

School inspection report

7 to 9 October 2025

Heathfield School

London Road

Ascot

Berkshire

SL5 8BQ

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 are knowledgeable and forward looking. Pupils are supported academically and pastorally in the school's inclusive and harmonious environment. Leaders preserve the school's distinctive identity and skilfully implement the shared policies and resources from the Mill Hill School Foundation to which they belong.
2. The well-designed curriculum and breadth of co-curricular opportunities provide pupils with a comprehensive and enriching educational experience. The school equips pupils, including those in the sixth form, with the knowledge, skills and opportunities to succeed. The school caters well for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils are empowered by effective teaching, personalised support and engaging learning environments. They work well with each other and build confidence in their abilities.
3. Leaders set out the key actions needed to raise pupils' aspirations and outcomes in the school development plan. This helps leaders, governors and staff to understand the school's improvement priorities. Currently there are inconsistencies in how assessment data is used across the school. Departments use the data to identify what pupils have learned and where pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills. This informs teachers' lesson planning and ensures that pupils are taught the necessary content to support their ongoing progress. However, this effective use of assessment data is not consistent across the school.
4. The school's personal, social, health, and economic education (PSHE) curriculum and relationships and sex education (RSE) is taught alongside the school's 'flourishing' programme. Pupils gain self-knowledge and learn how to interact with others. In addition, leaders plan opportunities for pupils to experience wonder and reflection. Carefully considered activities, including collective worship and creative projects, help pupils to develop into self-aware and empathetic individuals who build healthy and positive relationships with those around them.
5. Leaders prioritise pupils' physical health and mental wellbeing. They provide pupils with a wide range of sporting activities, teach pupils how to be resilient and ensure they are provided with nutritious meals. These strategies build pupils' physical fitness and their understanding about healthy lifestyle choices.
6. Leaders foster a culture of mutual trust and respect, ensuring that pupils feel safe and cared for. Pupils are confident yet sensitive. They are courteous, friendly, and supportive of one another. Through a comprehensive personal development programme that includes learning leadership skills, pupils understand the importance of serving others and of being active and responsible citizens in British society. Additionally, pupils receive personalised career advice, which prepares them well for their future lives.
7. Boarding house staff work together seamlessly to create a nurturing boarding community for pupils which emphasises mutual respect and encourages acts of kindness. Boarders develop skills for harmonious living. They learn to support each other and this contributes to their overall wellbeing. Clear policies, routines and procedures demonstrate leaders' knowledge about the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS), which are consistently met.

8. The school's safeguarding procedures are well established. Staff know and understand their shared responsibility to keep pupils safe. Governors and staff benefit from comprehensive training right from the start when they join the school. Annual refreshers and regular updates keep governors and staff well informed. The dedicated safeguarding team conducts regular reviews and provides reports to personnel from the Mill Hill School Foundation who offer valuable support and constructive challenge.

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 assessment data about pupils' academic progress and attainment is used consistently across departments to inform lesson planning, so that all teaching is effective and enables pupils to learn successfully.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The proprietor maintains effective oversight through a central executive team that both supports leaders and holds them to account. Senior staff working for the proprietor meet with school leaders frequently. They offer operational support, opportunities for leaders to share ideas with each other and organise extensive training. The board of governors maintains clear oversight by receiving regular reports, conducting on-site visits and engaging with leaders. These actions help governors to understand the school's accomplishments and identify areas for improvement. This collaborative approach ensures that leaders fulfil their responsibilities efficiently and that the Standards are met.
10. Leaders foster an inclusive and welcoming ethos that actively promotes pupils' wellbeing. Leaders demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to their roles. The cohesive leadership team makes well-informed decisions and maintains a clear awareness of each pupil's needs. Leaders communicate the school's aims and ethos to all stakeholders, so everyone understands the school's priorities and demonstrate a sustained commitment to continuous improvement.
11. Leaders have recently reviewed various aspects of the school's work to develop a dynamic development plan, mindful of the need to respond to change. This comprehensive and ambitious plan ensures that appropriate actions are taken. Leaders maintain high aspirations for all pupils, putting pupils needs first in their planning and decision-making processes. For example, leaders have recently introduced a leadership award for pupils in the sixth form and have redesigned the tutor programme. Pupils are well supported and benefit from a wide range of opportunities.
12. Leaders communicate their policies and protocols clearly, so these are understood by staff and pupils. Leaders make the required information available to parents, much of which can be accessed through the school's website. Leaders are working to improve the systems used to collect information. Currently, some overly complex methods of recording can hinder effective oversight. To address this issue, leaders have implemented a strategy aimed at creating a more coherent and consistent system.
13. The school fulfils its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders monitor and review an accessibility plan to address the needs of all pupil groups. This plan outlines specific activities and timeframes to ensure all pupils can access the curriculum, premises and information. The school makes reasonable adjustments for pupils who have SEND. Staff provide well-planned support that helps these pupils engage effectively in all the school has to offer.
14. Leaders communicate regularly with parents, including through parents' evenings, sharing their child's interim grades and formal written reports. These reports include information regarding pupils' attitudes toward learning and clear targets for each subject, so pupils know how to improve. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information related to any funded provision for pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
15. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies, including those focused on supporting pupils who have SEND and local safeguarding partners. This supports a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding day pupils' and boarders' wellbeing.
16. Suitably trained staff develop comprehensive and systematic processes to identify and manage risks. The detailed risk assessments cover different settings, including boarding, off-site trips, classrooms, and the overall premises. These assessments identify potential hazards and implement effective

control measures to mitigate risks. Leaders regularly review and update these actions to make sure they remain relevant.

17. Leaders address complaints fairly and transparently, following the school's policy. They maintain detailed records of complaints, including those related to boarding and conduct regular reviews to identify recurring themes and trends.
18. Boarding leaders demonstrate effective oversight of policies and procedures that ensures a safe and nurturing environment for boarders. Their commitment to the vision of high-quality boarding provision fosters a supportive culture rooted in kindness and mutual respect. By actively responding to pupil feedback, such as implementing hot chocolate evenings for pupils in Year 11, leaders exemplify an approach that values pupils' input. This responsiveness improves the overall boarding experience and enhances the relationship between leaders and boarders. This helps to promote a sense of belonging and community within the boarding houses.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The school's curriculum is age-appropriate and inclusive. Leaders give particular attention to meeting pupils' individual needs. This enables pupils to make good progress. The curriculum provides pupils with suitable skills and knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Leaders provide opportunities for bespoke pathways that match pupils' interests, such as obtaining qualifications in a range of languages, including Japanese, Russian, and Mandarin. At A level, pupils can study a range of subjects including economics, Latin and psychology. In addition, sixth-form pupils undertake a leadership award and choose from different pathways such as undertaking an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) or a cookery course. Results at GCSE and A level reflect the good progress that pupils make and attainment that is typically above national averages.
21. Teaching and learning in the creative arts are a key component of the curriculum. Pupils enrich their learning experiences in areas such as art, drama, photography and music. Teaching in these subjects is well informed, well resourced and thoughtfully tailored to align with pupils' interests and skill levels. This allows pupils to achieve high standards, as seen in the success gained in national competitions. Pupils have ample opportunities to showcase their distinctive perspectives and imaginative interpretations of the world. Pupils demonstrate their achievements when they engage in theatrical performances, create sophisticated artwork, produce striking photographs and hone their musical abilities.
22. Across subjects, teachers typically exhibit good subject knowledge, reflected in their thoughtfully structured lessons. Teachers give clear explanations that maintain pupils' focus and interest. The supportive relationship between pupils and teachers promotes opportunities for discussion. Pupils are encouraged to think critically, express their ideas and appreciate different viewpoints. This develops their communication skills and confidence.
23. Teachers' specific written and verbal feedback means that pupils know their next steps and how to improve their work. However, there are inconsistencies in how different academic departments use the school's assessment and performance framework. Some departments evaluate pupils' progress effectively. Leaders and staff identify where pupils' knowledge and skills are secure and where they are not. Teachers use this information to adapt their lesson plans and determine the essential content that they need to teach next. However, the effective use of assessment and performance information is not in place across all departments. Some pupils do not make the progress they could.
24. Leaders assess the linguistic capabilities of pupils who speak EAL as soon as they join the school. The information gathered enables leaders and teachers to implement appropriate strategies promptly, such as one-to-one support and the use of written glossaries. Specialist teachers tailor pathways to match pupils' aspirations and abilities, ensuring they engage fully in lessons. This assistance helps pupils who speak EAL to develop their language skills, leading to positive results in internal assessments and public examinations.
25. Leaders use robust systems to identify and support pupils who have SEND. Specialist staff work together with teachers to share strategies, such as using visual aids and writing frames and to adapt lessons based on the individual needs of each pupil. Leaders also conduct regular meetings that involve both pastoral and academic staff to review pupils' individual learning plans. This ensures these plans remain relevant and effective. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.

26. Pupils are offered a wide variety of co-curricular activities. Teachers' enthusiasm to deliver these, along with the school's extensive facilities, contribute to pupils' personal development. The co-curricular activities pupils access encompass cultural, physical, social, intellectual and creative pursuits. They are purposefully designed to foster pupils' empathy, confidence and ambition. Pupils develop their initiative to both lead clubs, such as debating, and form new clubs, for example badminton. This enhances pupils' engagement and helps them develop organisational and leadership skills. In addition, unique skills gained through activities such as cookery and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) not only captivate pupils' interests but also contribute to their personal growth.
27. Boarders are well supervised during their independent studies, which helps develop their self-management skills within a structured environment. Boarders benefit from using their free time to participate in the diverse array of planned activities and experiences. This not only encourages their independence but also cultivates supportive relationships amongst their peers.

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

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

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

29. Assemblies and chapel services, often led by pupils, provide regular opportunities for reflection and inspiration. The well-planned religious studies (RS) curriculum develops pupils' knowledge and understanding of different religions and spiritual perspectives. There are extensive opportunities for discussion that engage pupils in considering key moral concepts such as prudence, justice and courage.
30. The physical education (PE) curriculum is well structured and teaching is inclusive. Pupils articulate the importance of physical activity for their overall health and wellbeing. The PE curriculum encompasses a wide range of sports and exercise options to enhance pupils' physical fitness and promote lifelong participation. It also helps develop essential skills such as decision-making, teamwork and the ability to handle pressure. Pupils demonstrate good techniques and skill in a variety of sports, including lacrosse, equestrian and swimming, with both teams and individual athletes achieving national recognition.
31. The extensive PSHE curriculum, which includes RSE educates pupils to make safe and informed choices. Teachers facilitate age-appropriate discussion on topics such as healthy relationships, identity, drug awareness and consent. In addition to this, the school's 'flourishing' programme provides pupils with tools to understand their own and others' wellbeing. This programme fosters resilience and promotes positive mental health through discussions on topics such as 'assert yourself, your way'. Leaders assess the effectiveness of these programmes by gathering feedback from pupils and consulting with parents. This ongoing evaluation ensures that the curriculum remains relevant, supports pupils' continuous progress and aligns with leaders' goal of promoting pupil leadership.
32. Leaders foster a supportive learning environment that encourages pupils to develop self-awareness and confidence. They actively consider pupils' opinions and prioritise time and space for pupils to gain a secure understanding of themselves. This commitment is evident in initiatives such as the 'walk and talk' opportunities in PE lessons. Through the 'flourishing' programme, pupils in Year 12 train as peer mentors. Furthermore, pupils are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings through various curriculum activities, such as a photography project centred on the theme of 'connections', which explores heritage, culture and tradition.
33. Pupils, including those in boarding, benefit from the school's well-supervised and well-maintained buildings and grounds. Teachers are caring and accessible to pupils. They actively interact with pupils during breaktimes and other social times.
34. Leaders encourage pupils to always demonstrate positive behaviour, in line with the behaviour policy. Pupils respond to leaders' expectations. They behave well during their lessons and around the school. Positive behaviour is celebrated in assemblies with a range of rewards, culminating in a 'lily badge'. This is awarded to pupils who show kindness to others and act according to the school's values. Pupils speak warmly about their responsibility to support others through being thoughtful and exhibiting patience. Pupils are considerate and polite in their interactions with each other and staff. Rare incidents of bullying are addressed promptly and sensitively, providing support for all pupils involved. Reflection activities are used to help pupils understand the impact of their actions and to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

35. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained. There is a thorough programme of health and safety checks and records are well organised. Systems to manage fire safety are robust. This includes undertaking fire risk assessments and carrying out routine fire drills, including during boarders' sleeping time. First aid facilities are well equipped and offer a clean and comfortable space for pupils, including boarders, with a focus on both their physical and emotional care.
36. Leaders ensure that admission and attendance registers are well maintained. They monitor attendance and provide timely support whenever attendance issues arise. The local authority is informed when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.
37. Positive relationships between staff and boarders cultivate a supportive and inclusive environment that enhances personal growth and community engagement. Boarders have convenient access to a variety of nutritious meals and snacks to support their wellbeing and academic performance. Positions of responsibility, such as house captain, help develop pupils' communication skills and build pupils' confidence. Pupils are encouraged to customise their personal living areas and store their belongings securely. This fosters a sense of ownership and personal responsibility. Boarders can approach staff for support whenever needed, including during the night.

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

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

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

39. Economic education is woven into the curriculum. Pupils enhance their financial literacy through 'flourishing' lessons that cover topics like debt and household finances. Recently introduced teaching, driven by pupil feedback, now includes discussions on issues such as money-related family stress. All year groups engage in hands-on learning experiences that reinforce essential concepts. For instance, pupils in Year 8 participate in a business initiative where they design and develop a product and pupils in Year 9 plan the financial aspects for a prom event. These collaborative projects not only foster pupils' planning and promotional skills but also provide valuable insights into budgeting, profit and loss. This helps pupils to build their financial awareness in meaningful ways.
40. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, demonstrating a secure understanding of British society. PSHE lessons introduce key concepts such as the rule of law through a theme on Parliament. A thoughtfully organised series of assemblies, alongside subjects such as politics, history, and sociology encourages pupils' critical engagement with complex issues. This structured approach promotes reflection and discussion on various political systems, identity and citizenship. For example, pupils in the sixth form engage in thoughtful dialogues around freedom and identity, exploring how migrants and ethnic groups adapt to British customs. Pupils listen respectfully to a diverse range of balanced views and perspectives.
41. The school's ethos emphasises respect for others and the appreciation of diverse cultures, supported by policies promoting tolerance. Assemblies and curriculum opportunities enable pupils to explore cultural diversity. For example, cookery classes incorporate diverse recipes allowing discussions on the cultural significance of food. Cultural and diversity days feature workshops led by pupils to educate their peers about various customs and traditions. Additionally, displays such as one entitled 'hopes and dreams' and another highlighting influential women in history, celebrate diversity and encourage pupils to value and appreciate differences within society.
42. Pupils develop their sense of responsibility towards others. Pupils are keen to serve others within and beyond school. They participate in various fundraising and charity activities for global causes, such as supporting education for females in Kenya. Pupils contribute positively to the local community by raising money, donating produce and engaging in mutually beneficial projects with pupils in nearby primary schools.
43. The careers guidance programme enhances pupils' understanding of various career paths through engaging talks, interactive workshops and insightful visits that also address common stereotypes. A networking evening with alumni provides pupils with real-world insights. Pupils from Year 7 upwards receive personalised support through structured one-on-one interviews. By the sixth form, pupils are well informed about a range of next steps, including university, gap years and apprenticeships. This comprehensive guidance empowers pupils to make informed decisions regarding their future careers and ensures they are prepared for the opportunities that lie ahead.
44. Staff help pupils to develop a sense of justice and discern the difference between right and wrong by serving as role models and facilitating critical thinking. Pupils engage with global issues and consider the impact of extremism and populism. Staff consistently emphasise the school's core values of innovation, ambition and integrity. In the close-knit boarding community, there is a shared understanding of the importance of clear rules to maintain a caring and supportive environment.

45. Pupils' respect for democratic processes and public institutions is cultivated through teaching and off-site trips, such as a visit to the Barbican and themed days. In music lessons, pupils explore the significance of the Royal Albert Hall and in English they engage in a reflective study of impactful texts, for example, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. These experiences extend pupils' vocabulary and skills for thoughtful, respectful expression. Pupils engage in leadership elections and competitions such as the European Youth Parliament, which not only provide opportunities to practice democracy but also foster civic engagement and their understanding of public institutions. The school council and prefects speak proudly about their roles in serving the community and making a difference.
46. In the boarding environment, leaders actively engage their staff and older pupils to model equality, diversity and inclusivity. Leaders create opportunities to uphold these values throughout the houses by inviting external speakers, organising themed days and facilitating the diversity club. This encourages boarders to challenge stereotypes and promote respect and acceptance. During the school's cultural diversity day, boarders proudly wear their national dress and celebrate their different cultures. This approach fosters a boarding environment where pupils embody inclusion through kindness and respect to all.

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

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

Safeguarding

48. Leaders cultivate a robust safeguarding culture. They encourage open communication and respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that arise. The director of safeguarding, who represents the proprietor, liaises with the school's safeguarding team providing support and reviewing actions to ensure that safeguarding practices remain effective.
49. Leaders ensure that staff understand safeguarding procedures and how to record concerns, according to current statutory guidance. The safeguarding team's proactive approach of 'if in doubt, report it' is well established. Thorough record-keeping enables the well-trained safeguarding team to review incidents and identify any trends that require action.
50. Staff training occurs frequently and comprehensively. This includes detailed induction training, termly updates and ongoing supplementary support through weekly quizzes. As a result, all adults in the school stay informed about changes in practice and remain vigilant regarding safeguarding issues. They understand their responsibilities and how to respond to different types of concerns, including child-on-child abuse or radicalisation and extremism.
51. Leaders emphasise the importance of a listening culture by providing various ways for pupils to voice their concerns. This includes options for anonymity through an online platform. Pupils understand these communication channels and trust the support available to them. The curriculum, complemented by assemblies, encourages open dialogue between pupils and teachers about any worries. Additionally, warm relationships foster a community where pupils are comfortable to communicate their concerns early by approaching a trusted adult.
52. Leaders collaborate with external agencies such as children's services and the police. They seek advice and work together to address concerns as needed. This collaboration, along with consistent communication with the pastoral teams, contributes to the effective safeguarding of pupils.
53. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders limit mobile phone usage, reducing the risk of online bullying. Focus days, such as those involving theatre groups, help pupils to become more confident in managing friendships and navigating online interactions. Leaders implement robust internet filtering and monitoring procedures. These systems generate real-time alerts for leaders, enabling them to identify potential concerns and respond quickly.
54. Procedures to safeguard the welfare of boarders are effective. Careful oversight of travel arrangements and meticulous record-keeping help ensure the safety of boarders on arrival and departure. Staff awareness that pupils who are away from home may require additional help and support, ensures that they are vigilant to signs that may indicate concerns. Boarders are clear how to contact the independent listener should they have any worries.
55. Leaders implement thorough recruitment procedures. The single central record (SCR) of appointments is maintained carefully and contains all required information. This ensures that no adults begin to work in the school until all required checks have been completed.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Heathfield School
Department for Education number	867/6000
Registered charity number	106758
Address	Heathfield School London Road Ascot Berkshire SL5 8BQ
Phone number	01344 898343
Email address	administration@heathfieldschool.net
Website	www.heathfieldschool.net
Proprietor	The Mill Hill School Foundation
Chair	Mr Elliot Lipton
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Williams
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	154
Number of boarding pupils	72
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 June 2022

Information about the school

57. Heathfield School is an independent day and boarding school for female pupils situated in Ascot, Berkshire. It was founded in 1899. The school is a registered charity, overseen by a board of governors who are also the trustees. The school joined the Mill Hill School Foundation in September 2025. The current headteacher took up post in September 2025.
58. There are four boarding houses situated on campus, each of which accommodates pupils of different ages. One house caters for 11- to 12-year-olds, one for 13- to 14-year-olds, one for 15- to 17-year-olds and one for 17- to 18-year-olds.
59. The school has identified 49 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
60. The school has identified English as an additional language for 16 pupils.
61. The school states its aims are to inspire tomorrow's generation to live and lead with integrity, ambition and innovation. At the heart of its ethos is the tailored provision for all pupils, reflecting its small school, big opportunities identity. The school strives to support pupils in fulfilling their potential academically, alongside a clear focus on character, community, and co-curricular pursuits. The school endeavours to foster confidence and self-belief in all pupils, encouraging them to be happy, healthy and hungry to succeed.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

7 to 9 October 2025

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

63. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assembly
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chief executive officer and other staff from the Mill Hill School Foundation
- 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.

64. 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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