

# School inspection report

30 January to 1 February 2024

## **Mill Hill School Foundation**

Walker House

Miller Close

Mill Hill

London

NW7 1AQ

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 have a clear vision for school development based on effective monitoring, self-evaluation and quality assurance. Leaders are well supported by governors and executives of the foundation who contribute a wide range of relevant specialist experience, enabling them to ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
2. The curriculum is complemented by an innovative and well-resourced co-curricular programme, which benefits pupils of all ages and abilities. The programme is wide ranging and well coordinated across the schools to support pupil progression. The co-curricular programme engenders pupils' interests as well as develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. This is a significant strength of the school.
3. Leaders are rigorous in promoting the importance of learning and of hard work. Across the schools, the curriculum is effectively implemented by teachers who employ appropriate teaching strategies and have good subject knowledge. In cases of best practice, teachers give effective feedback to pupils which helps them to improve their work. However, this practice is not consistently implemented across the schools.
4. Leaders use suitable tracking systems to provide timely and appropriate support for pupils which helps them to make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress in line with their peers because of the appropriate and personalised support they receive. Pupils who speak English as an additional language rapidly acquire fluency in English because of the targeted and appropriate support they receive from teaching and pastoral staff.
5. Leaders establish an environment where the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of pupils is well understood by staff and pupils are effectively supported. Leaders ensure that boarders benefit from high-quality provision which supports their wellbeing.
6. Leaders ensure that pupils have many opportunities to contribute positively to the lives of others in school and in the local community. Leaders support pupils to be well prepared for their future schools and for life after school in British society. Pupils have a practical understanding of tolerance, respect and diversity which they apply in their daily lives. The international nature of the boarding houses deepens boarders' understanding of and respect for people from a wide variety of backgrounds.
7. Governors and executives of the foundation rigorously review safeguarding practices at the school and staff understand the school's procedures for reporting concerns. Leaders carry out recruitment checks correctly, and these are recorded appropriately. Pupils know how to keep safe, including online. Leaders have a strategic approach to the management of risk and take effective and appropriate action to mitigate the risks.

## 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:

- procedures with regard to giving pupils feedback about their work are consistently implemented to align with prevalent practice across the school.

### Material change request

8. Inspectors considered the school's request for a change to the details of its registration to include an increase of capacity from 1750 to 1855 without an increase in boarding capacity.
9. Safeguarding practice in the school is effective and leaders are rigorous in checking the suitability of staff to work with children. Leaders maintain effective procedures to ensure that health and safety and fire safety requirements continue to be met. Leaders prepare effective risk assessments, which include risks relating to an increase in pupil numbers. Risk assessments are reviewed and suitable mitigations implemented in order to minimise the risk.
10. Staffing and supervision are appropriate to support the increase in pupil numbers. The quality of education will be maintained through leaders' monitoring and taking action by deploying additional staff when appropriate. Provision including toilet and changing facilities are suitable and other aspects of the well-maintained premises such as the dining hall, are sufficient for increased pupil numbers.
11. It is recommended that the requested material change be approved.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Governors receive regular reports from school leaders and routinely scrutinise and monitor school practice and procedures as part of their quality assurance process. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders and ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
13. The specialist knowledge and experience of executives of the Foundation, particularly with regard to safeguarding, is effective in advising and supporting leaders and governors to ensure that robust measures are in place to protect pupils from harm.
14. Leaders effectively promote the values of the school and pupils readily uphold these values, developing their understanding of and respect for all groups of people in society.
15. Leaders regularly reflect on the success and development of the school and have effective monitoring processes in place. Leaders have an accurate view of school strengths and areas for further development, particularly with regard to academic and pastoral matters. Leaders use this understanding to inform their plans for the school, both in the short and longer term. Governors ensure that the school is sufficiently well resourced for these plans to be executed successfully.
16. Leaders promote a range of strategies to support best outcomes for pupils. These strategies include clear leadership of subjects, implementation of the 'promoting positive behaviour' policy, application of the feedback to pupils procedure, and use of engaging and effective teaching strategies. However, the procedure for giving targeted feedback to pupils about their work is not consistently applied across the schools.
17. Complaints are managed appropriately within the timeframes stated in the school policy. Parents receive reports regularly about pupils' progress and attainment. All other required information is made available to parents, largely through the school's informative website.
18. The management of risks relating to the school premises and educational and recreational activities is effective. Leaders identify the risks around boarding and the campus and take appropriate decisions to mitigate the possibility of harm. Leaders review risk assessments regularly to ensure that they remain relevant to changing demands. Records kept about accidents are thorough and up to date.
19. The school has an appropriate accessibility plan that is implemented effectively.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Pupils study a wide range of subjects from a well-planned and appropriate curriculum which meets the needs of pupils. Leaders provide a comprehensive co-curricular programme which complements the core curriculum for all pupils and adds breadth and depth to pupils' learning experiences. Leaders adopt a multi-stranded approach to the co-curriculum across all schools, so that new learning builds effectively upon prior learning. The programme enables pupils to develop a wide range of interests to develop their skills and understanding beyond the classroom. Staff closely monitor pupils' participation in co-curricular activities to ensure that pupils manage their time well and follow up effectively with any pupils who need support.
22. Teachers are experienced, have good subject knowledge and follow well-planned schemes of work, adapting their teaching to effectively meet the needs of pupils. Teachers establish positive teacher-pupil relationships which support pupils to respond thoughtfully and knowledgeably to teacher questions and prompts. Pupils readily use subject specific vocabulary to solve complex problems and to articulate sophisticated arguments. Pupils take pride in their work which is clearly structured and well organised.
23. Leaders carefully track and monitor pupils' academic progress across the schools so that pupils' emerging needs can be identified. Pupils may access additional academic support from their teachers in the evenings, at weekends and during boarding time.
24. Teachers typically give regular and helpful feedback to pupils. Pupils' use of self-reflection gives them the opportunity to see where their mistakes are and to work on effective strategies to improve their work. Where pupils receive effective feedback, they are able to acquire new skills and make good progress in their learning. However, this process is not consistently embedded in practice.
25. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from timely identification of their learning need. Teachers adapt the curriculum to meet pupils' needs and this supports pupils who have SEND to make good progress which is in line with that of their peers.
26. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are assessed in English proficiency upon entry to the school and receive appropriate and wide-ranging support for their academic and pastoral development. Consequently, pupils who speak EAL are integrated well into the school community, and make good progress in their learning.
27. Leaders effectively incorporate outdoor learning to strengthen pupils' development in all phases of the school. For example, teachers use the woodland environment to enhance learning for children in the nursery and older pupils take part in the combined cadet force (CCF) in the senior school.
28. The curriculum for younger pupils builds on the Early Years Foundation Stage and effectively supports the core skills of reading and mathematical development alongside a thematic approach to creativity and independent learning.
29. In the prep school, pupils take part in the future skills programme which emphasises critical thinking and skills development across a wide range of technical, aesthetic and creative areas. This supports pupils to focus on continuous improvement rather than relying entirely on grades to reflect performance and achievement. Pupils are keen to push themselves by choosing appropriate challenge levels and enjoy the process of learning.

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

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

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

31. Leaders establish an ethos where the wellbeing of pupils is well supported in a culture of mutual respect for all groups of people. The pastoral system is effective and consequently pupils are willing and comfortable to seek help when required. Senior leaders in boarding have created comfortable and homely environments, with systems in place to support the organisation of boarding which further enhance the wellbeing of boarders.
32. Pupils of all faiths are supportive of the spiritual values of the school and appreciate opportunities for stillness and reflection offered during assemblies and in chapel.
33. Pupils are confident and reflect on their experiences in school thoughtfully and in a balanced manner. Children in the early years play outdoors daily and develop resilience and a spirit of enquiry through being immersed in nature. This supports the children's wellbeing and physical and emotional development.
34. Fully trained and dedicated staff develop effective programmes which ensure that all pupils have access to suitable and regular exercise. Pupils enjoy representing the school in core sports and working on personal fitness programmes.
35. The well-planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum supports pupils' wellbeing and develops pupils' understanding of diversity. The relationships and sex education curriculum and lessons on mental health and wellbeing help pupils to develop their self-knowledge and understanding of others. Wellbeing ambassadors provide appropriate peer support for pupils and older pupils understand that they are role models and embody the values espoused by the school.
36. Staff effectively implement the behaviour policy which inculcates a culture of respect and tolerance for one another. This supports pupils to be respectful of the views and opinions of others. Leaders take swift action in line with the school policy when dealing with any cases of bullying, discrimination or anti-social behaviour.
37. The boarding houses are well staffed, with clear rotas and policies in place to support boarders' safety. The boarding houses provide a comfortable, safe and welcoming environment for all boarders.
38. Leaders ensure that school buildings are well maintained, and implement robust health and safety measures, with effective oversight from governors. Fire procedures are comprehensive with the completion of regular and timely fire evacuations including during boarding time. Leaders quickly and methodically follow up actions recommended as a result of internal monitoring or external audits. Leaders effectively monitor site security and supervise pupils closely on the school site and in boarding houses.
39. The admission and attendance registers are kept up to date and unaccounted absences are quickly followed up. Information about pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times is reported to the local authority in line with school policy.



40. First aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by qualified staff in the school medical centres.

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

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

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

42. Pupils make age-appropriate and positive contributions to society through their active support of a number of charities and through taking part in pupil-led initiatives. For example, pupils support residents in a local residential home and fundraise for a children's hospice. Leaders maintain effective oversight of the varied activities which take place.
43. Leaders provide an embedded and stable careers programme, which is largely delivered using an online commercial programme up to the sixth form. Pupils find this useful in identifying their strengths and in suggesting career possibilities. Sixth-form pupils take part in the 'Futures programme', which includes a range of guest speakers who help pupils to understand the world outside of the school and to appreciate the life experiences of other people. Older pupils support younger pupils in their transition between the schools which helps them to settle in quickly at their next school.
44. In the prep school, pupils take part in the 'Future Skills' programme which effectively prepares pupils for their next steps. Pupils learn about relevant topics of interest such as first aid, careers and managing finances.
45. Leaders promote the values of tolerance, respect and democracy through the effective PSHE programme. Pupils learn about current affairs and social and political issues across the curriculum. This supports pupils in increasing their social and cultural literacy and their understanding and therefore preparedness for life in modern Britain.
46. Pupils enjoy opportunities in the curriculum to develop their financial awareness. For example, pupils deliver a pitch for an eco-friendly game using upcycled materials. In lessons, pupils quickly gain an understanding of complex financial concepts, for example, in a business lesson, pupils learn about inflation, interest rates and currency exchange rates. Pupils reflect on how these topics could affect them as consumers as well as a business operating in the UK. Older pupils understand that economic problems often affect some parts of society more than others, and explore the effectiveness of steps taken by churches and other institutions to confront the issues.
47. Leaders provide an effective framework within which pupils develop a moral appreciation of what is right and wrong. This supports pupils to accept responsibility for their own attitudes and behaviour.
48. Pupils actively take up opportunities across the schools to take on leadership roles which positively impacts the lives of pupils at the school. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities to interact with their peers and celebrate their diverse school community through their everyday interactions and through pupil-led societies. The international element of boarding encourages pupils to mix and integrate with each other through the family system of boarding.

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

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

## Safeguarding

50. Leaders ensure that effective arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils across the three schools. The safeguarding policy follows statutory guidance and is implemented effectively. Leaders promptly request safeguarding files for new pupils and send safeguarding information to destination schools of departing pupils in order to maintain safeguarding arrangements for pupils moving schools.
51. Governors conduct an annual audit of safeguarding arrangements and leaders implement any actions arising from their findings promptly.
52. Safeguarding induction and training for staff, including that for the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and other members of the safeguarding team, are thorough, regular and in line with local requirements. Leaders provide safeguarding updates and scenario-based training for all staff, followed by school generated quizzes to review understanding. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to escalate concerns when required.
53. Leaders are aware of the contextual risks and challenges facing pupils beyond the school and use this understanding to inform staff training and the development of the PSHE curriculum.
54. Leaders provide a number of ways to hear the views of individual pupils. Pupils feel safe in their school and know who they can go to should they wish to share any concerns. The physical and mental health of pupils are given a high priority and effective communication with parents is maintained appropriately.
55. Safeguarding leaders create an open culture of safeguarding across the foundation and those with responsibility for leading safeguarding respond effectively to concerns and report any potential issues appropriately and in line with school policy.
56. Safeguarding leaders keep suitable records and maintain effective relationships with relevant external agencies. Suitable arrangements for the handling of allegations against staff or senior leaders are included in safeguarding procedures and are well understood by staff.
57. Leaders ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment checks on adults who work with pupils are made in a timely manner and that these are accurately recorded. The nominated governor with responsibility for this area reviews the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, including recruitment checks.
58. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders ensure that suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place and alerts are immediately reviewed by members of the safeguarding team who take action as required.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Mill Hill School Foundation
<b>Department for Education number</b>	302/6000
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1064758
<b>Address</b>	Mill Hill Education Group Walker House Miller Close Mill Hill London NW7 1AQ
<b>Phone number</b>	020 8959 1176
<b>Email address</b>	office@millhill.org.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.millhill.org.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Governors of the Mill Hill Foundation
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Elliot Lipton
<b>Headteachers</b>	
Mill Hill Senior School	Mr David Benson
Belmont	Mr Leon Roberts
Grimsdell	Mrs Kate Simon
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	
Mill Hill Senior School	879
Belmont	568
Grimsdell	212
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	91
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 to 23 January 2020

## Information about the school

60. The Mill Hill Education Group is a group of co-educational independent day and boarding schools for pupils aged 3 to 18 years. It consists of nine schools, four of which are in close proximity to Mill Hill in north London. This inspection reports on Grimsdell, which educates pupils of ages 3 to 7, Belmont for pupils from 7 to 13 years and Mill Hill School for pupils aged from 13 to 18. A court of governors oversees all of the schools. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed to Mill Hill School in October 2023.
61. There are four boarding houses which provide accommodation for some pupils from Mill Hill School, each within a short walking distance of the school. These are shared with Mill Hill International, which is close by. One of the boarding houses is for female pupils and the others are mixed.
62. The school has identified 310 pupils at Mill Hill School, 122 pupils at Belmont, and 24 pupils at Grimsdell as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four pupils at Mill Hill School have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, with two at Belmont and one at Grimsdell.
63. English is an additional language for 192 pupils at Mill Hill School, 174 pupils at Belmont, and 58 pupils at Grimsdell.
64. The school states its aims are to develop thoughtful, motivated and responsible young people with a global outlook.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

30 January to 1 February 2024

65. A team of twelve inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

66. 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 chief executive officer
- discussions with the head, 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.

67. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)