

School inspection report

9 to 11 September 2025

Belgrave School

The Willows

159 Four Acres

Withywood

Bristol

Somerset

BS13 8RA

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. Directors successfully support and challenge leaders to promote pupils' wellbeing effectively. Directors ensure that leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their responsibilities effectively, so that the Standards are met.
2. Senior leaders act on their self-evaluation effectively. They have taken actions that have developed the delivery and implementation of the school's administrative systems so that the organisation runs efficiently. Senior and subject leaders are instrumental in developing the curriculum, personal development and teaching.
3. Leaders carefully tailor the curriculum to meet pupils' individual, and often complex needs. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to plan engaging activities that help pupils regain their confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Through nurturing and therapeutic approaches, often consisting of individual support, pupils' confidence and self-esteem grow so that they can form positive relationships between their classmates and staff. Staff are successful in reducing many barriers so that pupils behave well and engage positively in their learning.
4. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is well planned and effective in developing pupils' understanding of social and economic matters. The provision for relationships and sex education (RSE) meets statutory requirements. Pupils learn that every individual person is unique and deserves respect.
5. Effective pastoral care contributes to an environment where pupils are well supported in developing their self-confidence and the communication skills needed to proceed to further education.
6. Pupils receive helpful guidance when choosing their examination subjects and when applying to the further education institutions of their choice. However, the school does not always provide pupils with information about the qualifications, aptitudes and skills needed for different careers or work as effectively as possible.
7. Clear behavioural expectations and effective behaviour management ensure that pupils behave well and are kind and respectful towards each other and with staff. Pupils develop their understanding of the need for rules and that behavioural choices have consequences.
8. Pupils are supervised appropriately throughout the day, including during breaks and lunchtimes. The premises, including the medical room, are maintained to a suitable standard. Secure risk assessment procedures ensure that risks which may affect pupils' welfare, health and safety are identified and mitigated.
9. Leaders consider safeguarding in all aspects of their work. Safeguarding leaders ensure that staff are kept up to date with any changes to statutory guidance. Leaders maintain productive working relationships with external safeguarding agencies and ensure that appropriate procedures to safeguard pupils are implemented effectively. Staff are appropriately trained and understand their responsibilities to help keep pupils safe from harm. Pre-employment and recruitment checks are methodical and carried out in a timely and robust manner.

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:

- develop careers education throughout the senior school to provide more clarity about the link between skills, aptitudes and qualifications and different types of work and career.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The directors carry out effective oversight of the school. Directors visit the school regularly, both in-person and online, to check that policy matches practice. Directors ask leaders challenging questions that focus on continuous improvement to promote the achievement of the school's aims and ethos. This results in the timely and effective implementation of new initiatives such as in how data is managed and in the quality of teaching. Directorial oversight ensures that leaders apply their skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and promote pupils' wellbeing. As a result, all of the Standards are met.
11. Leaders carry out effective evaluation of the school. They gather a range of information over time, particularly with regard to pupils' progress, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. Leaders use this information effectively to form an accurate view of pupils' individual performance across these aspects. Leaders use their evaluation of the school's work to inform effective actions. For example, leaders have taken steps to develop subject leadership and curriculum planning and delivery. They have also developed systems to track pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance efficiently.
12. Subject leaders have an effective overview of their curriculum areas and outcomes for pupils. They utilise the school's training and development programme to develop teaching effectively. Leaders carry out focused observations of lessons and provide coaching for individual teachers and specific training to develop curriculum planning and teaching strategies.
13. Leaders take effective action to manage potential risk. Systematic procedures and detailed records identify potential risks, and staff implement suitable actions to mitigate these. For example, staff implement effective risk assessment measures with regard to higher-risk activities, such as those which take place in sport, on water or overnight trips. Leaders are alert to the potential contextual risks associated with the school being located within a large city.
14. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan is in place that enables pupils to access all curriculum areas across the school site. Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination against any individual or groups of pupils.
15. A suitable complaints policy is available on the school's website. Leaders implement this policy effectively. They respond appropriately to any concerns raised and in a timely manner and maintain clear records of any informal or formal complaints received.
16. All the required information regarding policies and procedures is available for parents and prospective parents on the school's website. Parents receive two written reports followed by two parents' evenings each year. In addition, regular face-to-face and online updates regarding their child's progress and attainment take place across the school year. Leaders provide the relevant local authorities with all the required information about how funding related to education, health and care plans (EHC plans) is spent to support its pupils.
17. Leaders collaborate and liaise effectively with a wide range of external agencies, to ensure that pupils' particular needs are identified and understood thoroughly. They work productively with children's services and other safeguarding partners to ensure a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. The curriculum covers all the required areas of learning and is designed effectively to help pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to re-engage in their learning and to meet their individual needs. The curriculum focuses on helping pupils to gain an increased sense of self-worth and develop their academic skills. The curriculum is further enhanced by creative and aesthetic activities, such as art, crafts and cooking, with a focus on practical application to real life.
20. Pupils study towards a range of qualifications matched to their interests, abilities and aptitudes, including functional skills and GCSEs. Year 11 pupils study GCSE courses in art and design, biology, English language, English literature, geography, history, mathematics and physics. In 2025, all Year 11 pupils who sat entry-level qualifications in English, achieved levels 1 and 2. Most pupils attained GCSE grades at or above those initially predicted by the school.
21. Teachers plan activities which are informed by good subject knowledge and carefully matched to pupils' needs. Staff use their knowledge of each pupil to check how well they are learning and correct any emerging misconceptions. Learning support assistants support pupils well through clear guidance and a nurturing manner. Pupils benefit from intensive and flexible teaching.
22. Careful consideration to the individual needs of pupils helps to remove any barriers to learning that they might have. Teachers adapt resources, such as by enlarging visual diagrams, and also make effective use of resources designed to reduce anxiety, such as fidget toys, so that pupils are ready to learn. Where needed, pupils receive one-to-one support from learning support mentors.
23. Pupils make good progress from their starting points and typically meet the targets set in their EHC plans. Staff recognise that the process of preparing pupils for examinations can be extremely stressful for some individuals. They carefully arrange support well matched to individual pupils' needs so that pupils can manage the demands of the qualifications and accreditation. As a result, pupils gain an increased sense of self-worth and self-confidence that they can achieve their goals.
24. Teaching activities are carefully designed to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. In mathematics, pupils learn how to apply their mathematical skills to real-life situations, such as calculating the costs of materials, and ways to get the best price for purchasing paint and carpet for re-decorating a bedroom. Teachers apply their good subject knowledge to effective questioning and discussions through which pupils develop their confidence in listening and speaking. Adults model the accurate use of vocabulary and grammar and develop pupils' skill in selecting the most appropriate level of formality in language to use for different occasions. The focus on developing this communication and mathematical skills helps prepare pupils for adulthood and the workplace.
25. An effective system to check pupils' attainment and progress is in place. Teachers use this information to plan lessons, together with their detailed knowledge of pupils' skills and prior learning. Although the new system is at the early stages of implementation, staff are accurate in identifying gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. This enables them to provide appropriate support for pupils, as required. Effective screening arrangements enable leaders to identify any additional needs that pupils might have. They use this information to design stimulating resources and to provide teachers with effective strategies to support pupils in lessons.

26. Pupils participate in a recreational and enrichment programme which support their personal development. Pupils develop their skills in a variety of activities, including art, boxing, craft, dance, gardening, and outdoor activities. Annual residential trips provide further opportunities for pupils to acquire new skills, build their self-confidence and extend their range of leisure interests.

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

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

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

28. Pupils receive a comprehensive programme of physical education (PE) lessons and extra-curricular activities, delivered by specialist staff and carefully tailored to meet pupils' needs. The school provides many opportunities to engage pupils in sports and physical pursuits at local sports venues. These include kick boxing, scooter boarding and rock climbing, as well as the cycle skills initiative, 'Bikeability'. Pupils have regular opportunities to try out new water sports such as paddle boarding, kayaking and windsurfing. Participation in competitive football tournaments and school sports days helps to develop pupils' self-knowledge, social skills and teamwork. Pupils learn how taking part in physical activities can have a positive impact on mental and physical health.
29. The curriculum includes content about different world religions and spiritual perspectives. This helps pupils to develop an appreciation of the spiritual and moral dimensions of life, as do their studies in the creative arts. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to reflect on thoughts, beliefs and values. For example, pupils consider what might be the moral purpose in the minds of particular artists and writers when they produced their works.
30. Behaviour management is effective. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to reflect on their behaviour to resolve disagreements. Appropriate therapeutic approaches enable staff to understand pupils' individual needs well. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively because they focus on reducing anxiety, for example by deploying therapeutic resources such as plastic construction bricks and fidget toys to calm pupils and enable them to take more control of their behaviour. Pupils learn about the need for rules, rewards and consequences, to protect individual interests and promote a well-regulated society. As a result, behaviour is calm and civilised in lessons and around the school site. Leaders and staff model respectful behaviour and treatment of others. Through the PSHE programme, pupils learn about the different types of bullying and the negative impact these can have on people's mental and physical health. As a result, pupils are respectful towards staff and each other. Relationships are positive and bullying incidents are rare.
31. Staff focus on developing pupils' academic and personal potential by removing any barriers so that pupils are ready, confident and able to learn. They take much care to nurture and support pupils so that they feel calm and comfortable at the school and develop their self-confidence and self-esteem.
32. Pupils learn how to tolerate and respect people who may have a different experience of life to their own. They learn how damaging articulating pre-conceived, stereotypical or prejudicial viewpoints can be to others. Through the PSHE, 'life skills' and tutorial programmes, pupils learn about different types of diversity and the importance of recognising and valuing people's identities and situations. Pupils regularly take part in discussions that consider themes of fairness, justice and social responsibility and apply these to topical issues. For example, they explore complex issues such as those related to conflicts in different parts of the world in a sensitive manner.
33. The RSE programme reflects current statutory guidance. It is taught effectively through PSHE and 'life skills' lessons. The school consults parents appropriately with regard to the programme's content and delivery. Suitable and pertinent topics such as those about consent, appropriate sexual behaviour and drugs awareness provide pupils with strategies to cultivate and maintain healthy and respectful relationships.

34. The school premises and accommodation contain appropriate facilities and are well maintained. Leaders take methodical steps to ensure that the premises are suitable, and all required checks and maintenance are carried out regularly, including by external professionals commissioned by the school. Effective procedures are in place to reduce the risk from fire. An up-to-date fire risk assessment is in place and fire evacuation drills take place regularly. The school keeps clear records of health and safety and fire safety procedures and maintenance.
35. A suitable medical room is available for pupils who become injured or feel unwell. Appropriate procedures are in place for the administration of medicines, which are securely locked away. Arrangements for record keeping and communication with parents are effective.
36. Pupils are suitably supervised, including at break and lunchtimes. Leaders deploy staff effectively and in accordance with pupils' individual plans and needs. Staff ensure that they are always on hand to support pupils' different needs.
37. The school maintains attendance and admission registers appropriately and in line with current statutory requirements. Leaders monitor attendance closely and work effectively to improve it where there is the need. Leaders inform the local authority about any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times and any concerns about persistent or severe absence.

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

38. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

39. Pupils develop their economic knowledge through the carefully planned curriculum. Younger pupils use coins and notes to learn how to calculate any change they are owed from any transaction. They develop their financial literacy skills and learn about the benefits of making informed financial decisions. Pupils learn strategies to avoid getting into debt and manage household expenditure. They develop their money management skills by applying these to real-life economic scenarios, such as raising money for charitable events and making sensible spending decisions when given a budget to purchase items from the local market. Older pupils gain insights into socio-economic issues when they consider strategies to manage debt and to navigate the complexities of credit agreements.
40. The school's careers policy details careers provision from Year 7 in line with national benchmarks for effective careers guidance. However, the school does not always inform pupils about the skills, aptitudes and qualifications needed to pursue different careers as effectively as possible. Pupils have access to information about a suitable range of careers through specialist careers software, careers fairs and work experience placements. In 2025, all Year 11 leavers proceeded to college or training.
41. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles in the school, such as information and communication technology (ICT) and programme design consultants, eco-representatives and members of the school council. These positions of responsibility help pupils to represent the views and opinions of others as well as develop their own leadership skills.
42. Recognising pupils' changing needs, leaders have recently enhanced the 'life skills' curriculum, which is planned to develop in pupils the attributes which the school terms the 'Five Rs', readiness, reflectiveness, resilience, resourcefulness and responsibility. The programme is designed in line with the school's aims and ethos. It enables pupils to learn to respect and celebrate people's uniqueness and individuality, particularly with regard to characteristics such as age, disability, gender and race.
43. Pupils learn about the importance of not judging people based on stereotypes or appearance. Pupils listen to each other carefully and are understanding, tolerant and respectful of differences between people. Displays around the school explicitly promote inclusivity. The school provides an easily accessible environment designed to encourage pupils to feel safe and secure. For example, the 'Identity club' provides a dedicated space for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils to explore and discuss issues that are important to them.
44. The school develops pupils' understanding that not everyone holds the same opinions, and that everybody is entitled to their point of view. Pupils also learn about people's diverse cultural and faith traditions and how people live in different parts of the world. Leaders carefully track pupils' development of these attributes to ensure that learners are well prepared for education and life beyond the school.
45. Leaders' careful planning enables pupils to deepen their understanding of local and national British institutions and services in contemporary society. Pupils attend talks given by the police and fire brigade, travel by train and visit an art exhibition in Bath and a science museum in Bristol. Participation in these outings, helps pupils to learn how public institutions can make a positive contribution to society.

46. The curriculum is carefully planned to develop pupils' sense of social responsibility and provide them with opportunities to engage with and contribute to the local community. For example, pupils have visited the city farm, donated goods to the local food bank and worked with the carnival team. Pupils have also participated in a project with Bristol University to virtually redesign parts of the city using a well-known video game platform.
47. In PSHE, 'life skills' lessons and tutor time, teachers guide pupils to appreciate and understand the need for rules, and rewards and consequences, to protect individual interests and maintain a well-ordered society. Staff model appropriate social behaviour. This helps enables pupils to distinguish between right and wrong and apply moral principles and values. Pupils learn strategies in how to navigate new social situations and how to build respectful relationships.
48. Pupils gain an understanding of democracy, laws, legislation and political systems, and explore political debates, including those that are broadcast from the Houses of Parliament. Pupils learn about the benefits and protections that society can provide when its citizens respect democracy, abide by the law and contribute positively to their community. Staff ensure that any discussions that contain political content are conducted impartially and without bias.

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

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

Safeguarding

50. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders consider all pupils at the school to be vulnerable and take much care to help to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Directors provide meticulous oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements to ensure that the school implements a suitable and comprehensive safeguarding policy and procedures in line with current statutory guidance.
51. Safeguarding leaders are trained appropriately for their responsibilities. The safeguarding team delivers effective training to staff so that they are confident in responding to any safeguarding concerns and know to whom they should report concerns. The staff code of conduct clearly sets out leaders' expectations about how staff should conduct and present themselves, both online and in person. Staff understand the importance of reporting any low-level concern or allegation about an adult and understand the necessary procedures they should follow.
52. A comprehensive and robust internet filtering and monitoring system promotes pupils' safety when using the internet. Through PSHE, ICT and 'life skills' lessons, staff teach pupils how to safely navigate the online digital world. Pupils learn about the variety of risks they may encounter while using the internet and how to manage their online digital footprint. For example, pupils are taught not to share any personal information and to be alert to the dangers of scamming.
53. A range of staff, including counsellors, are available for pupils to speak to about any concerns they may have. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to speak to any trusted adult at the school should the need arise. The emotional wellbeing of pupils is supported well.
54. Leaders maintain effective partnership working with the four local authorities that commission places at the school. They seek advice or make timely referrals to relevant agencies, such as children's services and the local authority, as required. Leaders liaise closely with local agencies to understand any emerging risks to pupils in the local area so that they can mitigate any risk and protect pupils.
55. Safeguarding leaders keep comprehensive records of the decisions they make and maintain regular and appropriate communication between the pastoral and safeguarding team. Staff maintain high levels of vigilance across the school and are alert for any signs of potential safeguarding concerns.
56. All the required pre-employment checks are completed before staff or directors commence work at the school. The school records these checks in a suitably maintained single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Belgrave School
Department for Education number	801/6019
Address	Belgrave School The Willows 159 Four Acres Withywood Bristol Somerset BS13 8RA
Phone number	0117 974 3133
Email address	info@belgraveschool.com
Website	www.belgraveschool.com
Proprietor	Belgrave School Ltd
Chair	Ms Tracey Storey
Headteacher	Mrs Louisa Skinner
Age range	6 to 16
Number of pupils	41
Date of previous inspection	18 to 20 October 2022

Information about the school

58. Belgrave School is an independent co-educational day school providing for pupils with dyslexia and related learning difficulties. The school opened in 1993 and moved to its present site in 2020. In 2023, it joined a family of schools which make up Melrose Education. A central team of directors oversee and support eleven independent schools, including Belgrave School. The current headteacher took up her position in September 2025.
59. The school comprises six classes organised in two sections: the junior school, for pupils aged six to eleven years: and the senior school, for pupils aged eleven to sixteen years. The school is registered to admit pupils from the age of six but currently has no pupils below Year 5.
60. The school has identified all pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
61. The school has not identified any pupils as speaking English as an additional language (EAL).
62. The school states its aims are to empower learners with specific learning difficulties by providing a specialised, supportive and innovative educational environment that addresses their unique learning needs, builds their confidence and enables them to achieve their full potential.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

9 to 11 September 2025

63. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair of the proprietorial board and one director
- 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
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

65. 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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