

School inspection report

21 to 23 January 2025

Benedict House Preparatory School

27 Station Road

Sidcup

DA15 7EB

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	5
AREAS FOR ACTION.....	5
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	5
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	7
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	9
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....	10
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	11
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	12
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	13
SAFEGUARDING	14
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	14
SCHEDULE OF UNMET STANDARDS	15
<i>Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health, and emotional wellbeing</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Safeguarding</i>	<i>15</i>
SCHOOL DETAILS	16
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	17
INSPECTION DETAILS	18

Summary of inspection findings

1. The new headteacher has a clear vision and plan for school development. This builds on the schools' previous self-evaluation as well as the effective review of practice through discussion with Chatsworth directors. The plan for school development is effectively communicated to and supported by the leadership team and disseminated to staff and parents.
2. Leaders are effectively supported, and their practice is monitored and challenged by directors. However, monitoring and oversight of practice has not identified errors in maintaining the attendance registers in line with statutory guidance. The attendance policy was not on the school's website or in line with the requirements of statutory guidance.
3. The school's curriculum is effective in supporting learning across a broad range of subjects. It is supplemented with the Chatsworth schools' 'Tapestry' curriculum which focuses on a range of cross-curricular elements, including health and wellbeing and digital literacy. This encourages teachers to plan links between areas of the curriculum and develop pupils' awareness of their place in the global community. This approach includes a particular emphasis on entrepreneurial skills, which contributes to supporting pupils' preparation for the next stages in their education.
4. The early years curriculum is well planned and effectively delivered, with a focus on early reading skills. Teachers know the children well and tailor activities to match their individual needs and interests.
5. Teachers plan well-sequenced lessons. Feedback to pupils about their work and teachers' use of effective questions encourages pupils to review their learning or extend their skills. Pupils make good progress from their starting points.
6. There is less consistency in the use of assessment by teachers to inform their planning. Not all teaching makes effective use of assessment information to meet the needs of pupils.
7. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is taught in cyclical themes which include those relating to relationships and sex education (RSE). This allows pupils to revisit topics in an age-appropriate context and learning builds on prior understanding. Links are made with learning in other subjects and with the wider school assembly and visits programmes. This ensures learning is embedded and made relevant to pupils' lives in a British culture.
8. Leaders make sure that suitable policies are in place providing clear guidance to pupils on the expectations of positive behaviour. Teachers set high expectations and use a variety of well-chosen techniques to manage behaviour. This encourages pupils to act responsibly. Strategies to help pupils understand and manage their emotions are embedded from the early years. Leaders monitor behaviour logs to help ensure consistency in approach to behaviour management. They identify and mitigate risk when small groups of pupils in some year groups do not consistently meet the school's high expectations. Any bullying or serious incidents are swiftly dealt with on the rare occasions that they occur.
9. Leaders make use of an effective online management system to monitor provision for all health and safety arrangements in the school. The school premises are well maintained and provision for first aid and supervision of pupils are in line with requirements.

10. Teachers encourage pupils to value one another's cultural heritage. Pupils share their diverse experiences confidently. They value the differences between one another and appreciate how this sharing helps them to develop respect and tolerance.
11. Appropriate staff recruitment processes are in place. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding awareness. The safeguarding team swiftly act on any reported safeguarding concerns to ensure pupils get the help they may need. Pupils are encouraged to discuss any concerns and know who to go to for support.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- the school follows statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State to improve school attendance
- the attendance register is maintained in accordance with School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- the implementation of the attendance policy is effectively monitored to ensure correct records of pupils' attendance
- the policy is suitably updated to reflect school practice and is maintained on the school website
- directors maintain appropriate oversight of the attendance policy and procedures to suitably support and challenge leaders' practice.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure teachers use assessment information effectively to plan lessons which consistently meet the learning needs of pupils in all subjects.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders ensure that the school's aims and family ethos are understood and appropriately actioned across many aspects of the curriculum and wider school life.
13. Leaders take action to promote the wellbeing of pupils following a process of effective self-evaluation. This includes actions to promote pupils' positive behaviour. Leaders ensure that the behaviour of small groups of pupils is effectively monitored, with subsequent action being suitably evaluated. Leaders have enabled more opportunities for competitive sport and physical education to improve physical activity and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. They monitor curriculum planning to ensure learning is sequenced appropriately.
14. Leaders do not ensure that the statutory guidance relating to completing attendance registers is fully followed. The correct codes are not always used. The attendance policy does not reflect current statutory guidance.
15. The required policies and associated procedures are provided or available as required on the school website. Parents receive adequate information about their children's progress. Any necessary information, including details pertaining to the use of funds relating to pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans, is appropriately shared with the local authority.
16. The school complies appropriately with the Equality Act, 2010. There is a suitable accessibility policy in place which includes information to show how the school premises, curriculum and information have been adapted to meet the needs of pupils in the school. The school has improved disabled access.
17. Supervision of staff in the early years is appropriate and provides suitable opportunity for professional dialogue and development. Staff take a consistent approach when teaching and when recording observations of children's learning. This ensures that subsequent teaching is tailored effectively to meet individual pupils' needs.
18. Leaders are appropriately aware of the contextual safeguarding risks for a school in its location. They plan for and carry out suitable actions to mitigate these risks and monitor the resulting impact. Leaders develop effective links with partner agencies to benefit pupils' wellbeing.
19. Directors have comprehensive oversight of risk management. Leaders use the electronic management system to support practice so that risk registers and assessments are regularly reviewed and subsequently analysed to look for trends. Systematic risk assessments are carried out for trips, activities and facilities. Staff are appropriately trained to identify and manage risk in line with their roles.
20. There is an effective complaints policy. The school keeps suitable records which show that any complaints are managed in line with the policy.

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

21. Standards are not met consistently with respect to following the statutory guidance to improve school attendance.
22. **Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. Staff in the early years ensure that children develop effective communication skills. The teaching of letters and the sounds they represent is well structured in response to regular assessment of children's development. Children in preschool classes recognise key sounds and confidently match the sounds when mark making. They make effective progress from their starting points, forming letters and short words with increasing accuracy. Staff model language effectively. They know when to repeat and embed the language used by the child, and when to encourage further development of reading and writing skills. As a result, children reach a good level of development in this area of learning.
24. Resources are readily available and are used effectively by staff to stimulate discussion and play. Staff know when to use toys to help children think about how numbers are different or when to encourage some children to express their understanding of number without the toys, using simple mathematical notation. Staff set ambitious goals for children with higher prior attainment, asking questions which encourage deeper thinking and reasoning or links with prior knowledge.
25. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 continues to focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils study a broad range of subjects across all the required areas including Spanish. Careful curriculum planning builds skills over time. Pupils read with expression. Teachers encourage the use of increasingly complex vocabulary with accuracy. Pupils write with imagination and understanding of a variety of writing genres. The quality of teaching helps pupils to develop effective communication skills over time.
26. Teachers plan work to support and challenge pupils in mathematics so that pupils develop competent numeracy skills. Teachers ensure that effective understanding of mathematical concepts is embedded by making links with other subjects.
27. Positive classroom relationships, encouragement and an ethos of inclusion support pupils to participate. Teachers establish a positive ethos in classes enabling pupils to enjoy learning and to feel confident in contributing to discussion and activities with resilience. Pupils are encouraged to share their emerging thinking and practise their inference skills. This enables staff to judge how best to help pupils to make progress. Pupils receive effective verbal and written feedback to which they respond. Secure subject knowledge allows staff to ask increasingly complex questions, extending the thinking of pupils with high prior attainment in some subjects. This supports pupils in making good progress from their starting points.
28. Staff plan the curriculum to ensure that lessons build upon one another. Teachers use a range of resources, well matched to pupils needs, which engage pupils in their learning. Teachers plan for learning that is cumulatively more challenging over time.
29. Teachers take the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) into account when planning lessons to ensure pupils have time to practise and embed their learning. Resources are used effectively in teaching so that the pupils make good progress from their starting points.
30. Staff use a variety of effective strategies to support pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Teachers build visual symbols into lessons. This ensures that any barriers to learning for pupils who speak EAL are removed. Leaders ensure that pupils who speak EAL access the same

curriculum and make good progress. In the mathematics curriculum, plans include opportunities for pupils to choose to work with different levels of challenge or support. Teachers encourage pupils to make appropriate choices. This is based on the teachers understanding of the pupils' prior attainment. In some subjects, teachers do not use pupils' prior assessment data as the starting point for their planning as effectively and in these subjects, lessons are not planned to meet the different needs of pupils consistently.

31. Teachers set high expectations of pupils' behaviour with clear classroom structures and well-chosen techniques to manage behaviour when needed. Staff follow the school's behaviour policy consistently. Pupils act responsibly in class. Teachers establish a positive nurturing ethos in lessons enabling pupils to enjoy learning without fear of being judged. As a result, they persevere with activities and develop resilience.
32. A suitable range of sports, creative and academic clubs and activities, supplemented by trips, provide opportunities for pupils to explore their wider interests and enjoy their leisure time.

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

33. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

34. Staff understand and follow school policies to help pupils to acknowledge and express their feelings and emotions and manage behaviour. Any serious poor behaviour, though rare, is recorded and individuals are supported in line with the policy. Pupils know the school's expectations. Where necessary, staff encourage pupils to discuss and articulate their feelings in disputes so that apologies are given, pupils settle and move on swiftly. Leaders ensure that pupils' views and opinions are heard. Pupils' emotional wellbeing and positive mental health is supported effectively.
35. Leaders do not ensure that the policy and practice for attendance reflects current statutory guidance. Staff do not always use the correct codes when completing the attendance register. The admission register is suitably maintained and the required information relating to pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard times is appropriately reported to the local authority.
36. The physical education curriculum includes opportunities to learn activities such as archery, fencing and swimming as well as sports such as football, netball and tennis. Pupils learn a variety of associated skills and are physically active. Topics in science and PSHE, together with guidance on making appropriate choices at lunch time, ensure that pupils acquire a positive attitude to health. They understand, in an age-appropriate context, how certain lifestyle choices may have adverse effects on health.
37. Teachers in the early years plan activities to ensure that children improve balance and co-ordination skills and develop core strength. Suitably available resources are used effectively to link physical activities to topics and children's interests, so that they are engaged and make progress in physical development. The early years curriculum includes physical education (PE) lessons from specialist teachers. Effective communication between key people and these staff, ensures children experience cohesive support and develop key skills such as throwing and catching with increasing accuracy.
38. The PSHE and relationships education curriculum is taught sensitively, whilst complying with the requirements. It is effectively supplemented by the assembly programme and work in other subjects. Pupils gain age-appropriate understanding of the range of relationships in British society. This helps prepare pupils effectively for future experiences and promotes understanding, tolerance and inclusivity, in line with values in the wider society.
39. In PSHE pupils learn how to make positive relationships; first with their friends and families and then, in age-appropriate ways, in wider contexts. Pupils are encouraged to enact scenarios so they know how to respond in different situations should bullying occur. Pupils in Year 5 reflect on topics such as racism and cultural norms. They understand how a lack of respect can have an impact on people's self-esteem. Pupils develop an awareness of ways people can be stereotyped and the British laws that help to protect people.
40. Through PSHE lessons, pupils understand the importance of positive self-esteem for their mental health. They learn how to manage their own emotions. Staff use praise and feedback, so pupils understand their own strengths. Affirming classroom relationships encourage pupils to contribute to discussion and accept that they may make mistakes. They build resilience and improve their self-confidence.

41. Pupils learn about different world faiths in humanities. Pupils are encouraged to make comparisons and share their own religions and practices. They develop respect for their peers, alongside tolerance and empathy for different views and opinions.
42. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained. Procedures for health and safety and fire safety maintenance are carried out in a timely and efficient manner. Accurate records are kept of regular fire evacuation procedures. A regular fire risk assessment is made, and any subsequent recommendations are appropriately actioned. Regular health and safety checks are carried out efficiently. Staff are appropriately trained in line with their roles.
43. There is a suitable space for pupils to receive first aid. There are effective and well-known procedures for administering medicines, by suitably qualified staff, for all pupils, including those in the early years. All staff in the early years have appropriate paediatric first aid training.
44. Staff are deployed effectively so that suitable ratios are always maintained in the early years and supervision of pupils through the school is effective.

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

45. The standards are not met consistently. Attendance registers are not always maintained in line with statutory guidance.
46. **Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

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

47. Through the PSHE and wider curriculum pupils learn about the human and social influences in British and world societies. They research how people from different groups in society have changed and influenced opinions, achieved personal success and inspired admiration. This helps pupils to value people's individuality and develop respect and tolerance.
48. Special events such as 'Ancestry Day' raise pupils' awareness of the different cultures in their own community and wider British society. Pupils share and value their own backgrounds and gain a deeper appreciation of the way food, music, art, festivals and clothes are influenced by culture. They begin to learn to value inclusivity.
49. By listening to visiting speakers and participating in citizenship trips in the local area, pupils learn how people contribute to society. Pupils raise money for a variety of local and national charities and support national events, to help make their own contribution to wider society. The pupils' mini senior leadership team enables individuals with particular skills or interests to take a lead in their school community. Pupils contribute to their school including by running the school stationery shop, acting as librarians or lunchtime monitors.
50. PSHE themes on the law, together with other relevant curriculum topics, ensure that pupils develop an increasing understanding of the British legal system and the origins of democracy. Pupils progress from understanding and appreciating the work of the local community police liaison officer, when in the early years, to understanding the role of Parliament in the British legal system by Year 6. In history, pupils in Year 6 study a topic looking at crime and punishment through time. They gain an understanding of the current British jury system and develop respect for public institutions and services.
51. Pupils learn about rights and responsibilities. Pupils in Year 6 are encouraged to reflect on the rights of all people in a society and how they may conflict. Pupils understand the impact on individuals and groups if rights are not perceived to be applied fairly. Pupils develop a sense of justice and awareness of what is right and wrong.
52. Leaders integrate an entrepreneurial element into the curriculum, for pupils in Years 5 and 6, which builds on their competent numeracy skills. Teachers develop pupils' economic awareness and encourage them to reflect on the skills which may be needed in business. Pupils participate in inter Chatsworth group competitions, presenting the eventual product of their business in mini enterprise activities. Pupils develop effective awareness of economic and business influences.
53. Opportunities are planned into the early years' daily timetable to enable imaginative play and encourage social interactions. Children explore how to work and play together successfully. School procedures such as home visits prior to pupils joining the school, allow staff to collect relevant information about pupils' starting points and enable supportive home school partnerships to be developed. This ensures a co-operative approach to pupils' wellbeing

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

54. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

55. Chatsworth directors have appropriate safeguarding training. They carry out an annual review of safeguarding policy and practice, in line with statutory requirements. Additional governance support is available across the group of schools with a regular forum for discussions between designated safeguarding leads. This ensures opportunities to share and learn from effective practice. Ongoing actions, where relevant, are reported to and reviewed by the directors. These systems ensure that there is an appropriate focus on pupils' wellbeing.
56. Monitoring of practice by directors is effective in most areas relating to safeguarding. Directors review information provided to monitor patterns in pupils' attendance. However, they have not reviewed the policy to ensure its content is in line with guidance and have not had sufficient oversight of new procedures to ensure these meet requirements. Leaders have trained staff on changes in attendance policy, but they have not monitored the implementation of new practice effectively enough to ensure that the correct attendance information is being accurately recorded on registers.
57. Directors visit the school to support those in positions of safeguarding responsibility and to ensure oversight of staff training. Leaders follow rigorous staff recruitment procedures which are in line with statutory guidance. The single central record of appointments (SCR), which records the pre-employment safeguarding checks is reviewed by a director to give effective oversight and monitoring of recruitment processes.
58. Leaders with appropriate experience and training have specific safeguarding responsibilities in line with requirements. They keep suitably detailed records of actions and decisions, which are appropriately reviewed. Local authority procedures are followed to report any concerns and to allow effective communication with external safeguarding partners where required. This ensures that pupils receive appropriate support.
59. The detailed and comprehensive safeguarding policy, whilst common to all Chatsworth schools, is also suitably adapted to meet the specific needs of the school and is in line with statutory legislation. It gives appropriate guidance to staff who understand and follow procedures, reporting any concerns including those at a low level. Staff are trained effectively by the safeguarding team, who ensure appropriate safeguarding practices are embedded in school culture, regularly reviewing and reinforcing training. Staff are alert to signs which may indicate a safeguarding concern.
60. Pupils are taught how to raise concerns and keep themselves safe including when online. They have access to a variety of age-appropriate reporting methods. These systems support pupils to raise any worries effectively. Staff monitor pupils' use of school computers appropriately and are supported by the school's effective filtering and monitoring systems. Directors ensure these systems are tested. These processes support pupils' safety and appropriately mitigate any risk.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

61. Not all the standards are met consistently. Arrangements do not always take into account guidance issued by the Secretary of State in relation to improving pupils' attendance.
62. **Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.**

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR ¹ Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

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

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admissions and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupils Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Safeguarding

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
7(b)	such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

¹ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

School details

School	Benedict House Preparatory School
Department for Education number	303/6060
Address	Benedict House Preparatory School 27 Station Road Sidcup Kent DA15 7EB
Phone number	020 8300 7206
Email address	secretary@benedicthouseprepschool.co.uk
Website	benedicthouse.co.uk/
Proprietor	Chatsworth Schools Ltd
Chair	Mr Frederick Knipe
Headteacher	Mrs Laura Baker
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	213
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 February 2022

Information about the school

63. Benedict House Preparatory School is a co-educational day school. Since 2019, the school is owned and overseen by Chatsworth Schools Ltd, which provides the school's governing body of five members. The headteacher took up her post in January 2025.
64. There are 58 children in the early years in four classes, two Nursery classes, called Pre-school, and two Reception classes.
65. The school has identified 42 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. The school has identified English as an additional language for nine pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to promote a positive attitude towards life-long learning; to enable children to be creative and to develop their own critical thinking and problem solving; to enable children to be positive and respectful citizens who will be able to contribute to society; to ensure that all pupils have equal and fair access to the curriculum; to promote taking care of one's physical and emotional wellbeing and to enable all children to learn and develop their skills to the best of their ability.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

21 to 23 January 2025

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

69. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- 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 facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

70. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

For more information, please visit isi.net