ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

22 to 24 September 2026

Bury Grammar School

Tenterden Street

Bury

BL9 0HN

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 an informed and effective oversight of the school's operations. They ensure that leaders fulfil their duties and responsibilities with regard to the regulatory requirements, including those relating to the early years. Governors and senior leaders prioritise risk management, which is effective and proportional. Leaders are reflective and continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's policies and procedures. They always prioritise pupil welfare. They work co-operatively with governors to produce strategic plans reflecting this. Pupils' welfare is effectively supported.

2. The curriculum is well planned, starting in the early years, where children benefit from a stimulating environment that promotes their language, literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is enhanced by the extensive extra-curricular provision, which is well matched to the needs and interests of pupils. This includes sporting, musical, dramatic and academic activities, which serve to broaden pupils' knowledge and skills and enhance their experience of school. Typically, pupils perform very well in GCSE and A-level qualifications. Teaching across the school is generally effective and ensures pupils make good progress from different starting points. However, some teaching does not identify when pupils are ready to apply their learning in increasingly complex ways. When this happens, pupils are not challenged to deepen their thinking or understanding as well as they could be.

3. Pupils' behaviour is positive. They understand the school's expectations and act accordingly. Bullying is rare and leaders analyse any incidents that do occur for trends and patterns. The school operates an effective admission and attendance system. Sixth-form pupils are appropriately supervised and always accounted for. However, at the start of the inspection, the arrangements for the timing of sixth-form registration did not fully meet statutory requirements. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.

4. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of British values, their respect for different faiths and cultures, and to contribute positively to the school and wider community. Pupils take on leadership responsibilities and learn to express their views and respect those of others. They increasingly contribute to the wider community. For example, sixth-form pupils undertake weekly volunteering in settings such as primary schools, care homes, heritage organisations and services for people with disabilities. Charity groups, musical outreach and community events provide further opportunities for pupils to understand and respond to the needs of others. Careers guidance and financial education also prepare pupils well for their next steps.

5. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. The safeguarding team responds appropriately to concerns raised. Staff record and report concerns in a timely and effective manner.

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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 registration system for sixth-form pupils continues to fully conform with all requirements of relevant statutory guidance
- ensure that teaching consistently identifies and supports pupils who are ready for greater challenge in their learning.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Governors maintain effective oversight of the work of leaders in a systematic manner through committees, reports and regular visits to the school. Governors assure themselves that leaders have the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and that the school actively promotes pupils' wellbeing. They ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently.

7. Leaders communicate a clear and inclusive vision for pupils' development that is in line with the aims of the school. They use a range of oversight measures to ensure that this vision is appropriately implemented and act proactively to identify and address any areas for development. For example, recent developments around classroom routines have had a positive impact on pupils' experiences of school.

8. Leaders regularly take account of pupils' thoughts through the school council and other forums, through which pupils share their views with leaders. Leaders respond to pupils' suggestions, for example with the setting up of an 'expanding horizons' discussion group, or changes to food provision and the addition of the 'snack shack'.

9. Leaders assess and manage risk carefully, for example in sports, the curriculum, on site, and during off-site activities and overseas trips. Leaders also consider contextual risks and those that are harder to spot. Appropriate mitigation strategies are put into place. Risk assessments are monitored by senior leaders. Leaders ensure that reviews of risk assessments take place regularly after events to identify future improvements.

10. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders implement a suitable accessibility plan that identifies actions to improve pupil access to both the premises and the curriculum. Leaders ensure that all pupils can access the school site and the curriculum.

11. The school provides parents with regular communication to keep them well informed about their child's progress. This includes regular reports and parents' evenings. Leaders support parents' understanding of the information provided through information evenings and guidance. They listen to parents to improve methods of communication, reflecting on their feedback. The school makes all required information, including policies, available to parents via the school's website or on request.

12. Leaders maintain effective links with external agencies, including local safeguarding partners and medical professionals. The school provides the local authority with the required information relating to annual reviews, and the use of finance and funding for pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). They inform the local authority when pupils join or leave at non-standard transition points.

13. Leaders implement the school's complaints policy fairly and proportionately. They address complaints professionally and within appropriate time limits. Senior leaders and governors regularly monitor complaints to identify patterns and make appropriate changes.

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Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

14. Pupils follow an ambitious, broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders plan the curriculum carefully to ensure that it provides a wide range of learning opportunities and is well matched to pupils' needs. They ensure that pupils acquire the essential knowledge and skills needed to study a range of qualifications at GCSE and A level. Leaders also provide opportunities for pupils to enrich their studies and gain additional accreditations, for example through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and through opportunities to take part in regional and national competitions.

15. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this to teach effectively. They explain concepts clearly and make use of well-directed questioning to check pupils' understanding. Teachers help pupils to apply their knowledge and skills across subjects. For example, they draw on mathematical skills in science and encourage pupils to develop analytical skills when considering different perspectives in the humanities. Teachers use well-chosen resources to deepen pupils' understanding, for example in geography, where pupils apply their knowledge of climate change to interpret climate data.

16. Warm and positive relationships between staff and pupils support learning. Teachers know individual pupils well and encourage them to work both independently and collaboratively. Teachers provide regular guidance and feedback to pupils. This helps pupils to identify errors and misconceptions in their learning and improve their work. Pupils take pride in their work and take responsibility for their learning. Many teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in more complex ways. When this happens, pupils deepen their thinking and understanding of subjects. However, teachers do not always recognise when pupils are ready for this greater challenge. Consequently, some pupils do not extend their learning as well as they should.

17. Leaders monitor pupils' progress systematically through internal and external assessments to identify where additional support is needed. Teaching staff provide targeted support to ensure that pupils develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed for the next stages of their education. As a result of effective curriculum planning, high-quality teaching and leaders' oversight, pupils make good progress and achieve well in their GCSE and A-level qualifications. Pupils move on to a wide range of appropriate destinations, including university and degree-level apprenticeships.

18. Children in the early years benefit from a well-planned balance of adult-led teaching and purposeful continuous provision. Staff use their knowledge of individual children to plan activities that build progressively on what children know and can do. Through phonics, mathematics and carefully chosen activities, children develop their early language, literacy and mathematical knowledge. Staff model language, ask questions and adapt activities to extend children's thinking and understanding. As a result, children develop secure foundations for their future learning and are well prepared for their next stage.

19. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified appropriately and receive support matched to their needs. Leaders set specific targets for pupils and monitor pupils' progress in a range of ways, including in lessons and through assessments. Special educational needs and/or disabilities champions within departments help teachers to interpret and apply guidance in lessons. This enables pupils who have SEND to access the curriculum and make good progress.

20. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are appropriately supported. A very small number of pupils are in the early stages of learning English. These pupils receive effective support to develop essential linguistic skills. Teachers use a range of well-chosen resources to support pupils' learning, and they check methodically to ensure that pupils are understanding their work. This additional help enables these pupils to successfully access the curriculum, develop their speaking, reading and writing skills, and make good progress.

21. The school provides pupils with an extensive range of extra-curricular activities that cater for their interests. Pupils take part in team and individual sports such as football and hockey, as well as school productions, choirs, musical ensembles, debating societies, games clubs and the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). These groups allow pupils to develop teamwork, to challenge themselves and to develop their confidence and creativity, as well as catering to their specific interests.

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

22. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme helps pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem. For example, pupils in Year 8 are encouraged to reflect on their own internal and external values. Extra-curricular activities provide further opportunities for pupils to grow in confidence, for example through the school's junior school music groups, where pupils develop confidence in participation and performance. Positive relationships with staff help pupils feel known and supported and develop mutual respect.

23. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is age-appropriate and reflects statutory guidance. Leaders consult and communicate effectively with parents. Staff are suitably trained and use specialist resources and external contributors where appropriate. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, personal safety and contemporary social issues such as toxic masculinity. Children in the early years are taught about the importance of positive friendships.

24. Leaders promote pupils' emotional wellbeing through the pastoral curriculum and wider support available across the school. Staff know pupils well and identify when they may need additional help. Pupils learn to recognise and manage their emotions and know who they can speak to if they are worried or need support.

25. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual and moral understanding through the curriculum, assemblies and wider school activities. Pupils consider different beliefs, values and perspectives and have opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and those of others. They develop an understanding of how their choices and actions can affect other people.

26. Staff support children in the early years to develop their confidence, independence and emotional understanding. Children learn to recognise and express their feelings and develop positive relationships with adults and other children. Indoor and outdoor activities develop children's gross and fine motor skills and provide regular opportunities to be physically active. These experiences help children to develop the emotional and physical skills they need for their next steps.

27. There is an effectively planned and taught physical education (PE) curriculum. Pupils have extensive opportunities to be physically active through an inclusive sports programme. Pupils develop knowledge and skills in areas such as swimming, movement and teamwork. Pupils participate in a range of competitive and recreational sports and morning, lunchtime and after-school activities. Elite athlete, and strength and conditioning programmes provide additional opportunities for older pupils to develop their skills.

28. Leaders and staff communicate clear behaviour expectations, which are well understood by pupils. The school is a mobile phone-free environment, with sixth-form pupils allowed to use mobile phones in designated areas. The approach is well implemented by staff and understood by pupils. Pupils are well behaved and take responsibility for their actions. They are polite, focused and respectful in lessons and unstructured time. Where issues do occur, leaders ensure that sanctions are applied consistently and a restorative approach used to help pupils understand the impact of their actions. Leaders scrutinise behaviour logs to identify patterns, including those relating to vulnerable groups.

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29. There is an appropriate approach to anti-bullying in place. Leaders and staff are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying. Leaders respond swiftly to any rare events that do occur. Precise records are maintained of incidents, including the support given to pupils.

30. Leaders ensure the premises are maintained to a high standard. They oversee the arrangements for health and safety, including fire safety, through planned checks and the appropriate use of expert advice. Pupils are effectively supervised and well cared for throughout the school day. Suitable medical facilities and appropriately trained staff ensure that pupils' health needs are met. Care plans for pupils with allergies are communicated effectively and staff receive appropriate training, including in anaphylaxis and paediatric first aid where required.

31. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Pupil absence is actively promoted and carefully monitored. Appropriate actions are taken to track patterns of attendance. Leaders ensure that sixth-form pupils are safe and appropriately accounted for through a range of effectively implemented checks. However, at the start of the inspection, the arrangements for the timing of sixth-form registration were not fully in line with all aspects of current statutory guidance. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.

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

32. The school actively promotes British values through PSHE, including wider world weeks, assemblies, religious education and history lessons, as well as a range of activities. Pupils learn about democracy, law, individual liberty, respect and tolerance. Pupils learn the difference between right and wrong and why the civil and criminal law of the United Kingdom matters. They develop a broad understanding of, and respect for, public institutions, such as Parliament, the courts and the emergency services. As a result, pupils can explain how laws protect people and why society relies on them. They discuss contemporary and sometimes contentious issues in a balanced way. They develop confidence in expressing their own views and listen respectfully to others.

33. Pupils develop an understanding of different faiths, cultures and perspectives. Multi-faith assemblies, visits from faith leaders and pupil-led celebrations provide meaningful experiences. Culture days, developed in response to suggestions from pupils and the school council's equality, diversity and inclusion group, enable pupils to explore cultural identity and social issues within a respectful framework. The creation of the 'expanding horizons' group allows pupils to discuss geopolitical ideas and controversies in a safe and supportive way. Older pupils learn about the dangers of extremism and hear from local leaders fostering community cohesion.

34. Pupils respond positively to opportunities to take responsibility and undertake leadership roles. This is particularly evident in the effective house system, where pupils earn points for their houses in a wide variety of ways and aspire to leadership positions. Older pupils act as role models to younger children, including sixth-form pupils leading assemblies for pupils in the junior school.

35. Carefully planned activities promote children's social development in the early years. Children learn to share resources, work collaboratively and negotiate with others, for example by sharing space when riding tricycles. These experiences develop children's independence, co-operation and awareness of others, preparing them well for their next steps.

36. Leaders develop pupils' economic and financial understanding as they progress through the school. Younger pupils learn about earning money and older pupils consider savings, taxation, gambling, fraud and financial decision-making. Practical enterprise activities also give pupils the opportunity to apply this knowledge and develop their learning. Pupils in the sixth form are prepared for their next steps through activities such as learning how to read a payslip, how to budget and learning about student finance.

37. Careers education prepares pupils to make informed choices about their next steps, for example, with pupils in Year 7 who are supported to gain experiences of work environments. The careers programme includes a wide range of appropriate activity, such as visiting speakers, including alumni, and individual guidance. As pupils get older, they benefit from a range of impartial and wide-ranging guidance and information about further education, university, apprenticeship and employment. The careers provision enables pupils to make choices that reflect their aptitudes and interests.

38. Leaders have developed a range of ways that encourage pupils to contribute positively to the local and wider community. Pupils increasingly take part. For instance, half of the sixth-form pupils undertake weekly volunteering in settings such as primary schools, care homes, heritage organisations and services for people with disabilities. Charity groups, musical outreach and

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community events provide further opportunities for pupils to understand and contribute to the needs of others.

Safeguarding

39. Leaders have established an effective safeguarding culture throughout the school. The safeguarding policies and procedures reflect the current statutory guidance. Governors maintain effective oversight of leaders' safeguarding work, including through an annual review of safeguarding arrangements, to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. They ensure that any incidents are reviewed appropriately and that learning informs policies and staff training.

40. Staff are well trained in their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff receive suitable induction training and regular safeguarding training updates. These include child-on-child abuse, online safety and risks identified by local safeguarding partners. As a result, staff are vigilant about pupils' safety and wellbeing. They identify and record concerns, including low-level concerns about adults working with pupils, and escalate these if needed.

41. Members of the safeguarding team receive enhanced training to equip them to manage the school's safeguarding work. The safeguarding team responds to concerns appropriately and in line with local and national guidance. Leaders make timely referrals to relevant external agencies, such as children's services, the local authority or the police, when required. Leaders maintain suitable and thorough safeguarding records, including the support provided to pupils. Suitable risk assessments are put in place to support the welfare of pupils, as needed.

42. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They have a range of ways to seek help, including anonymously, and know that they can approach adults with concerns. Pupils are taught to understand harms that could occur online and elsewhere to protect themselves. Leaders regularly test the school's internet filtering and monitoring arrangements. They routinely review how they can improve measures to protect pupils from potential harm, for example when using artificial intelligence.

43. Leaders and governors are appropriately trained in safer recruitment procedures. They ensure that the required pre-employment checks are carried out on staff, volunteers and governors before they begin working with pupils. The school maintains an accurate single central record of appointments, which leaders and the nominated governor regularly scrutinise to ensure that all appropriate steps are taken to safeguard pupils when recruiting adults to work with them.

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School details

School	Bury Grammar School
Department for Education number	351/6008
Registered charity number	526622
Address	Bury Grammar School Tenterden Street Bury Lancashire BL9 0HN
Phone number	0161 696 8600
Email address	schooloffice@burygrammar.com
Website	www.burygrammar.com
Proprietor	The Bury Grammar Schools Limited
Chair	Mr Richard Smyth
Headteacher	Mrs Jo Anderson
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	1234
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2023

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Information about the school

44. Bury Grammar School is a co-educational day school, located in Bury, Lancashire. The school consists of a primary division, separate senior schools for male pupils and female pupils and a sixth form on the same site. The school is a registered charity and is overseen by a board of trustees who form the school's governing body.

45. There are 58 children in the early years, taught in two Nursery and two Reception classes.

46. The school has identified 141 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.

47. The school has identified English as an additional language for 202 pupils.

48. The school states that its aims are to challenge and inspire pupils to work hard, aim high, achieve and celebrate academic success. Leaders seek to foster generosity of spirit, open-mindedness, confidence, resilience, a sense of service and an unwavering commitment to equality. The school encourages all pupils to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, develop a lifelong love of learning, work harmoniously with others, and seek to have a positive impact on society.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	22 to 24 September 2026

49. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

50. 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work including with staff and pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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

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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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CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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