

# School inspection report

24 to 26 March 2026

## Millfield School

Butleigh Road

Street

BA16 0YD

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. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school. They visit the school regularly to scrutinise how leaders' decision-making promotes the school's values of 'be curious, be authentic, be disruptors, be kind, be brilliant' in the school community. They rigorously hold leaders to account, ensuring that pupils' wellbeing is promoted effectively and the Standards are met consistently.
2. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing. They set high expectations across all areas of school life. Leaders review the school's provision carefully, including the extent to which pupils participate in a variety of sports, and use this to inform clear priorities for development. They maintain a clear understanding of the risks relevant to pupils' wellbeing and implement suitable measures to reduce these. Leaders ensure that risk assessments are thorough and that staff are trained to implement them consistently. The school engages well with external agencies such as children's services.
3. The school's boarding provision is led well. Leaders ensure that suitably trained staff implement clear routines and set clear expectations for boarders. New boarders receive an effective, personalised induction and settle quickly into boarding life. Boarding staff liaise effectively with academic, pastoral and healthcare teams. The school's boarding accommodation is comfortable and well maintained. Boarders develop a clear sense of belonging within their houses.
4. Leaders provide a broad, flexible and stimulating curriculum that sparks pupils' intellectual curiosity. Staff use information from assessments to monitor pupils' progress and identify those who require support. However, the consistency of feedback that pupils receive on their work varies across the curriculum. Knowledgeable teachers plan engaging lessons that build effectively on pupils' prior learning. Leaders ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive appropriate and well-targeted support. A wide-ranging programme of recreational and enrichment activities enables pupils to extend their interests, develop new skills and work collaboratively.
5. The school supports pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing effectively, including through the PSHE programme. Pupils know how to access support from trusted adults when needed. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is well structured and suitable. Leaders apply a clear behaviour policy and deal with any instances of bullying robustly. Leaders implement effective health and safety procedures. Pupils benefit from well-resourced medical and healthcare facilities.
6. Leaders place sport at the centre of the school's provision. They weave opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting activity into the school day, including before and after school. The school provides an extensive range of individual and team sports, in which many pupils achieve at a high level, with support from well-qualified and experienced staff. Leaders ensure that all pupils take part in sporting activity and that teaching staff contribute fully to the sporting life of the school, in line with leaders' expectations. As a result, pupils develop their physical fitness, confidence and teamwork skills, and learn to be resilient in their approach to challenge.
7. Pupils are prepared well for life in British society. Leaders provide effective opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of cultural and religious traditions and to respect how people are different from each other. Pupils develop a high level of social responsibility, contributing responsibly to the school community and the locality. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about British institutions and

develop a clear understanding of moral and ethical issues. Pupils receive an effective economic and careers education.

8. Governors and leaders prioritise the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are well informed about contextual and sector-wide risks to pupils' wellbeing. Staff and governors receive suitable training in safeguarding. Records relating to safeguarding are comprehensive. Leaders craft well-considered plans to support vulnerable pupils. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring systems are in place. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. The school maintains rigorous safer recruitment procedures for staff and governors.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that pupils consistently receive regular high-quality feedback on their work across all areas of the curriculum to support their good progress.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors hold leaders to account through formal meetings, regular discussions and detailed reports. Governors' work is supported by an effective governance structure, comprising a full board supported by committees that oversee different areas of the school's work. This enables governors to scrutinise leaders' decisions in detail. Governors visit the school regularly to understand how leaders' decisions shape day-to-day practice. This approach enables governors to check that leaders possess the skills and knowledge required to meet their responsibilities and ensure that the school consistently meets the Standards.
10. Leaders place pupils' wellbeing at the centre of their decision-making. They ensure that policies, systems and daily practice reflect this priority. Leaders embed the school's core values consistently across all aspects of school life, including the curriculum, pastoral provision and the co-curricular programme. Staff apply these values in their interactions with pupils and in the expectations they set. As a result, pupils feel supported and develop a clear understanding of how to care for themselves and others.
11. Leaders adopt a reflective approach to improving the school's provision. They seek the views of parents, staff and pupils regularly and analyse relevant data, including academic outcomes and the extent to which pupils participate in a variety of sports. Leaders use this review to inform a comprehensive development plan with clear timescales, actions and success criteria.
12. Leaders demonstrate a well-developed understanding of contextual and sector-wide risks to pupils' wellbeing. This informs their systematic approach to risk management. Leaders produce comprehensive and well-considered risk assessments to mitigate risk. They train staff to identify and manage risk and check how well staff understand the strategies for reducing risk. Leaders review risk assessments, including those for off-site activity, regularly and update them when needed.
13. Leaders ensure that the school's boarding provision is managed effectively. They establish clear routines and expectations for boarders, which staff apply consistently. Leaders monitor boarding practice closely through regular review. New boarders receive supportive, personalised induction. Boarding staff collaborate well with academic, pastoral and healthcare teams to ensure that individual boarders' needs are met. As a result, boarders feel supported and well cared for.
14. Pupils receive well-structured support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Leaders ensure that pastoral systems identify pupils who may need support and provide timely intervention. They meet pupils' health needs through effective physical education (PE) and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programmes and well-resourced medical facilities. As a result, pupils understand how to maintain healthy lifestyles and know how to seek support when needed.
15. The school's website provides all required information, including key policies. Leaders ensure that the school's policies align with current statutory guidance and update them promptly when required. They check that staff understand policies and implement them effectively throughout the school.
16. Parents receive regular updates on their child's progress and achievements. These include detailed half-termly written reports from teachers, which also include their child's own reflections on the progress they have made and the areas in which they need to improve.

17. Leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusion. They implement a comprehensive accessibility plan with specific actions to improve pupils' access to the curriculum, information and facilities. For example, leaders have recently adapted boarding accommodation for pupils who have disabilities, installed automatic doors and added ramps to key areas of the site. The school meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
18. Leaders maintain constructive links with external agencies, including safeguarding partnerships. They promptly inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.
19. Leaders maintain and implement a clear complaints procedure. Since the previous inspection they have enhanced the procedure to ensure that complaints are consistently managed within published timescales. Leaders monitor complaints closely to identify any emerging patterns or trends. They review outcomes thoughtfully to inform improvements to the school's practice, including where complaints are not upheld.

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

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

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

21. Leaders have designed a rich, well-rounded and stimulating curriculum that fosters pupils' intellectual curiosity. It includes a wide range of subjects, including Chinese, photography, business, and food and nutrition, in addition to the core academic disciplines. The curriculum includes a range of options, including different levels of study, that are matched well to pupils' aptitudes, needs and interests. Pupils have structured opportunities to pursue their interests and develop skills in critical enquiry through independent research projects. Leaders provide a wide range of courses, including GCSE, A-level and BTEC options, to meet pupils' interests and needs. Leaders review the curriculum systematically, for example to ensure that it supports pupils to explore common themes across subjects.
22. The school has a robust framework for assessing pupils' progress. Academic leaders analyse data from pupils' assessments in detail. This enables them to provide appropriate support for pupils to improve their performance where required. Staff consider the outcomes of periodic assessments systematically to form an accurate understanding of pupils' progress and areas for improvement. Teachers provide structured opportunities for pupils to reflect on the quality of their work and consider their own strategies for improvement. In most cases, teachers provide helpful, personalised feedback on the quality of pupils' work. However, the quality and frequency of feedback varies between subjects.
23. Teachers have high levels of subject expertise. They plan well-structured, stimulating lessons that build methodically on pupils' learning. Through incisive questioning, teachers prompt pupils to probe their reasoning and develop independence of thought. Teachers use good-quality resources, including a wide range of multimedia materials and artificial intelligence, to support pupils' learning. Where appropriate, teachers encourage pupils to choose how they submit their work, for example as videos or slideshows. This enriches pupils' understanding of the different ways in which work can be presented. As a result of supportive teaching, pupils achieve well in GCSE, A-level and BTEC examinations in relation to their assessed starting points.
24. Teaching motivates pupils to persevere when undertaking challenging tasks. Teachers promote positive behaviour by setting high expectations. They nurture positive relationships with pupils, which contribute to a purposeful learning environment. Teachers encourage pupils to express a range of views and listen respectfully to other viewpoints, modelling the values of tolerance and mutual understanding. Boarders can access the school library during boarding time and receive helpful academic support from house staff when required.
25. Leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND are knowledgeable. They draw up carefully considered individual learning plans (ILPs) that identify and respond well to pupils' needs. These incorporate pupils' views on the support they find particularly effective. Teachers adapt their teaching in response to ILPs, such as by modelling processes step by step or by providing breaks for pupils where required. Leaders review the provision for pupils who have SEND regularly for its effectiveness and make adjustments where necessary.
26. Supportive staff rigorously identify the needs of pupils who speak EAL. They provide well-informed guidance to teachers on how to support pupils who may need help to develop their spoken and written English. Teachers adapt their teaching appropriately to support pupils who speak EAL. For



instance, they provide helpful guidance on technical vocabulary and craft seating plans which place pupils who speak EAL alongside pupils who can offer peer support in lessons.

27. The school provides a rich array of recreational activities, including during boarding time. These include a wide range of sporting activity, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), the Model United Nations and activities in areas such as music, art and drama. Pupils benefit from a broad range of clubs and academic societies, such as chess and model car building. These opportunities extend pupils' learning beyond the classroom and develop their confidence and teamwork skills.

### **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 provide a high standard of pastoral care for pupils, supporting the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to seek timely support when required. Adults to whom pupils can go for help include tutors, specialist staff trained in pastoral care in a dedicated wellbeing hub, safeguarding leaders and boarding staff. Boarders can speak to an independent person, external to the school, with whom they can discuss concerns. The spiritual hub offers a further source of support, providing a calm space where pupils can seek guidance and discuss personal or wider concerns in a supportive environment. Evening house meetings focus on themes identified through the wellbeing and spiritual hubs, enabling leaders to respond directly to pupils' emerging needs.
30. Leaders provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to reflect on spiritual themes. These include regular pupil-led peace vigils, which incorporate prayer and reflection, and opportunities to reflect on national sacrifice, for instance through carefully observed Remembrance Day commemorations. Pupils can engage in prayer and reflect quietly in the well-resourced spiritual hub. The curriculum gives pupils clear insight into a range of faiths and spiritual traditions.
31. The school's RSE programme is effective. It engages pupils sensitively with topics such as consent, personal responsibility and sexual health. Trained staff evaluate pupils' understanding regularly. They seek feedback on the programme from pupils and parents, consider the responses carefully and adjust the provision if required.
32. Leaders promote pupils' physical development through comprehensive, flexible and well-resourced PE and co-curricular programmes. The school provides an extensive range of team and individual sports, including football, karate, swimming, tennis, golf, hockey, rowing, badminton, athletics, fencing, squash, climbing and archery. Well-qualified and experienced staff support pupils in developing their stamina, agility, co-ordination and physical skills. As a result, pupils achieve success in national and international sporting competitions. The PSHE programme complements this provision by teaching pupils how to make informed decisions that support a healthy lifestyle, including in relation to nutrition, mental health and emotional resilience.
33. Leaders provide prefects with suitable training. As a result, prefects contribute responsibly to school life by acting as effective role models for younger pupils, promoting the values of kindness and respect and supporting their peers.
34. The behaviour policy sets out expectations, rewards and sanctions clearly. Leaders have taken steps to ensure that staff apply the policy consistently well. Leaders monitor patterns of behaviour through systematic record-keeping and take appropriate action where required. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on any instances of inappropriate conduct and to learn from their actions.
35. Staff implement rigorous procedures to address any instance of bullying promptly. Through the curriculum, pupils develop a clear understanding of the different categories of bullying. Staff review the record of bullying incidents regularly to identify any patterns that require addressing.

36. Leaders oversee effective health and safety procedures. Records are meticulous. Staff know how to report concerns, which leaders address promptly. Leaders ensure that relevant safety checks take place regularly. They schedule fire evacuation drills, including during boarding time. The fire risk assessment is reviewed rigorously. The school site is maintained to a high standard.
37. An appropriate number of staff hold first aid qualifications. Leaders deploy qualified staff suitably across the site. Medicines are stored securely and are administered appropriately. Leaders maintain comprehensive records of pupils' medical needs and any incidents. The school has well-resourced facilities for pupils who are unwell or injured.
38. Leaders deploy staff effectively to ensure that pupils are supervised well during the school day, including before and after school, at breaktimes, lunchtimes, during boarding time and, where appropriate, in the locality.
39. Leaders maintain accurate admission and attendance registers. Leaders put in place well-considered plans to support the few pupils who might require support in improving their attendance.
40. Boarders reside in well-maintained, comfortable and well-appointed boarding accommodation. They receive nutritious, good-quality meals, with appropriate provision for individual dietary requirements, and can readily access healthy snacks.

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

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

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

42. The curriculum, including the PSHE programme, provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to respect and value people's individual backgrounds and identities, and to reflect on the impact of prejudice. For example, in Year 11 PSHE, pupils explore the distinction between free speech and abusive or discriminatory language. Similarly, in Year 12 English, pupils probe the impact of slavery through literary texts, considering both its historical context and its continuing social and moral consequences. Leaders devise a wide range of activities that draw on the international cultures represented in the boarding houses to promote mutual understanding and respect for others' heritage. These include opportunities for pupils to learn about festivals such as Eid and Holi, prepare and eat food from different cultural traditions, and engage with a range of linguistic and musical traditions.
43. Leaders develop pupils' appreciation of music, drama and art effectively. They provide a wide range of musical and dramatic opportunities for pupils, including participation in orchestras, ensembles, choirs and theatrical productions, in which pupils perform to a high standard, often exceeding age-related expectations. A broad range of activities within the curriculum and co-curriculum supports pupils in developing their aesthetic judgement, including in the areas of photography, visual art and fashion.
44. The school encourages pupils to develop a high level of social responsibility. A pupil-led social action group devises initiatives to support the school and the local community. Leaders support pupils in putting these initiatives into practice. These include structured sessions during which pupils coach younger peers from local primary schools in sports such as fencing. Pupils support a local soup kitchen, engage with residents in a care home and help younger children to read in local schools. The school's eco-committee contributes to tree planting in the locality and supports a community allotment. As a result, pupils develop a clear sense of responsibility towards others and an understanding of how their actions can contribute positively to the wider community.
45. Pupils receive an effective education about citizenship, democratic participation and the role of Parliament, including through assemblies, the PSHE programme and presentations from visiting speakers such as MPs and political candidates. Pupils learn about public services, key institutions and British values such as individual liberty and mutual respect. In the spiritual hub, pupils from different international communities discuss the impact of regional political strife on their communities in a supportive environment that encourages reflection, mutual understanding and respect. Teachers diligently present a balanced political perspective in discussions.
46. The school provides well-considered opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of right and wrong, including through assemblies that explore the ethical basis for the school's values, in PSHE and subjects such as philosophy and politics. For example, in philosophy, pupils consider whether moral principles derive from human nature or divine authority. In politics, pupils assess the ethical implications of nationalistic viewpoints.
47. Through the curriculum, pupils develop a secure understanding of personal finance, including loans, mortgages, investments, bank accounts, budgeting and savings. The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn about entrepreneurship, including how to develop and implement

business plans. Through this provision, pupils acquire the practical skills to manage money and develop financial independence in their future lives.

48. Leaders provide an effective and well-structured careers programme. Pupils receive well-informed, personalised guidance on their future choices. They learn about a variety of professions through careers fairs and visits to school from representatives of a range of careers. Staff provide helpful guidance to pupils on making GCSE, A-level and BTEC subject choices. Sixth-form pupils receive high-quality individualised support when considering their higher education options, including degree courses in the United Kingdom and the United States, and vocational routes.

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

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

## Safeguarding

50. Governors place safeguarding at the centre of their oversight. They check that safeguarding arrangements are appropriate through detailed and regular reviews of safeguarding practice, and discussions with staff, pupils and parents. Governors are trained in safeguarding practice and receive suitable updates to ensure their knowledge stays current.
51. Leaders have established a robust culture of safeguarding. They are highly attuned to the contextual and individual risks that pupils may face and implement well-considered strategies to protect pupils from harm.
52. Staff are vigilant about pupils' welfare. They report concerns promptly in line with the school's safeguarding policy, which reflects current statutory guidance.
53. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibility are suitably trained for their role. They ensure that staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and regular updates. Leaders check how well staff understand safeguarding issues systematically, including through quizzes and discussions about hypothetical scenarios.
54. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding meet frequently to review concerns. They collaborate regularly with relevant pastoral, boarding, academic and healthcare staff to share information relating to pupils' safety and welfare. Leaders respond promptly to safeguarding concerns and put into place effective plans to support pupils affected by safeguarding issues.
55. Records relating to safeguarding matters are comprehensive. Documentation includes the rationale for decisions, referrals made and particulars of action taken. Leaders review these records meticulously to identify emerging risks and determine any action needed. When required, they liaise effectively with external agencies, including children's services, the local authority and the police.
56. Leaders check that safeguarding arrangements remain appropriate when external organisations use the school premises.
57. Staff understand how to report concerns or allegations about the conduct of adults. Leaders maintain appropriate procedures to respond to concerns promptly. They keep detailed records, which they review periodically to identify patterns or emerging issues that may require further action.
58. The school maintains suitable internet monitoring and filtering systems to protect pupils from accessing illegal, inappropriate or harmful material. These systems generate real-time alerts, which enable leaders to identify emerging issues and respond promptly. They test the effectiveness of these systems regularly and adjust them in response to emerging risks.
59. Through the PSHE programme, the broader curriculum and assemblies, pupils learn how to keep safe, including online. As a result, they are well informed about digital risk and know how to report concerns to trusted adults.
60. All required safer recruitment checks are completed before staff or governors begin working at the school. Suitable checks are undertaken on adults not employed by the school who live on the school premises. The single central record of appointments (SCR) is accurate and maintained diligently.

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

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

## School details

|                                        |                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>School</b>                          | Millfield School                                                    |
| <b>Department for Education number</b> | 933/6022                                                            |
| <b>Registered charity number</b>       | 310283                                                              |
| <b>Address</b>                         | Millfield School<br>Butleigh Road<br>Street<br>Somerset<br>BA16 0YD |
| <b>Phone number</b>                    | 01458 442291                                                        |
| <b>Email address</b>                   | generaloffice@millfield.com                                         |
| <b>Website</b>                         | www.millfieldschool.com                                             |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                      | Millfield School Ltd                                                |
| <b>Chair</b>                           | Mr Roland Rudd                                                      |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                     | Mr Gavin Horgan                                                     |
| <b>Age range</b>                       | 12 to 19                                                            |
| <b>Number of pupils</b>                | 1271                                                                |
| <b>Number of boarding pupils</b>       | 925                                                                 |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>     | 21 to 23 January 2023                                               |



## Information about the school

62. Millfield School is an independent, co-educational day and boarding school situated in Street, Somerset. The school was established in 1935. The school is overseen by a charitable trust, administered by a board of governors. The trust also oversees Millfield Preparatory School, which was inspected separately at the same time.
63. The school has 19 boarding houses, of which 8 are for female boarders and 11 are for male boarders. Most boarding houses are located on or adjacent to the campus; three are a short distance away.
64. The school has identified 509 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan.
65. The school has identified English as an additional language for 184 pupils.
66. The school states its aim is to transform lives through education by providing academic, creative and sporting opportunities within a full boarding environment, developing pupils' leadership skills and promoting their wellbeing.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

24 to 26 March 2026

67. A team of 10 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. 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.

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

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

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

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