

School inspection report

9 to 11 September 2025

Highfield and Brookham School

Highfield Lane

Liphook

Hampshire

GU30 7LQ

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. The oversight by the proprietor does not ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities so that the school meets all the Standards. In particular, some fire evacuation routes lack appropriate signage.
2. The proprietor, through the directors, provides challenge and support to leaders' decision-making. Directors regularly visit the school to evaluate pupils' experience first-hand.
3. The school enables pupils to make good progress due to a broad and varied curriculum and the effectiveness of teaching they experience in a majority of lessons. However, less effective teaching methods and classroom management in a minority of lessons sometimes slows pupils' progress.
4. Leaders promote pupils' emotional wellbeing through effective pastoral care. Pupils have access to appropriately trained mental health staff. Pupils in Year 8 are trained as peer listeners who support the emotional wellbeing of fellow pupils. Pupils regularly access the wellbeing centre and undertake activities such as meditation.
5. Behaviour management is typically effective. Health and safety arrangements at the school are effective and the premises are well maintained.
6. The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their lives. Leaders implement the effective transition of pupils between year groups, and of leavers to senior schools. Pupils develop their understanding of the value of careful financial management and different career paths they might follow in their future lives. Teaching provides pupils with insights into life in modern Britain and enables them to develop understanding, tolerance and respectful attitudes towards others.
7. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. The appropriately trained safeguarding team ensures that staff understand potential safeguarding risks to pupils, including children in the early years and boarders. Staff understand how to respond effectively to safeguarding concerns. Leaders liaise appropriately with external safeguarding partners.
8. Staff in the early years are highly responsive to children's needs and interests and provide them with care and attention. Children learn effectively in the indoor and outdoor areas of the school.
9. Boarding accommodation is suitable. Attentive boarding staff support boarders' physical and emotional needs well.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:

- demonstrate good skills and knowledge so that the independent school Standards are met consistently
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school standards are met consistently and
- actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- appropriate fire signage is in place at all fire evacuation routes.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the teaching methods and classroom management are consistently effective.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The proprietor does not ensure that leaders consistently utilise good knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities and promote pupils' wellbeing. In particular, leaders do not address potential risks to pupils with regard to a lack of appropriate fire signage at some fire evacuation routes. As a result, the school does not meet all of the Standards.
11. Leaders ensure that the school's aims and ethos are communicated effectively to pupils, parents and staff. Leaders and staff promote the school's values effectively.
12. Leaders encourage a culture of reflection in the school. They identify the most successful aspects of the school and areas for development through a typically effective self-evaluation process. Leaders consider the views of pupils, parents and staff when identifying points for development. For example, leaders included pupils' suggestions in the revised behaviour management policy.
13. Leadership of the early years is effective. Leaders hold regular meetings with staff to support their practice in supporting children and meeting their needs.
14. The proprietor, through the directors of the school, provides effective oversight of most areas of school life. Directors meet regularly with school leaders to support and challenge the effectiveness and suitability of the school's arrangements.
15. Leaders identify and mitigate potential risks to pupils on residential trips and educational visits. Appropriate measures are in place to manage risks involving vehicle movement around the site and areas of the school, such as the science, arts and sports accommodation.
16. Leaders ensure that the required information is available to parents on its website. The website clearly articulates the school's aims and ethos and includes the required policies as well as those not required by the Standards. The school provides parents with comprehensive verbal and written reports that include clear information about their child's progress. Parents of children in the early years are kept informed of their child's progress and wellbeing through regular contact between staff, parents and carers.
17. The school provides appropriate information relating to the use of funding for any pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) to the relevant local authority.
18. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, such as when seeking specialist support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding understand the thresholds for reporting concerns to the local authority.
19. The suitable complaints policy is readily available to parents via the school's website. Leaders implement this policy appropriately. Parents are encouraged to raise concerns, which are addressed promptly by leaders. Suitable arrangements are in place for boarders and their parents to raise issues and complaints.
20. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders implement a detailed and comprehensive accessibility plan that is renewed every three years and reviewed annually. Leaders have taken effective action to broaden access to the pre-prep building for pupils who have SEND. Leaders ensure that no aspects of the provision discriminate against any groups of pupils.

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

21. Standards are not met consistently with respect to fire safety and management of risk of harm.

22. As a result, Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not met.

23. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

24. The school provides pupils with a diverse curriculum that is built around what the school terms eight 'essential skills' for life. Pupils' development of linguistic, mathematical, scientific and technological knowledge, skills and understanding is well supported by the teaching of detailed schemes of work designed to facilitate methodical progress across a wide range of subjects.
25. Children in the early years make good progress in developing their communication and language skills through the many opportunities they have to express their thoughts and through the effective modelling of accurate language use by staff. Children's early reading and writing skills are well developed due to the opportunities they have to practise writing both indoors and outdoors, and the language-rich environment found in classrooms. Pupils across the school make good progress in writing due to the clarity of teaching about different writing styles and techniques.
26. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and science. Children in the early years gain understanding of mathematical concepts through the use of well-chosen resources and teaching methods matched to children's prior attainment, which build confidence and competence. Teachers enable older pupils to apply and develop their knowledge and understanding when solving mathematical problems and undertaking scientific activities.
27. Pupils progressively acquire the skills to be able to undertake independent research. For example, research projects by pupils in Year 8 demonstrate well-developed skills in synthesising information from several sources, and the effective use of technology. Pupils develop and hone their skills in creative arts subjects through clear teaching and the opportunity to participate in fixtures, exhibitions and performances.
28. Teachers' effective use of subject knowledge, teaching assistants and good-quality resources to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding typically enables pupils to make good progress and helps them gain places at a range of schools with selective entry requirements. However, in a small minority of lessons, teaching methods and classroom management are not as effective as they are typically across the school. In these lessons, a lack of appropriate pace and challenge sometimes limits the amount of progress that pupils make.
29. Leaders closely monitor pupils' progress in English and mathematics through the regular analysis of test data and assessment of their knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders use this information to identify any gaps in learning and provide pupils with suitable targeted support when required.
30. Pupils who have SEND are well supported in making good progress due to the early identification of their needs and effective strategies used to address any gaps in their learning. Teachers adapt their teaching and learning strategies following weekly meetings in which the needs of individual pupils who have SEND are discussed.
31. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported by the teaching of key vocabulary, the careful tracking of their progress and the individual additional support they receive when required.
32. Boarders have access to appropriate support during quiet study time in the evening. They engage with interest in a range of physical and creative evening activities.

33. Pupils of all ages participate in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. They develop their creative and problem-solving skills in art, bushcraft and construction clubs and their physical skills in a variety of sports clubs. Pupils in Year 4 and above undertake residential trips that enable them to develop greater independence.

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

34. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

35. Leaders do not ensure that all fire safety arrangements are effective. At the start of the inspection, appropriate fire signage was not in place at all fire evacuation routes in the pre-prep building.
36. Pupils' emotional wellbeing is enhanced by the effective pastoral care and attention they receive from staff. Consistently positive affirmation of pupils' value by leaders and staff contributes towards their high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.
37. Behaviour management is effective overall. Pupils typically demonstrate kindness, respect and tolerance towards each other, particularly during breaktimes and extra-curricular activities. Boarders maintain close friendships within an inclusive and supportive community. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually of a high standard.
38. Bullying rarely occurs at the school and is addressed effectively when it does. During anti-bullying week and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, pupils learn about the different forms of bullying, the impact of bullying behaviour and what to do should they experience or witness bullying.
39. Pupils' personal development is supported through a comprehensive and age-appropriate PSHE programme. Pupils' learning in class about a range of appropriate topics is further enhanced by a relevant programme of enrichment activities, such as when pupils' understanding of how to promote secure mental health is reinforced during yoga sessions.
40. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is well planned and contains suitable and relevant content that is well matched to the pupils' needs. Pupils learn about a range of relevant topics, such as puberty and consent. Leaders consult parents appropriately about the content of the RSE programme of study.
41. Leaders and staff support pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health well. Staff are quick to identify and respond to pupils' pastoral needs. Weekly pastoral team meetings and leaders' daily communications to staff equip them to be alert to pupils' emotional needs and provide them with appropriate support.
42. Leaders monitor boarders' wellbeing effectively and provide boarders with considerable support, including during their induction into the boarding community. Leaders and staff encourage boarders to express their views and share any concerns they might have. Staff act effectively upon feedback received from boarding meetings and prefects, such as by adapting menus and creating additional social spaces for older pupils. Prefects are assigned suitable responsibilities and support their peers appropriately. Boarding accommodation is suitable and well maintained.
43. The school enables pupils to develop their spiritual understanding effectively. Pupils learn about a range of world religions and different spiritual perspectives and practices in religious studies (RS) lessons. Staff also encourage pupils to develop and reflect upon their connection with nature. This begins in the early years, when children take part in activities such as witnessing chicks hatch. Pupils develop an understanding of the suffering and sacrifice caused by war, including through activities

such as making and displaying ceramic poppies that engage them with reflecting on the meaning of Remembrance Day.

44. Pupils' physical development is supported by extensive opportunities to participate in sporting activities, after-school clubs and inter-school fixtures, which enables them to develop their fitness and specific sports-related skills. In PSHE lessons, pupils learn about the positive impact of regular physical exercise.
45. The school teaches pupils about the benefits of healthy eating. Children in the early years regularly eat fruit, which is also available to boarders in the evening. Pupils have access to nutritious food choices at mealtimes. Children in the early years learn about the importance of oral hygiene and the benefits of washing their hands.
46. The school premises are well maintained. Health and safety arrangements are effectively overseen by leaders, including arrangements for educational visits, residential field trips and boarders' activities. Children in the early years are taught to stay safe by wearing helmets when riding bicycles and following a road crossing code.
47. Leaders arrange for regular fire risk assessments to be conducted. Pupils practise regular fire evacuation drills, including during boarding hours.
48. Suitably qualified staff implement appropriate procedures for the administration of first aid and medication. They keep appropriate and thorough records of all first aid and medication given. Suitable medical facilities are in place, including those for boarders. Day pupils and boarders are well cared for if unwell or injured. Staff in the early years receive appropriate paediatric first aid training.
49. The school maintains appropriate admission and attendance registers in line with current statutory guidance. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance effectively and follow up any concerns about absenteeism. The school informs the local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition times.
50. Supervision arrangements are effective. Appropriate ratios are maintained in the early years. Pupils are effectively supervised, including during breaktimes and boarding time, due to the suitable deployment and vigilance of staff.

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

51. Standards are not met consistently with respect to fire safety.
52. As a result, Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are not met.
- 53. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

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

54. Pupils demonstrate tolerance and respect towards others due to the effective promotion of an understanding of diversity that takes place across subjects and through enrichment days, assemblies, wall displays and visitors to the school. For example, pupils learn about the consequences of discrimination in Nazi Germany and increase their understanding about the impact of racism, including through events such as Black History Month. Pupils learn about human rights and apply their understanding of these to various scenarios. Staff encourage boarders to develop understanding of, and respect for the diverse backgrounds and cultures represented in the boarding community.
55. Leaders enable pupils to develop a sense of responsibility towards the needs of others. Older pupils support their younger peers in 'buddy' activities. Pupils support the school through a range of positions of responsibility and regularly undertake litter picking. They gain an awareness of the needs of the wider community through involvement in projects supporting local elderly and homeless people and those who have SEND.
56. Pupils develop a clear understanding of the values and institutions that underpin British society, such as when discussing individual liberty when learning about human trafficking. In history, pupils learn about the growth of the United Kingdom's democratic institutions. Pupils present themselves as candidates for democratic election to the school. Pupils develop their understanding of democracy and learn to respect the opposing views of others during activities such as mock elections for Parliament. Staff ensure that any discussions that include political themes or content are conducted impartially and in an unbiased manner. Children in the early years gain an understanding of the role of the police in upholding the rule of law, including through talks from police officers visiting the school. Older pupils learn about the workings of the criminal justice system.
57. Pupils are well supported through transition between year groups and when preparing to move to their senior schools. Pupils who are new to the school are assigned a 'buddy' to help them settle in quickly. New boarders' induction into the boarding community is thorough and effective, enabling them to settle quickly into the setting. A smooth transition between year groups is achieved through activities arranged towards the end of the school year. Older pupils are well prepared for transition to senior school due to the opportunities available to them to develop independent learning skills when undertaking self-chosen research projects, by taking on positions of responsibility and by conducting tours for visitors to the school.
58. Children in the early years gain an understanding about different professions through visits to the school by dentists, police officers and firefighters. Pupils in the senior school receive age-appropriate guidance on different career paths in PSHE lessons and about the types of skills likely to be required by future employers. The school develops pupils' understanding of gender stereotypes and how these can relate to different professions by inviting a range of professionals in to speak to pupils.
59. Pupils are taught about how to manage finances effectively. For example, pupils in Year 3 learn about how to budget and pupils in Year 5 apply business and financial skills during activities based on a television programme about setting up successful businesses. Senior pupils undertake a 'Tenner

Challenge' in which they have to maximise the profits they make from an investment of £10 in a business they create.

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

60. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

61. Leaders successfully maintain a school culture that prioritises the importance of safeguarding. The safeguarding policy and procedures are effective and reflect current statutory guidance. Leaders also promote a child-friendly version of the safeguarding policy to help enable pupils to understand more fully how to keep themselves safe and share concerns, should they arise.
62. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. The directors meet regularly with safeguarding leaders and visit the school to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.
63. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are suitably trained for their role. They provide staff with training and regular updates that enable them to understand different forms of abuse and how to respond effectively to any safeguarding disclosures or concerns that may arise. Staff receive suitable guidance about how to identify and address indicators of radicalisation.
64. The safeguarding team provides appropriate information to other leaders and staff with responsibility for pupils' pastoral care, mental health, emotional wellbeing and medical needs. Safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly and appropriately.
65. The safeguarding team responds to safeguarding concerns promptly and suitably and liaises effectively with relevant external agencies, referring concerns to them when appropriate. Leaders maintain safeguarding records in accordance with the requirements of current statutory guidance.
66. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to share safeguarding concerns with adults. Boarders are aware of the access they have to an independent person should they have an issue they wish to discuss.
67. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online. An appropriate internet filtering and monitoring system is in place and tested regularly. Leaders provide parents with helpful guidance about how they can help their children stay safe online.
68. The school carries out all required safer recruitment checks before adults commence working at the school. The proprietor and leaders maintain effective oversight of the single central record of appointments to ensure that it is maintained accurately.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

69. All the relevant Standards are met.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 3, paragraph 16	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that–
16(a)	the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
16(b)	appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
NMS ² 9.3	The school ensures that the welfare of boarders at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
EYFS ³ 3.91	Providers must ensure that they take all reasonable steps to ensure staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks and must be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks. Providers must determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers or inspectors. Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised.
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
NMS 2.1	The school’s governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

² National Minimum Standards for boarding schools ('NMS')

³ Early years foundation stage statutory framework ('EYFS')

NMS 2.2	The school's leadership and management, including its governing body, where appropriate, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, appropriate to their role and undertake appropriate training as required.
NMS 2.4	The school's leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met.
NMS 2.5	The school's leadership and management, and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
NMS 2.8	The records specified in Appendix B are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.

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

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 8	Where section 87(1) of the Children Act 1989 applies in relation to a school the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—
8(b)	such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools or the National Minimum Standards for Accommodation of Children under Eighteen by Further Education Colleges.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
NMS 10.2	The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and ensures alerting systems are accessible and there are clear evacuation plans for all children subject to their needs.
EYFS 3.79	Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation, including fire safety and hygiene requirements.
EYFS 3.80	Providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff, and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency. Providers must have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An emergency evacuation procedure. • Appropriate fire detection and control equipment (for example, fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire blankets and/or fire extinguishers) which is in working order. Fire exits must be clearly identifiable, and fire doors free of obstruction and easily opened from the inside.

School details

School	Highfield and Brookham School
Department for Education number	938/6252
Address	Highfield and Brookham School Highfield Lane Liphook Hampshire GU30 7LQ
Phone number	01428 728000
Email address	office@highfieldandbrookham.co.uk
Website	www.highfieldandbrookham.co.uk
Proprietor	Mr William Mills
Headteacher	Mrs Suzannah Cryer
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils	411
Number of boarding pupils	130
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 November 2022

Information about the school

70. Highfield and Brookham School is a co-educational independent day and boarding school. The school is owned by a company whose chairman is the owner and proprietor. Directors of the company support the school's governance in an advisory capacity.
71. Boarders usually board from Year 4, however, when deemed appropriate, they can board from Year 3. Boarders are accommodated in two boarding houses located within the main school building and a junior boarding house adjacent to the main building.
72. There are 71 children in the early years, comprising three Nursery and two Reception classes.
73. The school has identified 86 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Ten pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
74. The school has identified English as an additional language for 35 pupils.
75. The school aims to provide a first-rate day and boarding education, supported by an inclusive ethos, in a community where every child is treated equally and respected, so that they are happy, fulfilled and secure. It seeks to inspire children through a creative curriculum that nurtures curiosity, independence and a love of learning. The school intends to foster strong values, resilience and adaptability, to prepare pupils to thrive in school and beyond.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

9 to 11 September 2025

76. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

77. 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 and another director
- 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.

78. 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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For more information, please visit isi.net