

School inspection report

21 to 23 April 2026

Giggleswick School

Giggleswick

Settle

North Yorkshire

BD24 0DE

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 work closely with leaders to ensure that leaders have the appropriate skills and knowledge to promote pupils' wellbeing effectively. They assure themselves that the Standards are met through monitoring the school's policies, practice and procedures. They visit the school regularly and support leaders to develop and improve the educational provision.
2. The curriculum is broad and meets the needs, interests and aptitudes of the pupils. Teachers are knowledgeable and deliver well-prepared lessons. They communicate effectively so that pupils can learn successfully and understand how to improve their work. Consequently, pupils make consistently good progress and achieve well.
3. The early years is a happy and inclusive learning environment. Leaders in the early years provide a stimulating and creative curriculum. High-quality interactions with staff, and well-chosen activities, help children to make good progress.
4. The rich and stimulating co-curricular programme encourages and motivates pupils to participate in a wide range of academic, recreational and sporting opportunities. Pupils engage well with the programme and as a result they enjoy developing new interests and skills.
5. Boarders benefit from a strong sense of community. They are well cared for by experienced boarding staff and, as a result, the boarding experience is positive and integral to the wellbeing of boarders.
6. Leaders ensure that the school, including boarding accommodation, is well maintained and that all the necessary health and safety checks are carried out. Health and safety procedures and policies are implemented effectively.
7. Leaders and governors place a high priority on risk management. Risk assessments are detailed and comprehensive. They are carefully monitored and reviewed in order to safeguard pupils.
8. Admission and attendance procedures are effective. However, at the start of the inspection, the attendance policy did not include all information required by current statutory guidance. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
9. Leaders support and encourage pupils to be positive citizens in British society. Pupils develop respect for and appreciation of different cultures.
10. The careers programme prepares pupils for the next stage of their education, informing them effectively about different career pathways and the world of work. The programme for lower years in the senior school is less comprehensive, with a more limited range of talks and specialist advice available.
11. Leaders are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff are well trained and have a secure understanding of the school's procedures. The school maintains effective links with local safeguarding partners. Leaders ensure that all mandatory safer recruitment checks are completed before any adult begins working with children. They are accurately recorded on the single central record of appointments (SCR).

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 the attendance policy includes contact details for the senior attendance champion
- expand the careers programme for younger pupils in the senior school so that they develop their understanding of possible future careers and pathways.

Material change request

12. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include an increased age range, from 2 to 18 to 2 to 19.
13. Leaders have planned effectively for the proposed material change. Plans are in place to meet the needs of older pupils through the continuation and enhancement of current provision.
14. Leaders implement suitable arrangements to safeguard pupils. Leaders intend to ensure that there is suitable staff supervision and pastoral oversight during the school day and in boarding time. Pastoral leaders plan to monitor relationships and ensure that pupils are supported socially and emotionally. Pupils have access to counselling and wellbeing services.
15. Boarding accommodation for sixth-form pupils is suitable and includes washing, toilet and changing facilities. Younger boarding pupils do not have access to these areas.
16. Leaders ensure that all pupils understand their expectations regarding behaviour and bullying. Pupils sign a code of conduct confirming they will adhere to the school rules.
17. The curriculum is appropriate for older pupils. Leaders plan to ensure that participation in the co-curricular programme, and in particular team sports, will be risk assessed.
18. Leaders have prepared an effective risk assessment that will be personalised for each pupil. Risks will be reviewed regularly, and suitable mitigations implemented to minimise any risks identified.
19. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

20. Leaders at all levels demonstrate good knowledge and skills that enable them to fulfil their responsibilities and consistently promote pupils' wellbeing. As a result, the school implements its policies effectively and meets the Standards. Governors' oversight of the school is effective and well structured. Regular visits and a clear delegation of areas of responsibility ensure that specific areas of the school are scrutinised successfully.
21. Leaders communicate the school's aims and values of commitment, courage, curiosity, compassion and integrity effectively, so that they are well understood by pupils and parents and consistently promoted by staff. Teachers know pupils well and support their individual aspirations and needs. As a result, pupils develop self-esteem and confidence during their time at school.
22. Leaders have appointed suitably qualified boarding staff and provide training so that boarding staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their roles confidently. Leaders with responsibility for boarding know the boarders very well. They work closely with academic and pastoral colleagues to provide a supportive and comfortable boarding environment that prioritises boarders' wellbeing.
23. In the early years, leaders establish effective and caring routines and activities, which promote children's wellbeing, independence and social development. They make effective use of the school's indoor and outdoor environment to promote children's learning. Leaders and staff meet regularly to assess children's progress and areas for development. As a result, children thrive, develop confidence, and are well prepared for Year 1.
24. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. A comprehensive accessibility plan ensures equal access to all areas of the school site and curriculum. Leaders provide staff with specific training so that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported as effectively as possible.
25. Leaders and governors demonstrate a commitment to continuous school improvement. Leaders across all parts of the school engage in rigorous self-evaluation. Leaders' thorough evaluation and effective school development mean that the educational provision for pupils continues to evolve and meet their needs well.
26. Leaders and governors adopt a thoughtful and systematic approach to highlighting and mitigating risk. Suitable and relevant training is provided to staff who need to undertake risk assessments for facilities, events and educational visits off site. Leaders evaluate risk assessments regularly so that they continue to address potential risks appropriately.
27. Leaders provide parents with required information, largely through the school's informative website. Parents receive appropriate written reports and attend a suitable schedule of parents' meetings that provide them with helpful information about their child's attainment, progress and attitude to learning.
28. Leaders liaise effectively with a range of external agencies. These include local safeguarding partners, the local authority, health and safety specialists, and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Leaders report appropriately to the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times. The school reviews provision for any pupils who have an

education, health and care plan (EHC plan), and provides the local authorities who fund these with an annual statement of income and expenditure.

29. Leaders implement an appropriate complaints policy and procedure. They promote an ethos of open communication with parents to better understand parents' perspectives about the school. Leaders manage any submitted formal complaints in accordance with the published policy and maintain detailed and clear records, which include any actions taken and resolutions reached. Boarders understand how to raise concerns about their boarding provision through surveys and boarding committees.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

31. Leaders implement a broad curriculum that appropriately meets the needs of pupils. The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), Higher Project Qualification (HPQ) and Independent Research Project (IRP) enhance the curriculum, allowing pupils to research a topic of personal interest and develop advanced skills in research, critical thinking and academic writing as they do so. In addition, pupils can complete the Gold Arts Award, focusing on artistic practice, leadership and understanding of the creative industry.
32. Leaders set high expectations for inclusive, high-quality teaching. They provide oversight of the curriculum, and monitor and evaluate teaching standards through a comprehensive schedule of focused learning walks, lesson observations and work scrutiny. This means that the content and delivery of the curriculum is carefully monitored.
33. Teaching is characterised by effective planning, well-chosen resources and effective questioning to encourage pupils to extend their thinking skills. As a result, pupils are challenged in their learning, engaged in lessons and make good progress.
34. Leaders identify well-considered methods to develop pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills. In modern foreign languages (MFL), pupils engage positively in speaking activities with foreign language assistants. In English lessons in the prep school, pupils can recount a story and write creative poems, showing early confidence in reading sounds, sentence structure and understanding of texts. In senior school mathematics, pupils work independently to successfully derive equations of motion from velocity time graphs, demonstrating the numerical abilities to rearrange and substitute.
35. Pupils encounter a rich range of creative and aesthetic experiences that build on their prior learning. In textiles, for example, pupils learn a variety of techniques, such as free machine embroidery, felt making and screen printing, as they design corsets, resulting in highly individualised projects. In design and technology, the structured curriculum introduces pupils to a variety of materials, such as different types of wood, and makes strong connections to the rural environment of the school. In music, pupils have the opportunity to discuss the features of Mexican music and the sounds made by Indigenous instruments.
36. A suitable and thorough assessment framework is in place. Leaders monitor pupils' progress closely through regular assessments and track outcomes against standardised baseline assessments. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in external examinations, performing in line with, and sometimes beyond, expectations. Teachers provide pupils with helpful and precise feedback on how to improve, and pupils are encouraged to reflect and respond.
37. Leaders ensure that provision for pupils who have SEND is well co-ordinated, with effective processes in place to identify and support those pupils. Learning support staff demonstrate effective knowledge and skills and support individual needs through effective strategies. Consequently, pupils who have SEND are able to build self-confidence and make good progress.
38. Leaders provide carefully tailored induction programmes, teaching and pastoral support to meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), enabling every child to participate in the full breadth of the curriculum. Leaders have developed systems to assess pupils' language levels on entry to the school and to monitor and track pupils' progress. Pupils who speak EAL are identified and their individual needs are understood and met. Training is provided to enable

specialised teaching in EAL. As a result, pupils who speak EAL make good progress and develop confidence in written and spoken English.

39. A well-planned early years curriculum contributes to children’s good progress from their starting points and builds a secure foundation for the future. Leaders deliver carefully planned activities to help children develop their communication and language skills in fun and interesting ways. Children use their developing knowledge of phonics to write their names and label farm animals. They can differentiate sounds such as ‘snail’ and ‘whale’ and enjoy recounting stories. Well-qualified staff are quick to identify any speech or language difficulties and ensure that early intervention is provided. Such measures mean that children learn to use written and spoken English confidently.
40. The co-curricular programme is carefully planned to enable all pupils to develop their interests, talents and leadership skills. The creative, active, service and enrichment (CASE) programme has been designed to help pupils develop an appreciation of the arts, take part in physical activities, contribute to the wider community and support the environment. In addition, pupils can join the combined cadet force (CCF). Cadets take part in challenging experiences designed to boost self-esteem, build resilience and develop personal responsibility. The outdoor education programme provides opportunities to learn new skills such as kayaking, dry-stone walling and building mountain bike trails. As pupils progress through the school, they help shape, run and sustain CASE activities and, in so doing, develop their leadership skills.
41. Boarding leaders provide boarders with an appropriate balance of study time, organised in-house activities such as cookery and film nights, off-site visits to the local ice rink and bowling alley, and unstructured relaxation time. Boarding staff are on hand to offer academic support, if required.

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

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

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

43. Through assemblies and religious studies (RS) lessons, pupils learn about different world religions, faiths and cultures, enabling them to understand different perspectives. In the early years, children learn about people from around the world and celebrate a range of diverse festivals. In RS lessons, pupils study major world faiths, identifying and respecting the similarities and differences in beliefs. For instance, in the senior school, pupils discuss Christian, Muslim and secular beliefs surrounding life after death with interest. Chapel services provide an opportunity for spiritual reflection and leaders provide opportunities for quiet moments through mindfulness sessions and yoga practice.
44. The physical education (PE) programme develops pupils' resilience, teamwork and sports-related skills. Leaders ensure that PE is embedded from the early years through structured lessons that include regular swimming sessions. Pupils can take part in a wide variety of team and individual sports, including rugby, lacrosse, kayaking and taekwondo. Specialist games staff help pupils to develop their sporting skills and provide opportunities for pupils to take part in a large range of fixtures each term. Through effective teamwork they develop the qualities of sportsmanship.
45. Leaders implement a carefully planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme. They explore, at an age-appropriate level, how to stay safe online and when out on their own, including at parties and music festivals. Older pupils learn about the dangers of gambling and the increase of pornography online, while younger pupils learn about road safety, friendships and respect.
46. Leaders provide a well-planned relationships and sex education (RSE) programme, which covers all necessary aspects. Children in the early years learn about different family models and relationships. Older pupils are taught about personal barriers and what is meant by consent. The science curriculum teaches pupils about the emotional and physical changes experienced during puberty. Parents are consulted and kept informed regarding any RSE curriculum updates. Leaders are reflective and responsive to both pupil and parent feedback with regard to the RSE programme and have invited specialist external speakers to deliver more sensitive aspects of the curriculum.
47. Leaders set consistently high behavioural expectations across all areas of school life. Pupils understand these expectations and are courteous and thoughtful in their interactions with each other. Positive behaviour is praised and rewarded in age-appropriate ways, with rewards reflecting the school's values. Leaders and staff make it clear that bullying is not tolerated in the school, and as a result, bullying incidents are rare. Leaders maintain detailed records that identify patterns and trends of poor behaviour and bullying, and any actions taken.
48. Leaders maintain attendance and admission registers appropriately and follow up any concerns they have about absences promptly. However, when the inspection commenced, the attendance policy did not contain the contact details for the senior attendance champion. This was rectified before the end of the inspection.
49. The premises and accommodation in which pupils live are varied in style, age and complexity. Those responsible are vigilant in ensuring that the buildings and grounds are suitably and methodically maintained. Leaders with designated health and safety responsibilities conduct regular visual checks of the school site and respond to any reported concerns promptly and effectively. As a result, the

premises and accommodation remain suitable and secure for pupils and meet the requirements of health and safety and fire legislation. Fire evacuations are regularly practised, including at night in the boarding houses. Pupils who are sick or injured are cared for by suitably qualified staff who manage the medical facilities well, including those in the boarding houses.

50. Leaders ensure that pupils are supervised carefully throughout the school day. Alert and vigilant staff supervise breaktimes, mealtimes and after-school prep sessions. Leaders maintain suitable staff-to-child ratios in the early years. An appropriate number of boarding staff supervise boarders during the evenings and overnight.
51. Leaders promote boarders' wellbeing consistently. Pupils who board less frequently are integrated well so that they quickly feel part of the inclusive boarding community. Boarding houses are comfortable and clean, and provide spacious sleeping accommodation. Comfortable common rooms provide boarders with opportunities to enjoy social time together and feel at home in this welcoming environment. Boarders are supported by an appropriate independent person and are also comfortable sharing concerns with boarding staff.
52. Leaders provide children in the early years with a wide range of stimulating activities to promote physical and emotional development. Circle-time activities provide opportunities for children to share how they are feeling. Children use the well-resourced outdoor environment daily and practise their fine-motor development by building castles in the sandpit and growing herbs.

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

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

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

54. Leaders ensure that the values of mutual respect, inclusion and tolerance are promoted through the curriculum, boarding, pastoral work and co-curricular activities. Pupils discuss, for example, humanitarian responses to refugees and asylum seekers. Modern foreign languages students in the sixth form study set texts and films dealing with themes such as antisemitism in Germany and social problems in the Parisian suburbs. Leaders organise themed days and meals to celebrate cultural festivals around the world. Recently, a group of Ukrainian students shared details of their Easter celebrations with the school community. As a result, pupils develop social maturity and empathy, preparing them well for life in British and global society.
55. Pupils develop a secure understanding of finance and economic wellbeing through the curriculum and through enrichment opportunities. Pupils in the early years take part in shopping role-play activities and are confident using money. Older pupils learn about bank accounts, interest rates, credit cards and mortgages through the PSHE curriculum. Senior pupils further develop their understanding of financial matters through running the school tuck shop. They learn how to order stock and decide on a pricing structure, and have input into how the profits will be spent.
56. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to reflect upon fundamental British values alongside the school's values of commitment, courage, curiosity, compassion and integrity. Pupils vote for charities that they wish to support in addition to electing peers to positions of responsibility. Older pupils learn about the different political parties and the voting system. Respect for all is actively promoted through the curriculum, chapel services and PSHE lessons, all of which foster an understanding of other people. Pupils learn to respect different faiths and cultures through assemblies, RS lessons and cultural events.
57. Boarding leaders and staff actively promote pupils' social wellbeing by fostering a strong sense of community, shared responsibility and positive peer relationships. For example, boarders undertake dormitory leadership roles and represent the boarding community in boarding council meetings. Such measures promote a community spirit throughout the school, which positively contributes to pupils' personal development.
58. Senior school pupils receive suitable careers guidance. In the sixth form, pupils receive carefully tailored individual advice to help them make informed decisions about higher education and career pathways. In addition, senior pupils make effective use of a commercial online careers platform to identify their skills and aptitudes, and match these to a range of potential career options. However, in Years 7 to 11 there are fewer opportunities for pupils to discuss different career pathways.
59. Pupils are encouraged to take on positions of responsibility and to develop their leadership skills. Senior pupils in leadership roles are given appropriate responsibilities such as presenting awards in assembly, assisting staff on lunch duty and supervising younger pupils under the guidance of staff. Older pupils visit the early years and support children's reading. Peer mentors actively help other pupils by providing advice and friendship, when needed. Leaders also provide opportunities for older pupils to take qualifications to become sports umpires and referees.
60. The school prepares pupils effectively for future experiences and for the next stage of their education. Children in Reception visit their new classrooms so that they are able to approach the

transition to Year 1 confidently. Pupils in the prep school learn about road safety and practical life skills such as cooking. Senior pupils receive guidance on how to approach academic interviews. Through planned teaching, pupils develop knowledge and understanding that supports their personal development and preparation for adult life.

61. In the early years, leaders model kindness, courtesy and helpfulness. Children demonstrate positive social behaviour, such as co-operating confidently and showing respect and tolerance towards others. Children speak confidently and listen carefully to others during class discussions. During mealtimes, children chat politely to teachers and to each other and demonstrate appropriate table manners. Children are encouraged to help one another, develop independence and take responsibility for tidying away. As a result, children learn to approach social situations appropriately and with confidence.

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

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

Safeguarding

63. Leaders promote a vigilant safeguarding culture throughout the school. A clear and comprehensive safeguarding policy is in place, which is reviewed regularly and reflects current statutory guidance. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding are trained appropriately for their roles and have devised robust systems to record, monitor and assess safeguarding concerns.
64. Governors maintain effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The governor responsible for safeguarding visits the school regularly to ensure that safeguarding procedures are carried out effectively and to offer helpful challenge and advice to the safeguarding team. All governors undertake training in safeguarding.
65. Leaders engage with the relevant local safeguarding partners and other appropriate external agencies, including the local authority and children’s services. They refer safeguarding concerns to them in a timely manner, follow procedures and act on suggestions and advice.
66. Staff are provided with regular and effective safeguarding training, including at induction. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to escalate concerns when required. Leaders ensure that staff understand how to respond to and report any low-level or more serious allegations about adults who work in the school. Staff are aware of the importance of self-referral, in line with the school’s clear code of conduct.
67. There are a variety of methods by which pupils can share worries in confidence. Older pupils can share concerns anonymously with senior staff by using an online form. ‘worry boxes’ are provided in classrooms for younger children. Leaders remind pupils about the identity of the safeguarding team by prominently displaying posters around the school.
68. The school teaches pupils how to remain safe when working online or using social media. An effective internet filtering and monitoring system is in place, which is regularly tested. Alerts are promptly reviewed by members of the safeguarding team, who take appropriate action and maintain thorough records.
69. Boarding staff are aware of the safeguarding responsibilities associated with their roles and create a culture in which boarders’ security and welfare are prioritised. Boarders have access to a suitable independent person and are provided with clear guidance so that they know how to make contact, should they need to.
70. In the early years, staff have a thorough understanding of their responsibility to protect children’s wellbeing. Leaders ensure that a range of effective procedures are in place so that the early years environment is suitable and secure. They liaise closely with parents and carers to ensure each child’s safety and wellbeing.
71. Leaders ensure that all required safer recruitment checks on staff and governors are undertaken before they begin work at the school. These checks are accurately recorded on the SCR. The headteacher and governors regularly review the SCR to ensure that procedures for safer recruitment are effective.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

72. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Giggleswick School
Department for Education number	815/6011
Registered charity number	1109826
Address	Giggleswick School Giggleswick Settle North Yorkshire BD24 0DE
Phone number	01729 893000
Email address	office@giggleswick.org.uk
Website	www.giggleswick.org.uk
Proprietor	Giggleswick School
Chair	Mr Alex Thursby
Headteacher	Mr Sam Hart
Age range	2 to 18
Number of pupils	377
Number of boarding pupils	84
Date of previous inspection	10 to 12 May 2023

Information about the school

73. Giggleswick School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in Settle, North Yorkshire. Founded in 1512, the school is a limited company and charity overseen by a board of governors, who are also trustees of the charity. The school comprises four sections: a pre-school, for children aged 2 to 4; a prep school, for pupils aged 4 to 11; senior school, for pupils aged 11 to 16; and a sixth form, for pupils aged 16 to 18.
74. Boarding accommodation is in six houses, all sharing the school site, one of which is designed for the youngest pupils in Years 3 to 8. The remaining five houses are for pupils from Years 9 to 13. Two are for female pupils and three are for male pupils. Day pupils are integrated into boarding houses.
75. The school has identified 118 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are a small number of pupils in the school who have an education, health and care plan.
76. The school has identified English as an additional language for 38 pupils.
77. The school states its aims are to put children's wellbeing and learning at the heart of all that it does, to deliver the highest of educational standards across an engaging and broad curriculum, to support every child to achieve their best outcomes, to build positive relationships across the school community and the communities that it serves, to equip children to become lifelong learners and to welcome people of all faiths and backgrounds to a community based upon a Christian foundation.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 April 2026

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

79. 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.

80. 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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