



THE DOWNS
MALVERN

Summary of Inspection Findings

The Downs Malvern

June 2026

ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate



WELCOME

I am delighted to share The Downs Malvern College Prep School's latest ISI inspection report with you. The school was inspected in June 2026, and I would like to thank our pupils, staff, governors and families for the warm and open way in which they supported the inspection.

The report provides a very positive reflection of life at The Downs. Inspectors recognised the strength of our leadership and governance, the quality of our teaching and curriculum, and the care we provide for pupils across the school, including in our boarding provision and early years.

What is particularly pleasing is the way the report captures the character of The Downs as a happy and welcoming community. Our pupils are described as confident, enthusiastic and respectful, with strong relationships between pupils and staff helping them to thrive. The inspectors also highlighted the breadth of opportunities available to pupils, from sport and music to creative, technical and outdoor activities.

The report also recognises our strong culture of safeguarding and the importance we place on pupils' physical health, emotional wellbeing and personal development. These are central to the experience we want every child to have at The Downs.

As with all ISI inspections, the school is provided with recommended next steps (RNS), highlighting to schools areas in which we can continue to develop. Due to the strength of our provision we only received one RNS from the inspection team. We welcome the recommendation to strengthen the quality and consistency of our PSHE and RSE provision, as it is something we had previously identified as being a future area of review and focus in line with the new PSHCE guidance coming into play from this term. This will continue to ensure pupils have further opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills they need for their future lives.

I hope this summary gives you a flavour of the report and the many positive aspects of school life that the inspectors recognised.

Thank you for your continued support of The Downs and, most importantly, for the part you play in making it such a happy and welcoming community.

Andy Nuttall

Headmaster, The Downs Malvern

“When they are ready to achieve higher standards, pupils are challenged to think more deeply and solve challenging problems.”



Thank you for reading The Downs Malvern’s Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) school inspection report.
The inspection took place in June 2026 and this document contains an overview of the findings.
The full report can be found on our website
www.thedownsmalvern.org.uk/about-us/inspection-reports/

How to read this report

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect independent schools in England. The 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’.

Schools are expected to meet the robust standards listed below.

The Downs Malvern was inspected in the following standards and met all requirements.

- 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**.

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Section 5
Leadership and management, and governance	Quality of education, training and recreation	Pupils’ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	Pupils’ social and economic education and contribution to society	Safeguarding

A summary of the inspection findings

The inspectors found that leaders and governors are experienced and knowledgeable, **placing pupils’ wellbeing at the centre of decision-making**. They found that leaders evaluate the school’s provision effectively and identify areas for future development, while governors provide effective support and challenge.

The curriculum is carefully planned and provides a stimulating and challenging learning experience. Teaching is well planned to meet individual needs, including those of pupils with SEND, and pupils achieve well. Inspectors also highlighted **the breadth of the curriculum and co-curricular opportunities** available across the school.

Boarding is successfully integrated into school life and reflects the school’s caring ethos. **Boarders are well cared for by trained staff**, benefit from positive relationships and enjoy activities that contribute to their wellbeing and personal development. Children in the early years benefit from a well-resourced and nurturing environment, with carefully planned provision **supporting their learning, development and wellbeing**.

The inspectors found that pupils behave well throughout the school and **display courtesy and impeccable manners**. Leaders promote physical health, emotional wellbeing and personal development effectively, supported by strong health and safety arrangements.

The report also recognises the school’s work to promote **mutual respect** and prepare pupils to be positive participants in British society. Pupils accept differences, **work positively together** and benefit from a careers programme introducing them to a range of possible future pathways. Finally, inspectors found that **leaders fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively**, with regular staff training, appropriate recruitment checks, effective record keeping and timely action when concerns arise.



Section 1:
Leadership, Management,
and Governance

The inspectors found that leaders and governors actively promote pupils’ wellbeing through the decisions they make and the culture they create. As a result, pupils are happy, confident and safe. Leaders are knowledgeable and skilled and successfully promote the school’s aim of providing a fulfilling education in a happy and supportive environment.

Governors provide effective and well-structured oversight, bringing relevant expertise and experience and maintaining a clear understanding of the school community. Leaders are reflective and rigorous in their self-evaluation, regularly reviewing provision and taking effective action to make improvements.

The report also recognises the effective leadership of the early years and boarding provision. Leaders provide appropriate training and support for staff and maintain well-organised, welcoming environments in which pupils’ welfare and wellbeing are promoted effectively.

The school takes a systematic approach to managing risk, with staff comprehensively trained to identify and mitigate risks across the school site, boarding accommodation and off-site activities.

ALL STANDARDS ARE MET



“
Leaders are reflective and rigorous in
their self-evaluation of the school.
”



WINNER:
Small Independent School
of the Year

Section 2:

Quality of Education, Training and Recreation

The curriculum is carefully planned to meet pupils' needs and is adapted to reflect their differing interests and aptitudes. It provides secure foundations in reading, writing, mathematics and science, alongside breadth across languages, humanities, technology, music, drama and art. The introduction of the Downs Malvern Baccalaureate gives pupils further opportunities to research, experiment and present work on topics of particular interest.

Strong relationships between staff and pupils mean that children are enthusiastic about learning, participate actively and show resilience and perseverance when faced with challenging concepts.

Pupils develop strong foundational knowledge and make good progress across a wide range of subjects. They are typically successful in internal examinations based on ISEB Common Entrance examinations and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The report also highlights effective support for pupils with SEND and EAL, as well as a carefully considered assessment framework that helps teachers identify pupils' understanding and next steps.

Across the school, pupils benefit from a wide range of co-curricular activities, including sporting, creative, technical and musical opportunities. **Inspectors particularly noted the use of the spacious country campus and the Saturday 'hobbies' programme,** where pupils develop skills including cyanotype printing, farming, coding and working on the school's light railway.

ALL STANDARDS ARE MET



“

Pupils take pride in their work and talk with enthusiasm about what they have learned.

”

Section 3:

Pupils' Physical and Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

The Downs provides a caring and supportive environment that places pupils at the centre of school life. The 'skills to thrive' programme helps pupils develop self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience, while resources including the wellbeing hub and trained emotional literacy support assistants provide additional support when pupils have concerns or worries.

Inspectors recognised the opportunities pupils have for spiritual development through prayer, reflection, religious education and assemblies. Time outdoors and caring for animals also help pupils develop a connection with the natural world and understand their responsibility to care for the environment.

Physical education is wide ranging and well taught, with pupils developing skills across a variety of sports and activities, including competitive sport. This is complemented by the co-curricular and Hobbies programme.

Pupils behave very well throughout the school, including during less structured times and in boarding. They display exemplary manners, take responsibility for their actions and contribute positively to the school community. Inspectors also found the school's approach to anti-bullying effective, with incidents rare and friendship difficulties addressed through restorative approaches.

Boarders are well cared for, while comprehensive health and safety procedures, regular checks, drills and risk assessments help ensure pupils are safe and well supported.

ALL STANDARDS ARE MET





Charitable Fundraising

Spiritual Development

Eco-Council

Chippy Chats

“Pupils are given lots of practical opportunities to apply their learning to real-life situations.”

Section 4:

Pupils' Social and Economic Education and Contribution to Society

Pupils are taught effectively about fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law and personal responsibility. They explore these through **assemblies, 'chippy chats', PSHE and opportunities such as elections to the school council and eco-council.**

The school community is described as happy and welcoming. Pupils develop an understanding of the wider world, including through connections with overseas pen pals, and learn to appreciate different cultures and backgrounds. As they get older, they develop their ability to consider issues from a balanced perspective.

Economic understanding is developed through mathematics and PSHE, with pupils given practical opportunities to apply their learning. These include learning about money in the early years, budgeting as pupils get older, and organising fundraising through enterprise and charity projects.

Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the local community and wider world through charitable fundraising and joint ventures with local schools and organisations. **Inspectors also highlighted the enthusiasm with which pupils take on leadership responsibilities,** including becoming prefects, leading assemblies and acting as table hosts for younger pupils at lunchtime.

The school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education, including through visits to Malvern College, careers education, an annual careers fair and talks about a range of future career paths.

ALL STANDARDS ARE MET



“
Pupils show resilience and perseverance
when faced with a challenging concept.”
”

Section 5:

Safeguarding

The inspectors found that The Downs has established a strong culture of safeguarding, with leaders prioritising the wellbeing and safety of pupils in their decision-making. Policies and processes are well considered, aligned with statutory guidance and made available to parents.

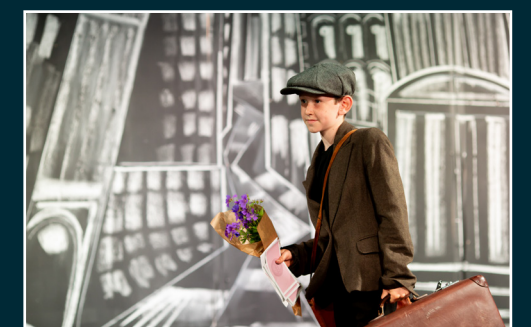
Staff receive safeguarding training at induction and through regular updates and weekly meetings. This includes training relating to the Prevent duty and equips staff to recognise and report concerns, including low-level concerns about staff.

Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding through school visits, reviews of documentation and regular reports from leaders, providing support and challenge where appropriate.

Boarding safeguarding procedures are also effective, with trained staff readily available to support boarders and close communication between boarding and school leaders.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online, and have a range of ways to raise concerns. The school's filtering and monitoring systems are used effectively, with alerts and reports reviewed so that potential risks can be identified and addressed promptly.

ALL STANDARDS ARE MET



Staff Training

Governor Visits

Pastoral Support

Online Safety



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