

School inspection report

21 to 23 January 2025

The Beacon School

Amersham Road

Chesham Bois

Amersham

Buckinghamshire

HP6 5PF

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. School leaders have a clear vision of 'guiding the next generation', which they deliver in a cohesive and effective manner. They provide pupils with a well-resourced and stimulating learning environment. The school's five core values of 'integrity, respect, achievement, wellbeing and courage' are well embedded within school culture and understood by pupils. Leaders have implemented the recent statutory guidance relating to school attendance, but the relevant policy was not updated in line with their practice.
2. Governors know the school extremely well. They make regular visits, speak to staff and scrutinise policies to provide professional challenge to leaders. In doing this, they ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
3. Pupils learn and make good progress through a broad and inclusive curriculum, which includes a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils achieve success in national sporting and mathematics competitions, or through performance, for example, at the Edinburgh fringe festival.
4. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and promote a culture of aspiration, using their understanding of the needs of individual pupils to tailor their teaching effectively. Leaders have designed an assessment framework where pupils' learning outcomes are monitored closely, supporting them to make good progress in relation to their starting points. Lessons are well-planned. Teachers use their subject knowledge adeptly to support pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to develop new skills and understanding. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) rapidly acquire fluency in English. Pupils typically enjoy their learning and achieve well.
5. Early years leaders are knowledgeable about how to support children's development in the prime learning areas. They are ambitious for all children and plan suitably challenging activities which help them make good progress.
6. The school is maintained to a high standard, with suitable health and safety procedures in place, including fire prevention and protection measures. Risk assessment and management is robust. Pupils feel safe within their learning environment.
7. Leaders set high expectations of personal conduct and have effective anti-bullying procedures in place. They implement a clear, consistent behaviour policy. As a result, pupils are well-behaved, considerate learners who show self-control and consider the impact of their actions on those around them.
8. Leaders offer a considered programme of activities that prepare pupils for their future lives. A sense of community is fostered, and pupils' contributions to school life are encouraged by staff. Art projects and charitable work within the local community develop pupils' understanding of the wider world.
9. Leaders have developed an effective safeguarding culture where all staff recognise their respective responsibilities. Both safeguarding leaders and staff are knowledgeable and appropriately trained. Well-embedded communication procedures are in place to share information and promote pupils' welfare. Pupils are confident about how to report concerns and feel safe and well supported.

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 policies are updated in a timely manner so they are in line with current practice.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders bring experience and considerable knowledge and skill to their role. Pupils' wellbeing underpins decision-making and is evident within the well-planned pastoral care systems. Leaders in the early years are skilled at developing provision that supports the needs of young children, who make a positive start to their school lives and make good progress in all areas of their learning.
11. Leaders are reflective and have a clear vision for the school. This has recently been revised to reflect the broad cross-curricular education provided. They provide competitive sporting opportunities and high academic standards within an inclusive, nurturing environment. Pupils are happy, articulate individuals who are proud of their school.
12. Governors are clear about their responsibilities to ensure the Standards are met consistently. They actively maintain strategic oversight and delegate operational management to senior leaders. Through regular meetings with staff, they review the effectiveness of policies and procedures. They maintain a positive relationship with school leaders and offer supportive, professional dialogue that provides robust challenge when needed. Governors and leaders are well informed about the contextual challenges that relate to the school.
13. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and publishes an accessibility plan and policy outlining reasonable adjustments, as necessary, for pupils who have a disability. Areas for action are clearly outlined, although timescales for completion of specific tasks are not always clear.
14. Leaders' management of risk supports pupils' wellbeing. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place and regularly reviewed. There is careful consideration by leaders of how the school site is managed to keep pupils safe. Staff receive thorough risk assessment training, and leaders oversee systems to mitigate potential hazards and take effective action when required. There is a nominated health and safety governor who scrutinizes this systemic approach to risk management.
15. The required policies are accessible on the school website, and these are updated regularly. When new statutory guidance is introduced, it is effectively implemented. However, policies are not always updated in a timely manner to reflect changes to procedures. All required information is made available to parents, prospective parents and other interested parties. Information required by the local authority regarding pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan is provided. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress and achievement through twice-yearly written reports and regular parents' evenings.
16. A suitable complaints policy is in place. Complaints are dealt with promptly and records are kept securely, in line with the published policy. Leaders reflect on any lessons emerging and, where appropriate, make changes to procedures.
17. Leaders have established effective and productive links with a range of local services and agencies that help them to support pupils. They work with outside agencies to support families who require assistance.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders have developed a broad curriculum that is rich in variety and provides a wide breadth of experience for pupils. Through the Pre-Senior Bacculaureate (PSB) curriculum, pupils acquire a wide range of knowledge, skills and learning attributes, and promote British values such as mutual respect and tolerance of one another's needs. Pupils achieve well in their academic subjects and in sport and the performing arts, and leaders celebrate their individual successes.
20. Staff collaborate closely to develop well-planned and sequenced schemes of work that build on pupils' prior attainment, making effective links and applying their knowledge and skills across subjects. For example, links between mathematics, history and English are fostered in Year 3 as part of a study on Tutankhamun to deepen pupils' understanding. Core learning skills that are developed by the PSB are embedded into the programme of activities delivered across the school. Older pupils are well informed about the criteria for success and use this to monitor and improve their learning.
21. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. They combine this with effective questioning to check pupils' understanding and clear instructions to support pupils to develop their understanding of topics. Pupils' prior learning and individual needs are well understood, and teaching strategies are adjusted in response to the needs of the individual. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points. At the end of their time at the school, most pupils secure entry to their first-choice future schools, many of which are academically selective, some gaining scholarships.
22. A well-considered assessment framework developed by academic leaders produces information that is carefully scrutinised. Pupils across the school sit regular standardised assessment tests that allow leaders to monitor progress against pupils' individual starting points. In consultation with class teachers and leaders of SEND, effective action is taken to support pupils' progress where needed.
23. Leaders responsible for developing provision to support pupils who have SEND provide teachers with helpful 'at a glance' documentation about individual pupils. Teachers use these documents to make appropriate adaptations in lessons. Targeted support from teaching assistants is well directed by teachers. As a result, pupils who have SEND, including those with EHC plans, access the curriculum successfully and make good progress. Pupils who speak EAL are supported with well-planned questioning and tailored resources, and typically make rapid progress in achieving fluency in English.
24. Behaviour management strategies are positive and build an atmosphere of mutual respect. Welcoming classroom environments and well-paced lessons promote pupils' engagement. Contributions are encouraged from all pupils, and pupils are conscientious listeners who are keen to ask questions to improve their understanding.
25. School facilities and resources are well utilised by teachers to enhance pupils' learning experience. For example, the use of an augmented reality sandbox in geography increases pupil engagement and motivation to promote good progress. Food technology lessons explore links with other subject areas and support pupils' development of life skills. Leaders' decision to introduce online technology to support the curriculum in Years 7 and 8 has a positive impact on pupil's learning.
26. Early years leaders provide thoughtfully planned learning experiences which capture children's individual interests and promote high levels of engagement. Staff have a deep understanding of child development, which is apparent in their targeted plans to develop children's knowledge and skills. Indoor and outdoor environments are well resourced with a wide range of materials to

encourage exploration and curiosity. Imagination and creativity flourish as children engage with activities such as junk modelling or setting up an ice cream shop in the kinetic sand tray. Almost all early years children meet all the early learning goals by the end of their time in the early years.

27. Pupils are provided with an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities to support their physical development and to allow them to develop new skills and interests. In addition to sporting clubs such as hockey, multi-sports, football or athletics, they can access a selection of performing and creative arts clubs such as orchestra, five choirs, art or drama. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) opportunities such as coding, robotics, cooking and chess are also available.

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 kindness as a core expectation within the school community. Pupils' physical and mental health and wellbeing is promoted, and extensive provision is available to support pupils' mental health needs. Leaders provide extensive counselling provision, and data on the emotional states of older pupils is monitored. Staff are well trained and skilled in providing pastoral support. They readily communicate with each other and with parents, including about any actions required with regard to individual pupils' social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) support plans. Pupils understand how they can gain access to support with their emotional wellbeing and know who to approach for this.
30. A program of twice-weekly assemblies and a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum, expressed as 'self and society', supports the development of pupils' spiritual and moral knowledge and understanding. The PSHE programme is taught effectively by teachers in a dedicated teaching space. Within a diverse pupil community, pupils of all ages show an age-appropriate understanding of and respect for different cultures and traditions.
31. In the early years, staff promote children's personal, emotional and physical development both in curriculum planning and in their interactions with the children. They model respect, kindness and tolerance, and reward positive behaviour. As a result, children show high levels of independence, good manners and co-operation as they play and learn together. There is a nurturing environment across the early years which encourages curiosity, resilience and exploration. Children can access resources independently, which they share responsibly with each other and with care.
32. Pupils' physical health and development is also an important aspect of provision for leaders. In the pre-prep, children from Nursery upwards swim in the on-site swimming pool and engage in physical education (PE) and games every week. Teachers in the pre-prep make effective use of a woodland learning environment. Freshly cooked and nutritious meals are served each day, and pupils are highly engaged in growing and cooking their own produce in the school's food and nutrition lab. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
33. The school's relationship and sex education (RSE) curriculum is led and taught by well-trained and skilled teachers. Deep consideration is given to the approach, content and delivery of the schemes of work so that pupils develop age-appropriate knowledge and understanding. Leaders regularly review curriculum content to ensure it reflects a changing society, as well as the school's context. For example, topics such as consent have been introduced age-appropriately with Year 8 pupils.
34. There is a high standard of behaviour in the school. Pupils are respectful, courteous and considerate of one another. Leaders have carefully considered the use of space so that it is well supervised by adults, well organised and rich in resources to support social development. The behaviour policy is clear and applied consistently. Pupils feel safe and treated fairly.
35. The anti-bullying strategy reflects school values. All bullying incidents are logged, and appropriate actions taken, including support to both victims and perpetrators. The school takes a proactive approach, addressing bullying effectively when incidents arise and providing regular guidance and support to pupils. Pupils are intolerant of bullying and have confidence in leaders' responses.

36. The school premises are well maintained and provide a safe environment where pupils can learn. Effective health and safety management demonstrates compliance with the requisite requirements including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Suitable records and logs are kept. Medical provision is well-resourced and maintained. Suitably qualified staff are available to provide first aid and medicine administration, following the requisite protocols.
37. Accurate systems for managing admissions and attendance registers, in line with recent guidance, are embedded in practice, and the school provides support to improve pupils' attendance. At the start of the inspection these arrangements were not reflected in the published attendance policy, but this was addressed by the school during the inspection.

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

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

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

39. Leaders ensure pupils are prepared for life in modern British society, and promote British values such as democracy, rule of law, mutual respect and tolerance or individual liberty. Underpinned by 'self and society' PSHE lessons, this is complemented by classroom and corridor displays, workshops and visiting speakers. Cultural celebrations of diversity and themed assemblies, some led by Year 8 pupils, are examples of the school community coming together with mutual respect.
40. In an age-appropriate way, early years staff introduce children to concepts of respect, tolerance and democracy. Through celebrations of different cultures and festivals, they gain an emerging awareness of diversity and the world around them. During classroom activities, children take turns and listen attentively to their peers, for example when they are given the opportunity to be 'top dog'. When children progress from Nursery to Reception and then into Year 1, staff nurture trusting relationships between children and their peers and adults to support smooth transitions.
41. Pupils understand their school's values and demonstrate these in their interactions with each other. They have positive attitudes, show respect for individual characteristics and understand that difference is something to be celebrated. There is a culture of inclusion and trust where pupils recognise right from wrong and acknowledge the link between poor decisions and negative outcomes. Integrity is nurtured as pupils nominate their peers for various weekly awards such as the kindness cup.
42. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate initiative and cooperation within the school community. As head of school, heads of house or members of the school council and eco-council, pupils regularly formulate plans for whole-school events for their peers to enjoy. Recent examples such as 'Beacon's got talent', a house basketball competition and pupil-led initiatives to promote sustainability show that pupils feel supported and listened to by school leaders. A scheme for older pupils to mentor younger peers as reading buddies is well established and has generated a sense of genuine appreciation for those in other year groups.
43. Connections with the local community are fostered through activities that allow pupils to make different contributions. Pupils represent their school on the sports field or share their musical or dramatic performances in the local church. Artwork from the school's annual art exhibition is on display in a local coffee shop. A Remembrance poppy veil created by the whole school and displayed within the local town is both a source of collective achievement for the school community and an opportunity for pupils to experience making a valued contribution to the locality.
44. Pupils are engaged with the opportunity to work together to identify and select house charities to support each year. Pupils understand the impact that charitable work has on the lives of others. They can relate their fundraising efforts for foodbank, mental health and care charities to their learning about economic and mental wellbeing. Visits from a therapy dog generate much joy as these are the result of a fundraising project to which the school community contributed through their Friday non-uniform days.
45. In Years 7 and 8, pupils receive well-structured, suitable careers education lessons as well as during a specific career-focused week in Year 8. Talks from former pupils and other visiting speakers provide

valuable insights into different career paths. Examples include a video game designer, a barrister, the current captain of a national rugby team and a historian.

46. Developing pupils' skills and knowledge for future lives is a priority for school leaders. They oversee after-school sessions on topics such as economics, credit ratings, taxes, interest and investments. These are well received by pupils and parents. The school's project-based citizenship initiative 'future sparks' provides pupils in Years 5 to 8 with a weekly collaborative school-parent learning opportunity that sets a range of challenges around life skills. Pupils build collaboration and communications skills and connect their home learning to learning at school.
47. Pupils learn about political institutions and the rule of law in British society as part of their PSHE studies. Younger pupils relate this to the importance of following school rules. There are visits from police, ambulance and fire service personnel to support an understanding of public services. Pupils explore the concept of democracy through participation in the annual election of the school council either as candidates or voters. During the recent general election, the school held a mock election.

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

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

Safeguarding

49. Comprehensive and robust safeguarding practices are embedded by leaders and staff. Staff recognise the need to be alert and share responsibility to promote pupils' safety and wellbeing.
50. Leaders of safeguarding are well trained and knowledgeable. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) leads a well-trained team of additional safeguarding leaders to support the oversight of safeguarding across the school. Effective communication promotes pupil safety and wellbeing. Weekly meetings between leaders ensure all staff are appropriately informed regarding any safeguarding matters relating to pupils.
51. When safeguarding concerns arise, leaders are swift to respond. Referrals are made efficiently, with appropriate levels of detail. There are effective links between the school and outside agencies to support families.
52. Staff are well informed about school policy and statutory guidance. Regular, detailed training for all staff ensures they understand what to do if a pupil makes a disclosure, and what their responsibilities are regarding the prevention of extremism, online safety issues and school contextual risks. Staff understand the school code of conduct and how to report low-level concerns and make appropriate self-referrals.
53. Pupils have a wide range of mechanisms through which to seek support, including suggestion boxes, a variety of trusted adults, and online reporting. Staff respond to pupil concerns promptly.
54. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to stay safe. Lessons on online safety, regular assemblies and a whole-school focus week form part of the safeguarding curriculum for prep pupils, led by the DSL. Pupils receive visits from police and other external agencies who support the safeguarding of pupils.
55. Safer recruitment procedures for the appointment of staff are well understood and followed and monitored by leaders. Governors also maintain effective oversight. All required checks are completed and are clearly detailed on the single central record (SCR) of appointments.
56. There is a system for monitoring and filtering online activities within the school. Notification systems are set up to inform network managers and safeguarding leaders of any potential areas of concern.
57. Safeguarding leaders have well-established links with external agencies. Regular contact is made with local authorities to discuss cases, and possible thresholds. They have a clear understanding of the procedures in place to report concerns about adults working with children.

The extent to which the school meet Standards relating to safeguarding

58. All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	The Beacon School
Department for Education number	825/6029
Registered charity number	309911
Address	The Beacon School Amersham Road Chesham Bois Amersham Buckinghamshire HP6 5PF
Phone number	01494 433654
Email address	office@beaconschool.co.uk
Website	www.beaconschool.co.uk
Proprietor	The Beacon Educational Trust Ltd
Chair	Mr Charles Miller
Headteacher	Mr Nick Baker
Age range	3 to 13
Number of pupils	507
Date of previous inspection	15 to 18 February 2022

Information about the school

59. The Beacon School is an independent day preparatory school for male pupils, situated near Amersham, Buckinghamshire. The school is owned by a charitable trust and overseen by a board of governors. The school comprises two sections: the pre-prep, which includes the early years foundation stage (EYFS), and Years 1 and 2; and the prep school for Years 3 to 8. The prep school is split into three sections comprising the lower school, Years 3 and 4; the middle school, Years 5 and 6; and the upper school, Years 7 and 8. A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
60. There are 62 children currently in the early years, which is comprised of one Nursery class and three Reception classes.
61. The school has identified 54 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Very few pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
62. English is an additional language (EAL) for 82 pupils.
63. The school states its aim is to inspire boys to achieve their best within a happy, secure and stimulating environment. The Beacon School flame outlines the school's five core values of 'integrity, respect, achievement, wellbeing and courage'. These values encapsulate how staff and pupils are expected to approach learning, treat each other, celebrate others' endeavours, develop a sense of self-care and conduct themselves in the face of challenges.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 January 2025

64. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The on-site inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

65. 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 one other governor
- 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. 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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