

School inspection report

28 to 30 January 2025

Bredon School

Pull Court

Bushley

Tewkesbury

Gloucestershire

GL20 6AH

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. Leaders regularly monitor and discuss pupils' academic and learning needs. They ensure that the support provided, including by specialist learning support staff, enables pupils to improve their progress.
2. Leaders demonstrate clarity and depth of commitment to ensuring the best outcomes for pupils. Their decision-making ensures a purposeful and welcoming learning environment that provides appropriate and effective education for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
3. Leaders evaluate the school's effectiveness thoroughly and accurately to understand what works well and which aspects of the provision need further development. This results in decisive actions that benefit all groups of pupils.
4. The school implements an ambitious curriculum suited to pupils' needs. Teachers plan and deliver lessons that proceed systematically and use questioning and observation effectively to check pupils' understanding. They modify their plans and teaching skilfully to ensure that individual pupils achieve well.
5. The curriculum enables pupils to study towards a very wide range of qualifications that support them to access apprenticeships, further education or training beyond school. The breadth of qualifications that pupils achieve is a significant strength. Vocational courses enable pupils to develop practical skills and experience a genuine feeling of success. The wide-ranging set of qualifications that pupils can study for enables them to succeed well in areas that are suitable for them as individuals and appropriate to their interests and future careers.
6. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and maintain a calm learning atmosphere. They offer a range of activities to ensure pupils remain engaged. They carry out detailed assessments that clearly inform them about pupils' progress and attainment over time.
7. Leaders and staff maintain a learning environment where mistakes are viewed as an integral part of the learning process, and positive behaviour is acknowledged and rewarded. However, the behaviour of a small number of older male pupils tends to become distracting for other pupils during tutor time and some lessons. Bullying is not tolerated within the school community.
8. The school's emphasis on understanding and respecting diverse backgrounds enhances pupils' educational experience, preparing them to achieve academically and socially. Pupils develop a secure appreciation of diversity and people's protected characteristics, such as race, sex and religion. Staff encourage pupils to feel comfortable talking about their own identity and situation, including the various types of support they receive, meaning that no stigma is attached. This helps pupils develop their self-knowledge and confidence.
9. The boarding houses provide a suitable, well-maintained and positive environment that prioritises boarders' wellbeing. Leaders provide plenty of opportunities for boarders to build friendships and feel secure in the boarding community.

10. Leaders recognise the need to be particularly vigilant for any signs of potentially vulnerable pupils being at potential risk of harm. Leaders and staff understand their role in safeguarding pupils and prioritise it so that they maintain a constant awareness of pupils' specific safeguarding needs.

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 older pupils' behaviour in lessons and tutor time is managed consistently effectively so that other pupils are not distracted from their learning.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders promote pupils' wellbeing effectively. They use their good skills and knowledge to ensure that the school's policies and procedures comply with relevant legislation, have regard to applicable guidance and are understood and implemented effectively by staff. Leaders maintain a school culture in which pupils confidently discuss their own various learning needs. They actively promote positive attitudes towards dealing with any difficulties, recognising that effective learning occurs in a supportive environment where the needs of pupils are known and addressed. Leaders communicate effectively with tutors and boarding staff about pupils' needs and steps to support their wellbeing.
12. The school maintains effective relationships with parents. Leaders provide parents with the required information. Regular reporting informs parents of their children's progress and development. Leaders provide the relevant local authority with all required information relating to the provision of funded pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
13. Leaders respond to complaints consistently and promptly, following the school's procedures. They carefully explore any parental and family concerns and consider individual pupils' needs when addressing and resolving informal and formal complaints.
14. Leaders' accurate evaluation of the school's work and suitably prioritised improvement plans underpin their effective decision-making. Decisions to introduce the 'Bredon lesson' to promote and clarify learning expectations and 'Bredon levels of assessment' alongside a robust approach to monitoring departments and lessons have brought about positive change for pupils. Learning walks by senior staff have ensured a more consistent approach across the school to supporting pupils' learning. Senior and subject leaders have increased the focus on support for staff development where needed. Leaders require subject leaders to draw up development plans and monitor how effectively these are implemented, including by scrutinising annual results in public examinations.
15. Leaders ensure that boarding staff have suitable experience and training and that all required records are in place. House staff have clear job descriptions and ensure that boarding houses are suitable, caring and comfortable environments for pupils.
16. Leaders use performance management well to develop teaching skills. They have a detailed understanding of effective teaching for pupils who have SEND and use lesson observations to identify practice that works well or not so well and strengthen it further.
17. Leaders ensure that risk assessments are conducted thoroughly for activities, lessons and excursions, including residential events such as the annual ski trip. These risk assessments identify potential risks carefully, including those relating to individual pupils' wellbeing, and also the measures required to mitigate these. Regular reviews of safety measures are in place, with specific attention given to the particular risks associated with off-site activities. The boarding team collaborates with staff to ensure that adequate risk assessments for accommodation, weekend activities and trips are well recorded.
18. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including those to protect vulnerable pupils from discrimination or prejudice. Leaders implement an appropriate accessibility plan to ensure all pupils can access and use the school's facilities, including the school farm.

19. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies to promote and benefit the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders. This includes collaboration with agencies that help pupils reintegrate into education or help support their social, emotional and mental health needs while at school.
20. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of the school. Governors rigorously scrutinise reports they receive from school leaders. They ask pertinent questions about the impact of leaders' actions and decisions and use this information effectively to ensure that leaders carry out their duties effectively, and that the requirements of the Standards and relevant statutory guidance are met consistently.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders have crafted a bespoke curriculum that addresses the diverse needs of pupils across a suitable range of subjects highly effectively. All pupils study the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Older pupils choose from three curriculum pathways depending on their preferences and interests. These provide highly positive and rich opportunities for learning because they are customised for individuals and groups of pupils. This motivates pupils to achieve levels of success that they may have initially thought was not possible.
23. The curriculum pathways are designed to enable pupils to grasp key learning points methodically and progress securely. Leaders use a flexible timetable to enable pupils in Year 9 to sample a wide range of subjects before making choices, allowing them to make informed decisions about which of the three curriculum pathways they will choose. This careful decision-making with regard to curriculum pathways helps pupils to achieve a wide range of qualifications, including GCSE, vocational and other professional-related courses appropriate to their interests and future careers.
24. Staff assess pupils' academic starting points when they first enter the school. They also identify any pupils who have SEND, barriers to learning or mental health needs. Staff use information about these needs to set individual targets for pupils' academic, social and emotional learning. Teachers plan appropriate activities that are engaging, enjoyable, challenging and designed to develop practical skills while meeting these needs.
25. Teaching effectively promotes pupils' progress from junior school onwards. Teachers adapt planned lessons so that pupils succeed in reaching achievable targets. They communicate their good subject knowledge and skills in a way that allows pupils to learn well. Staff use resources effectively because they are selected to meet individual pupils' particular needs.
26. Teachers use a range of well-judged teaching methods effectively. For example, in response to pupils' needs, lessons across the school are often framed around a learning goal explicitly shared with pupils at the start of lessons. 'Flashback' starter activities support pupils' retrieval of learning from previous lessons, thus enabling them to recognise what is expected of them as the lesson progresses. Well-posed follow-up questions stretch and challenge pupils where appropriate.
27. When appropriate, teachers use adaptive technology, such as headphones, microphones and pen readers, to support learners for whom writing is a challenge, helping them to produce high-quality work. Resources such as coloured paper or tinted glasses enable pupils with visual needs to access learning activities successfully. Pupils' work is displayed in a way that promotes self-confidence and values creativity. Pupils make good progress across the school, particularly in the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics, which teachers maintain a focus on when planning topics and activities. Consequently, pupils can apply what they have learned to other subjects they have chosen to study.
28. Leaders and staff assess pupils' progress thoroughly. They frequently meet with subject leaders and class teachers to check and discuss how pupils can meet the termly targets set for them. Teachers provide pupils with helpful verbal and written feedback that enables them to identify successful aspects of their work and how to improve it further. Teachers are adept at recognising when tasks are too hard or easy for the pupils or too complex to meet their learning needs. When this occurs,

teachers swiftly adapt their teaching methods to support pupils' understanding and engagement well.

29. Teachers utilise 'pupil passports' effectively to outline any learning difficulties that individual pupils may have and identify strategies and bespoke learning programmes to help them learn. The leader of the provision for pupils who have SEND and their team carefully monitor the effectiveness of the use of these strategies. The school's in-house specialist learning support team adds another layer of expertise that teachers feel confident drawing on when needed. The collaborative work between the specialist learning support team and teachers helps pupils who have gaps in their learning get back on track and achieve set targets.
30. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive targeted support from specialist learning support staff. Staff use visual aids and other strategies to enable these pupils to apply their developing vocabulary effectively in their studies.
31. The school provides pupils with a range of recreational activities, such as fitness training, cricket and activities carried out as part of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE). The school farm is used for activities at different times of the day and weekends that develop pupils' skills in caring for animals such as pigs, cattle and poultry or tending to horticultural crops. These activities enable pupils to develop new skills and boost their confidence and self-esteem. Pupils develop leadership skills through the school's Combined Cadet Force (CCF) activities, such as when carrying out drill practices during lunch breaks.

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

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

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

33. Leaders have developed a curriculum emphasising respect for others by modelling respectful relationships in an inclusive environment. They have facilitated various discussion groups, such as the 'hidden differences' group, where pupils can talk and share personal perspectives about their own neurodiversity. This holistic approach supports pupils in feeling a sense of belonging and purpose, ultimately building their confidence and resilience. Various programmes, including a mental health action group involving staff, parents and pupils, enhance the support provided for pupils' mental health.
34. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme contains suitable and age-appropriate content. Teachers plan and adapt this programme with consideration to pupils' individual learning needs. Junior school pupils explore concepts such as those of greed, ignorance and hate, engaging in rich discussions and demonstrating reasoning skills in a nurturing atmosphere. Older pupils discuss strategies for supporting their own sexual health or ways to avoid peer pressure.
35. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme reflects the requirements of current statutory guidance. Pupils learn about the physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes associated with adolescence and puberty, such as changes to the male voice and the growth of bodily hair. They also learn about different types of healthy relationships and the importance of consent and respecting privacy.
36. Pupils study a range of different religions. The large number of pupils who choose this subject at GCSE achieve success in their examinations. Pupils also explore ideas about spirituality while caring for animals on the school farm. For example, they discuss how loyalty and companionship with the pigs, cattle and horses they look after helped them to understand empathy and resilience.
37. Leaders and staff implement robust health and safety measures. They ensure that all required checks and maintenance are carried out when needed, such as routine checks of minibuses, and take effective measures to support the security of the premises, for example by having access codes on all external doors, including in boarding. Effective fire safety arrangements are in place, including a suitable fire risk assessment and regular fire evacuation drills during both day and boarding hours.
38. A sufficient number of day and boarding staff are trained in first aid to meet pupils' needs. Pupils have regular health check-ins with the school nurse, ensuring that medical needs are met promptly. Staff manage any medication carefully, with strict protocols in place for its administration.
39. Behaviour management is effective overall. Leaders and staff ensure that pupils understand the sanctions given for poor behaviour and typically resolve behavioural issues swiftly and fairly. Leaders monitor pupils' perspectives on behaviour at the school through surveys and act in response to these, such as by implementing a series of assemblies and focused activities that addressed the issue of bullying. However, staff do not always consistently address low-level behavioural issues during lessons and tutor time. Inappropriate comments made by a small number of older male pupils are not always dealt with in a manner that instils confidence and makes it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable. These instances of low-level disruption and behaviour that do not meet the typically high expectations set by the staff can impact the positive learning environment.

40. Staff supervise pupils effectively, including during lunch breaks and boarding time, thus ensuring that pupils' welfare is monitored well. Staff rotas are well structured to ensure all areas of the school are appropriately staffed, whether that be in and around the junior learning and play areas or near the school farm and fields that are used for learning, or during lunch. After school and weekend clubs are also made available for boarders.
41. The school provides pupils with a range of physical education (PE) activities that develop their skills in areas such as team sports, golf, mountain biking and climbing. Other activities are provided to meet pupils' particular needs, such as dog walking and clay pigeon shooting. A farm on the school site effectively provides pupils with a space to engage in meaningful activity outside of lesson time, supporting and enhancing their mental health.
42. The school maintains suitable admission and attendance registers in line with the requirements of current statutory guidance. Leaders follow up on any absenteeism effectively and review attendance data weekly to identify patterns or trends. They inform the local authority appropriately whenever pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.
43. Boarding accommodation is suitable and well-maintained. Leaders conduct regular checks on pupils' emotional wellbeing, including daily assessments of their happiness and confidence. Many areas of the boarding house have been refurbished to a high standard. Boarding staff are well trained and experienced in supporting the needs of the pupils in their care. They create a homely atmosphere where pupils can relax. Poor behaviour in boarding is rare and dealt with appropriately.
44. The induction of new boarders includes a 'buddy' system, tailored to match pupils based on their interests and personalities. Additionally, there are mechanisms to encourage boarders to voice any concerns, such as 'talk to me' boxes placed on every landing, which staff monitor daily. There is no prefect system; instead, staff encourage all boarders to take responsibility, including through contributing to various activities each evening and at the weekend.

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

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

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

46. The curriculum includes a wide range of options and a large number of qualifications to study towards, appropriate to pupils' interests and potential future careers, and supplemented by varied and engaging extra-curricular activities. As a result, pupils are always able to explore their interests and develop their skills successfully in areas that match their aptitudes. Pupils from farming communities can study horticulture and agriculture. These include courses or specific modules in qualifications that relate to their experience, such as cereal production or poultry farming. Pupils also have opportunities to study agricultural engineering modules to develop skills they can use in their own family business. Other pupils can study qualifications that prepare them for life in social media and digital industries, as well as graphic arts or photography that they can use, for example, in family restaurateur businesses. The curriculum and extra-curricular provision prepare pupils very well for employment and life in modern Britain.
47. Teachers successfully integrate discussions about ethical issues, such as the fair treatment of people, and fundamental British values, such as those of mutual respect and individual liberty, into lessons. In history, younger pupils discuss issues relating to rights and responsibilities as they apply to the subject matter at hand. Older pupils in agriculture and land-based studies explore issues of rights and the consequences of decisions on others, such as when considering the use of brown-belt, previously developed land or the proposed uses of green-belt farmland. Leaders and staff normalise discussions around mental health issues, including through assemblies, and engage the pupils in events such as Children's Mental Health Week. The school's emphasis on understanding and respecting diverse backgrounds enhances pupils' educational experience and develops their own appreciation of the need for equal treatment and mutual respect.
48. The school develops pupils' sense of responsibility towards others. As well as supporting each other within the school community and caring for animals, pupils engage with the local community, raising funds to support a local foodbank and a children's mental health charity.
49. Pupils develop economic literacy through mathematics and the school's 'work ready' programme, which introduces them to budgeting and banking. They learn about how to read payslips and how invoicing works. Pupils also develop budgeting and entrepreneurial skills through determining the costs of buying poultry and selling produce such as eggs within the school and to the local community.
50. Staff provide individual pupils with up-to-date careers information, advice and guidance. This includes suitable work experience that helps them understand the world of work. The impartial careers advice helps pupils create an action plan that supports them in making informed choices about their next steps in education, training or employment. Staff provide sixth-form pupils with appropriate support towards applications to further education through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) process. They are supported by mock interview techniques, which help them develop an awareness of what is expected of them.

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

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

52. Leaders foster an effective safeguarding culture and emphasise that safeguarding is a collective duty. The school's safeguarding policies and procedures reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. The proprietor maintains efficient oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements and responses to any safeguarding concerns. They regularly meet with and receive reports from the extended safeguarding team. This allows them to check and review the effectiveness of safeguarding across the school.
53. All staff undertake robust and regular safeguarding training, which ensures that they are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities and the procedures to follow should a safeguarding concern arise. Leaders and staff are aware of the potential vulnerability of pupils who have SEND and remain highly vigilant and alert to pupils' wellbeing and any potential contextual safeguarding risks that might affect the school. Staff are trained about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, online grooming and the importance of internet safety. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities receive additional training to equip them for their roles.
54. Leaders maintain a culture where staff feel comfortable to raise any safeguarding concerns. Leaders follow up any concerns effectively, including through effective engagement with external agencies. They refer concerns to relevant safeguarding partners when appropriate. Leaders maintain suitable records of safeguarding concerns and the school's responses to these.
55. Leaders carry out robust pre-employment checks to reassure themselves that staff are suitable to work with children. All required safer recruitment checks are carried out before any person starts work at the school and are recorded in an appropriate, well-maintained single central record (SCR) of appointments.
56. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online. School devices are subject to appropriate filtering, while regular monitoring ensures that pupils use the internet safely. Leaders arrange for the regular testing of the filtering and monitoring systems. The safeguarding team is well-known by pupils, who feel confident in identifying who they would speak to in the event of a concern.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Bredon School
Department for Education number	885/6023
Address	Bredon School Pull Court Bushley Tewkesbury Gloucestershire GL20 6AH
Phone number	01684 293156
Email address	admissions@bredonschool.co.uk
Website	http://www.bredonschool.org
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Limited
Chair	Mr Aatif Hassan
Headmaster	Mr Nick Oldham
Age range	7 to 21
Number of pupils	218
Number of boarding pupils	80
Date of previous inspection	23 to 25 March 2022

Information about the school

58. Bredon School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school in a rural Tewkesbury location. It opened in 1962 and since 2014 has been owned by Cavendish Education Limited, whose board of directors provides oversight. The school specialises in educating pupils with dyslexia and a range of other specific learning difficulties but also admits pupils without these needs. The school comprises three sections: the junior school for pupils aged 7 to 11 years, the senior school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years and the sixth form.
59. The school offers boarding from the age of nine. Boarding accommodation is provided in two single-sex houses situated on the school site. Boarding comprises full-time, weekday and flexible provision.
60. The school has identified 191 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are 96 pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. The school has identified English as an additional language for two pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to promote a family ethos instilling empathy, acceptance and mutual respect so that each pupil feels valued and supported. It seeks to inspire pupils to participate in a wide range of outdoor educational activities throughout the rural setting. The school's objective is to challenge and support pupils to give them the confidence to be themselves, the competence to achieve, the creativity to shine and the character to succeed.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 to 30 January 2025

63. A team of four 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 tutor time and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with a representative of the proprietors
- 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.

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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For more information, please visit isi.net