

School inspection report

7 to 9 October 2025

Bradfield College

Common Hill

Bradfield

Reading

RG7 6AU

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 demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to implement policies effectively and ensure that the school meets the Standards. They carry out thorough and well-evidenced self-evaluation that leads to highly effective decision-making. Leaders make substantial use of information and data about pupils' progress, behaviour, experience and perspectives, to strengthen procedures and continuously improve pastoral provision. Leaders at all levels make confident and effective use of data to provide pupils with timely academic and pastoral support. This leads to a highly beneficial impact on pupils' wellbeing with no detriment to any groups of pupils. Leaders' use of self-evaluation to inform their impactful decision-making is a significant strength.
2. The broad and well-balanced curriculum is carefully tailored to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. Teaching enables pupils to learn well. The GCSE and sixth-form curriculums are designed to meet the needs of pupils with different levels of prior attainment, supported by effective careers provision.
3. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress due to leaders' regular scrutiny of progress data and subsequent adaptations made to classroom teaching. However, when pupils who have SEND first join the school in Year 9, the support provided to them initially is not as effective as that provided as they progress through the school.
4. Teachers provide pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) with effective individual support when required so that they make good progress.
5. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes contain suitable and relevant content. Staff adjust the programmes in response to issues that arise in society and the specific experiences that pupils might encounter. Examples used in lessons are accessible and lead to engaging and helpful discussions that deepen pupils' understanding of the themes they engage with.
6. The boarding accommodation is suitable and maintained to a high standard with areas for pupils to focus on academic work, as well as social activities.
7. Admissions and attendance procedures are effective. However, at the start of the inspection, the attendance policy did not include all information required by current statutory guidance. Leaders rectified this during the inspection.
8. The school develops pupils' sense of social responsibility well. Leaders encourage pupils to support local, national and international charities.
9. The school provides suitable and relevant careers guidance. Pupils receive up-to-date and informative guidance about different potential careers and educational pathways.
10. Safeguarding arrangements are effective, underpinned by suitable staff training. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities consult with external agencies effectively and refer safeguarding concerns to them when appropriate. Governors carry out regular and effective reviews of the school's safeguarding practice.

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 the support provided to pupils who have SEND when they first join the school in Year 9 is as effective as that provided later
- ensure that the attendance policy includes all information required by current statutory guidance.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders at all levels demonstrate good knowledge and skills that enable them to fulfil their duties and consistently promote pupils' wellbeing effectively. As a result, the school implements its policies effectively and meets all of the Standards. Governors' oversight of the school is effective and well structured. Regular visits and a clear devolution of governors' areas of responsibility ensure that specific areas of the school are scrutinised effectively.
12. Leaders across all parts of the school engage in rigorous self-evaluation. They consider current ideas about best practice and data about pupils' progress and wellbeing to determine where the school is most successful and areas that it could develop further. Leaders' thorough self-evaluation is further informed by consideration of pupils' views and regular lesson observations and other monitoring of provision. Leaders use the findings of their self-evaluation to take highly effective action to continuously improve the provision so that it meets pupils' emerging pastoral and academic needs very well. Leaders monitor the impact of their actions against clear objectives and ensure that their decisions and actions do not result in detriment to any pupils.
13. Risk assessment is consistently effective. Risk assessments identify potential risks in areas of the school and learning activities undertaken by pupils, including when on educational trips and visits. They include appropriate actions to lessen the danger of the potential risks that are identified. Leaders and governors regularly review risk assessments to ensure their continued suitability.
14. Leaders ensure that all required policies and other information about the school are available via the school's website. Parents receive regular reports about their child's progress and approaches to learning. Leaders communicate the school's aims and ethos well, so that these are known by pupils and parents and promoted by staff.
15. Leaders implement a suitable complaints policy and procedure. They promote an ethos of open communication with parents to better understand parental perspectives about the school. Leaders respond to complaints within a suitable timescale and maintain appropriate records of complaints submitted and any actions taken by the school in response to these.
16. Leaders ensure that the school fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. An appropriate accessibility plan is in place and leaders review and update this plan regularly.
17. Leaders liaise effectively with a range of external agencies such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and social services to further support the wellbeing of pupils when required.
18. Leaders with responsibility for boarding know pupils well and work closely with medical and pastoral colleagues to ensure a supportive environment in which boarders' wellbeing is prioritised. Academic and residential staff work together effectively to support the wellbeing of pupils.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. Leaders offer a broad and well-resourced curriculum that is matched well to pupils' needs and prior attainment. Schemes of work in all subjects contain content beyond the age-related expectations of the national curriculum. Curriculum design is tailored to the aims and ethos of the school and is regularly reviewed in response to feedback from staff and pupils. It is designed to engage pupils with teaching that encourages pupils to relate together what they learn in different subjects. Leaders ensure that the choice of GCSE, A-level and International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) qualifications meet pupils' needs well.
21. Leaders consider pupils' emotional wellbeing when planning the curriculum. For example, leaders match specific mathematical courses to pupils' levels of prior attainment well, which raises these pupils' confidence to study more challenging courses later. Similarly, leaders engage pupils in dialogue about how many science qualifications they could study for, based on their previous attainment and confidence in the subject. The curriculum in the sixth form is designed to enable pupils to choose appropriate courses for them, whether this be A-levels or subjects from within the IBDP.
22. Teaching features planning that takes account of individual pupils' learning needs and the effective use of high-quality resources. Teachers communicate clear learning objectives and good subject knowledge to facilitate pupils' ability to think and learn independently. Teachers make effective use of questioning techniques which check pupils' understanding and promote their careful thinking. Teachers ensure that learning activities contain levels of challenge matched well to the prior attainment of pupils and enable them to make good progress.
23. A suitable and thorough framework for assessment is in place. Leaders and staff monitor pupils' progress through regular assessments and put in place effective support when needed.
24. Leaders monitor the progress made by pupils who have SEND in most year groups, so that appropriate support can be provided when required. Teachers typically make suitable adaptations to their teaching strategies and use of resources to enable pupils who have SEND to learn well and make good progress. However, in Year 9, when pupils who have SEND first join the school, the support provided to them initially is not as effective as that provided later.
25. Teaching is tailored to the individual needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) as required. Leaders develop individual learning plans (ILPs) when required, which identify pupils' language needs, prior attainment and learning targets. Staff use these ILPs to provide pupils who speak EAL with appropriate support when it is needed. For example, some older pupils receive additional guidance to help enable them to respond to longer essay questions.
26. The school provides suitable extra-curricular provision. Pupils develop their skills in areas such as the creative arts, London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) activities, football, tennis, golf, dance and swimming. Leaders ensure that boarders experience a suitable variety of activities in Year 9 to build upon their interests outside the classroom. This ranges from a compulsory carousel of activities to an increasing number of options for boarders to choose from. Boarding staff organise social events and visits to local places of interest. Older pupils are given the opportunity to build their own extra-curricular programme to match their 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. Leaders nurture an environment of mutual respect and tolerance that encourages pupils to engage in all the activities offered with confidence. All house staff play a central role in monitoring pupils' emotional wellbeing and academic progress and in providing support in these areas when required. Staff receive training in using data effectively to identify where support might be needed and in using conversations to help pupils develop their resilience and self-esteem.
29. The PSHE curriculum contains suitable content and is taught in an age-appropriate manner. For example, younger pupils learn about recognising and managing their emotions, while older pupils learn about how to guard themselves against potential risks, such as those that could present themselves in festivals and nightclubs.
30. The RSE programme complies with current statutory guidance. Pupils learn about suitable themes, such as the dynamics of healthy relationships, the importance of respecting consent, appropriate sexual behaviour and signs of untoward pressure and protecting oneself against pressure or exploitation. The school consults parents appropriately with regard to the curriculum and delivery of the RSE programme.
31. Through assemblies, PSHE and religious studies (RS) lessons, pupils learn about different faiths and cultures, enabling them to understand different spiritual perspectives while developing their own spiritual ideas. Chapel provides the opportunity for spiritual reflection.
32. The physical education (PE) programme develops pupils' resilience, teamwork and sports-related skills. Pupils learn that taking part in physical activities can positively impact their mental and physical health. The breadth of team and individual physical activity offered supports all pupils in finding an area in which they feel confident and can develop their skills, underpinned by specialist coaching, such as in football and golf. Pupils learn how different training exercises can benefit their performance in competitive sports. A fair and transparent trial system for team sports ensures equal opportunity, with pupils' ability to move between teams based on performance and development. Pupils are rewarded for their effort and participation to the benefit of their self-confidence and willingness to engage in PE and sports.
33. Leaders ensure that prefects have specific and appropriate duties and responsibilities to support other pupils within boarding houses, promoting positive interaction between pupils of different ages. Effective oversight by staff ensures that prefects carry out their roles in a suitable and professional manner without overstepping their authority.
34. Leaders operate an efficient behaviour management system that is well understood by pupils and consistently applied across the school. Leaders and staff apply sanctions fairly and consistently. They record incidents of unintentional unkindness and educate the pupils about how to avoid this in the future, including regarding online messaging. Leaders and staff make it clear that bullying is not tolerated in the school. They educate pupils about different types of bullying and the importance of reporting any concerns about such incidents.
35. Leaders ensure that boarding and sleeping accommodation is of good quality and maintained to a high standard. Boarding houses are well lit, heated and ventilated with access to suitable toilet and

washing facilities. Boarders are encouraged to view their boarding houses as both places of study and homes, promoting a sense of comfort alongside academic focus. Dedicated study spaces enable pupils to engage meaningfully with their academic work in a supportive environment.

36. Health and safety arrangements are effective. Leaders ensure detailed and regular checks of equipment, including fire safety equipment, and servicing of utilities so that the premises are well maintained and suitable. Appropriate fire safety procedures are in place, including regular staff training, up-to-date fire risk assessments and fire evacuation drills to ensure that pupils know how to respond effectively in the event of an emergency.
37. Supervision is effective across all activities and areas of the school. Leaders deploy staff to mitigate risk, such as at key road crossing points and in areas of high pupil traffic. There are always staff available to support pupils, including during boarding hours.
38. The medical provision is suitable and effective. Pupils have regular access to a range of medical professionals, such as speech therapists and physiotherapists. Suitably trained staff are available to support pupils who require medical assistance, including at night. All medication is stored and administered effectively.
39. The admissions and attendance registers are kept as required by current statutory guidance. The school informs the local authority whenever pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition. However, when the inspection commenced, the attendance policy did not contain all the information required by current statutory guidance, such as details of the senior attendance champion. Leaders rectified this before the end of the inspection.

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

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

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

41. The school develops pupils' sense of social responsibility effectively and encourages them to contribute to the wider community. Leaders use assemblies and pastoral time to highlight the types of issues that affect society, and actively support any pupil-led initiatives that arise in response.
42. Supported by staff, pupils lead activities in the service of people and charities beyond the school. For example, pupils in the sixth form contribute to reading support sessions and help coach pupils at local primary schools. They receive external training to ensure quality and impact, especially in paired reading schemes. House charities are chosen by pupils and support causes such as the supply of sanitary products for girls in Saudi Arabia and the use of football to encourage pupils to attend school in India. Charity prefects play a key role in organising and promoting these efforts.
43. Staff teach pupils about diverse cultures and develop their understanding of issues relating to equality and inclusion, engaging thoughtfully with diverse views on these topics. For example, pupils study Black history and explore issues of misogyny in girls' and women's access to education in some countries. They consider how people's characteristics, such as gender, sexuality and ethnicity are sometimes used as excuses to discriminate against them and treat them unfairly. The pupil-led 'equality, diversity and inclusion' (EDI) committee considers ways to increase advocacy and celebrates different types of diversity through regular events. Annually, pupils support events such as 'Show Racism the Red Card'. Pupils' exploration of such themes helps to develop their ethical sensibilities.
44. The school develops pupils' appreciation of British society and its institutions. Pupils are encouraged to express views different from their own and to understand how others might think. They explore the legal framework of citizens' rights in the UK, which are also explored when, for example, pupils consider current political issues, such as immigration. Pupils compare how different democratic systems deal with such issues and discuss the broader workings of a democratic society, particularly the election process. They engage in a version of this process through elections to pupil committees and prefect roles. Staff ensure that any discussion containing political themes or content is conducted impartially and in an unbiased manner.
45. The school provides pupils with appropriate economic education. Pupils learn about themes such as budgeting for a household and managing credit card debt. Teachers make effective use of a range of scenarios to teach younger pupils about how bank accounts work and the value of saving while responding to regular household outgoings. Older pupils learn about student loans and budgeting when living independently during college or university courses.
46. Leaders and staff provide pupils with up-to-date and well-informed careers guidance. Pupils develop awareness of possible careers, an understanding of their own aptitudes and employment skills in all year groups. Staff make effective use of input from people representing different professions, universities and apprenticeship providers. In the sixth form, pupils receive carefully tailored individual advice to help them make informed decisions about higher education and career pathways. Staff provide pupils with guidance on professional networking, a regular careers fair which represents a range of future destination options, mock interview sessions and guidance about applying to employers and universities.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

48. Leaders ensure that safeguarding practice is robust and that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and reflect current statutory guidance. Pupils have access to trusted adults, including staff and the independent person, and can report concerns anonymously through an online platform.
49. Governors receive regular safeguarding training from external professional bodies. They maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements, including through meetings at least twice a term with the safeguarding team and scrutiny of a termly safeguarding report. Safeguarding is a standard agenda item at meetings of the governing body.
50. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond to any safeguarding concerns that arise in a timely manner. They work effectively with external safeguarding agencies, referring concerns promptly when appropriate. Leaders keep clear and detailed records of safeguarding concerns and leaders' decisions in response to these.
51. The school has appropriate systems in place to report and respond to low-level concerns and any allegations relating to adults' suitability to work with pupils. Where appropriate, these are reported to the local authority.
52. All staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding, which meets local and national requirements and is adapted to reflect the context of the school. Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of safeguarding practice and how to respond to pupil concerns. Boarding and house staff receive additional training tailored to their roles. Pupil leaders receive basic training to ensure they understand their role in supporting pupils' wellbeing, particularly within the boarding environment.
53. The school teaches pupils how to remain safe when working online or using social media. An effective internet filtering and monitoring system is in place and leaders check the efficacy of this regularly. Leaders analyse trends in data which emerge and have recently adapted the PSHE curriculum to include discussion of the use of programs designed to bypass internet restrictions.
54. Leaders ensure that all required safer recruitment checks on staff and governors are undertaken before they begin work at the school. These checks are recorded in an appropriate single central record of appointments (SCR). The headteacher and chair of governors regularly review the SCR to ensure that procedures for safer recruitment are effective.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

55. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Bradfield College
Department for Education number	869/6000
Registered charity number	309089
Address	Bradfield College Common Hill Reading Berkshire RG7 6AU
Phone number	0118 964 4500
Email address	head@bradfieldcollege.org.uk
Website	www.bradfieldcollege.org.uk
Proprietor	Warden & Council of Bradfield
Chair	Mr Tom Beardmore-Gray
Headteacher	Mr Jeremy Quartermain
Age range	13 to 18
Number of pupils	814
Number of boarding pupils	645
Date of previous inspection	29 November to 1 December 2022

Information about the school

56. Bradfield College is a co-educational day and boarding school located in Bradfield, Berkshire. The school consists of a senior school which includes a sixth form. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a council of governors and chaired by the warden, who took up his post in August 2022. The current headteacher took up his position in September 2025.
57. There are twelve boarding houses on site: four boarding houses for female pupils and seven boarding houses for male pupils. In addition to these, there is one mixed boarding house which accommodates pupils in Year 9.
58. The school has identified 297 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
59. The school has identified seven pupils as speaking English as an additional language.
60. The school states that its aim is to provide all pupils with an outstanding education for life. It seeks to equip pupils with the skills to flourish personally and professionally and to make a positive contribution to society. The school intends to develop pupils' confidence, open-mindedness and resilience along with a sense of inquiry, good communication skills and the ability to innovate in a changing world through creativity and entrepreneurship.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

7 to 9 October 2025

61. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. Inspection activities included:

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

63. 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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