

School inspection report

3 to 5 October 2023

Brookes UK School

Flempton Road
Risby
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP28 6QI

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	5
Areas for action	5
Recommended next steps	5
Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance	6
Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation	8
Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	10
Section 4: Pupils’ social and economic education and contribution to society.....	12
Safeguarding.....	14
Schedule of unmet standards.....	16
School details	18
Information about the school	19
Inspection details	19

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and managers do not always have appropriate skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities. As a result, the standards are not met in some areas.
2. There is a lack of effective oversight of the work of the leadership by the proprietor. Potential risks impacting on pupils' wellbeing are not managed effectively. As a result, Standards relating to the leadership, management and governance, the quality of education, pupils' physical and mental health and wellbeing and safeguarding are not met.
3. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including children in the early years, are not effective. Oversight of safeguarding by the proprietor is not robust. Staff have not been trained to recognise and report low-level safeguarding concerns, and leaders do not recognise the risks inherent in this situation. Leaders and governors do not always record, consider and report concerns and allegations regarding staff.
4. Teachers manage behaviour inconsistently because they are not trained to deal with some behaviour effectively. Consequently, some teachers deal with poor behaviour inappropriately. This has a negative impact on pupil attitudes and wellbeing. The risks associated with this are not recognised and mitigated.
5. In the senior school, leaders do not provide the required relationships and sex education (RSE) programme consistently for all pupils. Younger pupils receive suitable relationships education. In other respects, the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum prepares pupils for the responsibilities and experiences of later life.
6. Boarders are not always able to easily contact a member of staff at night. Leaders do not provide boarding staff with adequate training and professional development opportunities to enable them to carry out their role effectively.
7. Leaders know their pupils well, and endeavour to meet the needs of all pupils through their planned curriculum. Teaching meets pupils' learning needs in most areas. However, teachers do not always provide clear feedback to pupils to help them improve their work.
8. Results in nationally standardised tests show that most pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also make good progress because they are given effective support. Pupils have effective communication skills. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) and those who transition to the school at non-standard points, such as the children of US service personnel, settle in quickly and make good progress.
9. In the early years, staff provide a wide range of suitable activities. Children in the early years develop their physical skills and learn to manage their emotions responding to helpful guidance from staff. Children develop independence from a young age and make good progress during their time in the setting.

10. All pupils have opportunities to engage in physical activities. Pupils, including boarders, develop their interests and learn new skills through a suitable programme of extra-curricular activities.
11. The school premises are well maintained, and health and safety practices are implemented effectively.
12. Respect for diversity and different faiths is developed through the curriculum, assemblies and a range of other activities. Pupils are considerate and sensitive to the needs of others. Pupils receive effective support as they transfer to different stages of their education and staff provide helpful guidance on a range of careers.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards:

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are not met consistently
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are not met consistently
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are not met

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities:

- demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and
- actively promote the wellbeing of pupils

so that:

- risk of harm to pupils' wellbeing is identified and appropriately managed
- boarding staff receive adequate training and professional development opportunities to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively
- the behaviour policy is implemented effectively so that staff manage pupils' behaviour appropriately, in a positive and respectful manner, including during lessons
- all secondary school pupils are provided with suitable relationships and sex education, except where parents have exercised their right to withdraw their child from elements of the programme.
- all boarders are properly supervised and able to contact a member of staff during the night
- staff have a good understanding of the low-level safeguarding concerns policy
- appropriate action is taken when safeguarding concerns are reported
- any allegations against staff are handled in line with statutory guidance.

Recommended next steps

- Leaders should ensure that teachers consistently provide clear feedback to pupils to help them improve their work.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. A lack of effective oversight of the leadership of the school by the proprietor means that not all Standards are met. The governance arrangements do not offer sufficient informed challenge to the leaders. For example, the oversight of safeguarding procedures is not effective. The proprietor does not ensure that all leaders and managers have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their particular roles in the school.
14. Through their self-evaluation, leaders have identified some priorities for improvement, including the need to monitor the PSHE curriculum, improving pastoral support for senior school pupils and development of the extra-curricular programme and community links. Leaders and governors have not recognised or addressed deficiencies, including in safeguarding, behaviour management, RSE provision and the management of boarding.
15. Leaders do not ensure that the safeguarding arrangements meet the needs of pupils. Whilst they have established links with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils, leaders do not always follow appropriate reporting procedures when there have been concerns about the behaviour of staff. Staff are not adequately trained in aspects such as the recognition, recording and reporting of low-level concerns. Governors do not give adequate consideration to their oversight of safeguarding.
16. Leaders do not recognise risks relating to pupils' wellbeing and have not taken action to mitigate all risks. These include the risks inherent in the lack of recognition of low-level safeguarding concerns, inconsistent use of sanctions and inappropriate strategies for managing the behaviour of senior school pupils. A lack of experience in managing the behaviour of older pupils and lack of training for some staff has a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of pupils. Risk assessments for pupils who have SEND and for some pupils who are dealing with poor mental health are followed by staff and action is taken to protect pupils from harm.
17. Leaders do not ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to supervise and meet boarders' needs during night-time hours. When house parents are not on duty, female boarders cannot easily contact the adult on duty. Leaders do not provide suitable training and professional development for boarding staff.
18. Leaders ensure that children from the earliest years have a clear understanding of the need for them to be kind to others, whatever their differences. Pupils are typically thoughtful and inclusive, both inside and outside the classroom. Leaders provide encouragement to pupils to build their self-confidence. Boarding staff know the boarders well, and in most areas boarders receive individual care and attention from boarding staff to support their wellbeing.
19. Leaders have ensured that there are suitable ratios of suitably qualified and trained staff to care for children in the early years. Staff reflect on their practice in supervision meetings with leaders of the early years setting. Children make good progress in the early years setting as a result of the individual attention and carefully planned education they receive.

20. The complaints policy required minor changes to clarify certain processes during the inspection, but examples seen in the complaints file show that the correct process is followed.

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

21. Standards relating to governance, leadership and management, and the understanding and management of risk are not met. In consequence, the school does not meet the related requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders do not ensure that teachers use effective strategies to manage pupils' behaviour in lessons. Some staff have limited experience of working with older pupils. They use inappropriate strategies to address poor behaviour. On occasions, this can include shouting at individual pupils and other inappropriate interactions which can impact negatively on pupils' progress and their wellbeing. Leaders are aware of these issues but have not acted.
23. Leaders plan a suitable curriculum which generally meets the individual needs of pupils. The range of subjects taught ensures that all pupils gain knowledge and develop skills across a wide range of areas. From the early years there is a clear focus on the development of pupils' linguistic, literacy and numeracy skills through engaging teaching which considers the individual needs of each pupil. Pupils demonstrate effective communication skills.
24. Leaders check the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils. Teachers give individual focused feedback in most lessons, which is helpful to pupils. However, in some teaching, there is a lack of clarity about the next steps that pupils need to follow in order to improve their work.
25. In the early years, leaders plan for children to engage in a range of activities which cover the required areas of learning. Children often select their own activities and collaborate with their peers. This enables children to become increasingly independent. Children choose appropriate tasks, guided by the expertise of their teachers. Effective use is made of resources such as the woodland learning environment. Children learn how to understand potential risks, as staff explain these to them. Children in the early years make good progress.
26. Leaders have identified a benefit to pupils when they experience practical activities in their learning. Pupils collaborate well as they develop a range of mathematical, linguistic and practical skills in food technology. The high quality of pupils' art, displayed around the school, reflects the good progress pupils make in the creative arts.
27. Through well-planned teaching, pupils' learning needs are met effectively across almost all curriculum areas. Pupils who have SEND benefit from effective support in lessons including from knowledgeable teaching assistants. As a result, pupils who have SEND usually achieve in line with their peers.
28. An effective framework is in place to evaluate pupils' progress. In mathematics and English, progress is assessed in relation to nationally standardised tests. Most pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points. The small number of pupils who join the school with English as an additional language receive effective support to enable them to access the curriculum. Some pupils are the children of US service personnel, who join the school for a limited time at various points. Leaders have implemented effective transition arrangements to support them, assessing their starting points and helping them to adjust to a new curriculum, enabling them to make good progress during their time at the school.
29. Leaders have designed an extra-curricular programme, including trips and visits, to give pupils the opportunity to try new activities. Pupils discover new activities and develop their knowledge and

skills, including in cycling and gardening clubs, that they can continue to enjoy when they leave school. Boarders participate in activities after school and at weekends.

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

The Standards are not met consistently with respect to the behaviour management of pupils in lessons.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

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

30. Leaders do not ensure the Standards relating to RSE, behaviour and supervision are met. There is a consequent impact on the wellbeing of pupils.
31. Pupils generally behave well. However, when behavioural incidents occur, staff do not all follow the behaviour policy. Sanctions are not applied consistently. Some teachers display a lack of respect, which sometimes includes shouting at senior school pupils. This has a negative impact on the wellbeing and behaviour of pupils as they see that staff do not follow appropriate behavioural expectations. However, incidents of bullying are managed effectively.
32. In the senior school, the relationship and sex education programme is not provided consistently to all year groups and does not cover all of the required areas. As a result, pupils do not have the required understanding which they need to guide their future lives and make informed decisions. In the lower school, leaders have embedded a comprehensive PSHE programme which includes provision for relationships education. From the earliest years, pupils understand about different types of families and their right to say 'no'.
33. Leaders have not ensured that suitable arrangements are in place to supervise and meet boarders' needs during the night hours. When house parents are not on duty, female boarders cannot easily contact the adult on duty during the night. In other aspects, boarding provision is suitable. Boarding staff know individual boarders well. This plays a pivotal role in the personal development and growing confidence of boarders. Boarders have good quality accommodation and are provided with a wide range of nutritionally balanced meals and snacks. Boarders' views are valued and are sought through an online suggestion box and through daily conversations with boarding staff.
34. Leaders' planning ensures the effective supervision of pupils during the day. In response to behavioural issues when lower school and upper school pupils shared overcrowded play facilities at break times, leaders staggered break times to avoid further incidents.
35. Pupils' health and wellbeing are supported by the opportunity to engage in physical activities in lessons, extra-curricular activities and in competitive sports. Leaders offer a diverse range of activities including Morris dancing, rock climbing and a range of musical events, all of which contribute to pupils' enjoyment and self-confidence. Staff in subject departments organise a range of visits which broaden the educational experience of pupils. Leaders celebrate individual pupils' successes in assemblies which helps to build pupils' self-esteem.
36. Pupils develop an appreciation of non-material areas of life through the arts and opportunities to explore nature. Pupils find art classes relaxing and a place where they can explore their own creative ideas and reflect their own feelings. Younger pupils display a sense of calm as they go about their classroom activities with gentle music playing in the background.

37. The attendance and admission registers are properly maintained and stored. Staff quickly follow up the destinations of pupils who leave and are removed from the admissions register and persevere if they do not receive a response.
38. The school premises and accommodation, including the boarding houses, are well maintained. Health and safety practices are implemented effectively. Precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Fire evacuation drills take place termly, including in boarding time.
39. Suitable arrangements and accommodation are in place to care for pupils who become unwell or who have specific medical needs. Staff receive regular training in first aid and sufficient staff in the early years are trained in paediatric first aid.
40. Leaders have ensured that there is a team of staff who can provide effective emotional support to pupils through the creation of individual care sessions, emotional literacy programmes and independent learning programmes. As a result, pupils receive support for their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Staff in the early years know the children very well and help them to manage their emotions and to self-regulate. Effective use is made of a peace table to help children to resolve any disputes.

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

The Standards are not met consistently with respect to provision of relationships and sex education, the implementation of the behaviour policy and the supervision of boarders. In consequence, the school does not meet the related requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

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

41. Leaders have designed a PSHE curriculum that has opportunities for pupils to prepare for the responsibilities and experiences of later life. Lessons in personal finance increase pupils' understanding of financial responsibility. For example, concepts from mathematics lessons are incorporated into real-life financial situations such as the opportunity to run the school tuck shop.
42. Values such as democracy, mutual respect and the tolerance of different faiths and beliefs, are woven through the curriculum and the everyday experiences of the pupils. Children in the early years learn to take turns and collaborate when putting their equipment away after using it.
43. Older pupils gain an understanding of democracy through opportunities to vote for positions of responsibility. They contribute positively to the school community through leadership opportunities such as school council representatives, house captains and leaders of a range of activities. Pupils are encouraged to think of others beyond the school community. Some pupils achieve this through donating harvest gifts to help those in short term housing and develop empathy for others.
44. Boarding staff provide boarders with many opportunities for social development and contribution to the boarding community. Older boarders act as older siblings to younger boarders, role-modelling support, care, inclusivity and responsible behaviour in the community.
45. Teachers take opportunities to develop pupils' cultural knowledge, such as when pupils compare their own lives to the lives of those living in a Nepalese village. Pupils develop an awareness of different traditions and an appreciation of the advantages and disadvantages of living in different environments.
46. Leaders promote mutual respect through assemblies where pupils learn about diversity and are encouraged not to judge people by their appearance or their personal characteristics. Pupils demonstrate respect for other members of the diverse school community, which prepares them well for life beyond school. Pupils are accepting and supportive of each other.
47. Leaders ensure that pupils receive suitable support and advice as they transfer to different stages of their school life, and then to the next stage of education and training. Pupils are well-prepared when they join the senior school. Leaders have developed a programme which ensures that pupils receive suitable advice about subject choices and in relation to a range of careers options.
48. Older pupils attend careers fairs and visiting speakers from local colleges and schools are invited to speak to pupils about possible next steps in their education. They are well-informed about a broad range of possible educational or career choices.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

Safeguarding

49. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including children in the early years, are not effective in all areas. Leaders do not have an adequate understanding of statutory guidance, and staff are not properly trained.
50. The proprietor's oversight of safeguarding is not effective. A governor who has been suitably trained maintains a close working contact with the designated safeguarding lead. However, a lack of robust challenge by governors has led to some safeguarding procedures not being understood or followed.
51. Leaders and the proprietor do not always communicate and refer concerns to the relevant external agencies. Staff have not been trained to recognise and report low-level concerns about other staff or related to themselves. Low-level concerns and allegations regarding the behaviour of staff, which have been brought to the attention of leaders, are not recognised as such, reported, recorded or acted on appropriately.
52. The school provides information to pupils, including boarders, as to how they share any concerns. However, when they raise concerns related to the behaviour of members of staff towards pupils, leaders do not take prompt action.
53. The training for those with specific safeguarding responsibilities as a designated senior lead (DSL) is in line with requirements and is up to date. Staff are trained regularly and know the procedure to follow if a child is missing. They are aware of how to listen and respond to children's concerns.
54. Allegations of sexualised behaviour, racism or child-on-child abuse amongst pupils are treated as potential safeguarding concerns and addressed effectively. Child protection records are held securely and with suitable confidentiality. This enables leaders to act upon welfare considerations for individual pupils and to identify patterns of concern. Staff recognise the additional vulnerabilities of pupils who have SEND.
55. Safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and governors and a suitable record of appointments and checks is kept.
56. Pupils know how to stay safe online and the school has appropriate filtering and monitoring processes in place.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

Standards are not met with respect to oversight of safeguarding by the proprietor and staff training in low-level concerns. Leaders do not take appropriate action when concerns are raised about staff. In consequence, the related requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding and the Early Years Foundation Stage are not met.

Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included at the end of the report.

Schedule of unmet standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The relevant Standards are not met

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16(a) and (b); NMS 9.3, EYFS 3.65	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that— (a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and (b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 (1)(a)(b) and (c); NMS 2.1 to 2.8	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school— (a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; (b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and (c) actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

The relevant Standards are not met consistently

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3(h)	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly.

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

The relevant Standards are not met consistently

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 1 2(1)	The standard in this paragraph is met if –
ISSR Part 1 2(1)(a)	the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
ISSR Part 1 2(1)(b)(i)	the written policy, plans and schemes of work – (i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan;
ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A (1)(b)	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor: (b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary

and (d)	education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2); and (d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9(b); NMS 15.1 and 15.2, EYFS 3.53	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that– The written behaviour policy that, amongst other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils’ misbehaviour is implemented effectively.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 20.8	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through appropriate deployment of school staff.

Section 4: Pupils’ social and economic wellbeing and contribution to society

The relevant Standards are met

Safeguarding

The relevant Standards are not met

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.4, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.13	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that– 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; 8(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school; and 8(b) such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools.

School details

School	Brookes UK School
Department for Education number	935/6065
Address	Flempton Road Risby Bury St Edmunds IP28 6QJ
Website	uk.brookes.org
Proprietor	Brookes Education Group
Chair of proprietors	Mr David Rose
Principal	Mrs Natalie Taylor
Age range	2 to 17
Number of pupils	153
Number of boarding pupils	8
Date of previous inspection	24 to 26 September 2019

Information about the school

57. Brookes UK is a co-educational, independent day and boarding school. The school moved to its current site in 1984. Brookes Education Group, who provide proprietorial oversight, acquired the school in 2015. The school now consists of a nursery, lower school, senior school and boarding house, all of which occupy the same site.
58. The school has one boarding house with eight boarders aged between 10 and 16.
59. The school has an early years setting with children aged between 2 and 5.
60. The school has identified 26 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Seventeen pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. English is an additional language for six pupils.
62. The school states that its aims are, through leadership challenges and opportunities, to help pupils to discover their passion, develop their character and understand their connection to others in a diverse and inclusive society. Its vision is for pupils to become self-confident learners whose kindness inspires them to help others.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 3 to 5 October 2023

63. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
64. The inspectors:
- observed lessons
 - held joint discussions with pupils and staff about pupils' work
 - observed a series of lessons, some with members of the school's leadership team
 - had discussions with pupils
 - held discussions with members of staff
 - held a discussion with the proprietor
 - observed extra-curricular activities
 - visited the early years setting
 - visited the boarding house
 - examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.
65. 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

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