

School inspection report

30 June to 2 July 2026

Brackenfield School

128 Duchy Road

Harrogate

HG1 2HE

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 and governors ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met. They collectively promote pupils' wellbeing effectively, ensuring the school upholds its mission and aims. The governing body maintains effective oversight of leaders' work through a range of activities. Leaders implement a detailed strategy for the development of the school based on self-evaluation and regular consultation with pupils, parents and staff.
2. Leaders identify risks to pupils' wellbeing and act to minimise them. Leaders manage daily hazards effectively and implement suitable mitigations, including through the drawing up of appropriate risk assessments. On occasion, actions relating to site maintenance and the storage of maintenance equipment are not completed as promptly as outlined in leaders' planning. This does not affect pupils' safety, but leaders had not identified these delays through their monitoring processes.
3. Pupils are taught an appropriate curriculum that prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Teaching is well planned and tailored to meet pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy their learning and act on the helpful guidance and feedback for improvement given by teachers. They make good progress and are well prepared to transition to secondary school by the end of Year 6.
4. Children in the early years are well supported in their social, emotional development and learning. Warm and positive relationships with staff help children to settle quickly, feel safe and secure, and develop confidence and independence. Children learn to manage their emotions, express their needs and build positive relationships with others. The welcoming and supportive learning environment provides purposeful opportunities for learning and play. As a result, children develop the knowledge, skills and personal attributes that prepare them well for Year 1.
5. Leaders promote and prioritise the emotional and physical wellbeing of pupils. Pupils understand the importance of treating each other kindly. Relationships between staff and pupils are supportive. Consequently, pupils are confident and behave well. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about how to keep themselves healthy and well. Leaders work effectively with external services to support pupils who need extra help, such as when there are concerns about their attendance. Admission and attendance registers are kept as required. However, prior to the start of the inspection, the attendance policy did not reflect current statutory guidance or the school's established procedures. The policy was updated during the inspection.
6. Pupils are well prepared for life to become responsible citizens in the school and local community. Through the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme, the curriculum and co-curriculum, they receive an effective understanding of financial matters. Pupils contribute meaningfully to the lives of others in their school and in the local and wider community. They learn to understand and respect equality and diversity. Pupils are taught to understand the services and institutions of modern Britain and why they are important.
7. Leaders draw up and implement suitable policies and procedures to safeguard pupils. Staff receive regular and effective training and follow appropriate procedures. Leaders work effectively with external agencies, when needed. Pupils are taught how to stay safe and how to report concerns. Leaders ensure that all pre-employment checks are made on adults before they work with pupils. However, there were a small number of administrative errors in the recording of dates on the single central record of appointments (SCR) that had not been identified by leaders or governors. These

were not reflective of the thorough recruitment procedures in place. These administrative errors were rectified during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that actions associated with managing risk around the school premises are consistently completed within the timescales and as identified in leaders' planning
- ensure that the attendance policy consistently reflects up-to-date statutory guidance and the school's procedures
- ensure that the information about recruitment checks is consistently recorded accurately on the single central record of appointments.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school and of leaders' work. They visit regularly, undertake surveys, meet with leaders, staff and pupils, seek external specialist expertise and review leaders' reports on issues such as pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. Governors ensure that leaders have the knowledge, skills and understanding required to fulfil their roles appropriately and that policies are implemented effectively. They ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met.
9. Leaders undertake a thorough self-evaluation of all aspects of school life. They are reflective when evaluating the school's success in meeting its aims, gathering the views of staff, parents and pupils, including through annual surveys. They use this information to inform their planning and ensure continuous improvement through a detailed school development plan. This clearly identifies leaders' priorities for the year ahead and actions. They routinely review this to ensure that they are taking all appropriate action to bring improvements in provision for pupils.
10. Leaders implement suitable systems to manage risk effectively. Risk assessments covering the school's premises and educational provision identify potential risks, and appropriate mitigating actions are put in place effectively. On occasion, actions relating to site maintenance and the storage of maintenance equipment are not completed as promptly as outlined in leaders' planning. This does not affect pupils' safety, but leaders had not identified these delays through their monitoring processes.
11. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders implement a suitable accessibility plan, which outlines measures to ensure access for all pupils to the curriculum and the physical site. Leaders routinely review how they can improve the arrangements to ensure that all pupils can fully access all aspects of their learning equitably.
12. Leaders liaise with external agencies to promote pupils' wellbeing. They work effectively with a range of external services, such as children's services teams and mental health professionals, to support pupils who need more specialist support. They work closely with external agencies to support pupils where there are concerns about attendance and inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times. Leaders work appropriately with the local authority to support pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including providing information about additional funding and finance.
13. The school provides appropriate relevant information to parents and other agencies. Information about the school's policies and procedures is provided on the school's website. Parents receive information about their child's progress and attainment in written reports and in person at regular points throughout the school year. They receive additional details about activities and school events through regular newsletters.
14. Leaders manage concerns and complaints appropriately. They respond in line with the published procedures. Leaders maintain appropriate records of complaints, including any actions that they have taken and how complaints have been resolved. Governors review this information to see if there are any learning points that could be taken from the complaint.
15. Leaders in the early years effectively promote children's wellbeing. They ensure that the learning environment is well matched to the curriculum and is adapted to meet the needs of the children in

the setting. Staff work closely with parents to make sure that they provide a positive and nurturing environment that helps to promote the children's self-esteem. Leaders ensure that the requirements of statutory guidance are met and that staff are well trained in these.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Pupils experience a broad and well-planned curriculum. A suitable range of subjects, including drama, art, music, science, technology and computing, enable pupils to develop their skills and knowledge well. Subject leaders work effectively together to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and interesting and supports pupils' participation. The curriculum supports pupils to be well prepared for each transition to the next stage of their education.
18. Typically, teachers have up-to-date and thorough understanding about the subjects that they teach. They plan effectively for the pupils in their classes, prepare high-quality resources and use a range of effective teaching strategies that are well considered to support pupils' needs. Most pupils respond well to teachers' expectations, settle to work quickly and make the most of their learning time in lessons.
19. Owing to the well-planned curriculum and effective teaching, pupils develop and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding effectively. For example, in mathematics, pupils measure capacity and volume successfully and analyse data from pie charts. In English, they write in a range of styles using appropriate grammatical structures. They apply their learning about pitch and dynamics in music when learning songs for their production. They use coding software to create computer games, and they design and build motorised vehicles for land and sea.
20. Leaders and teachers use an effective assessment framework to monitor and track pupils' learning and progress. They use a variety of assessment information to check on how well pupils are faring in the curriculum. They are timely and effective in identifying pupils who need any additional help or assistance. Teachers use a range of ways to provide pupils with appropriate and well-considered guidance and feedback on how to improve their work and develop their understanding. As a result, pupils learn effectively in lessons and make good progress over time. They are well prepared to transition to their next stages of education, including the transition from Year 6 to secondary school.
21. Staff in the early years have created a curriculum that gives children a vibrant range of planned and play-based experiences that promote an early enjoyment of learning. They ensure that children develop essential foundational skills in language, communication, literacy and numeracy. For example, they support children's language development through high-quality interactions. They use effective teaching of phonics and early reading to support children's early writing skills. Staff use effective resources to support children's early numeracy, such as the use of building blocks to support number bond understanding or practising counting skills when reading the story of *The Hungry Caterpillar*. By the end of the Reception year, children are well supported and prepared to move on to Year 1.
22. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately identified and effectively supported. Staff adapt teaching appropriately and closely monitor progress. Strategies such as one-to-one support, targeted resources and external specialist involvement support pupils to learn the curriculum effectively alongside their peers. Leaders and teachers use 'pupil passports' and regular assessment to track the progress and additional support needed for pupils. When required, pupils receive additional intervention to support them.
23. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils who spoke English as an additional language (EAL). However, leaders are well prepared to support any pupils who arrive in the early stages of

learning English. They have appropriate provision to support any future pupils to develop important linguistic skills.

24. Pupils' learning is enriched by a broad and stimulating range of co-curricular activities and after-school clubs. These include construction, debating, gymnastics and wildlife clubs. Pupils participate in concerts, perform in shows and exhibit in art exhibitions, and grow in confidence. For example, the choir performs annually at a service in Ripon Cathedral and the whole school participates in annual drama productions, choosing to perform on stage or assist behind the scenes. As a result, pupils develop their creative knowledge and skills in a collaborative enterprise. The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of interesting visitors, themed events, educational visits and residential field trips.

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

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

26. Leaders actively promote pupils' emotional wellbeing and self-confidence. This starts with the youngest children in the early years, where warm and supportive relationships with staff help children to settle quickly and feel safe and secure. Children develop confidence and independence as they learn to manage their emotions, express their needs and build positive relationships with others. Positive relationships with staff also help pupils, as they get older, to develop their self-esteem and feel confident expressing things that matter to them. For example, pupils' achievements are regularly celebrated in assemblies and school newsletters. Leaders seek pupils' views through surveys and the school council and use these to identify ways to further support their wellbeing and sense of security.
27. Pupils develop their spiritual and moral understanding in a range of ways. Pupils are taught to value the non-material aspects of life through the extensive forest school programme and considering the natural world around them. They learn about the major world religions in religious studies (RS) and visit local places of worship, such as a local church, mosque and a synagogue. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop their moral understanding by considering topical and thought-provoking issues. For example, pupils in the debating club consider the use of artificial intelligence in schools and pupils in Year 6 compare the fairness of punishments for crimes in the Victorian era with those used today.
28. There is an appropriately planned and taught PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) programme. Lessons are taught by teachers who know the pupils well. The curriculum is enhanced by assemblies and visiting speakers. Pupils learn about topics such as online safety, diversity, changes during puberty, the importance of respecting privacy, consent, different types of relationships and healthy relationships. Leaders liaise and consult with parents appropriately.
29. The well-planned and taught physical education (PE) programme fosters pupils' enjoyment of sport and physical activity successfully through exposing them to a range of sports and fitness. This starts with children in the early years, who are provided with a varied range of activities that help develop their balance, co-ordination and gross motor skills. They learn about healthy eating and oral hygiene. As they get older, pupils experience regular exercise at school and effective guidance from knowledgeable teachers, which enables them to understand how to promote their physical health.
30. Leaders establish appropriate expectations for behaviour and an effective approach to preventing and addressing bullying. These approaches are underpinned by the school's values, which are consistently modelled by all staff. Pupils take responsibility for their actions and develop respectful relationships with others. Poor behaviour and bullying are rare. When incidents occur, staff respond promptly and use restorative approaches where appropriate. This helps pupils to learn from their mistakes and gain a better understanding of right and wrong. Leaders' actions take account of pupils' needs and are fair and proportionate.
31. Suitable accommodation and procedures are in place to care for pupils who are injured or unwell. Appropriately trained staff provide first aid and meet pupils' specific medical needs. Medicines are securely stored and appropriately administered, with suitable records maintained of accidents, injuries and medication.

32. Health and safety and fire safety arrangements are effective. Regular checks and servicing take place to ensure that the premises are well maintained and effective systems are in place to deal with any required repairs or maintenance. The school maintains, and acts upon, regularly reviewed fire risk assessments and procedures. Pupils benefit from attentive supervision and staff are deployed appropriately, including in the early years.
33. Attendance and admission registers are maintained appropriately. Leaders take prompt and appropriate action to support pupils' attendance. However, there were a small number of gaps in the information in the school's attendance policy, as required by statutory guidance. The policy was updated during the inspection so that it precisely reflects statutory requirements and the school's established practice.
34. Pupils gain much from the opportunities to take on leadership roles within the school. For example, pupils in Year 6 take their roles seriously and understand that each position, such as house captain, sports captain or member of the school council, comes with responsibility, not just a title. Pupil leaders recognise how they provide service to the school and are proud of this achievement.

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

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

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

36. The school's values are central to its culture and help bind the community together. Leaders and staff systematically teach and model values such as perseverance, honesty, respect and kindness, which contribute to positive relationships across the school. Fundamental British values are promoted through PSHE lessons, assemblies and the wider curriculum. Pupils learn about topics such as diversity, prejudice, equality and human rights. The curriculum is supplemented by visiting speakers and events that broaden their understanding of the experiences of others. For example, pupils experience talks from speakers from the visually impaired community and the local wheelchair basketball clubs. As a result, pupils respect and value differences and express their own views, showing appropriate consideration for those of others.
37. Pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong as they progress through the school. Staff help pupils to understand how they can make better choices when they make mistakes and to take responsibility for their actions. They learn about how rules and laws govern wider society and the consequences that can follow when the law is broken.
38. The school develops pupils' knowledge of and respect for British institutions and democracy effectively. They invite visiting speakers to the school to further pupils' understanding. Recent examples include a judge, a local representative from the UK Parliament, and members of the police and armed forces. The school council provides opportunities for pupils to experience democracy and decision-making within their community. Pupils know that they are listened to and that changes may happen because of their ideas. For example, 'no ball Wednesday' during playtime was introduced by pupils to enable a greater range of activities to take place.
39. Staff teach children to care for one another in the early years. They serve as positive role models, helping children form successful friendships. During registration, positive relationships are fostered through welcoming routines, affirmations and greetings. The outdoor area is equipped with age-appropriate equipment that promotes co-operative play and the development of social skills such as negotiation and turn-taking.
40. The school teaches about economic matters effectively. Younger pupils learn about money, for example through shopkeeping role play and counting activities. Older pupils learn about the value of items, budgeting, banks, profit margins and mortgages. Pupils undertake an enterprise project, which enables pupils to develop their wider financial and business skills. For example, in order to raise money for the school's charities, pupils in Year 5 are expected to design, make, market and sell pizzas and, in Year 6, the pupils set up and run a variety of craft stalls.
41. Leaders ensure that appreciating the wider community and their role in it is understood by pupils. Pupils, including those in the early years, play active roles in the local community. These include regular visits to the residents of a local care home, singing music in local churches for concerts and services, and participating in collaborative events such as the annual Holocaust and Remembrance Day services in Ripon Cathedral. Pupils are involved in supporting a variety of charities and providing service to the local community each year. This includes participating in a 'book drop' to pass on books they have read at no cost to the local community, litter picking in a local park and collecting items for the local foodbank. Pupils raise money through bake sales, running stalls at school fayres and participating in fundraising for a partner school in South Africa.

42. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for their future lives. Transitions between year groups are supported by teachers' detailed knowledge of pupils. This knowledge is developed through regular whole-staff meetings, daily interactions and the school's close-knit community. Leaders carefully manage older pupils' transition to senior school, developing their confidence and readiness to move on. Pupils also receive structured early careers guidance through careers fairs, assemblies, PSHE and talks from representatives of a range of professions, including the civil service, farming, veterinary medicine, chartered surveying, genetics and public relations. These experiences broaden pupils' early understanding of potential career paths.

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

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

Safeguarding

44. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders ensure that these arrangements are in line with the latest statutory guidance and a detailed policy is in place. This policy outlines the school's range of safeguarding procedures and processes, including the training on different forms of abuse, the roles and responsibilities of leaders, additional safeguards for vulnerable pupils and the role of attendance monitoring in safeguarding.
45. Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding matters. They complete formal reviews of safeguarding policy and associated practice at various points throughout the year. They undertake a range of activities to check on the effectiveness of leaders' work.
46. The school's safeguarding leaders are suitably trained and experienced. Detailed records are kept of any concerns raised. The resulting action is appropriate and swiftly enacted. When necessary, advice and guidance from specialists in the local authority is sought and followed. Effective communication is maintained with external safeguarding partners to ensure that pupils get the help and support that they need.
47. Suitable induction and regular training arrangements are in place for staff. Staff have a thorough understanding of the policies and processes to safeguard pupils, including those related to whistleblowing and low-level concerns about adults working with pupils. Leaders ensure that safeguarding knowledge is embedded amongst staff. As a result, staff report concerns in a timely and effective way.
48. Pupils know that they can approach any member of staff if they have a worry or concern and want to discuss matters in person. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, both in the physical world and when online. Pupils learn about online safety through computing lessons, PSHE lessons and assemblies.
49. Governors ensure that there are appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place. They ensure that pupils and staff access appropriate content when online in the school and when on school devices. The school implements an appropriate policy on the use of mobile phones and smart technology for pupils, staff and visitors. Leaders take effective and timely action when concerns arise.
50. Leaders implement suitable safer recruitment procedures when appointing adults to work with pupils, including carrying out all necessary pre-employment checks within appropriate timescales. These checks are recorded in staff personnel files. However, there were a small number of administrative errors in the recording of dates on the SCR, which had not been identified by leaders or governors. These were not reflective of the thorough recruitment procedures in place. These administrative errors were rectified during the inspection.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Brackenfield School
Department for Education number	815/6027
Address	Brackenfield School 128 Duchy Road Harrogate North Yorkshire HG1 2HE
Phone number	01423 508558
Email address	office@brackenfieldschool.co.uk
Website	www.brackenfieldschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Harrogate Preparatory School Limited
Chair	Mr John Forsyth
Headteacher	Mr Joe Masterson
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	137
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 June 2023

Information about the school

52. Brackenfield School is a co-educational independent school located near the centre of Harrogate. The school is owned by a proprietor body whose directors provide governance. Directors are supported by an advisory board, comprising the head, representative of the governing body and parents of the school. The school consists of three sections: the nursery, for children aged two to four years; the infants, for pupils aged four to seven years; and the juniors, for those aged seven to eleven years.
53. There are 27 children in two Nursery classes and 11 children in one Reception class.
54. The school has identified 30 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
55. The school has no pupils for whom English is an additional language
56. The school states its aims are to promote a lifelong love of learning through the provision of a rich and varied range of collaborative experiences in its mission areas of curriculum and learning, activities, outdoor learning and community, underpinned by the values it promotes: kindness, respect, confidence, perseverance, initiative and honesty.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 June to 2 July 2026

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

58. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

59. 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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