

# School inspection report

7 to 9 October 2025

## **Bedales School**

Church Road

Petersfield

Hampshire

GU32 2DG

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 effective in promoting pupils' wellbeing. Leaders demonstrate thorough knowledge, skills and understanding and fulfil their responsibilities. They carry out rigorous self-evaluation and keep the school's aims and ethos at the centre of their decision-making. Governors work closely with senior leaders and staff and provide oversight of the school's educational provision. Consequently, the Standards are met consistently.
2. Pupils' knowledge and skills are broadened considerably from their engagement with the school's 'outdoor work' curriculum. Pupils develop skills such as animal husbandry, blacksmithing and carpentry very well. They steward the school farm and manage the produce that the 'outdoor work' curriculum creates. In so doing, the pupils engage in sustainability and welfare projects for the collective benefit of school community and develop useful and specific physical and workplace skills. Pupils' engagement and quality of output are both very high. The 'outdoor work' curriculum contributes substantially to pupils' preparation for life after school and has a highly beneficial impact on pupils. This is a significant strength of the school.
3. Teaching enables pupils across the school, including in the early years, to make good progress. Lessons are well planned by teachers and learning is matched to pupils' ages and prior attainment. Leaders implement a suitable framework for assessment to monitor and track pupils' progress. Teachers use this to identify pupils' individual needs and work closely with tutors and boarding staff to provide support with appropriate strategies, including for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
4. Governors and leaders have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding reports and audits ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective across the school, including in boarding. Leaders ensure that when pupils transfer to or join from another school, appropriate information relating to safeguarding is shared. They monitor any guardianship arrangements for boarders effectively.
5. Leaders and governors ensure that the school's practice is effective. However, they do not ensure that all policies are routinely updated to reflect statutory requirements. When the inspection commenced, the safeguarding policy did not reflect current statutory guidance, and the attendance policy did not include the details of the senior attendance champion. Leaders updated these policies and uploaded them to the school's website during the inspection.
6. Leaders maintain appropriate levels of supervision throughout the day and in boarding. Boarders are well cared for by trained house staff who understand boarders' needs. However, leaders do not always ensure that the role of some pupils as 'dorm mentor' within the mixed-age boarding environment for boarders aged 13 to 17 years promotes mutual trust and respect.
7. Leaders implement a suitable relationships education curriculum for younger pupils and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum in the senior school that meet current statutory requirements. The programmes are typically well planned and taught by trained staff. However, leaders do not ensure that the use of assessment of pupils' understanding in RSE to inform subsequent planning to meet pupils' needs in this subject is always as effective as possible.

8. Governors and senior leaders have a strategic approach to identifying and managing potential risks to pupils' wellbeing. Leaders conduct risk assessments to mitigate such risks, including in the early years and boarding and with regard to the school's 'at home' social events activities programme.

## 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 the school's safeguarding and attendance policies remain up to date and in line with current statutory guidance
- ensure the effective use of assessment of pupils' understanding in RSE to inform subsequent planning to meet pupils' needs in this subject
- ensure the role of the 'dorm mentor' within the mixed-age boarding environment for boarders aged 13 to 17 years promotes mutual trust and respect.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governing body committees focus on specific areas of responsibility to maintain appropriate oversight of leaders' decision-making. Leaders provide detailed reports that governors scrutinise and present to the school's full governing board, together with evidence from school visits and self-evaluation audits. This enables governors to evaluate how effectively policies are working in practice and informs their detailed action plans for improvement. As a result, governors ensure that leaders utilise good knowledge and skills so that they fulfil their responsibilities to promote the wellbeing of pupils effectively and ensure that all of the Standards are met. However, governors do not always maintain effective oversight of all school policies to ensure their suitability. At the start of the inspection, the attendance policy lacked details of the senior attendance champion, and the safeguarding policy was not in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders updated both these policies and uploaded them to the school's website before the end of the inspection.
10. In the boarding houses, leaders' decision to maintain mixed-age dormitory room arrangements for boarders aged 13 to 17 years who share rooms, promotes the development of pupils' capacity to be aware of, and be sensitive to the emotions and needs of others. The 'dorm mentor' is a leadership role within the dormitory and a factor that promotes development of boarders' self-confidence. However, there are unintended consequences related to this hierarchical leadership role, with some behaviour in the boarding houses that does not reflect the school's aim of nurturing mutual trust and respectful relationships.
11. Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Pupils who have SEND receive the support they need to access the full curriculum and the range of co-curricular activities. The school's accessibility plan details the actions planned and adjustments made to ensure that pupils who have SEND are able to engage fully with the curriculum and access the premises.
12. Risk management is effective. Leaders assess risks related to premises, activities, outdoor work and trips, and implement suitable control measures. Staff identify potential hazards and risks and carry out appropriate actions to protect pupils from these, taking individual pupils' particular needs into account.
13. The school provides and makes available to parents all required information. Parents receive detailed written reports on their child's attainment and progress, as well as information about these at meetings and via digital platforms. The school provides the local authority with all required information relating to any funded pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
14. Leaders implement a suitable complaints policy. They respond to complaints promptly and keep suitable records of these. Leaders review these records to identify any trends in parental perspectives, including those related to boarding.
15. Leaders work effectively with external agencies. They seek advice to inform their decisions and make prompt referrals to agencies such as the police, local safeguarding partners and children's services where necessary.

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

**16. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

17. Leaders have designed and implement a well-planned and structured curriculum throughout the school, which provides pupils with age-appropriate learning opportunities across the required areas. In the early years, children work towards the early learning goals (ELGs) and typically reach nationally expected levels of development by the end of the Reception year. In the pre-prep and prep, pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in English and mathematics, as well as in humanities, technology and science. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge and their understanding of pupils' prior attainment, needs and interests to teach lessons that enable pupils to build on their prior knowledge so that they make good progress. Specialist teaching in subjects such as modern foreign languages, art, drama, music, dance and sport enriches pupils' learning experiences and deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding.
18. The curriculum in the senior school offers a suitable range of GCSE, IGCSE and 'Bedales' assessed courses' (BAC) options to cater for pupils' interests, preferred assessment framework and aspirations. The sixth-form curriculum offers A levels and the extended project qualification (EPQ). A programme of pupil-led talks and competitions open to all pupils provides further enrichment. Pupils achieve well overall across subjects, including in public examinations.
19. Pupils are encouraged to develop their speaking and listening skills across the curriculum, to express their views, present ideas and ask searching questions. In the early years, staff introduce children to new vocabulary and make its meaning clear through their dialogue and their interactions with the children. The children in the early years are confident communicators and respond with a range of age-appropriate vocabulary. Teaching across the school enables pupils to develop their ideas through discussion and debate. Pupils are confident and articulate. They collaborate and communicate effectively when problem-solving with their peers in lessons.
20. In the early years, teaching enables children to make good progress across the areas of learning, such as in numeracy and in their understanding of phonics, as well as in their dexterity and fine motor skills. Curiosity and creativity are promoted well, as children are encouraged to play and explore for themselves in the classroom and outdoor learning activities. In the prep and senior departments, pupils' numeracy skills progress through the application of their mathematical and arithmetic knowledge to increasingly complex abstract and real-world problems. In English, teaching is adjusted to meet the needs of pupils and provide appropriate challenge, such as tasks that require the interpretation of the meaning of poems and explanation of the effect that their structure has on the reader.
21. Pupils receive helpful feedback from teachers on their progress in various formats, including digitally, orally and in writing, to clarify misconceptions in their understanding. Typically, pupils' progress is enhanced by precise and clear verbal and written feedback from their teachers that informs them how they can develop their work further. This contributes to pupils' good progress.
22. Leaders maintain oversight of pupils' learning, including through learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. They make typically effective use of the school's assessment framework to track pupils' progress from their starting points and to inform planning and adjustments to teaching. For example, leaders' identification of some underperformance by boarders in relation to day pupils resulted in a more effective homework arrangement for boarders and a resultant improvement in their outcomes.

23. Leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND use effective methods to identify the needs of these pupils. Leaders provide training for teachers and share information and strategies with staff to enable adjustments to teaching and planning to meet pupils' needs. Specialist teachers provide resources such as fidget toys and support with concentration, recall and memory retention. Staff use effective techniques, including use of modelling, multisensory aids and movement breaks, when appropriate, to help each pupil understand what works best for them in their learning. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.
24. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are assessed on entry. When required, they are supported with individual strategies to ensure that they are able to access the curriculum and make good progress in their fluency and proficiency in English.
25. The co-curricular programme enables pupils to develop their skills and interests in areas of their choice, including sport, music and drama and a wide range of clubs and societies. For example, pupils may join the 'greenpower' club to race electric cars or the animal care club known as 'reptylers'. Older pupils can participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE). Pupils of all ages contribute to drama productions and concerts. As a result, pupils develop their creative skills, as shown in their music making, dramatic performances and their knowledge of the technical aspects of production.
26. Boarders are well supported in their work by staff who understand their needs. Boarders are able to access help and support with their academic work in boarding time. Frequent formal discussions between teachers and the pastoral staff mean that pupils' needs are identified at an early stage to support their progress. They have sufficient free time, which gives them the opportunity to develop supportive relationships with other boarders. There is an appropriate range of activities, trips, clubs and pupil-led societies available that encourage boarders to pursue their interests and to explore new activities.

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

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

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

28. An appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is taught through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) life skills and science curriculums. The RSE programme is designed to develop pupils' knowledge and match their interests, as well as reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. In the senior school and sixth form, pupils learn about themes such as puberty, healthy relationships, sexual orientation, gender identity, consent and respect. The RSE programme is supported by speakers on topics such as 'faith and sexuality' and 'a lad's guide to respect and consent'. Pupils become aware of common signs and symptoms of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Leaders check that there is appropriate coverage of the curriculum, but do not assess pupils' progress as effectively as possible to adjust subsequent planning and teaching to ensure pupils' understanding is secure.
29. Through the PSHE programme, which is taught through 'life skills' and 'wellbeing' lessons, as well as lessons in philosophy, religion and ethics (PRE) and history, pupils discuss modern ethical dilemmas thoughtfully, considering different moral, ethical and spiritual perspectives. Pupils' understanding is developed further through school events, including assemblies with themes related to, for example, Remembrance Day and the Holocaust; visits to places of worship; the school's programme of external speakers; and trips to, for instance, international humanitarian organisations, sites of battlefields and concentration camps. Pupils learn about a range of different religions and the school provides opportunities for religious observance for those of faith. As a result, pupils demonstrate an understanding of the need for tolerance of and respect for people with diverse beliefs, faiths and cultures.
30. The physical education (PE) and sports programme is taught in an inclusive manner. Children in the early years develop gross and fine motor skills in a range of different and appropriate activities, such as navigating obstacle courses, and using tricycles, construction kits and hammering. Across the school, there is a high level of participation in sport in competitive games fixtures. The PE programme, including training for specific sports and strength and conditioning coaching, enables pupils to develop a range of physical and sports-related skills. Pupils also learn about the importance of healthy eating and exercise.
31. The school has a clear behaviour policy and effective anti-bullying strategy. Leaders respond to and systematically record any behavioural incidents, including incidents identified as bullying. Leaders review these records regularly to identify patterns and take timely action when needed. Leaders and staff promote clear behavioural expectations and apply the suitable sanctions in the behaviour policy. They engage pupils in dialogue about the behaviour policy to develop their understanding of the sanctions and rationale for the rules it contains. Typically, the behaviour between members of the school community and between pupils is respectful and rules are followed.
32. Attendance and admission registers are well maintained. Leaders monitor attendance closely, promptly following up any unexplained absences or emerging patterns. The school informs the local authority of pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard times of transition.
33. The school has effective medical and first aid procedures in place. Staff receive appropriate training in first aid, including, in the early years, paediatric first aid. The boarding staff and medical centre provide appropriate medical support for older pupils, day and night, including access to medical

professionals and counsellors. Arrangements for the storage, recording and administration of medicines are suitable.

34. Boarding offers a welcoming experience. Boarders receive a comprehensive induction when they join the school to ensure that they know how to obtain support when it is needed and the procedures to follow in an emergency. Boarders continue to receive ongoing care and support from dedicated staff who are well trained and know and understand boarders' individual needs.
35. Health and safety across the school site is carefully managed. Boarding houses, the grounds, sports facilities and outdoor work areas are well maintained. The boarding houses are comfortable and suitable. Leaders ensure that routine emergency evacuation drills take place, including in the boarding houses outside of the school day, so that staff and pupils know what to do in the event of fire.
36. Pupils are supervised effectively, including when moving between the different buildings on the premises and during boarding time. There are always sufficient staff in place to supervise children in the early years effectively. The respect and support provided by staff promotes pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem.

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

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

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

38. The 'outdoor work' programme enables pupils to develop a diverse range of vocational and physical skills and knowledge extremely well. It enables them to develop a sophisticated understanding of crafts that support the natural world and of the need for sustainability. Pupils learn about areas such as animal husbandry, construction and restoration of buildings, gardening, willow, wool and hazel work, blacksmithing, butchery, baking and conservation, which includes planting and coppicing. Such learning has a very beneficial impact on pupils and enables them to produce work of very high quality.
39. Leaders have established a school community characterised by mutual respect and inclusivity. In the early years, mutual respect is seen in action through the interactions of the children with both their peers and their teachers. Across the school, pupils learn and play collaboratively in and outside the classroom, take turns and share effectively with each other. In the senior school, pupils lead clubs and societies, such as 'pride society', 'Jewish society' and 'embrace society'. Teaching across the curriculum engages pupils in thoughtful discussions about ethical topics that relate to themes of diversity and inclusion. For example, in English, pupils in the sixth form explore Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, drawing on their knowledge of the text to discuss the author's possible messages in relation to racial attitudes, imperialism and the human capacity for evil. In assemblies, history lessons and through the 'global perspective' programme, pupils reflect on, and debate, social issues and British values, such as through the study of the English Civil War and the Chartists in history.
40. Pupils experience democratic engagement and shared responsibility through the suggestions box and the democratically-elected school council, where pupils' ideas for school development are discussed with school leaders and contribute to their decisions. For example, pupils' suggestions have influenced reviews of the use of areas of the school, the school's promotion of respectful relationships between pupils and analysis of policies, including the mobile phone policy. Children in the early years learn about democracy through activities that involve choice, including voting for stories.
41. Pupils distinguish right from wrong and take responsibility for their actions. Pupils of all ages learn about the importance of the law to keep everyone safe, and the role of the police and the judicial system. Visits to the school by police and police community support officers support pupils' understanding of the rule of law.
42. Children in the early years begin to learn about democracy through activities such as voting for which stories to engage with. In the prep and senior school, pupils learn about democratic principles and develop their understanding of political institutions and the work of Parliament. In the political literacy component of the 'global perspectives' programme and through the topics in humanities, pupils consider different political ideologies. Teachers ensure that political themes and content are addressed impartially and without bias.
43. Careers guidance is well developed and effective. Pupils receive advice about pathways to higher education and university applications from their tutor, the school's careers team, external advisors and visits to careers conferences. Pupils research careers options and receive individual advice about possible future choices and applications to universities, apprenticeships and direct employment. Pupils receive up-to-date information about different types of careers, including through the weekly

careers newsletter. Pupils in Year 9 develop their practical skills and awareness of different vocational options through the 'outdoor work' programme. Pupils are prepared for the next phase of their education or employment.

44. Suitable economic education is threaded through the curriculum. Children in the early years learn about money through role play, which extends into pre-prep. Pupils apply their numeracy skills to calculate the cost of items in mathematics lessons. They learn about managing personal finances, including bank accounts, and how to avoid debt in their 'life skills' sessions. In the sixth form, pupils learn about budgeting for daily living as well as how markets work and apply their learning to a live business. Pupils engage with real-world business scenarios from production to selling and reinvestment and from harvesting to packaging and the costs of materials through their involvement in the 'outdoor work' programme.
45. The school develops pupils' sense of social responsibility through school-based projects and community service. For example, in the prep, pupils produced designs to reconfigure the skateboard shed in the playground to make space for scooter storage. In the senior school, pupils participate in partnerships with local charities, initiatives to support refugees and shared projects with other educational settings, including special schools and pupil referral units. Older pupils help support younger pupils in other educational settings.

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

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

## Safeguarding

47. There is an effective culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Staff in all phases of the school, across the early years, pre-prep, prep and senior school, are aware of the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm and who to contact if they have a concern. Possible contextual risks to children in the early years and boarders are understood by staff and they take suitable steps to mitigate these. For the boarding environment, this includes maintaining a rigorous risk analysis of the school's 'at home' social events activities programme to guard against safeguarding issues arising.
48. Governors receive annual detailed reports of safeguarding and visit the school to provide effective oversight of procedures. The safeguarding governor meets regularly with safeguarding leaders to monitor patterns in the type and frequency of concerns and the nature of the school's responses.
49. There are multiple processes for pupils to raise a concern. Children in the early years and pre-prep use worry boxes and speak to trusted adults. Older pupils and boarders have a range of adults in the school to whom they can speak and they can use an electronic reporting system to alert staff of a concern. Boarders are clear on how to contact the independent person.
50. Members of the safeguarding team respond effectively to safeguarding concerns that arise. They follow appropriate procedures, including through maintaining close and regular contact with local safeguarding partners and, where appropriate, referring concerns on to them. The safeguarding team keeps suitable and secure records of safeguarding concerns and how the school has acted in response to them.
51. Staff receive safeguarding training on induction and regular updates, including about the 'Prevent' duty that relates to risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. Staff are trained to use the school's reporting and recording systems effectively. The safeguarding team ensures that staff understand the whistleblowing procedures and how to report any low-level concerns or allegations against adults working with the pupils.
52. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including when online, through their PSHE lessons and wellbeing sessions. The school monitors online usage through a suitable internet filtering and monitoring system, which is tested regularly. The safeguarding team responds swiftly to any alerts.
53. Leaders ensure that all necessary pre-employment recruitment checks are carried out before adults take up their appointments. The single central record of appointments (SCR) is regularly checked by the safeguarding governor to ensure it is accurately maintained.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Bedales School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	850/6007
<b>Registered charity number</b>	307332
<b>Address</b>	Bedales School Church Road Petersfield Hampshire GU32 2DG
<b>Phone number</b>	01730 300100
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:seniorreception@bedales.org.uk">seniorreception@bedales.org.uk</a>
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bedales.org.uk">www.bedales.org.uk</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Governing Body of Bedales School
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Stephen Nokes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Will Goldsmith
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 19
<b>Number of pupils</b>	718
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	319
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 to 13 May 2022

## Information about the school

55. Bedales School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in Petersfield, Hampshire. The school is a registered charity administered by a governing body. The school is divided into three sections on the same site: the pre-prep school, for pupils aged 3 to 8 years, which includes the nursery; the prep school, for pupils aged 8 to 13 years; and the senior school, for pupils aged 13 to 19 years.
56. There are four boarding houses. Flexi-boarding and full boarding options are offered in a co-educational boarding house for pupils aged 8 to 13 years. There is one boarding house for male pupils and a separate boarding house for female pupils aged 13 to 17 years, and a sixth-form house for pupils aged 17 to 18 years.
57. There are 30 children in the early years, comprising one Nursery class and one Reception class.
58. The school has identified 359 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
59. The school has identified 28 pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
60. The school states it aims to provide a forward-thinking, liberal education for pupils to become lifelong learners with the ability to think critically and creatively within a culture of openness and respect.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

7 to 9 October 2025

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

62. Inspection activities included:

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

63. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

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

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