

School inspection report

28 to 30 April 2026

Great Ballard School

Eartham

Chichester

PO18 0LR

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and governors work collectively to ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently. Leaders have a thorough understanding about the school's areas for improvement and take appropriate and timely actions to address these areas. Governance ensures that there is well-informed oversight of leaders' work across the school, including in safeguarding, educational provision and compliance.
2. At the start of the inspection, the safeguarding policy available on the website was not up to date with the most recent statutory guidance and did not represent the effective practice in the school. This was rectified during the inspection.
3. Leaders ensure that children in the early years benefit from a well-planned, nurturing environment that supports their communication, independence and social development. Teachers use effective questioning and responsive planning to build on children's interests, enabling pupils to make good progress from nursery onwards.
4. Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad, coherent, and well sequenced. Pupils' learning is well supported from the early years through to Year 11. Most teaching ensures that pupils learn well and develop a thorough understanding of foundational knowledge and skills. Over time, pupils make good progress and achieve a range of qualifications and accreditation. Some teachers do not provide pupils in the senior school with clear and constructive written feedback about precisely how to improve their work and understanding.
5. Leaders prioritise pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. A highly effective pastoral system, alongside a rich programme of outdoor education and wellbeing initiatives, promotes resilience and confidence. Pupils understand the school's approach to behaviour and adhere to leaders' expectations. Leaders' approach to health and safety ensures that the site is well maintained and pupils are always well supervised.
6. Leaders and governors have established a distinctive culture by introducing additional strategies that prioritise pupils' personal development alongside their academic progress. Leaders have established a pastoral programme that allows pupils to have real choice in who supports their needs, alongside additional support from teachers as needed. This has resulted in a strong community that fosters mutual respect between all year groups and staff. Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are met and that they develop a secure sense of belonging. This is a significant strength.
7. Leaders ensure that social and economic education meets the needs of the pupils. Pupils benefit from meaningful opportunities to engage with financial education. They are provided with informed careers guidance which allows them to make informed choices about post-16 education, training and employment. Pupils undertake opportunities to develop their leadership skills and a commitment to service, each of which prepares them effectively for the next stage of their adult life.
8. Leaders create a culture where safety and wellbeing are prioritised. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff are well trained, systems for reporting and monitoring concerns are clearly understood and used appropriately, and timely action is taken to keep pupils safe. Pre-employment checks on adults working with pupils are in line with legal requirements. Pupils are taught about how to stay safe, including online and how to report their concerns. As a result, pupils feel safe and confident in seeking support.

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 safeguarding policy provided to parents reflects the most up-to-date information about statutory guidance and the procedures in the school
- ensure that teachers provide pupils with written feedback that supports them to understand how to improve their learning and work, so that they consistently make the progress of which they are capable.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders create a positive environment where pupils' learning and personal development are valued. Leaders put pupils' wellbeing at the centre of their policy, planning and actions. As a result, leaders have created a nurturing environment, which prioritises the welfare of pupils. Leaders ensure pupils understand the school's aims through the curriculum and extra-curricular provision, promoting respect. A sense of community is evident through shared activities across year groups, such as conservation work and the weekly Tea Club.
10. Governors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and provide effective oversight. They are appropriately trained, monitor provision through a range of activity and through the school's committees. Governors assure themselves that leaders have the knowledge and skills to ensure that the Standards are met.
11. Leaders identify and mitigate a full range of risks related to their statutory responsibilities. Risks relating to the size of the school site are thoroughly evaluated and mitigated, as are those relating to trips, curriculum change, visits and off-site activities. Leaders have put in place effective systems for risk assessment, training of appropriate staff, management and review of risk assessments. This oversight helps create a culture of risk awareness for the school community.
12. Leaders have a complaints policy that fulfils the requirements of the Standards. They have a clear and effective oversight of complaints, including informal complaints. There are appropriate records kept of both the nature of the complaints and the actions taken by the school. Leaders ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the complaints policy. Complaints are reviewed regularly by school leaders and governors.
13. The school provides appropriate and relevant information to parents. Routine reports and parents' evenings provide parents with required information about their child's progress and attainment. The school uses its website to provide required and relevant information, including a range of policies and procedures. However, the safeguarding policy did not reflect the most up-to-date statutory guidance and the more effective practice in the school. This policy was rectified during the inspection.
14. Leaders maintain effective links with external agencies. The school provides the local authority with appropriate information relating to any pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including information relating to additional funding and finance. They ensure that they work closely with safeguarding partnerships, when needed, such as children's services. They inform the local authority of when pupils join or leave at non-standard transition points.
15. Leaders foster a culture of high expectations, ensuring that every pupil is supported to achieve their potential. They use a range of information to check on the effectiveness of their work and where improvements could be brought. For example, they maintain a rigorous overview of teaching and learning. They use this information to inform staff training and professional development, and to identify where some staff need more guidance.
16. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A detailed accessibility plan is in place and reviewed routinely. Through this, leaders ensure that all pupils can access the curriculum and the site effectively and equitably.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. The curriculum is broad, balanced and designed to meet the needs of all pupils. It is coherently structured and planned to support pupils to build essential knowledge and skills, in an age-appropriate way, starting in the early years, through to Year 11. The content of the curriculum combines national curriculum content with opportunities for pupils to experience project-based learning and enrichment, including the school's own diploma. Leaders review the curriculum regularly to ensure it remains appropriate and supports pupils' intellectual curiosity. Leaders ensure that it prepares the oldest pupils to be able to study successfully for a range of qualifications and accreditation.
19. Teachers foster positive relationships in a supportive classroom environment. They use effective strategies to engage pupils in their learning. They encourage pupils to collaborate effectively and show positive attitudes to learning. As a result, most pupils behave well, try hard and are keen to learn.
20. Teachers have effective subject knowledge. They use this understanding to plan lessons, explain tasks and concepts and use a range of resources to support pupils' understanding. Most teachers use a range of ways to check on what pupils know and can do. For example, some teachers use skilful questioning, guidance and feedback to help pupils to apply their learning in more complex ways. However, some teachers' written feedback to pupils does not provide them with a precise understanding about how to improve their work and learning.
21. Leaders use a range of assessment and monitoring systems to check on the progress that pupils make and that provision meets pupils' needs. Leaders use this information to identify and support pupils who need extra help or support. Leaders ensure that, over time, pupils learn effectively. This leads to pupils at the end of Year 11 achieving a range of qualifications and moving onto appropriate post-16 destinations.
22. Leaders ensure that the early years curriculum provides a range of planned and play-based activities that engage children's interest and teach them important knowledge and skills. For example, teachers are adept at supporting children's early language and communication skills. They help children to develop important vocabulary as they play. They support the development of their early phonics knowledge. They help them to apply early understanding of number when counting toys. As a result, children are well prepared to transition onto Year 1.
23. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified in a precise and timely way. Leaders provide guidance to staff about the strategies that will best support pupils' learning and development. Where needed, some pupils access additional individualised provision and targeted support. As a result, pupils who have SEND access the curriculum successfully alongside their peers and learn effectively.
24. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) benefit from early assessment that identifies their linguistic needs precisely. Teachers provide targeted support and use adaptive strategies to help pupils develop their skills in reading, writing and speaking in English. Over time, they develop important linguistic skills, access the curriculum and achieve well.
25. A wide-ranging extra-curricular programme supports pupils' personal development. Activities such as young enterprise, outdoor education and swimming build confidence and teamwork across year

groups. Pupils benefit from a co-ordinated approach that integrates academic, physical and personal development, promoting enjoyment and supporting pupils for the next stage of their education.

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

26. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

27. The school fosters a supportive and inclusive community, which prioritises pupils' emotional wellbeing. Staff act as positive role models for pupils by displaying caring behaviours. Teachers are responsive to pupils' wellbeing. This creates positive relationships between pupils and staff. When needed, pupils are supported by effective pastoral systems, tutors and the school's 'Champions' programme. Pupils' views are listened to through, for instance, the school council. The curriculum and enrichment programme support pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing by ensuring that they understand how to seek help, when they need it. As a result, pupils feel safe, known and valued in the school community.
28. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect and think about the world around them. For example, children in the early years learn about nature through experiences in the outdoors. Pupils have opportunities to pause and reflect in assemblies. The school's 'learning to learn' programme supports them to take time to think about how they think, how to manage their emotions and reactions, and ways to communicate effectively. This starts with the youngest children in the early years who are taught how to understand their emotions and the feelings of others.
29. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is well structured and taught by trained staff, covering a range of subjects, including mental health, diversity and the qualities that make us different from one another in an age-appropriate way. It is further developed through a range of other activities such as assemblies, visits to religious institutions and external speakers. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum enables pupils to develop a clear understanding of relationships and respect. Pupils learn about topics such as physical and emotional boundaries, and engage thoughtfully in discussion.
30. Pupils understand the school's approach to behaviour and adhere to leaders' expectations. Behaviour around the school and in lessons reflects the pupils' sense of mutual respect. Leaders have established a culture in which expectations about behaviour and respect are understood by all, and teachers encourage pupils to reflect on appropriate behaviour with each other. Pastoral leaders review any occasions when behaviour is not acceptable and intervene early to address them. There are effective strategies in place to ensure bullying is rare and leaders respond to any incidents quickly and meaningfully. As a result, pupils are listened to and valued. Relations between pupils and staff are highly positive, which allows pupils to discuss any concerns they have with a trusted adult.
31. The physical education (PE) programme is broad and inclusive, promoting healthy lifestyles and participation. For example, the youngest children in the early years undertake a range of well-planned active play in the indoor and outdoor environment. Through PE lessons, they develop skills in throwing, catching, rolling, balancing and jumping. The PE curriculum is enriched by the school's outdoor education, including The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE). Opportunities such as lifeguarding and other physical challenges, such as the school's 'great outdoors' programme, develop resilience, confidence and teamwork.
32. The school's attendance and admissions procedures are thorough and well managed. Leaders maintain accurate record-keeping and appropriate communication with the local authority. Attendance is effectively monitored through clear and structured systems. Leaders work effectively

with families and external professionals, when needed, to support pupils' attendance to school. These processes ensure that pupils' welfare and safeguarding are thoroughly supported.

33. Leaders and governors maintain a safe and well managed environment through effective health and safety systems. The site is well maintained. Risk management and risk assessments are detailed and appropriately implemented and fire safety procedures are robust. First aid provision and accommodation are effective in caring for the medical needs of pupils. Appropriate supervision ensures pupils can learn and play safely in a secure setting, including the supervision of the youngest children when eating.

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

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

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

35. Leaders promote values of inclusivity, kindness and service effectively. Through the PSHE curriculum, pupils are taught about the importance of respecting those of varying faiths, cultures, beliefs and ideas. Staff act as role models with regard to these values in their daily interactions with pupils, creating a harmonious school environment. Pupils learn about the importance of equality and how people are protected by law. As a result, pupils are respectful, kind and courteous. They value diversity in the school and local community.
36. The curriculum teaches pupils about a range of important British values, such as democracy, rule of law and right and wrong. From the youngest age, children learn about important public services, such as nurses and the police, as people who help us when we need it. As they get older, pupils learn about different political ideas, the role of laws and the importance of taking responsibility for actions. Activities such as mock elections and participation in the pupils' council provide relevant practical opportunities to see these concepts in practice. Leaders provide pupils with a range of meaningful experiences.
37. In the early years, kindness and collaboration are modelled by staff in daily routines. Staff provide opportunities for children to participate in shared activities that promote co-operation, communication and respect. Staff use play activities to help children learn to take turns, interact, co-operate and share. Children develop effective, age-appropriate social skills.
38. Pupils develop appropriate economic understanding, starting with the youngest children, who learn about the role of money in buying things, when playing shops. As they get older, through a well-planned curriculum, pupils learn about financial literacy and topics such as budgeting and economic decision-making. Pupils engage in a range of activities that enrich their understanding, such as enterprise projects, and popular initiatives, such as the school's 'service and leadership' dinners. These provide pupils with relevant practical experience of financial planning.
39. Pupils receive an appropriate education related to careers, information and guidance. Over time, pupils learn about a range of careers available to them, enriched by visiting speakers from different professions. Pupils access an online profiling tool that helps them to think about careers that match their abilities, interests and aspirations. As they get older, they receive individual, impartial and well-structured guidance, supporting them to make informed decisions about their future. Older pupils receive work-related learning, application support and mock interviews to help ready them for the world of work. Pupils are well supported to make informed choices about post-16 options, including apprenticeships and further education.
40. Pupils have opportunities to contribute to the school community and develop leadership skills. For example, the student council enables pupils to influence decisions, and activities such as event organisation and charity work foster responsibility.
41. The school supports pupils to maintain effective links with the wider community, promoting service and social responsibility. Initiatives such as DofE volunteering, partnerships with local organisations and charity fundraising ensure that pupils contribute actively and engage positively in these opportunities.

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

42. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

43. School leaders create a secure safeguarding culture which is embedded in daily practice. They have appropriate policies and procedures that are aligned with up-to-date statutory guidance. However, at the start of the inspection, the policy available on the school's website did not reflect the most recent statutory guidance and the more effective practice in the school. This was rectified during the inspection.
44. Pupils are taught how to report concerns. Regular pastoral support, PSHE and a visible staff presence reinforce a culture where pupils are listened to and provided with timely help when they need it. Pupils report feeling safe, known and supported. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including about online risk, through PSHE. There is an appropriate internet filtering and monitoring system in place which is checked routinely. Leaders act quickly when concerns are raised. Leaders and governors routinely review the information from their filtering and monitoring systems to look for any wider trends or actions that need to be taken.
45. Leaders provide comprehensive safeguarding training for all staff. This includes regular updates aligned with statutory guidance, weekly briefings, termly sessions and online modules. As a result, staff are well trained and vigilant to signs of concern, including those related to low-level concerns about adults working with pupils. Staff have a secure knowledge of reporting procedures and escalation routes, and report concerns in a timely manner.
46. Leaders have established appropriate recording and monitoring systems. An online platform provides staff with a centralised place in which to log concerns. Leaders take swift action and ensure timely support when concerns are raised. Records are detailed and clearly document actions and the action taken. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies, when needed, to seek further specialist support for pupils.
47. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding. Governors with responsibility for safeguarding undertake a range of checks, including on-site visits, discussions with pupils and staff, and review of a range of documentation. Governors review recruitment checks, risk management and safeguarding records, ensuring compliance and supporting ongoing improvement. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item in governors' meetings, where governors review the range of information. Governors ensure the effectiveness of leaders' work in keeping pupils safe.
48. Leaders and governors ensure that appropriate pre-employment recruitment checks are carried out in line with statutory guidance. These are maintained on a single central record, which is comprehensive, accurately maintained and regularly reviewed. Leaders and governors ensure that these procedures and recording are compliant with legal requirements.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Great Ballard School
Department for Education number	938/6174
Address	Great Ballard School Eartham Chichester West Sussex PO18 0LR
Phone number	01243 814236
Email address	office@greatballard.co.uk
Website	www.greatballard.co.uk
Proprietor	Great Ballard School
Chair	Mrs Sue Jay
Headteacher	Mr Matthew King
Age range	2 to 16
Number of pupils	239
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 May 2023

Information about the school

50. Great Ballard School is a proprietorial independent co-educational day school situated on a single site in Eartham, West Sussex. The school comprises: a nursery, for children aged two to four years old; a pre-prep, for pupils in Reception to Year 2; a prep, for pupils in Years 3 to 6; and a senior section, for pupils in Years 7 to 11. The school is owned by limited company, Great Ballard School Limited, where directors take on roles as governors.
51. There are 24 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery and one Reception classes.
52. The school has identified 61 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. 12 pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
53. The school has identified English as an additional language for 27 pupils.
54. The school states its aims are nurturing confidence in pupils and allowing them to become the very best versions of themselves; encouraging curiosity, invention, and ambition; putting kindness, empathy and service at the heart of its vision; ensuring no-one feels invisible; giving all pupils a voice and showing them how to use it; valuing inclusivity and focusing on what pupils can do and not just what they can't; seeing leadership in all pupils and valuing role models; keeping pupils safe and happy but always encouraging them to look beyond the bubble; prioritising the head, hand, heart and health of every pupil.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 to 30 May

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

56. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

57. 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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