

School inspection report

10 to 12 June 2025

Ashbridge Independent School

Lindle Lane

Hutton

Preston

Lancashire

PR4 4AQ

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. Proprietors and leaders work in close partnership to draw up effective measures to promote pupils' wellbeing. A clear strategic vision and its regular review inform the school's continuous development. Leaders are alert to potential risks and respond promptly to mitigate these, when required. Proprietors ensure that school leaders are well trained to carry out their roles and responsibilities. They receive detailed reports from leaders across key areas of school life and extend opportunities so that leaders can further their expertise in specialist areas.
2. The curriculum is thoughtfully planned to cater for pupils' prior attainment and learning needs. Lessons in outdoor learning and horticultural studies add depth to pupils' knowledge and skills base. Teachers draw up well-structured schemes of work so that pupils make purposeful connections to their wider subject learning. They provide stimulating activities which help pupils to develop their skills, often including a practical focus and access to the outdoor learning environment. Teachers' high expectations motivate pupils and challenge their thinking. Pupils achieve well as a result. They are enthusiastic and diligent learners who express their ideas clearly and confidently.
3. Leaders use an appropriate assessment framework, which is particularly effective in English, mathematics and science, to monitor pupils' attainment over time. Teachers use the information provided to adapt planning to meet individual pupils' needs. Assessment methods in some other subject areas vary, so that leaders' strategic oversight of pupils' attainment and progress in humanities is not as rigorous as in other subjects. This reduces opportunities for leaders and teachers to reflect on further ways to improve pupils' progress and attainment.
4. Leaders in the early years set high expectations for children's personal development and learning outcomes. They plan targeted activities which are closely linked to children's interests and encourage their independence. Leaders in the early years meet regularly with school leaders to plan and reflect on the impact of new initiatives on children's skill development. Consequently, children make good progress.
5. The school's revised behaviour policy enhances pupils' clear understanding of leaders' expectations and school procedures. Pupils are well behaved and aware of the impact of their actions on others. Positive relationships with staff reassure pupils that any concerns raised will be quickly addressed. A comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum supports pupils' self-understanding through topics such as growing up and managing emotions. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing through a rigorous approach to health and safety, including fire safety and the ongoing maintenance of buildings and facilities.
6. Pupils are well prepared to be responsible citizens. They embrace responsibility keenly and show sensitivity to the needs of others through the leadership roles available to them. The school enables pupils to develop financial awareness to inform their decision-making in their adult lives. Extensive opportunities in horticultural studies and outdoor learning provide pupils with relevant knowledge and social skills for their adult lives, including food cultivation, teamwork, resilience and practical problem-solving.
7. Leaders implement effective measures to protect pupils from harm. They review these regularly and reflect on any lessons to be learnt when incidents arise. Safeguarding leaders, proprietors and staff

are well trained and knowledgeable. When concerns arise, leaders keep detailed records and seek advice promptly from safeguarding partners, using this to inform their decision-making.

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 strategic oversight of assessment in humanities in order to identify strategies to improve pupils' progress and attainment.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Proprietors maintain effective oversight of the school. They gain a deep understanding of how leaders promote pupil wellbeing through engagement with staff and attendance at academic and pastoral leadership meetings. Proprietors receive regular, detailed updates about all aspects of school life. These support them in checking that leaders have the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their responsibilities in meeting the Standards.
9. Leaders work closely with proprietors to review development planning to confirm that it reflects the school's evolving vision. They take action promptly when needed. Recent initiatives include a targeted school-wide focus on handwriting and extended writing and the introduction of a new mathematics scheme to support pupils' progression. Leaders regularly monitor lessons and talk to pupils about their work to assess the impact of new and established initiatives on pupils' learning.
10. Leaders take a systematic approach to policy review. They implement changes to improve understanding amongst pupils and staff of procedures and the part they play in the implementation of these. Leaders and proprietors meet regularly to scrutinise detail in key policies and check implementation, including through regular staff training and discussions. This enables proprietors to reassure themselves that policies are suitable and reflect current statutory guidance.
11. The school's aims and its accompanying 'rights' are well understood by pupils. Leaders communicate key messages clearly and consistently through assemblies and PSHE lessons. Displays around school reinforce the school values which staff model throughout their own interactions. Pupils are confident and respectful towards their peers and teachers and appreciate the wide-ranging opportunities available to them within the curriculum.
12. Leaders work in close partnership with a range of external agencies to seek specialist advice when required, using the guidance provided to inform their decision-making. The school reports to the local authority in respect of funding for pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Parents have access to information about the school and its policies through the school's website or on request.
13. Leaders are alert to potential risks to pupils' wellbeing. They draw up thorough risk assessments and implement suitable control measures to minimise potential risks on the premises and within school activities. Proprietors maintain oversight of risk management in the school, including within their ongoing site review.
14. An appropriate policy is in place to manage parental complaints. Leaders respond to concerns in line with specified time frames, ensuring that they are quickly addressed.
15. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Pupils are not discriminated against by the school. A suitable accessibility plan outlines the school's procedures to improve pupils' access to the school's curriculum, documentation and the physical environment. Adaptations to the site include specialist classroom resources and access ramps.

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 and proprietors liaise closely to design a curriculum which reflects the school's ambitions for pupils to develop as intellectually curious and creative learners. Leaders plan programmes of learning which include teaching methods and environments to cater for the needs of all age groups. Pupils achieve well, notably in reading, mathematical problem-solving and science. They routinely secure places and scholarships at a range of senior schools.
18. Leaders implement a thorough assessment programme, including in English, mathematics and science, to monitor pupils' progress and attainment over time. They analyse data regularly so that planning can be adapted to take into account pupils' identified learning needs. Assessment of pupils' attainment in some other subjects is less systematic and consistent across the school. As a result, leaders' strategic oversight of pupils' progress and attainment in subjects such as history and geography is less well developed. This reduces opportunities for teachers to gather detailed information on what pupils do and do not know so that they can plan their next steps as effectively as possible.
19. Teachers use their in-depth subject knowledge, well-planned lessons and stimulating activities to increase pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding. A wide variety of activities, matched to pupils' needs, sustain pupils' focus and engagement in lessons. These are enhanced by one-off sessions such as drone workshops and photography sessions which broaden pupils' technological skills and knowledge.
20. Teachers make effective use of assessment data in their planning. They provide daily group sessions in early reading and mathematics which include activities based on pupils' prior attainment and differing needs. A combination of verbal and written feedback provides pupils with insight as to how to improve their work. Teachers use resources skilfully, such as when using audio recordings to enhance the depth of pupils' writing.
21. Schemes of work, notably in horticultural studies and weekly forest sessions, provide pupils with opportunities to test their theories practically in the outdoor learning environment. Pupils extend their learning across the curriculum by using their skills to solve real-life problems. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to challenge their thinking and understand how mistakes can help the learning process. As a result, pupils are motivated, conscientious and confident learners. They readily accept challenge and demonstrate logical reasoning.
22. Pupils enhance their secure mathematical skills through activities such as measuring plant height and estimating distances between seeds when sowing. They extend their instructional writing techniques by summarising key information for seed packet designs. Pupils demonstrate advanced scientific and technology skills when planning and adjusting experiments through activities such as the design of a dam for flood prevention. They make connections between science and history, deepening their appreciation of the impact of the Romans' water systems by designing pipe networks to carry water over long distances.
23. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points, notably in handwriting and sentence composition. Leaders identify pupils' needs through assessments and classroom observations and meet regularly with teachers to identify where additional learning or emotional support may be required. Specialist classroom resources,

early reading and mathematics group sessions and targeted pastoral support are provided when required. Leaders review support regularly to ascertain any change in needs.

24. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are identified on entry to the school using specialist assessments. Pupils develop their oral and writing confidence within support sessions focused on the sounds that letters make and sentence formation.
25. Adults in the early years model ambitious vocabulary through their purposeful use of actions, targeted conversations and repetition. This builds children's familiarity with new terminology and increases their confidence in practising new words in their own conversations. Children quickly apply new knowledge, such as when using their new understanding of two-dimensional shapes to cut a diagonal line on a square piece of paper. Leaders set high expectations for children's outcomes through challenging activities which build their resilience and independence. Children achieve well as a result.
26. Staff regularly share information with parents through written reports and during meetings to keep them updated about their child's academic, personal and social progress. Guidance is offered to parents so that they understand how to further support their child at home.
27. A diverse range of extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' learning before, during and after school. Well-attended clubs offer pupils opportunities to build on existing techniques and knowledge in such areas as netball or gardening, and acquire new interests, including in cheerleading or yoga.

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

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

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

29. Leaders promote pupils' emotional and spiritual wellbeing by fostering a learning environment in which pupils are actively invited to share their opinions and concerns. A focus on collaborative learning and discussion enables teachers to form warm and purposeful relationships with pupils. Younger pupils benefit from the calm spaces provided in reading sessions, including in the outdoor library, and a mindfulness area. Older pupils value opportunities to feel close to nature through access to the woodland areas, animal barn, kitchen garden and meadow. They engage enthusiastically in lessons, showing confidence and an ability to manage their emotions positively, fostered through their activities outdoors.
30. Pupils develop their personal health and fitness through physical education (PE) lessons and regular participation in fixtures and sporting competitions. Subject specialist teaching, well-structured lessons and high expectations enable pupils to grow in confidence and skill. Clear demonstrations and explanations of technique help pupils to improve skills such as ball control, foot movement and understanding of body positioning. Outdoor areas, including boulders to scramble over, provide pupils with the means to remain fit and active at break times.
31. A comprehensive programme of PSHE is planned to cater for the different ages and needs of the pupils. Wellbeing sessions help pupils to learn how to manage emotions such as jealousy positively and to practise relaxation techniques to ease anxiety. Topics in relationships education, including puberty, sleep routines and personal hygiene, help pupils to understand how to identify and manage their emotions and bodily changes.
32. Leaders foster pupils' awareness of the importance of mutual respect through four rights: 'the right to learn, to be safe, to be happy and to be myself'. Posters on display around school remind pupils of their responsibilities towards others. Staff engage pupils in conversations around gender stereotyping from an early age by exploring misconceptions linked to various occupations. Visits, for example from a Paralympian basketball player, and to a home for the visually impaired, offer pupils insight into voices and experiences different to their own. Pupils interact respectfully as a result and develop a heightened appreciation of the diverse groups of people who make up society.
33. The recently reviewed behaviour policy outlines clear consequences should pupils' behaviour fall below the school's expected high standards. Pupils have a secure understanding of the stages of the procedure and reflect positively on their impact, confident that the policy is implemented fairly and consistently. They are well-behaved and respectful in their everyday interactions, considered in their comments and insightful about the choices they make. Pupils form purposeful relationships with peers and teachers. Instances of bullying seldom occur and leaders step in swiftly to support all parties when they do.
34. Supervision at break times is suitable and staff intervene quickly to offer pupils support, when required. In the early years, leaders maintain an appropriate ratio of adults to children.
35. Leaders help pupils to understand the importance of regular attendance. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with statutory guidance. Leaders track pupils' absences carefully and inform the local authority when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

36. The school's approach to health and safety is rigorous and supported by well-documented records. Leaders monitor systems closely to reassure themselves that the required checks are routinely carried out. They maintain the premises meticulously within a robust system of monitoring. Suitable measures are in place to reduce potential risks to pupils in the event of fire.
37. Leaders provide appropriate facilities to cater for pupils' medical needs. They store medicines securely and maintain thorough records when first aid is administered. Staff are suitably trained in first aid and notify parents promptly when accidents occur.
38. Children in the early years increase their physical development through weekly PE lessons. Frequent use of various woodland and adventure playground areas helps children to develop their co-ordination, agility and strength. Children negotiate equipment, including low ropes, climbing frames and balance beams, bravely and nimbly. Children thrive because of the warm and nurturing relationships they have with adults. Adults encourage children to be independent and embrace new challenges. They remain close at hand to offer children support and words of reassurance when needed. Children grow in self-confidence as a result.

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

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

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

40. Leaders plan opportunities in PSHE, assemblies and through educational visits for pupils to acquire relevant skills and knowledge in preparation for life in modern Britain. Leaders prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education and future lives. Transition arrangements for children in the early years prepare them effectively for Year 1. Older pupils are well prepared for senior school through entrance examination practice sessions and teachers' explanations of senior school routines and expectations. Topics in PSHE introduce pupils to possible future career paths, including apprenticeships.
41. Leaders introduce pupils to financial literacy, providing them with relevant strategies to inform their future decision-making. Younger pupils learn to distinguish between financial want and need. Older pupils reflect on the role of money through the ages and compare it to modern day transactions. Members of the business club develop skills in budgeting, creating a business plan and loan application in preparation for running a stall at the summer fair.
42. Pupils develop an understanding of and respect for different cultures through religious education lessons, a varied assembly programme and through regular themed events. Pupils share their own cultural identity and experiences during themed days and through presentations to their teachers and peers about religious celebrations. This helps pupils to learn about a range of cultural traditions which are different to their own.
43. Leaders extend opportunities for pupils to develop useful skills for their adult lives through horticultural studies and outdoor learning sessions. Pupils learn how to grow and use fruits and vegetables in horticultural lessons. Older pupils speak knowledgeably about making tomato soup and wild garlic pesto from school-grown produce. Specialist teachers plan activities in outdoor learning sessions which enable pupils to deepen their understanding and increase skills in teamwork, communication and resilience. Pupils apply these skills effectively to encourage their peers, listen to their comments and support each other.
44. Pupils understand expectations of their behaviour and the impact of their decisions on others. During assemblies, PSHE lessons and classroom discussions, leaders encourage pupils to reflect on ethical and moral issues such as whether honesty can ever be harmful.
45. A range of leadership roles helps pupils to understand their wider responsibilities to those around them. Pupils respond maturely to the roles entrusted to them, including as school and eco councillors, playground leaders for younger peers and as head boy and girl. Pupils who are responsible for looking after the school's guinea pigs carry out their tasks with care and pride.
46. Pupils learn to value the views of others through engagement in the process of school development within PSHE lessons. Leaders involve pupils in activities such as planning educational visits and agreeing a pupil leadership structure for the next year. The pupil leadership team has introduced a suggestion box and a complaints procedure for pupils which they review annually with school leaders. Leaders work closely with the pupil leadership team to reflect on comments. The regular implementation of pupils' suggestions reassures them that their voices are heard.

47. Leaders plan a range of events which encourage pupils to engage with their local community. Pupils undertake fund-raising activities, such as a 'colour run', in support of various children's charities and a charity providing clean water to countries in need. Events such as singing at a residential care home and working with an embroidery group on a tapestry for the school, help pupils to recognise the positive contributions they can make to their local area.
48. Leaders help pupils to learn about the significance of fair processes and how the making of laws supports a safe society through 'Parliament Week' and visits to Holyrood and the Houses of Parliament. Older pupils keep abreast of current affairs by watching a children's news programme during snack time. Teachers further pupils' understanding through discussion, offering a balanced presentation of views when political matters are discussed. Pupils learn how democratic systems work by voting in various pupil leadership elections.
49. Adults in the early years act as positive role models, helping children learn how to form successful relationships. Children display a mature understanding of how to engage in conversation. They listen attentively when their peers are speaking, show pleasure at their comments and interact courteously with adults and friends. In Reception, leaders have recently introduced a topic on African countries so that children broaden their global knowledge. This helps them to develop a wider insight into the experiences and traditions of the wider world. During imaginary play, children practise parental roles using nurturing actions and caring words with each other.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Leaders put in place suitable arrangements to safeguard pupils. Proprietors carry out an annual review to check that effective safeguarding policy and procedures reflect current statutory guidance and are implemented. They use the review to reflect on any potential risk factors so that action can be taken. Proprietors use their attendance at monthly meetings and frequent visits to the site to ensure that suitable measures are in place to promote pupils' welfare.
52. Safeguarding leaders collaborate purposefully with local safeguarding partners, including children's services and the police, to seek advice and make prompt referrals, when needed.
53. Adults throughout the school are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures, including processes for reporting concerns about adults working with children. Proprietors, leaders and staff receive suitable annual training and regular briefing updates, including a refresher on key terms and phrases. A thorough induction programme introduces safeguarding protocols, such as expectations of staff behaviour, to new staff.
54. Comprehensive arrangements are in place to protect pupils from harm. Positive and trusting relationships between pupils and adults reassure pupils that their concerns will be heard and quickly addressed. Staff are confident in identifying any potential safeguarding issues. They use their in-depth knowledge of the pupils to remain vigilant to any changes in pupils' behaviour. Leaders take appropriate action in response to concerns. They maintain detailed records which they use to identify patterns so that action can be taken to address related concerns.
55. A range of measures limits pupils' access to inappropriate websites. Leaders oversee appropriate systems for filtering and monitoring internet use and review any breaches thoroughly. Pupils understand ways to keep themselves safe online, both at home and in school, such as limiting the sharing of information and effective password protection.
56. Leaders undertake the required checks before a person starts work at the school and record these accurately in a single central record of appointments. Those with responsibility for these checks are rigorous in their approach to safer recruitment and keep thorough records.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Ashbridge Independent School
Department for Education number	888/6027
Registered early years number	EY286886
Address	Ashbridge Independent School Lindle Lane Hutton Preston Lancashire PR4 4AQ
Phone number	01772 619900
Email address	school@ashbridgeschool.co.uk
Website	www.ashbridgeschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Ashbridge School Ltd
Chair	Mrs Sarah Carr
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Mehta
Age range	4 to 11
Number of pupils	131
Date of previous inspection	8 to 11 March 2022

Information about the school

58. Ashbridge Independent School is an independent co-educational day school located in Preston, Lancashire. The school is a limited company overseen by a board of directors.
59. The registered early years setting, which caters for children from the age of three months to four years, was not part of this inspection. There are 24 children in the non-registered setting, which comprises one Reception class.
60. The school has identified eight pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. The school has identified a very small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), some of whom receive additional support.
62. The school states its aims are to instil in pupils a keen curiosity for learning, the confidence to be creative, to develop innovative thinking skills and to have respect for themselves, others and the wider world. It aims for pupils to follow a nurturing ethos and build positive family partnerships which promote a happy and adventurous childhood.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

10 to 12 June 2025

63. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. 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 proprietor
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- discussions with learning support staff and visits to the facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

65. 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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