

# School inspection report

29 April to 1 May 2025

## **Ballard School**

Fernhill Lane

New Milton

Hampshire

BH25 5SU

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

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

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders have a clear vision for school development based on effective monitoring and self-evaluation. Governors maintain efficient oversight of the school, enabling them to ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders have a strategic approach to the management of risk and take effective and appropriate action to mitigate the risks identified.
2. The curriculum is suitably broad and designed to meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils. Children in the early years are provided with a suitable range of activities which develop their skills. Teaching is effective in considering the needs and prior attainment of pupils so that they make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress because of the care which is put into considering the support they receive. Pupils' performance is systematically monitored, and this information is used by leaders to ensure that support is targeted effectively.
3. Parents are provided with reports which provide them with information about their child's attainment, progress and attitudes to learning. However, where pupils are underperforming, written comments do not always accurately reflect the extent of the relative weaknesses in the pupils' achievements.
4. The curriculum is complemented by a well-resourced co-curricular programme, which benefits pupils of all ages and abilities. The programme is wide-ranging and well-co-ordinated. It supports pupils' skills, interests and personal development effectively.
5. Leaders implement clear policies and procedures to ensure that behaviour is good around the school and in lessons. An effective strategy to prevent bullying is in place. Pupils' emotional, physical and mental health are successfully supported. Pupils are confident that there are adults to whom they can go with any concerns. A high proportion of pupils participate in, and achieve well in, physical activity. Leaders have a systematic approach to the management of health and safety, including fire protocols. Appropriate first aid is readily available when required.
6. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect for others. Effective links with the local community ensure that pupils are well informed and well prepared to contribute positively to British society. The careers education programme enables pupils to make informed choices about their next steps. However, the school does not develop pupils' economic awareness and understanding as effectively as possible.
7. Governors maintain a rigorous oversight of safeguarding practices at the school. Staff understand and implement the school's procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns that might arise. Leaders carry out recruitment checks as required by current statutory guidance, and these are recorded appropriately. Pupils learn how to keep safe, including when online.

## 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:

- strengthen pupils' understanding about how to manage their own finances as they move into adulthood
- ensure that reports to parents always contain clear information of what pupils need to do in order to develop their progress and attainment further.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders and managers have the required knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils. Governors assure themselves that the Standards are met by effective scrutiny and monitoring of the school's practice and procedures. Governors receive detailed reports, regularly visit the school and scrutinise documentation. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.
9. Leaders have an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school and areas for further development and carefully consider the impact that their actions have on pupils' wellbeing and success. They utilise methodical and detailed self-evaluation to inform their strategic school development planning. This planning focuses on improving the impact on pupils' wellbeing in all areas of the school's provision.
10. Leaders manage any parental complaints appropriately and keep thorough records of these and any actions taken by the school in response. Complaints are dealt with within the timeframes stated in the school's policy.
11. Parents are provided with reports which provide them with information about their child's attainment, progress and attitudes to learning. However, in a small number of cases, where pupils are underperforming, written comments do not accurately reflect the extent of the relative weaknesses of the pupils' work. Consequently, parents are not always sufficiently well informed of what their children need to do in order to develop their progress and attainment further.
12. Required information about the school, including its aims and ethos, is made available to parents, largely through the school's informative website. The school annually reviews the provision for any pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan and provides funding local authorities with an annual statement of income and expenditure.
13. Leaders have a comprehensive and robust approach to risk management. Leaders have an effective understanding of physical, welfare and safeguarding risks and respond with urgency and diligence to areas of potential risk when these are identified. Risk assessments identify potential risks thoroughly and detail appropriate steps taken to reduce or remove these. Leaders systematically monitor risk assessments to check their continued effectiveness.
14. Leaders foster effective links with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils. In particular, they maintain an effective working relationship with local safeguarding partners.
15. Leaders have developed a detailed accessibility plan that includes actions to facilitate access to the curriculum and facilities for any pupils with a disability. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

17. The broad curriculum is designed effectively to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in literacy, numeracy, creativity and a broad range of other areas. Speaking and listening skills are further developed via drama lessons as part of the core curriculum. Leaders monitor the implementation of the curriculum through learning walks and work scrutiny. Such activity also enables leaders to ascertain that teaching promotes British values.
18. Language development is encouraged through a recently introduced systematic scheme of work which relates letters to the sounds they make. Clear teaching utilising this scheme ensures that pupils make good progress in sentence construction and reading. Pupils with higher prior attainment are given sufficiently sophisticated spellings to challenge them. Leaders have reflected on practice and have introduced a new scheme for mathematics in the primary years. Pupils engage enthusiastically with the resources and tasks provided, to the benefit of their learning. Staff reflect on the effectiveness of their practice and adapt it when required in order to promote pupils' progress. School leaders provide seminars for parents to help them understand how to support their children in homework. Carefully planned lessons ensure children in the early years are motivated and engaged with learning and show independence and initiative in their learning.
19. Teachers engage pupils with tasks that develop their ability to learn and think for themselves. Pupils work well in groups in and out of class, preparing them for life outside of school. Teachers communicate clearly and knowledgeably about the subjects and tasks set, ensuring that pupils understand what is required of them in appropriately challenging tasks.
20. Teachers are reflective and take on board ideas about best practice. For example, upper primary English teachers plan series of lessons that allow pupils to actively engage with well-chosen examples of effective work and then generate their own. High levels of achievement and progression in writing skills are clearly visible in pupils' books, as is their ability to analyse and synthesise ideas and information.
21. Leaders have developed an approach to teaching and learning which ensures consistently effective teaching across the school. For example, teachers consistently establish a classroom environment conducive to learning at the start of lessons by effective use and presentation of learning activities. Additionally, teachers across the curriculum explain tasks effectively to ensure that more challenging tasks are accessible to all pupils. The positive relationships between pupils, fostered by leaders and staff, facilitate collaborative learning between pupils, including activities such as peer assessment and feedback. Teaching is ambitious and ensures that pupils typically make good progress.
22. Pupils habitually take into account the written feedback they receive on their work by applying that helpful feedback to subsequent pieces of work so that they make progress. A systematic assessment framework to assess pupils' academic achievements is in place across the school. This allows any underperformance of pupils to be readily identified and addressed and informs curriculum planning. Pupils make good progress from their starting points at all stages to GCSE.
23. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) have access to lesson summaries, additional learning material and subject-specific vocabulary lists. Specialist support is available to these pupils if required. Consequently, these pupils make good progress.

24. Effective processes for identifying the specific needs of pupils who have SEND lead to targeted and personalised support provided across the curriculum, when appropriate. Leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND provide effective guidance to teachers and curriculum leaders about how they can support individual pupils and develop curriculum plans, teaching and assessment which can be accessed by all pupils. Teachers make effective use of the teaching assistants to help provide prompt additional support when required, so that all pupils can access more challenging material in lessons. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress.
25. Children in the early years are provided with a range of stimulating activities both indoors and outdoors. The allocation of a key person to each child in nursery enables children's communication and language needs to be met. Teaching features regular informative dialogue and effective questioning which encourage children's language development and problem solving.
26. The school provides an enriching and inclusive co-curricular programme that supports pupils' all-round development beyond the classroom. Provision is broad, offering a diverse range of activities across creative, academic, sporting and practical disciplines, with opportunities for all pupils to participate and explore their interests. Consequently, pupils develop their confidence and a broad set of transferable skills, including communication and working together.

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

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

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

28. The school develops pupils' spiritual awareness effectively. The school's teaching develops pupils' understanding of Christianity in line with its ethos, as well as the traditions and perspectives of different religions. Outdoor learning activities are designed to enable younger pupils to develop a sense of their relationship to nature.
29. Leaders' and staff's relationships with pupils are warm and supportive, supporting them to feel secure and valued. The approachability of staff, including senior leaders, encourages pupils to feel comfortable speaking to them about any concerns or worries that they might have.
30. The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to develop as leaders within the school community, such as through the programme of pupil mentoring which offers older pupils the chance to act as role models for younger pupils, and through the school council. Such experiences allow pupils to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. Staff nurture pupils' self-confidence and resilience from an early age, including through the way in which children and pupils are welcomed when they first join the school, and through the encouragement given when pupils face challenges.
31. The physical education (PE) and sports provision is designed to challenge and support pupils with a wide range of abilities, enabling both developing athletes and those with more advanced sporting skills to develop their abilities and techniques in different areas. Pupils demonstrate high levels of skill, teamwork and enthusiasm, with many achieving success in both school and external sporting events.
32. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is thorough and well planned. Pupils learn about matters such as personal hygiene, mental health, inclusion, tolerance and respect. The programme is appropriately informed by, and adapted to address, any issues that may arise in the school, or requests from pupils for more information on particular themes. Children in the early years learn about what makes a good friend and about oral health and hygiene. Leaders supplement the PSHE programme's key messages on issues such as mental health by holding assemblies on such themes. The messages provided by the school on this theme encourage pupils to speak about their mental health should they feel the need.
33. The comprehensive relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is well structured and effectively delivered in age-appropriate ways. Teachers use systematic assessment to check that pupils develop secure knowledge and understanding of issues such as healthy relationships, puberty and consent.
34. Pupils behave very well across the school. Leaders promote good behaviour through well-planned initiatives that focus on the development of friendships. Positive behaviour is expected and encouraged effectively from an early age. For example, Reception and Year 1 pupils engaged in outdoor learning follow rules with ease and show consideration towards others when playing with sticks. Bullying is rare with few incidents. This is because the school educates pupils about the effects of bullying, and the school culture is successful in enabling pupils to build positive relationships with each other.



35. The premises are maintained effectively to provide a suitable physical environment for pupils. There is a rolling programme of works to upgrade premises. Leaders ensure that the school complies with all requirements of relevant health and safety laws and the regulations related to fire safety, including by carrying out all required checks and servicing of equipment systematically. Regular fire evacuation drills ensure that pupils know what to do should a fire alarm sound.
36. High levels of supervision, including in the early years, and effective deployment of staff ensure all pupils interact positively, including in breaktime. Activities are provided in unstructured times, and the positive relationships generated in class and activities support pupils in respecting the school's behavioural rules and expectations.
37. The school maintains admissions and attendance registers as required by current statutory guidance. Pupils' attendance is monitored by pastoral staff to ensure that trends are identified and, when required, support is put in place to ensure appropriate attendance. Attendance data is studied by pastoral leaders who follow up on emerging trends. This has resulted in an increase in overall attendance over the past three years. The school informs the local authority whenever any pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.
38. School leaders oversee a careful approach to first aid within the school. The medical centre provides a suitable space for pupils to be treated. Staff follow appropriate procedures when administering any medication or first aid. The first aid training of staff, including those in the early years, is appropriate and updated regularly.

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

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

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

40. The school develops pupils' economic understanding effectively overall. Younger pupils learn, in an age-appropriate way, about the value of money and taxation, while older pupils learn about budgeting and the risks associated with gambling. However, the guidance provided to pupils about managing their finances as they move into adulthood is limited.
41. Leadership fosters an inclusive ethos by prioritising mutual respect and ensuring that pupils develop their understanding of the importance of respecting peoples' protected characteristics, such as race, belief and sex. Events are held to celebrate diversity and to tackle prejudice. This enables pupils to engage in open, respectful dialogue. Consequently, pupils value diversity, speak confidently about inclusion and demonstrate respect for others' identities and beliefs.
42. Leadership ensures that the promotion of British values is central to the school's ethos and consistently reinforced across all aspects of school life. Understanding of these values is taught through PSHE and other curriculum areas, visual displays in every classroom and regular opportunities for discussion and reflection. Subjects such as PSHE and history teach pupils about the democratic systems in England and in other countries, supported by pupils' participation in mock elections and visits from public service representatives. Pupils experience the democratic process and representation of views through the pupil councils. Pupils learn about how laws are determined and upheld, including through activities such as visits to the Royal Courts of Justice to learn about its work. Leaders ensure that a balanced perspective is presented consistently on political issues and that alternative viewpoints are presented without bias.
43. The careers education programme provides pupils of secondary age with timely, impartial careers advice which meets individuals' interests and needs. For example, one-to-one conversations with all Year 9 pupils have been introduced, so that careers advice is offered to inform GCSE subject choices. Both the parent and the alumni communities contribute actively to careers events and pupils benefit from the experience and insight of these groups.
44. Leadership prioritises broadening pupils' awareness of life beyond their rural context to help prepare them for the wider world beyond school. Discussions in PSHE, themed workshops and external speakers address social challenges such as gang culture and knife crime. Teaching effectively supports pupils' awareness of human and social issues across subjects such as PSHE, geography and history. Consequently, pupils develop their understanding of the differing social issues faced by young people across the UK and reflect thoughtfully on these.
45. Leaders actively promote a culture of moral responsibility by encouraging pupils to express their views and to reflect on ethical issues. For example, pupils explore themes such as whether or not 'white lies' can be morally justified and on the basis of which moral principles. There are structured opportunities for pupils to collaborate on initiatives such as creating their own charter for their behaviour, which distinguishes between right and wrong. As a result, pupils develop a sense of personal accountability and an embedded understanding of the importance of considering the consequences of their choices and actions.

46. The school takes advantage of its locality for outdoor learning activities when appropriate. Pupils visit local care homes and events are hosted for other local schools. Consequently, they gain an understanding of the school's locality.
47. Leadership provides a well-considered and appropriate programme of activities for children below school age. This includes a balanced mix of co-curricular and curriculum-based opportunities, with access to a wide range of sports, including dance, as well as creative, social, and exploratory clubs that support children's development. Children engage enthusiastically, develop key social skills, and build secure foundations for future learning.

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

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

## Safeguarding

49. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that arise. They consult with external safeguarding partners and refer safeguarding concerns to them when required. Suitable arrangements for the handling of allegations against staff or senior leaders are in place. These are well understood by staff and followed when required. Leaders keep suitable records of safeguarding concerns and the decisions and actions taken in response to these.
50. Governors maintain effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The safeguarding governors visit the school regularly to ensure that safeguarding procedures are suitable and carried out effectively. All governors undertake training in safeguarding.
51. Safeguarding training for staff, including that for the safeguarding team, is thorough, regular and in line with local requirements. Leaders provide safeguarding updates and scenario-based training for all staff. This is supplemented by weekly updates and questions for staff to consider to review understanding. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to escalate concerns when required. A suitable induction process is in place to ensure that new staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities.
52. Leaders maintain awareness of potential contextual safeguarding risks facing pupils beyond the school, including those relating to radicalisation and extremism. Staff receive training about the 'Prevent' duty that relates to such risks and how to respond to them.
53. Leaders provide a number of ways for pupils to raise any concerns that they might have. Pupils are informed of whom they can go to should they wish to share any concerns.
54. Leaders ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment checks on adults are made in a timely manner and are accurately recorded in a suitable single central record of appointments (SCR). Staff files are well organised and accurate.
55. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place. These systems are tested regularly by the school and any alerts are immediately reviewed by members of the safeguarding team who take action as required.

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

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

<b>School</b>	Ballard School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	850/6012
<b>Registered charity number</b>	307328
<b>Address</b>	Ballard School Fernhill Lane New Milton Hampshire BH25 5SU
<b>Phone number</b>	01425 626900
<b>Email address</b>	secretary@ballardschool.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.ballardschool.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Ballard School Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Goodfellow
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Andrew McCleave
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 16
<b>Number of pupils</b>	476
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 to 21 January 2022

## Information about the school

57. Ballard School is a co-educational independent day school. The school is an educational charitable trust managed by a board of governors. Set in a rural location, the school has developed from an amalgamation of schools, the most recent being in 1995.
58. The school has identified 113 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. The school has identified English as an additional language for four pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to provide a supportive and caring environment for learning and excellent teaching, designed to ensure all pupils achieve their academic best.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

29 April to 1 May 2025

61. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and an assembly
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headmaster, 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.

63. 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

For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)