

School inspection report

24 to 26 March 2026

Millfield Preparatory School

Edgarley Road

Edgarley

Glastonbury

BA6 8LD

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 and leaders are effective at providing clear direction for the school's development. They work collaboratively to ensure that Standards are met consistently and that the holistic development of pupils' education and wellbeing remain central to decision-making. Systems for monitoring performance and managing risk are secure, enabling leaders to evaluate practice accurately and respond appropriately. As a result, pupils benefit from a supportive and well-led environment.
2. Leaders promote the school's ethos and values successfully through the broad and enriching co-curricular activities that support pupils' development. Leaders provide access to high quality sport and also offer breadth and depth across a variety of other activities, such as art, music, drama and dance. Leaders successfully support pupils to pursue their talents and passions.
3. Teaching is effective and supports pupils to make good progress across the curriculum. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which they use to plan engaging lessons. Teachers often provide clear and concise verbal and written feedback that enables pupils to understand how to improve their learning further. This is not consistently the case and pupils do not always know the next steps they can take to improve and extend their knowledge and understanding.
4. Leaders in the early years create a nurturing and stimulating environment by using their in-depth knowledge of children and their needs. Staff plan activities, incorporating children's interests, that promote learning, independence and confidence. Children benefit from caring relationships with adults so that they feel safe and secure. As a result, children learn and develop well. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
5. Leaders promote close working relationships and effective communication between staff so that pupils' wellbeing can be supported holistically. The personalised curriculum centre (PCC) provides integrated support for pupils, such as those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who have emotional needs, as well as for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Teaching, pastoral, boarding and PCC teams meet regularly with leaders to provide and review the additional support to pupils. As a result, pupils benefit from a collaborative, joined-up approach by the school that meets their holistic needs.
6. Leaders ensure that boarding is a positive and enriching experience for boarders. They create a caring environment in which boarders are supported and valued. Clear expectations and consistent routines help boarders to settle quickly. The approachable presence of boarding staff encourages boarders to seek guidance with confidence. Leaders support boarders to build respectful relationships, become independent and be positive role models for others. A wide range of structured activities and opportunities for relaxation enables boarders to balance academic demands with social and personal development. As a result, boarders benefit from the sense of community and belonging that boarding provides.
7. Leaders promote a newly introduced behaviour policy based on consultation with pupils about what they see as effective ways to promote positive behaviour. As a result, rewards and consequences are well understood by pupils and they typically display respectful behaviour. As yet, staff are not consistently effective in their implementation of the behaviour policy which leads to some isolated incidents of inappropriate behaviour among pupils.

8. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life beyond school. They enable pupils to develop a secure understanding of respect, responsibility and life in British society, alongside opportunities to contribute positively to the school and wider community. As a result, pupils show confidence, consideration for others and an increasing awareness of their role as active and responsible members of society.
9. Leaders and governors maintain a robust culture of safeguarding, supported by clear policies and appropriate training. Staff understand their responsibilities and act promptly to promote pupils' welfare. Pupils are kept safe, are taught how to keep themselves safe and know whom to approach with any concerns.

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 teachers consistently provide pupils with specific guidance and feedback so that they understand precisely how to improve their work, develop their understanding and make further progress
- ensure that all staff implement the new behaviour policy effectively so that pupils consistently apply expected standards of behaviour.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders place pupils' wellbeing at the heart of school life, creating a culture in which pupils feel valued and connected to the school community. Leaders get to know pupils as individuals, which helps to foster a genuine sense of belonging and positive relationships across the school. The school's values of being kind, challenging, curious, brilliant and 'being you' are actively modelled by leaders and reinforced through regular recognition and rewards. This consistent emphasis helps pupils develop academically, personally and socially, by instilling confidence, resilience and mutual respect.
11. The governing body provides clear direction and support to the leadership team to ensure that Standards are met consistently. They analyse the school's performance through scrutinising reports and data and through speaking to staff and pupils about their experiences. They enable leaders to access professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills and understanding. Together, governors and leaders ensure that policies and procedures are based on relevant statutory guidance and implemented effectively.
12. Governors and leaders implement a strategic approach that is firmly rooted in maintaining the school's aims and ethos as well as adapting provision to meet pupils' emerging needs. This includes integrating support for pupils so that it is holistic and flexible to their needs. Leaders make strategic decisions based on pupils' views, gathered through forums and informal discussions, which has contributed to redevelopment of the behaviour policy. Leaders review the impact of these strategies to consider if further action is required. Pupils benefit from provision that is well planned and responsive to their individual needs.
13. Leaders in the early years are effective at promoting children's learning, development and welfare. Leaders understand the requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework and ensure that policies and procedures are implemented consistently. Staff are appropriately supported and guided so that they can further develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders monitor provision carefully and act quickly to address any priorities for improvement.
14. Leaders with responsibility for boarding provide effective oversight to ensure that boarding provision promotes pupils' wellbeing. Leaders ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place and are implemented consistently by staff, so that the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS) are met consistently. Leaders ensure that boarding staff are suitably deployed and that communication between boarding staff, academic staff and parents is effective. Systems for monitoring and evaluation are secure. This enables leaders to identify areas for improvement, supporting the ongoing development of the boarding provision.
15. Governors and leaders manage risks effectively and take appropriate steps to ensure that pupils' welfare is promoted. Leaders have structured systems for identifying and assessing potential risks across different areas of school life, including educational activities, boarding and trips off site. Staff understand their responsibilities and implement agreed procedures consistently, reducing the likelihood of avoidable incidents. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and adapted as circumstances change, ensuring that control measures remain relevant and effective.

16. Leaders make information available to parents and provide a range of information on the school's website, including key policies and contact details. They ensure that parents receive detailed information about their child's progress and targets at school.
17. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 through the implementation of an accessibility plan. This is reviewed annually with governors to ensure that actions are effective. Recent actions include training for staff in safe evacuation procedures for people who have a disability.
18. Leaders maintain effective links with external agencies so that they can promote pupils' wellbeing. They liaise with the local authority when reviewing pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan) and provide information about associated finances. They ensure that they update the attendance officer about any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition times.
19. Leaders implement an appropriate complaints policy which provides opportunities for complaints to be managed informally as well as formally. Leaders adhere to published timescales and keep a log of complaints and any associated actions.

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. The curriculum is well planned, providing a range of educational experiences for pupils. Leaders provide a coherent and well-considered curriculum for the youngest pupils. This curriculum prioritises the development of pupils' important foundation knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as enquiry skills and a positive attitude to learning. This curriculum provides an effective foundation for pupils as they transition into Years 7 and 8. Here, the varied programme of subjects is planned cohesively to promote a smooth transition to the senior school. Leaders review and adapt the curriculum so that it is responsive to pupils' differing aptitudes and interests. Leaders strive to widen the curriculum offer so that pupils can pursue their individual talents as well as focus on their academic learning.
22. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan well-structured and effective lessons. They know their pupils well so that they can support and extend pupils at appropriate times. They provide meaningful links across subjects so that pupils can connect ideas and deepen their understanding. Teachers use a range of strategies and resources in their lessons, including enquiry-based learning, investigations and debates, to engage pupils and to encourage them to apply the school's value of 'being curious'.
23. Teachers often provide pupils with a range of written and verbal feedback relating to classwork and assessments. This enables pupils to understand their achievements through 'what went well' statements and how they can extend their learning through 'even better if' statements. This is not consistently the case. Not all teachers give precise information to enable pupils to always know exactly how they can make further progress in their learning.
24. Leaders implement a range of systems to collect and track attainment information so that they can monitor pupils' progress. As a result, additional support is offered to pupils, such as extra sessions for those who need to improve their reading and enrichment sessions for those who would benefit from extension work. Leaders use assessment information to refine provision within the curriculum when required, such as reviewing how spelling is taught and subsequently improving spelling outcomes for pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress across a variety of subjects and develop confidence, independence and readiness for the next stage of their education.
25. Leaders ensure that there are effective systems in place to identify and support pupils who have SEND. Effective communication between teachers and leaders enables staff to understand pupils' needs and to respond effectively in lessons. Leaders provide teachers with practical strategies through 'pupil passports' that emphasise inclusive teaching approaches. These approaches provide bespoke support in lessons that is precisely tailored to the needs of individual pupils. As a result, pupils who have SEND are well supported to learn alongside their peers.
26. Leaders provide structured provision for pupils who speak EAL. This includes assessing pupils' needs and providing tailored support so that pupils are able to access learning effectively. Staff support pupils to improve their vocabulary, particularly subject-specific vocabulary, to help with learning in class. They monitor pupils to ensure that they can access the curriculum and learn effectively.
27. Leaders in the early years understand how young children learn and develop, which they use effectively to create a nurturing and purposeful learning environment. Staff ensure that routines are well established and children explore and engage in their learning confidently. Teachers incorporate

children's interests into their planning, which motivates children to engage in activities. Children develop mathematical knowledge through ordering, counting and comparing items. Children develop communication and language skills through high-quality interactions with staff, effective phonics teaching, emergent writing opportunities and shared storytelling. As a result, children make good progress across all areas of their development and are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.

28. Leaders with responsibility for boarding establish effective routines and supervision to enable boarders to develop study habits and independence in their learning. Boarding staff work constructively with academic staff to ensure that boarders receive appropriate guidance and support. The boarding environment provides boarders with suitable opportunities for quiet study as well as enrichment activities that complement the curriculum. As a result, boarders are well supported in their learning.
29. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and well-structured co-curricular programme that enriches pupils' experience. Opportunities span a wide range of different areas including sport, creative and performing arts, and outdoor activities. Pupils explore activities and develop skills, facilitating pupils' individual talents, such as swimming and horse riding. Pupils participate enthusiastically in co-curricular activities, developing confidence, teamwork and leadership skills in the process.

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

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

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

31. Leaders enable pupils to develop self-esteem and self-knowledge by helping them to recognise their personal achievements and to value a wide range of talents and interests. Staff support pupils to respond positively to setbacks and to view them as part of learning. Confidence is enhanced through a culture of recognition, with pupils' demonstration of the school's values acknowledged through the rewards system and celebration assemblies.
32. Leaders promote pupils' spirituality by creating frequent, meaningful moments in which pupils are encouraged to reflect, question and develop an awareness of themselves and others. Opportunities for quiet reflection, whether through assemblies, time spent outdoors or sessions of mindfulness, help pupils to consider how they are connected to the people and world around them. As a result, pupils show growing self-awareness of their belonging and responsibility within the school community.
33. Leaders provide an effective personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme, taught through the school's character education and life skills (CELS) curriculum. Teaching emphasises the importance of positive mental health and emotional wellbeing, helping pupils to understand how to look after themselves and others. Pupils learn strategies to remain calm and are confident about seeking help when concerns arise. Staff work collaboratively to monitor pupils' wellbeing and pastoral needs, meeting regularly to identify and respond to emerging needs in a timely and holistic way.
34. Leaders place a firm emphasis on physical education (PE) within the curriculum by providing both elite and inclusive opportunities for a wide variety of different team and individual sports, including hockey, tennis, swimming and golf. As well as developing fitness, agility and co-ordination within PE lessons, the curriculum is tailored to individual pupils' interests and needs so that pupils can focus on their talents and acquire new skills. High-quality teaching ensures that pupils develop to a high standard in their chosen sports. Leaders carefully track participation to ensure that pupils are engaging positively and making progress.
35. Leaders implement an effective relationships and sex education (RSE) programme so that pupils develop respectful relationships and understand their personal development. Teachers plan lessons carefully, including time for pupils to reflect and ask questions to deepen their understanding. Pupils learn about appropriate boundaries in friendships, including how to manage digital interactions. Teachers provide age-appropriate discussions around topics such as consent and puberty, so that pupils are well equipped for their lives today and in the future.
36. Leaders in the early years promote children's emotional and physical wellbeing through a nurturing environment in which staff get to know the children well. Staff make consistent use of resources so that children can start to identify and manage their emotions. They help children understand how to look after their physical health, such as the importance of dental hygiene and why eating a 'rainbow' of different foods is good for them. Staff provide a range of activities, such as swimming, playing on bikes and trikes, and using modelling dough so that children develop their motor skills.
37. Leaders have recently implemented a new behaviour policy with input from pupils about strategies for promoting positive behaviour. Typically, pupils behave well during the school day and at

boarding times. In particular, pupils are motivated to gather reward points that they can exchange at the school shop for privileges such as being the first in the lunch queue. As yet, not all staff are consistent in their implementation of the new behaviour policy, which leads to some isolated pockets of lapses in behaviour, mainly outside of the classroom.

38. Leaders promote an effective anti-bullying strategy which is consistently implemented. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying and why this type of behaviour is not acceptable. As a result, bullying is rare and resolved promptly when it does occur.
39. Leaders have effective systems for health and safety. Leaders maintain the premises well, responding promptly to emerging issues and any recommendations from external audits. They test and service fire equipment regularly and conduct termly fire drills, including at night for boarding pupils.
40. Leaders ensure that boarding provision is well organised. Staff know boarders well and provide caring and appropriate support. This results in boarders feeling settled and confident within the boarding environment. Boarding accommodation is clean, well maintained and suitable for the age range of pupils. Leaders ensure that boarders' physical health is promoted through access to appropriate medical care and a range of activities. Leaders provide nutritious meals with a variety of options to suit boarders' tastes and dietary requirements.
41. Leaders ensure that pupils are well supervised throughout the school day and during boarding times, including overnight. They maintain appropriate adult-to-child ratios in the early years, including when children are eating.
42. Leaders comply with statutory requirements to maintain admission and attendance registers. They promote the importance of attendance and follow effective procedures to manage any attendance concerns.
43. Leaders provide suitable medical facilities and ensure that staff have appropriate first aid qualifications. This includes boarding staff and those who work in the early years. The school's surgery is staffed by nurses so that day pupils and boarders can access medical assistance when they are unwell or injured.

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

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

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

45. Leaders encourage pupils to respect others by listening attentively to differing opinions, responding thoughtfully, and showing consideration for the views and feelings of others, including when these differ from their own. This is reinforced through teachers' modelling of the school's value of 'being you' which successfully encourages pupils to embrace and appreciate the uniqueness of themselves and others.
46. Pupils develop a secure and age-appropriate understanding of British values through well-planned experiences that reflect everyday life in modern Britain. Through 'parliament week' pupils learn about the democratic systems and institutions of the United Kingdom (UK). Pupils apply this knowledge practically through the school and boarding councils where they express views and contribute to decision-making. Teaching promotes respect for the rule of law and enables pupils to understand how rules and expectations support co-operation within communities.
47. Leaders support pupils' cultural development through a broad range of meaningful experiences that encourage understanding, respect and curiosity about different beliefs and traditions. Pupils learn about world religions within religious studies (RS) lessons and are given opportunities to share personal experiences, which helps deepen their understanding. For example, leaders encourage pupils to speak in assemblies about celebrations such as Eid, Lent and Holi, enabling peers to learn directly from one another.
48. Pupils celebrate the diversity of the school community and promote inclusivity. This is reinforced through events, such as Black History Month, which promote appreciation of diverse histories and contributions. The curriculum ensures that pupils are exposed to diverse role models, such as the importance of females in science and history. Themed food days allow pupils to experience foods from Britain and across the world. This enables pupils to demonstrate respect and tolerance towards others, showing sensitivity to differing backgrounds, beliefs and viewpoints.
49. Leaders provide a well-structured programme of community engagement and charitable activity, so that pupils develop an understanding of the wider world and their role within it. This includes visits to perform music at local care homes, helping with the upkeep of a local nature reserve and raising money and supplies for the foodbank and local children's hospice. These result in pupils developing awareness of needs in their local community and showing empathy towards others. As a result, pupils engage positively in school life and contribute thoughtfully to the community.
50. Leaders promote the importance of the school's value of being kind when pupils interact with others. They encourage pupils to consider the impact of their actions and to develop an inner moral compass. Pupils throughout the school, including children in the early years, are encouraged to use manners and to share and take turns, so that they develop positive friendships and enhance their social skills.
51. Leaders implement a range of careers-related opportunities for pupils, including external speakers and links with the senior school to support transition and option choices. Older pupils take part in a structured careers day, including activities such as personality profiling, employability matching and engagement with professional platforms. As a result, pupils begin to understand their aptitudes and how these relate to a variety of future pathways.

52. Leaders provide suitable economic education through CELS lessons so that pupils are equipped with the practical knowledge and understanding of finances required for life beyond school. Pupils are introduced to key financial concepts, including taxation, budgeting and the management of household bills, enabling them to develop an informed awareness of personal financial responsibility. This learning is reinforced through practical experiences, including the May fair, when each tutor group designs, plans and runs a stall to raise money for charity. Through this activity, pupils apply their understanding of costs, pricing and profit in a real-world context. As a result, pupils gain confidence in handling money and demonstrate a growing appreciation of how financial choices affect both themselves and others.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. Governors maintain an effective oversight of safeguarding. They ensure that safeguarding policy and processes meet all statutory requirements. They support leaders to promote a thorough safeguarding culture, in which pupils' welfare is a shared responsibility across the staff. Leaders prioritise timely communication. Safeguarding considerations underpin their routines and decision-making. As a result, safeguarding is an integral part of the school's ethos.
55. Leaders provide safeguarding training that equips staff with the knowledge and confidence to recognise potential concerns and to respond in line with agreed procedures. Staff receive training at induction so that they are vigilant and report any concerns about pupils, or adults working with pupils. Safeguarding training is reinforced through regular updates and discussions, ensuring that safeguarding remains a consistent priority. As a result, staff act promptly and appropriately when issues arise and safeguarding arrangements operate effectively in practice.
56. Leaders undertake their roles effectively. They promote regular dialogue and communication with staff and pupils. They take concerns seriously and act upon them promptly. They liaise well with external agencies to provide appropriate and timely support to pupils and their families. They attend training and meetings with the local authority so that they can enhance their knowledge of local risks and thresholds. Governors review a range of information and provide support and challenge to leaders. Collectively, leaders and governors ensure that pupils' welfare is promoted and prioritised.
57. Leaders ensure that safeguarding principles are well understood by pupils. Pupils have a thorough understanding of who they can approach for support, including an independent person for boarding pupils. They can access additional help through the PCC, as well as through an online system that allows pupils to request assistance discreetly.
58. Leaders' arrangements for safer recruitment are effective. Recruitment procedures are clearly structured and followed consistently, ensuring that appropriate checks are completed before staff take up their roles. Those involved in recruitment understand their responsibilities and apply them carefully when compiling the single central record of appointments (SCR). Governors and leaders regularly review the SCR and recruitment procedures. They ensure that pre-employment checks are undertaken and recorded appropriately.
59. Leaders provide effective internet filtering and monitoring systems, which are tested regularly. Leaders monitor and resolve any concerns or alerts. Leaders ensure that pupils understand the importance of online safety through assemblies and curriculum provision. This enables pupils to manage online risks confidently and to make informed and responsible decisions, such as not sharing personal information online and being wary of social media pressure.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

60. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Millfield Preparatory School
Department for Education number	933/6115
Registered charity number	310283
Address	Millfield Preparatory School Edgarley Road Edgarley Glastonbury BA6 8LD
Phone number	01458 832446
Email address	prepoffice@millfieldschool.com
Website	www.millfieldschool.com/prep-7-13
Proprietor	Millfield School Ltd
Chair	Mr Roland Rudd
Headteacher	Mr Dan Thornburn
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils	434
Number of boarding pupils	98
Date of previous inspection	24 to 26 January 2023

Information about the school

61. Millfield Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding school located in Glastonbury, Somerset for pupils aged two to thirteen. The school is part of Millfield School Ltd, a charitable trust. Trustees undertake the role of governors. The school comprises two sections: the pre-prep, for children aged two to seven; and the prep, for pupils aged seven to thirteen.
62. The school accommodates boarders from age seven to thirteen in two houses for female pupils and two houses for male pupils. The boarding houses are located on the school site. The school offers full, flexi- and occasional boarding.
63. There are 54 children in the early years, accommodated in two Nursery classes and one Reception class.
64. The school has identified 113 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
65. The school has identified English as an additional language for 40 pupils.
66. The school states its aims are to discover brilliance in every child and transform lives through education, to immerse children in academic, creative and sporting opportunities, in a full boarding environment, and create an environment which fosters leadership and wellbeing.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

24 to 26 March 2026

67. A team of six 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 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**.

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For more information, please visit isi.net