills by learning how to take turns and interact with others kindly. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how their actions affect others and to think about being role models for others. This is particularly effective during 'buddy breaks' when older pupils are assigned to be with a younger pupil in their house to act as a mentor and provide advice about taking responsibility.
50. The newly developed 'growth' curriculum contains topics that relate to careers development for pupils in Years 7 and 8. Leaders aim for pupils to learn about different careers and to think about their career aspirations so that they are ready for the world beyond school. Not all pupils find the careers information useful or frequent enough to be able to make informed decisions about the different pathways available to them.
51. Leaders encourage pupils to become active citizens who make meaningful contributions to the local community and wider world. Pupils are involved in fundraising for local and national charities. The pupils are currently supporting a local hospice through a variety of events, including a pupil-led 'exercisathon' involving pupils, staff and parents. Pupils make regular collections for local food and clothing banks, and visit a local care home, so that they develop their understanding of how their actions can benefit others.

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

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

53. Leaders establish a robust safeguarding culture as a result of clear processes, consistent staff engagement and effective oversight by governors. Safeguarding leaders have relevant and regular training to ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues. They communicate regularly with staff and governors to ensure that practice meets statutory requirements. They provide regular information to governors so that they can review safeguarding practice and ensure that it is effective.
54. The safeguarding team ensure that all staff have regular safeguarding training, with updates provided during staff meetings and at the start of term. This enables staff to acquire appropriate knowledge regarding raising concerns about pupils. Staff know about the 'Prevent' duty and why this is an important aspect of safeguarding. They understand the school's procedures for reporting and recording any concerns about staff working with the pupils. New staff receive safeguarding training at induction so that they understand their role in implementing the school's safeguarding policy.
55. Members of the safeguarding team take appropriate action when managing safeguarding concerns. They keep detailed and confidential records, including rationale for any actions. They liaise well with local safeguarding partners to ensure that pupils receive the best support for their situation. Communication with the local authority is effective in enabling staff to understand the risks relating to safeguarding, at both a national and local level.
56. Leaders have suitable training in safe recruitment so that they are thorough in their recruitment processes. They complete relevant pre-employment checks on all members of staff and for any staff who live or stay on site. All checks are accurately recorded on a single central record.
57. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to stay safe online and understand the benefits of the school's internet filtering and monitoring systems. Leaders test and review these systems regularly. They receive alerts and act upon them swiftly. Leaders communicate regularly with parents to promote their engagement in online safety. As a result of effective teaching in computer science and 'growth' lessons, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online, such as not sharing passwords and being careful about potential scamming.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Terra Nova School
Department for Education number	895/6006
Registered charity number	528413
Address	Terra Nova School Jodrell Bank Holmes Chapel Crewe Cheshire CW4 8BT
Phone number	01477 571251
Email address	office@tnschool.co.uk
Website	www.tnschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Governing Body of Shrewsbury School
Chair	Mr James Pitt
Headteacher	Mrs Christabel Westall
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils	213
Number of boarding pupils	Up to 60 (weekly and flexi-boarders)
Date of previous inspection	7 to 10 June 2022

Information about the school

59. Terra Nova School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between two and thirteen years. The school was founded in 1897 and moved to its current location near Holmes Chapel in Cheshire in 1939. In August 2025, Terra Nova School became part of the Shrewsbury School family of schools, which is a charitable organisation. They share governors with Shrewsbury School, with a committee of governors who oversee Terra Nova School. A new headteacher was appointed in October 2022.
60. The school offers weekly or flexi-boarding from Monday to Friday for pupils in Year 3 and above. There is one boarding house which is located in the main building.
61. There are 45 children in the early years, comprising two Nursery classes and one Reception class.
62. The school has identified 51 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
63. The school has identified English as an additional language for seven pupils.
64. The school states its aims are: to provide a safe, ambitious and nurturing environment in which children can flourish, discover their talents, develop their potential and contribute to the community to lead happy, fulfilled lives.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

11 to 13 November 2025

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

66. 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.

67. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

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