

School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

Monkton Combe School

Church Lane

Monkton Combe

Bath

BA2 7HG

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 |
| RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS | 5 |
| SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE..... | 6 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE | 7 |
| SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION | 8 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION | 9 |
| SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING..... | 10 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING | 11 |
| SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY..... | 12 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY | 13 |
| SAFEGUARDING | 14 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING | 14 |
| SCHOOL DETAILS | 15 |
| INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL..... | 16 |
| INSPECTION DETAILS | 17 |

Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors maintain close oversight of the school and challenge leaders to demonstrate how their actions support the school's continuous development. Governors work closely with leaders to ensure that they possess the appropriate knowledge and skills to ensure the wellbeing of pupils.
2. Leaders and governors monitor and review the implementation of policies and procedures for both parts of the school regularly. In this way, they assure themselves that the school supports pupils' needs and meet the Standards.
3. The broad curriculum enables pupils to develop skills and understanding across a wide range of areas. An enriching programme of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to further develop their skills and interests. Typically, well-planned teaching enables pupils to make good progress so that they are successful in GCSE and A-level examinations and proceed to a variety of universities. However, sometimes teachers' planned activities are not well matched to pupils' abilities and lessons lack pace. This limits the rate at which pupils make progress in these lessons.
4. An effective programme of careers guidance supports pupils in making decisions about their future. However, leaders have accurately identified that economic education is inconsistent across the school so that pupils are not sufficiently aware of financial matters until the top years. A plan is in place to ensure more comprehensive coverage across the school, but it is too early for this to have had any impact as yet.
5. Children in the early years are well cared for and happily play and learn in the suitable indoor and outdoor environments. Well-planned activities and gentle guidance from staff ensure that their developmental needs are met and they make good progress.
6. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the carefully targeted support they receive. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress in developing fluency in English.
7. The 'personal development' curriculum provides age-appropriate programmes of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE). Leaders consult pupils to make sure they are helpful and relevant. Effective pastoral systems, including individual tutoring, nutritious food, a variety of physical activities and outdoor education support pupils' mental and physical health.
8. Leaders ensure that effective systems for health and safety, the management of fire risk and first aid are in place. As a result, premises and accommodation, including for boarding, are well maintained.
9. Leaders promote the school ethos through the 'personal development' curriculum, assemblies and chapel services. The pupil-led equalities committee helps to promote positive relations among pupils. As a result, pupils typically respect their own and other cultures and other people, whatever their differences. However, some pupils occasionally make comments that indicate that they do not fully understand the value of mutual respect. The teaching of British values, such as those of democracy and mutual respect across the school, is generally effective. A few pupils have a limited understanding of democracy and public institutions and services in Britain.

10. The effective implementation of the behaviour and anti-bullying policies mean that incidents of serious misbehaviour and bullying are rare. They are dealt with quickly when they occur. An age-appropriate range of sanctions is employed. Leaders analyse behaviour records to identify potential trends and take appropriate action to address emerging issues.
11. Leaders make sure that a rigorous safeguarding culture is maintained so that staff spot and report concerns. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities communicate with external agencies appropriately when a concern arises that requires their attention. Robust safer recruitment procedures are in place.
12. Leaders provide pupils with the opportunity to support other pupils and people in the local community, such as through a buddy system in the boarding houses and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE). Pupils support charities by raising funds or volunteering and thus develop a keen sense of social responsibility.

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:

- all lessons are well planned to engage pupils so that they are motivated and make consistently good progress
- pupils consistently show mutual respect and develop an understanding of democracy, public institutions and services in Britain in preparation for life in British society
- a comprehensive programme for economic education is delivered across the school to help pupils prepare for their future life.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors visit the school regularly, receive reports from leaders and question what they read, see and hear. This informs their oversight of school policies, procedures and pupils' wellbeing. Governors challenge leaders' decisions and monitor their effect. This assures them that leaders have suitable knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles well.
14. Leaders have a clear vision for the school which is available to parents in writing and communicated to pupils through assembly themes. They communicate the school's ethos effectively.
15. Leaders regularly undertake detailed self-evaluation to make sure that the school aims remain relevant. A recent review led to the inclusion of 'courageous' in the school's aims to reflect the qualities that leaders have determined that pupils need in the modern world. Leaders monitor and review policies and procedures regularly to check that the requirements of the Standards are met. They include the responses of parents and pupils to regular surveys in their analysis. This helps leaders to prioritise pupils' needs and recently led to more focused careers guidance. Leaders investigate the cause of any negative responses from pupils and parents and take appropriate action.
16. Governors and leaders ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met. The school's accessibility plan identifies clear strategies to enable those who have SEND to access all aspects of school life. Actions include the addition of wheelchair ramps, the installation of text and voice recognition software and refurbishment of boarding accommodation.
17. Leaders provide all required information. They inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times. This minimises the risk of pupils missing education. Parents have access to information about the school and receive regular reports about their child's progress. The school provides the local authority with the required information relating to pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
18. Leaders take parental concerns and complaints seriously. They respond quickly in line with the published procedure and maintain records appropriately, including of actions that they have taken and how complaints have been resolved. Leaders systematically review the causes of complaints to identify repeated issues.
19. Leaders and managers undertake, record and review risk assessments regularly to mitigate the risk of harm as far as possible. Appropriate risk assessments are completed for school accommodation, including boarding houses, and activities that take place both on and off the school site. Risk assessments take into account pupils' needs, such as any dietary requirements or additional support needed.
20. Leaders make sure that pastoral care systems are effective to identify and deal with pupils' concerns. Pupils share worries through a variety of systems, including tutorials and an online communication tool. Leaders respond quickly and ensure that appropriate help and support is provided.
21. Leaders in the early years have the skills and knowledge they need to provide an enjoyable experience for children which meets their developmental needs. They hold regular professional

development meetings with staff to be sure that children's needs are met within a suitable and nurturing environment.

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

22. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Leaders ensure that pupils experience a broad and appropriate curriculum that fosters their confidence and love of learning. The curriculum is well planned with schemes of work typically matched well to pupils needs. It includes outdoor education which encourages pupils to learn about the natural environment and to support their mental and physical wellbeing. Pupils are taught about different cultures through the study of modern foreign languages including Spanish, French and Mandarin.
24. In the early years, activities are well matched to children's needs and interests. They make good progress towards their developmental milestones by the end of Reception. Clear and knowledgeable communication by staff, who enable children to pursue their own interests thoughtfully, help children to develop confidence, knowledge and skills.
25. Teachers model vocabulary and conversation skills so that children in the Nursery speak clearly for their age in well-structured sentences. For example, children explained how they used leaves and twigs to paint in mud in the woodland area. Teachers' consistent interaction with children and immediate feedback supports their good progress in early reading and writing skills. Children in Reception recognise the sounds that letters make, blend them and read multi-syllable words. They learn to form letters correctly and quickly progress to writing simple sentences. Role play activities encourage the youngest children to count to at least five. Interactive games help children to recognise the number of objects instantly, without needing to count them individually. This helps children develop early calculation strategies. In these ways, children become confident in recognising and manipulating numbers to 20 and beyond.
26. Teachers' knowledgeable delivery of the English curriculum enables pupils to write independently and collaboratively, using a range of literary devices to persuade, inform and entertain readers. For example, pupils in Year 8 use pathetic fallacy, oxymoron and simile to add interest to their writing. Pupils in Year 9 confidently discussed semantic themes in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Specialist teaching in mathematics enables pupils to become competent and independent mathematicians. Appropriate levels of challenge and various teaching methods motivate pupils and encourage them to apply mathematical skills and knowledge to different subjects. For example, pupils in Year 10 recorded rates of chemical reactions, converting minutes into seconds and plotting results onto a graph.
27. Assessment data is tracked and analysed by leaders, managers and teachers to generate appropriate support and challenge to enable pupils to make typically good progress. The most successful lessons are taught at an engaging pace with a variety of methods. This motivates pupils and increases their knowledge, understanding and skills. However, some lessons across the school lack sufficient pace to engage pupils and include activities not matched well to pupils' abilities, which limits their progress.
28. Standardised assessment data shows that pupils in the prep school make good progress from their starting points. GCSE and A-level results are typically above the national average and most pupils transfer to British universities when they leave.
29. Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early. Individual learning profiles include details of pupils' difficulties and

strategies to help them learn. This enables teachers to provide effective support during lessons that complement individual specialist teaching. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points.

30. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported by specialist staff. Their level of English is assessed before and after entry to the school so that a programme of appropriate support is provided in discrete lessons. As a result, they become fluent and make good progress in English.
31. The wide range of recreation activities enables pupils to broaden their interest and skills, such as learning new moves in chess and different ways of lighting a stage set. The variety of activities such as astronomy, paddle boarding, beekeeping and expressive arts encourages pupils to try new things.

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

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

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

33. The personal development curriculum encourages pupils to understand the importance of maintaining positive mental and physical health. Pupils learn about the benefits of physical activity, a healthy diet, sleep and doing things they enjoy. One to one tutor sessions provide individual support and enable pupils to discuss all aspects of their lives including helpful strategies such as revision plans, making time to relax and sharing their anxieties.
34. Physical education (PE) and games lessons, sports matches and a variety of extra-curricular activities provide pupils with regular exercise. This helps them to develop and maintain physical fitness and to understand that exercise supports their mental health.
35. The personal development programme encourages pupils to discuss and understand their feelings and emotions with confidence. Children in the early years are encouraged to express their feelings and make individual choices. This helps them to know themselves and develop self-confidence. For example, children in the early years ask for which drink they would like at snack time and say if they are feeling happy or sad. For older pupils, the boarding staff spend time with both boarding and day pupils to discuss how they are feeling and older pupils are mentors to younger ones. In this way, all pupils quickly feel confident to be themselves in the boarding environment.
36. The behaviour policy is implemented effectively overall. Staff set high expectations of behaviour and give appropriate sanctions, guidance and support if pupils make poor choices. This helps pupils understand the consequences of their actions. Pupils are taught about mutual respect and respect for people who are different to themselves through the 'personal development' curriculum. Assembly themes, such as the effects of banter masquerading as jokes about people, also reinforce this message. However, occasional disrespectful comments by some senior pupils show a lack of understanding of the negative impact that disrespectful language can have. This can impact the self-esteem and confidence of some pupils. Leaders ensure that appropriate systems for reporting such incidents are in place, including an online communication tool and ensuring that staff are readily available to talk to. Leaders deal with any incidents of disrespectful behaviour quickly when they occur. Instances of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively when they do occur.
37. Chapel services and assemblies help pupils to develop their spiritual understanding. The Chaplain leads discussion groups for those who wish to explore Christianity or other faiths further. Leaders help pupils who have a non-Christian faith to attend appropriate places of worship and provide suitable space for them to pray at school. The provision of meals is adapted for pupils who fast as part of their religion. Such measures contribute to pupils discussing their own and others' beliefs confidently and feeling included.
38. The RSE programme develops pupils' understanding of the nature and diversity of relationships. Leaders consider pupils' responses to regular surveys so that the RSE curriculum remains relevant to their needs. The RSE programme enables pupils to understand topics such as what makes a positive and healthy relationship, different types of families and the importance of consent.
39. Pupils are informed of who they can turn to if they have a concern. Pupils are confident that pastoral staff will listen and support them. Pastoral systems such as an anonymous online reporting tool, a school listener and an independent listener are available to pupils across the school. One to one

tutoring and time to talk with staff mean that pupils feel supported and able to discuss their concerns and feelings.

40. The school sites are maintained well. Health and safety procedures are thorough. Boarding houses are suitably lit, clean and comfortable and an appropriate cycle of checks, maintenance and refurbishment is followed across the school. Staff are proactive in reporting incidents and potential hazards so that improvements designed to keep pupils safe are implemented. Suitable precautions are taken to reduce the risk of fire, such as the fire risk assessment, fire safety training for staff and regular evacuation drills. Leaders seek and follow external specialist advice to help ensure that maintenance and security measures are efficient.
41. Appropriate numbers of staff supervise pupils at all times of the school day, including in the early years, and boarding staff are present in the boarding houses whenever boarders are there.
42. Leaders analyse records of accidents and make changes if trends emerge. Paediatric first aiders are available to children in the early years and an appropriate number of staff are trained as first aiders across the school. The suitably equipped medical centre with well-qualified medical staff provides appropriate care to pupils who are injured or unwell, including at night for boarders.
43. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained and absences are followed up. The local authority is informed as required when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times.

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

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

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

45. The personal development curriculum, educational visits and visiting speakers inform pupils about British society and the world beyond school. A range of talks and debates on topics such as equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging and the negative impact that sexism and other forms of prejudice have on people, offer pupils a balanced view on political and social topics.
46. Assemblies and personal development lessons encourage pupils to show respect for each other, use initiative, take responsibility for their own behaviour and follow rules through. The pupils' equality committee works with leaders to help all pupils feel valued. The teaching of British values, such as those of mutual respect and democracy, is generally effective and pupils understand the importance of respecting diversity and protected characteristics such as sex and sexual orientation. Occasionally, senior pupils show a lack of respect and understanding of these values.
47. The personal development and mathematics curriculum includes some aspects of economic education such as learning what money is and how to calculate costs, change and profits. However, it is not included regularly until the top years of the school. This means that pupils' awareness of topics such as managing personal finance is restricted. Leaders have identified the need to develop this area. Plans to ensure a more comprehensive programme of economic education designed to prepare pupils to manage their finances in the future are in place. However, it is too early for the impact of this planned programme to be seen.
48. The religious education and theology, philosophy and ethics (TPE) programme, assembly themes and speakers from diverse faiths teach pupils about the ideas, ethics and principles of world religions and other perspectives. Pupils in the prep school are taught about different faiths through the personal development and RS curriculum, visiting speakers and assemblies about festivals such as Diwali. As a result, pupils understand and respect different religions and that people hold different beliefs to each other.
49. Teachers in the early years skilfully guide children to develop positive relationships based on kindness. As a result, children share equipment, play and work together happily in both indoor and outdoor activities. This helps them to understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils learn that rules exist to keep them safe. Leaders encourage pupils to understand the value of collaboration through group activities. For example, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) enables senior school pupils to develop responsibility, teamwork, independence and leadership through a variety of military and non-military activities.
50. Prep school leaders encourage pupils to work with others co-operatively in all areas of the curriculum. This approach, coupled with support from their teachers, helps pupils develop future life skills such as communication, collaboration and leadership. Leaders implement a suitable careers guidance programme for pupils from Year 7, which is in line with national benchmarks. Individual tutoring gives pupils opportunity to discuss options and future choices, supported by aptitude profiling. Visiting speakers help to inform pupils about a range of career routes. The school holds a regular careers fair so that pupils can make informed choices about a range of higher education options and professions.

51. Leaders encourage pupils to volunteer within the school and local communities to develop their awareness of their responsibility to others, in line with the school's values of humility and service. Pupils contribute to a local foodbank, volunteer at the Bath half marathon and support local people through the DofE. Boarders choose charities to support and arrange fundraising events. Senior boarders act as buddies to prep school boarders and boarding house prefects act as positive role models. This helps pupils feel included and part of the boarding community.
52. The programmes of environment and adventure education, participation in the DofE and the CCF help to develop pupils' social wellbeing. The various activities enable pupils to work together, develop leadership skills, support other people and help to improve the natural environment. For example, senior school pupils work together on conservation work and habitat development, support each other on expeditions, help local residents and fundraise for charity. The prep school farm enables pupils to work together as they take responsibility for animals and grow vegetables in the school allotment to share with others. In these ways, pupils understand the positive contribution they can make to the school and local communities.

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

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

Safeguarding

54. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities work effectively with a range of external agencies, including the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO), police and children's services. They routinely seek advice to confirm the best action to take when a safeguarding concern arises. Safeguarding issues are quickly identified and appropriately managed, with pupils affected given suitable support. Safeguarding records are maintained as required.
55. The governor with designated responsibility maintains close links with safeguarding leaders. They pose questions to check that responses to concerns are in line with the safeguarding policy. Governors analyse regular reports on the nature of concerns and actions taken. They visit the school regularly to meet with leaders and staff and scrutinise the single central record of appointments. In this way, they assure themselves that safeguarding practice is in line with current statutory guidance.
56. The safeguarding team receive regular safeguarding training appropriate to their role. This keeps their knowledge and skills up to date. Safeguarding induction and training for all staff are thorough. Staff know and understand the safeguarding policy and are confident in how to identify and report concerns, including any that might arise about people working in the school. They know they can make a direct referral to children's services if necessary.
57. All the required safer recruitment checks are undertaken and recorded clearly in a single central register of appointments. All appointment checks are carried out before adults start work at the school.
58. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online through the curriculum and talks on internet safety. They know how to access online resources safely. The safeguarding lead oversees the robust filtering and monitoring systems and reviews their effectiveness regularly. This ensures that inappropriate use is identified and action taken to support pupils' safety.
59. Pupils know who they can talk to in school if they have a concern. An online tool is available for pupils to communicate concerns about themselves or others. They can choose to do so anonymously. Pupils are also provided with the contact details for national helpline services.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

| | |
|--|---|
| School | Monkton Combe School |
| Department for Education number | 800/6008 |
| Registered charity number | 1057185 |
| Address | Monkton Combe School Church Lane Monkton Combe Bath Somerset BA2 7HG |
| Phone number | 01225 721111 |
| Email address | admissions@monkton.org.uk |
| Website | www.monktoncombeschool.com |
| Proprietor | Monkton Combe School |
| Chair | Professor Ewan McKendrick |
| Principal | Mr Christopher Wheeler |
| Age range | 2 to 19 |
| Number of pupils | 686 |
| Number of boarding pupils | 246 |
| Date of previous inspection | 27 to 28 November 2019 |

Information about the school

61. Monkton Combe School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated close to Bath. It is part of the Monkton Combe group of schools. The spiritual ethos of the school is Christian, in line with its foundation. The school comprises the prep school for pupils aged 2 to 13 and the senior school for pupils aged 13 to 19. They occupy separate sites. The school is a charitable trust run by a board of governors. The current Chair of governors was appointed in 2022. Until March 2023 the prep and senior schools were inspected separately. This is the first whole school inspection.
62. The boarders are accommodated in six boarding houses within the senior school grounds, three for female pupils and three for male pupils. One boarding house for prep school pupils is within the prep school site.
63. There are 39 children in the early years, which comprises two Nursery classes and one Reception class.
64. The school has identified 124 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small number have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. English is an additional language for 60 pupils.
66. The school states its aims are to inspire young people to become courageous, kind and ambitious adults who live fulfilling lives. It seeks to provide a proactive pastoral environment in order to develop academically strong enthusiastic learners within a Christian ethos.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 April to 2 May 2024

67. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. Inspection activities included:

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

69. 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