

School inspection report

10 to 12 October 2023

Barlborough Hall School

Barlborough Park
Barlborough
Chesterfield
S43 4TJ

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 and managers at all levels, have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities and the knowledge and skills to carry them out effectively to promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders ensure that the guiding principles underpinning the school's ethos guide leaders' decision making. The vision to 'Strive for Magis (excellence) in all we do' is effectively managed so that the impact for all pupils regardless of background, is to have the chance to grow spiritually, morally and personally.
2. Acting through committees reporting to the governing board, governors have oversight of all aspects of school life and can suitably challenge and question leadership. Governors and leaders work effectively together to create and review the school's development planning.
3. Effective review of assessment and teaching has prompted the introduction of new schemes of work in core subjects, which have led to further improvements in pupils' skills and knowledge. Implementation of the new English scheme is still in its early stages but is beginning to have a positive impact. Pupils achieve well and enjoy learning. Pupils react positively to the active engagement in learning through practical activities, which leaders have promoted. Leaders are planning to develop the school's approach to teachers' marking further. This is as a result of leaders' review of the newly introduced developments in teaching and learning. Teaching of mathematics does not always meet the needs of the most able mathematicians. Pupils learn skills in ICT timetabled lessons but do not have many opportunities to apply and practice these skills.
4. The early years is well resourced and effectively managed. Teachers plan learning carefully to meet children's individual interests and abilities so that children meet their goals. The teaching team, work effectively to monitor progress and plan activities to meet the emerging needs of children, such as in the development of fine motor skills. Adults set challenges for children using a range of resources to ensure children make progress in this and other areas of the early years curriculum.
5. The comprehensive pastoral curriculum ensures that pupils are effectively taught about how to build personal skills and positive relationships with others, helping them to live safely. Pupils are taught to respect one another and learn to co-operative in a supportive community. Pupils' behaviour is positive. The school uses its strong links with the wider national and international Jesuit community to enable pupils to see the importance of community action.
6. The extensive activities program ensures pupils can follow their interests and develop skills covering a broad range of opportunities. The school's 'Future me' focus, a program of workshops lead by parents in different occupations, enables pupils to see how these skills could be developed and useful in their lives and world of work.

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

- Develop processes for teachers' marking and feedback to pupils to ensure it has a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Ensure that teaching in mathematics meets the needs of the most able pupils and builds on previous learning.
- Ensure that teaching enables pupils to apply, practise and improve their skills in ICT.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Knowledgeable leaders and managers have the necessary skills to lead their areas of responsibility effectively. They ensure that appropriate policies are in place that are well understood and implemented effectively.
8. Leaders and governors ensure that the school's aims are fully embedded, understood and largely part of the experience of the pupils. Leaders' development planning is based on rigorous self-evaluation and review of previous goals. Leaders' plans are focused on the pursuit of excellence. This aim is promoted through the school's policies and practices. Pupils show caring attitudes, share joy and gratitude and are happy members of the school community.
9. Governors monitor leaders' work thoroughly and systematically. The safeguarding governor supports the safeguarding team and reviews the school's safeguarding practice. The governing body reviews the impact of the actions emerging from these visits. Governors appropriately challenge leaders about school processes and their impact, including about the academic progress of pupils and their attendance. Governors contribute to development planning and are well informed about the school's priority to improve the curriculum.
10. Governors ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities regarding health and safety legislation. A suitable risk assessment policy gives staff clear direction about how to identify and minimise risks. Thorough risk assessments are carried out for areas of the early years, school trips and the safety of the premises and grounds, and to ensure the welfare of individual pupils where necessary.
11. The school's website is a useful source of information, providing parents and parents of prospective pupils with the required information, including about the school's approach to safeguarding. Leaders deal with parents' complaints appropriately and in a timely way. Leaders ensure that parents receive detailed reports on their child's attainment and progress. Leaders are reviewing and developing the format of these reports in response to parental feedback.
12. Leaders ensure that that the school fulfils its requirements under the Equality Act. They have a strategy to improve accessibility, which is regularly reviewed. Adaptations to the plan are discussed with parents as appropriate to their child's needs. Leaders promote respect for difference, and diversity is celebrated through the curriculum.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

13. Leaders ensure the broad and varied curriculum covers all required areas of learning. This is regularly reviewed. As a result, the school has recently adopted new schemes of work for mathematics and English, which are being effectively implemented and which typically meet the needs of pupils. Leaders regularly monitor and review activities to ensure teachers feel supported and their skills are fully developed.
14. Pupils have particularly well-developed literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching enables pupils to develop very competent speaking and listening skills including in French. Children in the early years gain a confident understanding of letter sounds and quickly translate this into early writing skills. Staff model language effectively to encourage the children to develop a broad vocabulary. Pupils across the school enjoy reading the stories in the newly introduced English scheme. Pupils can confidently write across a range of genres. Teaching enables pupils to have a strong understanding of number so that pupils confidently explain a variety of strategies to answer mathematical questions, including using formal methods. The technology curriculum enables pupils to acquire suitable ICT skills. However, teaching does not enable pupils to regularly apply their ICT knowledge and skills.
15. Pupils make good and often rapid progress and usually attain well by the time they leave the school to attend their senior school or other local schools of their choice.
16. Well-planned lessons are delivered by enthusiastic and talented staff. Most teaching engages pupils in well-planned lessons which they actively enjoy. Behaviour in lessons is generally positive. Pupils are highly motivated when involved in practical activities which build their subject knowledge and skills effectively. A wide variety of teaching methods are used, which encourages pupils to produce a variety of independent creative responses to tasks. Pupils' creative skills are highly developed through music, art and drama teaching.
17. Teaching promotes pupils' confidence, so that pupils share ideas openly in discussions. Teachers' good subject knowledge, effective questioning and positive encouragement help pupils to think for themselves, take risks and apply their intellectual effort in lessons.
18. Teachers assess pupils effectively and use the information to inform planning both for groups of pupils and for individuals, ensuring that pupils make good progress over a series of lessons. The less able pupils and those with specific needs make good progress in line with their peers because of the support they receive. However, teaching does not consistently meet the needs of the more able mathematicians which limits their progress and ability to use their initiative and apply their skills with greater independence.
19. Pupils have a clear understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. They are encouraged to assess their own work against clearly defined aims so that they fully understand what they have done well and what they can improve. Teachers provide helpful feedback to pupils. However, pupils do not always have the opportunity to address weaknesses identified in the helpful feedback comments and so make further progress.

20. The curriculum is effectively enhanced by an extensive hobbies program of after school and Saturday school activities, which are well attended by pupils. There is a wide choice of activities including food technology, musical theatre, chess and the major sports, which enable the pupils to develop and follow their interests and skills.
21. Learning in the early years ensures that children gain experience of all the areas of development. Creative water play promotes an appreciation of not only aesthetics but the development of language, by focusing on associated written and spoken 'watery' words. The range of activities for children allow both individual choice and teacher focus on the attainment of individuals so that children make good progress.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

22. Leaders ensure that the inclusive curriculum enables pupils to develop a rich spiritual understanding and depth of knowledge. Pupils learn about a variety of world faiths and are encouraged to share their own experiences. The curriculum is further enhanced through regular 'Godly Play' lessons with Biblical story boxes and activities which encourage pupils to independently reflect on the wonder in the world and develop their ability to philosophically question. Pupils have positions of responsibility as 'leaders in faith', to encourage the development of the positive character traits which underpin the school ethos. Pupils have a deep moral sense of right and wrong and demonstrate good manners and care of others in lessons and when moving around the school. Classes take it in turns to share in leading the liturgy for their parents, which builds pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Pupils clearly enjoy these opportunities.
23. The pastoral curriculum further develops pupils' understanding of the value in caring about others. Pupils speak reflectively on the importance of showing respect to all groups of people, even though they may have different backgrounds, ideas or experiences. Pupils know that everyone should be valued. The curriculum also helps pupils to understand how to build positive relationships and friendships and to respect their own bodies and the personal space of others.
24. Pupils have a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and an awareness of the importance of good mental health in maintaining self-esteem and self-confidence. Leaders have reflected on the school's provision and this has led to a focus on mental health support and a bespoke curriculum of regular mental health lessons is being introduced. This programme is in the early stages of development. However, pupils are positive about the support they have to develop strategies to cope with any worries they might have.
25. The pupils have many opportunities to participate in physical activities both during the day, in hobby activities or at Saturday school. Pupils are encouraged to be physically active. A programme of sports for all is being gradually introduced including opportunities to play mixed-gender fixtures with other schools. All pupils in the upper school play cricket and can choose to play rugby or hockey, football or netball. Children's physical development is promoted well in the early years including through the use of the suitably resourced, and effectively used outdoor learning environment and because all children swim regularly in the school pool.
26. Pupils fully understand the behaviour policy which they say is implemented fairly with prompt action taken to deal with any unkind behaviour. Staff teach pupils how to deal with bullying and pupils are confident that any rare instances of bullying are dealt with appropriately and promptly by adults. Pupils are properly supervised by staff in all areas of the school.
27. Leaders ensure that the school premises are well maintained and are safe. The school has a proactive approach to health and safety. Precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. Evacuation procedures are well understood and implemented. Staff keep meticulous records of all maintenance and safety actions and practices. This helps to ensure that health and safety is monitored effectively.

28. Pupils have a safe and comfortable place to be if they are feeling unwell or need medication. Suitably trained members of staff tend to pupils' first aid needs competently. All medicines are appropriately stored with suitable records of their administration. Governors have close oversight of pupils' attendance and leaders ensure that the school's admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

29. Leaders have ensured that pupils learn about society and the wider world both through the themed topics in the pastoral curriculum for all year groups under the heading 'Diverse Britain' and through topics in humanities subjects.
30. Teaching promotes the importance of all having the freedom to speak about their values and beliefs. Older pupils understand the impact of living in a democratic country and how this is supported through rules and laws. Pupils enjoy sharing and learning about different cultural traditions from their peers or through music, literature and artwork. These areas of learning are successfully adapted by teachers to include influences from different cultures. Children in the early years have access to a variety of toys and books to promote early understanding of the variety of cultures in British society.
31. Leaders actively promote the values of 'men and women for others' which underpin the school's ethos. Pupils are encouraged to be caring and tolerant of all.
32. From an early age, pupils are aware of their social responsibilities. Children in the early years enthusiastically work together to tidy the Reception classroom after sessions, taking responsibility for their environment. Teachers effectively plan for opportunities to develop social skills through play activities. Children take turns in speaking and listening and share play resources co-operatively.
33. School council representatives work together to improve the school community, supporting fund raising activities for the outdoor classroom and influencing decisions about the choices of snacks on offer in the school. Older pupils have responsibilities in a variety of leadership roles including as house, music and sports captains. Pupils support three local charities through the activities in their houses. They raise funds for national charities, sometimes in response to individual pupils' ideas. Connections with other schools in the national Jesuit community enable pupils to complete linked projects and engender an understanding of the value of contributing to wider society.
34. Pupils understand the principles of economic wellbeing and are well prepared for the next stage in their school life, experiencing 'taster days' before transitioning to a new year group. Leaders recognise the importance of pupils having an understanding of the world of work from an early age. Pupils from the early years upwards, engage in a series of activities to encourage thinking about 'A future me'. Workshops led by parents representing a range of potential jobs, develop interest and discussion in a wide range of potential careers.

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

35. Leaders ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including those in the early years, and that these are implemented effectively.
36. Pupils know what to do and who to go to if they have a problem. There is a school focus, through the pastoral curriculum, on talking about any worries and learning about how to keep yourself and others safe in a variety of situations including online. The staff know pupils well and are alert for any changes in their behaviour.
37. Appropriate action is taken to support pupils, including by working with partner agencies as required. The school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems to ensure pupils' online safety.
38. Staff in key safeguarding roles are suitably trained and fully understand local thresholds for reporting. All staff feel confident in their training, including through regular weekly reflections in the staff newsletter on safeguarding scenarios and updates about any changes in guidance. These equip staff to be alert to safeguarding issues. Staff understand the process to follow if they have any concerns about other adults. Leaders ensure that all are fully aware of the safeguarding policies, and these are fully implemented. Safeguarding records are accurately and systematically maintained.
39. Staff recruitment procedures follow safer recruitment practices, and an accurate record of appointments is kept.
40. The proprietor ensures appropriate regular oversight of safeguarding procedures.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	Barlborough Hall School
Department for Education number	830/6015
Registered charity number	230166
Address	Park Street Barlborough Chesterfield S43 4ES
Website	www.msmcollege.com
Proprietor	The Mount Trust
Interim Chair of Governors	Mr Shaun Whyman
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Keeton
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	186
Date of previous inspection	27 to 28 November 2019

Information about the school

41. Barlborough Hall School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 3 and 11. It was founded in 1939 by the Jesuits as the preparatory school for Mount St Mary's College, which occupies a separate site nearby.
42. There are 48 children in the early years setting. There are 18 children in Reception and 30 children in the Nursery.
43. The school has identified eight pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
44. English is an additional language for ten pupils.
45. The school states that its aims are grounded in the Jesuit vision and the Ignatian characteristics of education: care for the person, pursuit of excellence, integrity, maturity, holistic education, and sharing joy and gratitude. It intends to know, understand, challenge and support its pupils, so that they can grow to be fulfilled, purposeful and happy members of society who care for others and themselves.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 10 to 12 October 2023

46. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
47. The inspectors:
 - spoke to pupils, leaders, teachers and governors
 - observed lessons
 - undertook learning walks with members of the school leadership team
 - evaluated school policies and supporting documentation
 - visited the school premises including those for the early years setting
 - looked at examples of pupils work and discussed these with leaders and pupils.
48. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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