ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

6 to 8 October 2026

Felsted School

Stebbing Road

Felsted

CM6 3LL

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 make sure that leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge to support their roles. They check that the implementation of suitable policies and procedures is effective. Governors visit the school and boarding provision regularly, so they know them well. They meet with staff, pupils and boarders to ensure that the school meets its aims and fulfils all the regulatory requirements. This means that the Standards, including the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools (NMS), are met consistently.

2. Leaders weave the school's aims and ethos into all aspects of school life. They set high expectations for pupils. The school's culture values and promotes inclusion, integrity, service, courtesy, confidence and responsibility. Leaders review the effectiveness of the school's provision. They are well informed about potential risks to pupils' welfare. The appropriate measures in place control any risks they identify.

3. In the early years, the early years foundation stage (EYFS) curriculum is ambitious, coherent and responsive to children's interests. It aligns with their emerging needs and stages of development. The prep and senior school curriculum provides a wide breadth of choice. The range of subjects and qualifications take account of pupils' interests and aptitudes. These include GCSEs, A levels, BTEC options and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They plan well-structured lessons. These ensure that pupils make good progress. Regular checks on pupils' learning inform the support given to individual pupils, so they achieve well over time.

4. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive thoughtfully targeted interventions. Staff are well trained to adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' individual needs using all the available information. This means that adaptations to support pupils' learning are used effectively throughout the school.

5. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive high levels of support tailored to their needs.

6. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of co-curricular opportunities. These benefit pupils of all ages and abilities. The co-curricular programme fosters pupils' interests while developing their knowledge, skills and understanding of service, leadership and sustainability.

7. A suitable behaviour policy supports pupils to uphold high standards of conduct, including those who are boarders. Teachers encourage and expect high standards of behaviour. High expectations and effective behaviour management systems ensure that pupils' good behaviour is acknowledged. Poor behaviour receives appropriate and proportionate sanctions. Leaders respond to any instances of bullying promptly and effectively.

8. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme includes relationships and sex education (RSE). It meets statutory requirements. The programme is well planned and responsive to pupils' needs. Pupils know who to turn to if they have any concerns. They are taught how to stay safe, including when online. Pupils understand the reasons for limiting their access to mobile phones. They value the extra time this gives them to spend with fellow pupils and boarders.

9. Careers guidance is detailed and well resourced. Careers fairs, talks, seminars and tailored guidance broaden pupils' understanding overall. This allows older pupils to gain knowledge of routes into higher education and employment. However, younger pupils do not receive the same breadth of careers education and guidance to help to nurture their early aspirations.

10. Boarding arrangements are well organised, creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment. Boarders live in caring boarding houses. As a result, boarders have a well-developed understanding of mutual respect and tolerance. Boarders are well supervised. They benefit from the thorough induction process for new boarders. The boarding accommodation provides a clean, warm and comfortable environment, supporting their welfare effectively.

11. Pupils enjoy positions of leadership and service. These roles promote the school's core values effectively. Pupils welcome opportunities to be of service in the school, as well as in the wider community. They enjoy opportunities to raise money for international projects and charitable organisations.

12. Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. Pupils feel safe. Staff are well trained and vigilant to risks and risk mitigation. When the need arises, the school works closely with external agencies. Governors are robust in their oversight and monitoring of safeguarding across the school and in boarding, including through safer staff recruitment.

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:

- expand careers guidance in Year 7 and Year 8 so that pupils are suitably equipped to make informed decisions for their future pathways.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities have appropriate skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties effectively. Governors bring a wide range of suitable experience to their role. They work closely with leaders to provide scrutiny, support and a commitment to continuous improvement. They visit the school and boarding regularly to monitor the work of senior leaders and to understand the impact of their decision-making. This gives them assurance that the Standards are met consistently, including the NMS.

14. Governors and leaders work together to create an environment which encourages pupils and boarders to value individual difference. Pupils develop their skills and qualities while engaging in a rich co-curricular programme. The school's offer promotes their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing effectively.

15. Leaders set high standards for pupils. They put pupils' wellbeing at the centre of their planning and decision-making. Leaders understand the potential risks to pupils and boarders. They are well trained and knowledgeable in managing them. Thorough systems record and track any wellbeing concerns. Leaders know how to monitor and escalate concerns. They liaise effectively with external agencies when needed. Suitable risk assessments cover a variety of aspects, including the site, boarding and educational visits. Leaders implement appropriate health and safety measures. They monitor these to ensure that they remain effective, taking further action when needed.

16. The school's website provides clear and accessible information for pupils and parents. This includes all the policies and documents required, including those related to boarding and the early years. Parents receive reports and other information about their child's progress, attainment and attitudes. Leaders provide external agencies with appropriate and relevant information. They notify the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition. They also provide the local authority with the required information related to those with education, health and care plans (EHC plans).

17. Effectively led boarding provision meets the school's aims and ethos. This creates a culture of mutual respect and tolerance. Boarding houses provide a warm and caring environment with well-trained staff. Teaching, boarding and medical staff communicate regularly to promote boarders' wellbeing. All staff understand the effective policies and procedures in place. The systematic training for boarding staff ensures they have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their roles confidently.

18. The well-considered and detailed accessibility plan is informed by regular reviews of pupils' needs. These reflect the school's commitment to ensuring that all pupils are included. Leaders' actions minimise any potential barriers to pupils' learning and support participation across the school's premises. Leaders ensure that teaching does not discriminate against any pupil and that the school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

19. Leaders implement the complaints policy effectively. The complaints log is suitably maintained and monitored regularly. This ensures that trends across the school and boarding are identified quickly. The policy has a three-stage process with clear timescales. Records are kept appropriately, including any action taken and the outcomes of the complaint.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The school's broad and balanced curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of creative, academic and aesthetic experiences. In the early years, the curriculum is equally broad and balanced. This is supported by appropriate schemes of work. The regular checks on learning, for example, through routine tracking and observation, mean that children make good progress. Leaders regularly audit and evaluate staff practice and procedures. They continue to evolve and improve the school's offer, ensuring that it meets all statutory requirements**.**

21. The curriculum, from pre-prep to the upper sixth form, is divided into areas such as language and communication, technology and innovation, future and self. The model allows for progression and supports pupils' character, knowledge and skills development. Pupils build on prior knowledge as they move through year groups. In the early years, the curriculum supports children to make links across diverse areas of learning. It includes specialist teaching in Spanish, swimming and dance. In the prep school, curriculum subjects are linked and explored through a creative and inquiry-based approach. Leaders provide a wide range of courses for older pupils, including GCSEs, A levels, BTEC options and the IBDP, in response to pupils' aptitudes, needs and interests. The curriculum enables pupils to prepare for a wide range of university courses and careers. Leaders review and adapt the curriculum routinely to meet the pupils' aspirations.

22. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly to identify strengths and areas for development. Teachers are experienced and well trained in the subjects they teach. Pupils benefit from the well-planned lessons. These include effective teaching strategies and digital technology to support their teaching. Pupils gain secure foundations of knowledge and skills. They develop independence, intellectual curiosity and good subject knowledge. As a result, they are well motivated and eager to learn. They make good progress, linking content across subjects as they consolidate and build on previous learning.

23. The school's assessment model ensures that pupils' progress is monitored closely. The information gathered is used effectively to develop schemes of work. Lesson plans provide carefully targeted support when pupils need it. Effective communication between departments ensures that staff know pupils well. The regular assessment points, alongside routine monitoring and intervention, ensure that pupils are well supported. Any gaps in pupils' understanding and skills are filled promptly in lessons and through the additional support sessions on offer.

24. There are robust policies and procedures in place to identify and support pupils who have SEND across year groups. Leaders with responsibility for these pupils have appropriate skills and knowledge. Pupils' individual needs are identified quickly, including through checks on learning and professional dialogue with teaching, pastoral and boarding staff. This results in a highly personalised and inclusive approach for each pupil. Consequently, they achieve well alongside their peers. Staff are well trained. They adapt their teaching using tailored strategies and resources. Pupils who have an EHC plan are thoughtfully supported so that their needs are met.

25. Pupils who speak EAL receive effective support that is aligned closely to their needs. Those joining from overseas have additional support prior to the start of the academic year. They benefit from an introduction to key vocabulary and a variety of social activities to nurture their speaking skills. Pupils' achievements are monitored closely as they settle into school. Leaders and staff implement effective plans to help pupils to develop their spoken and written English. These include clear guidance for

pupils on subject-specific vocabulary and the provision of appropriate materials to support their learning.

26. The co-curricular programme continues into the evenings and weekends. Boarders benefit from stimulating and engaging recreational opportunities. These range from sport, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), Model United Nations, music, creative activities, outdoor pursuits and programmes such as those of the Round Square network, an affiliation which promotes international cultural exchanges, adventure activities and leadership. The co-curricular programme also includes The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), robotics and esports. The variety offered ensures that pupils have an opportunity to explore their own interests. This develops new skills and equips pupils for the next stage of education.

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

27. The school's ethos emphasises hospitality, originality, integrity and resilience. All of this fosters an inclusive environment in which diversity is viewed as a strength. Pupils are encouraged to develop the ability to make a difference in the world.

28. Chapel services play an integral role in the life of the school. These include services such as Remembrance Day. Pupils and the local community value these events. Such occasions foster pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to understand reverence, as well as to develop their knowledge and experience of music. Pupils of all faiths and none feel welcomed and respected. Spiritual development is also pursued through philosophical thinking and dialogue. Pupils explore concepts, such as equality, through thoughtful debate.

29. The range of PSHE, RSE and character-building opportunities develops pupils' wellbeing. Qualified professionals deliver mindfulness, yoga, peer counselling and creative therapies in the school's wellbeing centre. Throughout the pre-prep and prep school, pupils' physical and mental wellbeing is actively promoted in the comprehensive PSHE and RSE programmes. Opportunities for pupils to share their views and ideas enhance this learning. The curriculum covers a range of topics such as identity, healthy relationships, consent, mental health and emotional wellbeing. The school emphasises the importance of fundamental British values, such as tolerance and mutual respect, as well as pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) knowledge and skills development.

30. Revised approaches to pupils' physical wellbeing align closely with pupils' needs. In line with the school's aims, the curriculum encourages healthy lifestyles. The new curriculum for Year 7 and Year 8 includes fitness units of work, with multiple options for pupils to choose from. This builds their positive attitudes to exercise and engagement. Pupils who have SEND receive one-to-one support and individually designed learning plans. These ensure that the curriculum is accessible and inclusive. The broad range of sports and physical activities on offer includes rugby, hockey, cricket, swimming, tennis, squash, horse riding, dance and netball. These activities promote physical fitness. They contribute appropriately to pupils' overall emotional wellbeing through opportunities for personal growth, leadership and teamwork.

31. Pupils' good behaviour is reinforced through clear expectations, strong relationships and purposeful learning experiences. In the early years, staff interactions are characterised by a caring, calm and restorative approach. Consequently, any inappropriate behaviours are addressed promptly. Positive reinforcement, modelling and praise are evident. Children behave well. They follow the expectations, creating a purposeful learning environment. Leaders maintain behaviour records and scrutinise them so that they can respond to any trends. Reports of unkind behaviour or bullying are taken seriously by leaders and acted on immediately. Guidance on mobile phones is introduced with care. This ensures that pupils and boarders have appropriately managed access to phones. Pupils understand the benefits of less screen time.

32. Boarding accommodation is well designed, managed and maintained. Laundry systems are efficient. The food provision in boarding houses is extensive and responsive to pupils' requests. Well-established induction processes support new boarders. The programme includes the allocation of a house mentor who helps boarders to settle. Boarders enjoy well-planned in-house social and recreational events. These support social development and cohesion within the boarding

community. Supervision of boarding is appropriate and continuous during the evening and at weekends.

33. Pupils value leadership roles within the school. They view them as opportunities to share their views with leaders, promoting inclusion and equality. They lead houses, committees and support other pupils to settle into the school. Prefects work with leaders to reinforce standards of behaviour and the development of positive relationships.

34. Health and safety protocols are implemented effectively. Thorough risk assessments cover all aspects of school life, including the international summer school. Staff receive first aid training. Leaders instigate regular fire evacuation drills, including in boarding houses. Pupils and staff know how to respond in an emergency. Leaders implement regular checks and maintenance, including for fire safety equipment, electrical and water systems. Appropriate supervision is in place throughout the school day and in boarding to ensure pupils' safety. The school has a policy and procedure for restrictive interventions and seclusion. This includes a reporting system for any incidents arising. Leaders monitor this for any trends. They ensure compliance with relevant health and safety legislation.

35. The school's well-resourced medical and wellbeing centres provide assistance when pupils' need it. Trained medical staff work closely with pastoral staff and counsellors. They make sure that pupils receive the support they need. Boarders also have access to local medical services. First aid kits, including those for use during trips and physical education (PE), are maintained effectively.

36. Leaders meet regularly to ensure that there is systematic oversight of pupils' attendance. They identify any emerging attendance improvement needs quickly, with supportive plans put in place. The school liaises with families and local agencies to ensure that pupils attend regularly. The school maintains an accurate admission register. Admission and attendance processes are effective and meet all the regulatory requirements.

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

37. The curriculum and wider school activities promote understanding of different cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. Pupils learn about the importance of protections for people under the Equality Act 2010. The curriculum is enhanced through events such as Black History Month, international celebrations and the teaching of human rights in religious studies. The arrangements accommodate different faith practices. The school's response to relationships between pupils from countries affected by conflict demonstrates a considered and respectful approach. In the prep school, the drama department uses a range of books from other cultures to act as stimuli for drama lessons. This allows pupils to access other cultures and to develop their global knowledge and understanding. Pupils are confident to express their views and to engage with different viewpoints. They appreciate their diverse community and understand the importance of tolerance and respect towards each other. This prepares them well for life in British society.

38. Fundamental British values are well promoted and embedded through the curriculum. As a result, pupils build their understanding of the need for the role of law and democratic institutions. They host and attend Model United Nations conferences. These events encourage them to engage with contemporary issues. The school's aims and ethos emphasise wellbeing, inclusivity and community. Pupils develop their understanding of values such as liberty and tolerance. They do this, for example, through their participation in pupil committees, debates, mock elections and boarding house hustings. The 'laureates', a pupil-led initiative, provides an opportunity for pupils to engage in community service, leadership and peer support. Pupils contribute to developing the school's behaviour charter, demonstrating ownership of school expectations and helping them to distinguish right from wrong. Assemblies, tutorials and PSHE provide opportunities to explore equality, diversity, democracy and mutual respect.

39. The comprehensive careers programme supports pupils to consider a wide variety of future options. Pupils learn about a broad range of professions representing a wide range of careers. This includes through presentations from visiting speakers, some of whom are alumni. Staff provide helpful and personalised advice to pupils about future choices, higher education options and next steps. The choices consider courses at UK and international universities, degree apprenticeships and pathways into employment after leaving school. Pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 receive careers education. However, the programme is not sufficiently explicit in setting out the range of opportunities available to them in their future learning and life beyond school.

40. The curriculum equips pupils with financial awareness. The PSHE programme addresses personal finance, including credit cards, mortgages, compound interest, savings and economic inequality. The Year 7 and Year 8 enterprise initiative provides practical experience of business planning and selling products, alongside the consideration of environmental sustainability. Pupils' participation in managing house budgets further develops their financial decision-making and negotiation skills.

41. Pupils develop their sense of social responsibility by contributing to the local community. Pupils participate in purposeful charitable and service activities, including foodbank visits, fundraising events and the 'Felsted School Mission' in London. The mission provides activities for young people, encouraging fitness and social interaction. Boarding houses commit to building charity partnerships. Such opportunities extend beyond fundraising to develop understanding of social responsibility and the needs of others. Pupils understand the social and financial impact of their involvement, linking

economic contribution to wider responsibility. They engage with causes in a way that helps them to understand the value of giving time, sharing resources and expertise. A pupil-led initiative imports coffee from Uganda to sell across the UK in partnership with other schools. This funds places for children attending school in Uganda. Opportunities in the Creativity, Activity and Service element of the IBDP continue to build on and develop these experiences outside of school.

Safeguarding

42. Governors know the school and understand local safeguarding risks. They provide effective oversight of safeguarding, ensuring that leaders with responsibility for safeguarding receive appropriate challenge and support. They visit the school and boarding regularly to monitor safeguarding and recruitment processes. Their checks include staff files, low-level concerns and wider safeguarding issues. They review the safeguarding policy annually in light of new statutory guidance.

43. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding have a well-developed understanding of safeguarding requirements. They are clear about their responsibilities, local contextual risks and emerging safeguarding trends. They monitor pupils' welfare carefully. Pastoral staff, the medical centre, the wellbeing centre and boarding teams systematically maintain thorough records of safeguarding concerns and any actions taken. They work closely with external agencies. They understand local thresholds and welcome their advice when needed.

44. In the early years, leaders ensure that teachers receive additional early years specific safeguarding training, such as restraint for early years and intimate care. Staff understand the additional safeguarding vulnerabilities of children in the early years. High levels of supervision, together with safe practices, including for paediatric first aid, safer eating and comprehensive, dynamic risk assessments, keep children safe.

45. Staff maintain an effective and proactive safeguarding culture across the school and boarding. They are aware of both regulatory requirements and broader contextual safeguarding changes. They know their pupils well. This supports early identification of potential concerns. Staff receive regular training, including at induction. The training explores themes such as contextualised safeguarding in boarding, countering extremism and managing low-level concerns. As a result, staff in all phases of the school remain vigilant. They report concerns promptly, in line with the school's safeguarding policy and procedures.

46. The school provides different ways for pupils and boarders of all ages to raise concerns or disclose issues about their welfare, including access to an independent person for boarders. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum, including online. Suitable online filtering and monitoring arrangements are in place, with immediate escalation of high-risk alerts. This ensures that leaders act quickly when the need arises.

47. Recruitment for staff in the school and boarding is planned with care. Governors monitor this aspect of school life. They ensure the effectiveness of those arrangements, including recruitment checks.

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School details

School	Felsted School
Department for Education number	881/6009
Registered charity number	319870
Address	Felsted School Stebbing Road Felsted Essex CM6 3LL
Phone number	01371 822600
Email address	info@felsted.org
Website	www.felsted.org
Proprietor	Felsted School Trustee Ltd
Chair	Mr Michael Beale
Headteacher	Ms Lara Péchard
Age range	3 to 19
Number of pupils	835
Number of boarding pupils	528
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 December 2023

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Information about the school

48. Felsted is a co-educational independent boarding and day school for pupils aged 3 to 19 years. The school consists of a pre-reception, pre-prep, prep and senior school which includes a sixth form. It is located on two sites in the village of Felsted in Essex. The school was founded in 1564 and is a registered charity.

49. There are seven boarding houses in the senior school (Deacon's, Elwyn's, Gepp's, Follyfield, Stocks's, Windsor's and Garnetts). These include two for pupils in Year 13. The other five are for pupils from Year 9 to Year 12. Male and female pupils are accommodated in separate boarding houses in the senior school. There is one co-educational boarding house in the prep school for pupils from Year 5 to Year 8.

50. There are 31 children in the early years, in two Reception classes. There are ten children in the Pre-Reception class.

51. The school has identified 243 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Very few pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.

52. The school has identified English as an additional language for 57 pupils.

53. The school states its aims are to educate all pupils to develop their individual character and become lifelong learners who are aspirational, globally minded and with the skills to flourish beyond the school. The school intends for its pastoral care to support personal growth and emotional development in a community based on the development of mutual respect.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	6 to 8 October 2026

54. A team of ten inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

55. 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 including with staff and pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

56. 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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