ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

28 to 30 April 2026

Bethany School

Goudhurst

Cranbrook

Kent

TN17 1LB

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. Leaders provide clear strategic direction to ensure consistent implementation of policies that support pupils' wellbeing and academic progress. Governors are well informed about the school and hold leaders to account, ensuring compliance with all relevant Standards.

2. Pupils benefit from a broad and well-considered curriculum. Leaders have thoughtfully designed learning that enables pupils to develop a wide range of skills, including critical thinking, research and analysis. Across subjects, tasks are deliberately planned to support pupils' personal development as well as their academic progress.

3. Leaders adapt the curriculum effectively to meet the ages, needs and aptitudes of all pupils. Teachers are well trained to meet the individual needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which is evident in classroom practice, wider activities and the pastoral support that pupils receive.

4. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff know their pupils well and use this insight to provide carefully tailored challenge and support. This personalised approach enables pupils to develop increasing independence in their learning and contributes to pupils' good progress towards outcomes in public examinations.

5. Leaders provide a well-sequenced personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum that equips pupils with the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to manage school life confidently and navigate day-to-day experiences beyond school. Leaders provide opportunities for spiritual and creative development to ensure that pupils develop healthy lifestyles and build confidence and self-assurance in a range of contexts.

6. Pupils' wellbeing is promoted through effective pastoral systems, medical and first aid provision, well-maintained facilities and flexible, supportive boarding arrangements.

7. Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to perform publicly, showcase their work and speak openly with adults, which helps to promote their self-confidence and self-knowledge.

8. Leaders provide purposeful opportunities for pupils of all ages to take on formal and informal responsibilities, including older pupils leading enrichment activities and pupils in the sixth form acting as peer mentors. These experiences contribute to pupils' confidence, maturity and wider personal development.

9. Across the school, pupils learn to express their views respectfully and to consider the perspectives of others, supported by structures that promote positive relationships and mutual respect. As a result, the school helps to prepare pupils for future education, employment and adult life.

10. Pupils develop positive social skills through the enrichment programme and mixed-age activities. Older pupils model co-operation and demonstrate a secure understanding of right and wrong. However, leaders do not ensure that pupils in the younger years are fully supported in developing sufficient social awareness to understand the impact that unkind words and actions can have on others.

© Independent Schools Inspectorate 2026

11. Leaders safeguard pupils effectively, establishing a robust culture that is underpinned by diligent oversight. Clear reporting systems, safer recruitment checks and governor scrutiny ensure that arrangements to promote the welfare of pupils, both during the day and in boarding, are consistently implemented.

12. In boarding, staff are appropriately qualified and well trained to ensure pupils' safety and support their wider wellbeing. Leaders have the knowledge and skills to ensure the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS) are met.

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:

- strengthen the support for younger pupils to accelerate the development of their social skills so that they understand the impact of their actions and words on the wellbeing of others.

© Independent Schools Inspectorate 2026

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Leaders place inclusivity and equality at the centre of their strategic planning. They know their pupils well and, using this understanding, they tailor teaching, pastoral support, enrichment and the use of facilities so that each pupil can thrive. As a result, pupils experience a nurturing environment in which they are well supported.

14. Governors ensure that leaders have the knowledge, skills and understanding required for their roles through regular check-ins, termly governing body meetings and focused subcommittees that oversee key areas of strategic direction. The constructive and professional working relationship between governors and leaders supports both the school and boarding provision to meet their aims. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively and are held to account by well-informed, appropriately trained governors, ensuring that all relevant Standards are met.

15. Leaders demonstrate a secure and well-embedded understanding of self-evaluation, knowing their school and its pupils well and taking a strategic approach to promoting pupils' wellbeing. They sustain and update their professional knowledge through regular training, systematic policy review, structured dialogue with governors and ongoing monitoring activities, such as lesson observations and routine oversight of safeguarding and risk. Leaders identify and address the training needs of staff promptly, ensuring that practice remains consistent and effective.

16. Leaders ensure that policies are implemented effectively, consistently and with clear understanding. Leaders provide regular training and reinforce procedures through diligent oversight. As a result, staff apply policies reliably. Pupils can articulate expectations, such as those around behaviour, and arrangements, such as those relating to boarding, demonstrating that these policies are well embedded across the school.

17. Leaders ensure that all required information is readily available to parents of current and prospective pupils. They maintain regular, purposeful communication about pupils' progress and pastoral matters. As a result, parents are well informed about school life.

18. Leaders identify, manage and reduce risks effectively through systematic oversight and detailed risk assessments. Leaders put in place clear routines that are well understood by staff and pupils. They maintain suitable practice through regular fire and lockdown drills and proactive monitoring of both physical and online risks, ensuring that concerns are swiftly addressed and pupils feel safe.

19. Leaders ensure that inclusivity and equality are embedded across the school. They have a secure understanding of pupils' needs and tailor provision accordingly. Leaders promote this culture through well-resourced academic and pastoral support, including high-quality provision for pupils who have SEND. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive targeted support to address their individual needs and enable them to access the full curriculum effectively. Leaders also implement a clear and strategic accessibility plan that enables all pupils to access the full curriculum and wider school life, ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

20. In boarding, leaders ensure that boarding is sufficiently staffed with suitably qualified and well-trained personnel, enabling policies to be implemented effectively. This results in the delivery of high-quality boarding provision.

21. The school has a robust complaints policy and procedures in place. Parental concerns are handled effectively. Clear communication helps complaints to be resolved at an early stage. Complaints are recorded and dealt with in line with the policy.

22. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding, ensuring that recruitment processes, policies and procedures are robust and consistently applied. They review safeguarding and risk-management arrangements regularly to assure themselves that systems are working well. Leaders liaise promptly and appropriately with external agencies when concerns arise and maintain proactive communication to support pupils' safety.

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

23. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

24. Leaders have mapped a coherent, whole-school curriculum that is progressively sequenced and balances breadth with depth. Leaders help pupils to understand the links between different subjects. This helps to deepen pupils' understanding. For example, in Year 9 science lessons on osmosis, pupils use skills learnt in mathematics to draw graphs. Leaders have broadened vocational options so that pupils can pursue pathways that align with their interests and future destinations, including apprenticeships. As a result, pupils are well informed about the full range of future pathways and make confident, well-matched choices that support their next steps, including successful progression to universities, work and apprenticeships.

25. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and manage pupils' learning effectively, which contributes to a positive environment. Across subjects, staff use their expertise to plan well-structured learning. Teachers model high-quality responses that build pupils' confidence, subject understanding and examination technique. Pupils experience supportive relationships with staff. Teachers are approachable and readily available to help, including in the sixth form, where boarders receive additional academic support during study time. As a result, pupils are well supported and benefit from opportunities to develop new skills. Overall, at GCSE and A level, pupils achieve outcomes above the national average.

26. Teachers understand the individual needs of all pupils, particularly pupils who have SEND. Pupils are supported through seating plans, tailored resources, scaffolded learning and flexible timetabling. Specialist timetabled 'dyslexia learning support' lessons further support pupils who have SEND to achieve successful outcomes at GCSE and A level. Leaders support pupils' individual needs when making subject choices, ensuring that options, including those with coursework elements, are well-matched to pupils' prior attainment, interests and future aspirations. Specialist staff provide targeted support, helping specific pupils to access lessons and offering a calm, supervised space when they need time away from the classroom.

27. Pupils who speak EAL are supported through well-structured scaffolding and tailored resources, with teachers adapting activities and feedback to ensure that learning is accessible and clearly understood. Targeted vocabulary development and regular monitoring of progress enable pupils to build confidence and independence. Pupils who speak EAL make good progress.

28. Teachers manage classroom time effectively, using well-structured lessons, purposeful circulation and timely one-to-one feedback to keep pupils focused. Pupils' behaviour is calm, motivated and respectful, as reflected in their sustained engagement, self-directed work and positive attitudes to learning.

29. Boarding arrangements make a positive contribution to the quality of pupils' academic work. Boarders benefit from regular access to subject specialists during evening study, and staff are readily available to provide one-to-one support that reinforces learning and builds confidence. The structured study routines and calm, well-supervised boarding environment provide conditions that support focused, sustained learning. Leaders monitor boarders' progress closely against academic expectations. They provide incentives, such as the opportunity to study in their own rooms, to encourage pupils to sustain effort. This combination of academic support, clear structure and pastoral care supports boarders' progress and helps them to be well prepared for their next steps.

© Independent Schools Inspectorate 2026

30. Pupils benefit from a broad and well-planned programme of recreational activities outside teaching time, including cookery club, school productions and a Friday afternoon carousel of enrichment, where options such as bicycle riding, curling and visits to the goat sanctuary enable them to develop emotional, social and creative skills while building confidence and wider awareness. Boarders access an equally rich programme, with opportunities to use facilities such as the gym and swimming pool, take local outings and participate in weekend trips to places of cultural interest.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. Leaders have developed a progressively sequenced PSHE curriculum that builds on prior learning and incorporates the statutory elements of relationships and sex education (RSE) alongside health education. The curriculum is delivered by teachers with specialist subject expertise. This ensures that pupils gain age-appropriate knowledge on topics such as risk and safety in society, intimate relationships and the characteristics that make people different from one another, enabling them to build the understanding needed for each stage of their personal development.

33. The physical education (PE) curriculum offers pupils a broad range of sporting experiences, with leaders adapting provision to reflect the skills and interests of each group of pupils. As a result, pupils develop sustained enjoyment of physical activity and an informed understanding of how exercise supports their physical health, mental wellbeing and healthy lifestyles, both now and in the future.

34. Regular chapel services and opportunities for creative expression contribute to pupils' spiritual development. Older pupils' performances in assemblies and school productions, which showcase high levels of talent, provide positive examples for younger pupils. Creative work displayed across the school, including ambitious pieces such as a fashion garment constructed from cards, further promotes pupils' reflection and aesthetic appreciation.

35. Leaders ensure that behaviour is well managed through a clear policy that pupils understand and respect, resulting in a calm and respectful atmosphere. A pupil-led behaviour charter ensures ownership and encourages kindness and personal responsibility. Older pupils act as positive role models, particularly in sport and during registration, helping younger pupils to feel well supported and confident.

36. The anti-bullying strategy is effective, and pupils can clearly distinguish between bullying and unkind behaviour. They are able to identify trusted adults with whom they can speak should concerns arise.

37. Admission and attendance registers are maintained accurately. The attendance champion reviews attendance data weekly and initiates early contact with parents when concerns emerge. Close work with pastoral staff ensures that barriers to attendance are identified and addressed. Tailored measures, including trusted adults, exit cards and flexible timetables, are used to build pupils' confidence and support improved attendance.

38. The range of facilities available in boarding provides pupils with well-appointed and well-maintained specialist facilities. Boarding accommodation offers a wide range of secure, flexible and comfortable areas, including private rooms, common rooms and access to the gym and swimming pool. This enables pupils to feel safe and relaxed.

39. The wellness centre is a hub that offers emotional, medical and first aid support, including overnight provision. Its open-door approach and consistent staff presence provide a supportive space for pupils. Leaders have provided a dedicated day room in which pupils in Year 7 can socialise and relax, creating a calm space that supports their wellbeing and contributes to positive relationships and a settled start to school life.

40. Pupils are well supervised at all times, including in the boarding house. There is always a member of staff on duty, both during the day and at night. Pupils benefit from the flexibility of the boarding environment, which allows, for example, opportunities to return to the house during the day to rest, cook and contact home.

41. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to perform, present their work and speak in wider forums, such as in assemblies and drama productions. These experiences build pupils' self-knowledge and help to develop their self-esteem. Leaders develop pupils' self-confidence through a well-planned PSHE and RSE curriculum and a nurturing school culture where staff know pupils well and respond sensitively to their needs.

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

42. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

43. Pupils' economic understanding is developed progressively through a sequenced blend of PSHE, enrichment and subject teaching. Pupils in Year 7 are introduced to the differences between debit and credit cards. Pupils in Year 10 create a budget based on a payslip and pupils in the sixth form are trusted with planning, organising and managing the entire budget for the leavers' ball. This gives them authentic experience of financial decision-making and responsibility.

44. Leaders foster mutual respect and consideration for others by creating structured opportunities for pupils to learn from and support one another. Older pupils who have SEND regularly mentor younger pupils who have similar needs. Roles such as peer mentors and anti-bullying ambassadors enable older pupils to guide and support younger pupils, reinforcing a culture of respect across the school.

45. Pupils show initiative and contribute to the lives of others through a wide range of meaningful community activities, such as supporting a local primary school, donating food to the local foodbank and raising funds for charities. Through these experiences, pupils develop empathy, social awareness and a sense of responsibility towards wider society. Boarding pupils visit cultural sites and engage in local activities, such as hosting a stall at a community event, which demonstrates initiative and helps to develop links between the school and its surrounding community.

46. The enrichment programme and mixed-age activities support pupils to develop social skills. For example, older pupils direct younger ones in drama. Older pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of right and wrong. However, leaders do not provide strategies to enable some younger pupils to develop a social awareness of the impact their words and actions can have on others.

47. An impartial and well-structured careers curriculum ensures that pupils are well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern British society. Pupils in the sixth form are prepared for life beyond school through a dedicated careers and futures programme known as 'project horizon'. Pupils in Year 9 understand GCSE subject requirements and future pathways, reflecting the effectiveness of the advice they receive. Older pupils experience in-person and virtual work experience, ensuring that they are informed about a wide range of opportunities. Long-term initiatives such as Young Enterprise, alumni engagement and external partnerships provide authentic, real-world learning. Talks from external consultants, including on the future impact of artificial intelligence (AI), further promote pupils' engagement with careers.

48. Pupils develop respect for public institutions, the rule of law and democratic processes through curriculum teaching, assemblies and tutor time. Opportunities such as the school council enable pupils to practise democratic decision-making first hand and gain a greater understanding of democracy as they advance through the school. In politics lessons, teachers make effective use of weekly current affairs quizzes to ensure pupils engage with political events beyond the classroom and build secure contextual understanding of local, national and global issues.

49. Leaders embed British values across school life. Pupils demonstrate a confident understanding of school values such as tolerance and respect, applying these principles to real-world issues, including media representation, climate responsibility and cultural diversity. They understand wider civic

concepts such as voting rights and personal choice. Pupils experience these in practice through everyday decisions, for example, selecting their medium of choice in art. They engage thoughtfully with current issues, such as debates around inheritance tax for farmers, showing awareness of different viewpoints.

50. Leaders promote equality and inclusion and encourage pupils to take responsibility across all aspects of school life. Mixed-gender sports teams and extensive sporting opportunities, including professional links and competitions, ensure equal access and promote aspiration. Assemblies and tutor time reinforce kindness and respect for protected characteristics. Pupil-led groups, such as the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committee, allow for a wide range of differences to be discussed openly and foster the sense that everyone is accepted. The house system and mixed-age enrichment groups help pupils to understand and respect others' identities and beliefs.

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

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

52. Leaders safeguard pupils effectively, establishing a robust culture underpinned by diligent oversight. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding work closely with external agencies when concerns arise. When needed, referrals are appropriate and timely.

53. Leaders operate effective internet filtering and monitoring systems, which are subject to regular external checks to confirm that they continue to protect pupils from inappropriate or harmful online content. The mobile phone policy protects younger pupils from social media misuse during the school day.

54. Staff receive thorough and regularly updated safeguarding training, including annual whole-school training, weekly safeguarding updates and mandatory online training modules. This ensures that they are consistently confident in recognising, responding to and escalating concerns.

55. Leaders operate robust and comprehensive recruitment procedures. All required checks are completed for staff prior to appointment. Suitable systems are in place to oversee arrangements for residents over 16 years old who are not employed by the school. This ensures the ongoing suitability of all adults working with, or around, pupils.

56. Leaders have in place policies and procedures to ensure that the parents of boarders select guardians appropriately and check that guardians understand their responsibilities. Leaders with boarding responsibilities regularly check that guardianship arrangements continue to promote the welfare and wellbeing of boarders.

57. Leaders ensure that boarders are safeguarded and that their wellbeing is promoted consistently by maintaining close liaison with parents and guardians to secure safe travel, providing clear separation of staff accommodation and ensuring that boarders can access appropriate support services, including the independent person.

58. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, including online, through clear curriculum provision in PSHE and assemblies. Pupils have a confident understanding of how to stay safe in different contexts.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

59. All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	Bethany School
Department for Education number	886/6036
Registered charity number	307937
Address	Bethany School Goudhurst Cranbrook Kent TN17 1LB
Phone number	01580 211273
Email address	schooloffice@bethanyschool.org.uk
Website	https://bethanyschool.org.uk
Proprietor	Bethany School Limited
Chair	Mr Jonathan Fenn
Headteacher	Mr Francie Healy
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	313
Number of boarding pupils	32
Date of previous inspection	18 to 20 April 2023

© Independent Schools Inspectorate 2026

Information about the school

60. Bethany School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school close to the village of Goudhurst. The school is based on a 60-acre site in the Weald of Kent. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors.

61. Boarders are accommodated in one boarding house on the school site.

62. The school has identified 225 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.

63. The school has identified English as an additional language for 17 pupils.

64. The school states that its aims are to provide each pupil with a personalised education that nurtures their academic, creative and sporting strengths, supports their spiritual development and promotes high standards of health, safety and wellbeing within a caring community, enabling them to realise their potential in all areas of study and develop a genuine love of learning.

© Independent Schools Inspectorate 2026

Inspection details

Inspection dates	28 to 30 April 2026

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

66. 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 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.

67. 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

© Independent Schools Inspectorate 2026