

School inspection report

16 to 18 June 2026

Park House School

Wentworth Way

Tankersley

Barnsley

S75 3DH

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. Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's distinctive character. They ensure that leaders actively promote the school's aims and fulfil their responsibilities so that the Standards are consistently met. Leaders preserve the school's identity and skilfully implement the shared policies and resources from the Keys Care group to which they belong.
2. Leaders and governors demonstrate extensive knowledge and understanding of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are highly skilled at supporting pupils who have SEND, particularly those facing social and emotional challenges connected to mental health or trauma. Leaders have established a school that prioritises an individualised, tailored approach that successfully addresses each pupil's personal, social, academic and emotional needs. This helps pupils better regulate their emotions and behaviour, engage in learning, maintain regular attendance, and successfully achieve the qualifications needed for the next stage of their lives.
3. All pupils in the school have SEND and an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Many pupils have had extended periods of absence in their previous schooling. Leaders create a welcoming environment and make effective use of information to plan the school day and curriculum in detail, considering each pupil's stage and individual needs. Caring staff thoroughly support pupils and build trusting relationships with them.
4. Leaders have recently enhanced the assessment systems used to track pupils' progress and share this information with teachers. The assessment framework provides precise information on pupils' development of knowledge and skills across all aspects of the curriculum. Teachers typically make effective use of this information to identify areas of success, weakness or any gaps, and adapt their teaching accordingly. However, this is not yet consistent.
5. A comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme, appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) plans, and a detailed spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) curriculum focus on pupils' physical, emotional, social and mental wellbeing. Each aspect is taught weekly by staff who know pupils well, with plans tailored to suit each pupil's age and developmental stage. Staff consistently implement a positive and restorative approach to behaviour management. Consequently, pupils develop effective self-regulation techniques and contribute to a calm and purposeful atmosphere. This environment enables pupils to build trusting relationships with adults and gradually develop a positive self-image.
6. Pupils benefit from the welcoming community that fosters a caring environment grounded in inclusion and mutual respect. Staff are skilled at motivating and engaging pupils who have previously struggled with mainstream education. Leaders create personalised pathways to help each pupil access learning effectively. They collaborate closely with local partners, including colleges and businesses. Teachers help pupils prepare effectively for future opportunities.
7. Leaders, including governors, create and manage a secure culture of safeguarding. Staff are aware of the vulnerabilities of pupils in the school and are vigilant to potential risks. Comprehensive training equips staff to respond to concerns about pupils' wellbeing and use the school's system to report issues. Safeguarding leaders support pupils and minimise risks to their wellbeing by working actively with local authorities and a wide range of external agencies, including those that help pupils access alternative provision.

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 assessment information is used consistently to adapt planning and teaching so that the learning needs of all pupils are met.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders, including governors, have a clear vision for the school that prioritises pupils' wellbeing and successfully promotes the school's aim to help pupils achieve their potential. They understand the often complex needs of pupils and implement carefully considered actions to meet pupils' emotional and mental health needs and uphold high aspirations for pupils' academic progress.
9. Governors maintain an in-depth understanding of the school's performance. They attend regular meetings and participate in other activities, informed by various reports and presentations from leaders and staff detailing their actions and their impact on pupils. Governors and leaders collaborate to foster an environment that encourages support and constructive criticism. This collaboration enables governors to verify that leaders possess the skills and knowledge needed to ensure the school consistently meets the Standards.
10. Leaders evaluate the school's performance and identify opportunities to improve the educational provision. They consult constructively with pupils, parents and staff to craft strategic actions that enrich pupils' overall experience. This comprehensive self-assessment shapes the school's development plans and fosters positive outcomes for pupils. Leaders make changes based on feedback from pupils, such as redesigning the sensory room and introducing residential placements. For example, pupils can now choose to attend a trip to London or go fishing for a weekend.
11. Leaders routinely review and revise policies to reflect current statutory requirements and best practices. These policies guide staff across a wide range of school operations and daily routines. Leaders actively seek feedback from staff and use it to improve the effectiveness of school policies, ensuring that the guidance remains relevant and practical. By providing regular training, for instance on sexualised behaviour, leaders ensure that staff deepen their understanding of policies and facilitate their effective implementation.
12. Leaders ensure that inclusion is a core value informing decisions and actions within the school. Leaders promote equality by implementing a suitable accessibility plan. Recent improvements include clearer signage on toilet doors and enhanced external lighting. Equality is further promoted through the ongoing work of staff in adapting provision for each pupil in line with their EHC plan. This commitment enables pupils to access the curriculum and ensures the school consistently upholds the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
13. Leaders build productive and proactive relationships with external agencies. They work closely with local professionals such as educational psychologists and social workers. This collaboration enhances decision-making and ensures a cohesive focus on pupils' wellbeing. The school notifies the local authority promptly when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities regarding pupils' EHC plans, including through reviews and the provision of appropriate information about funding.
14. The school's website provides all the required information for parents, making it easy to access current policies and procedures. Staff communicate regularly with parents through 'communication books' or daily calls. Parents can come into the school each term to talk with staff and look through their child's work. They receive a detailed report on their child's progress and achievements each year, linked to their targets in their EHC plans.

15. Leaders adopt a thorough approach to risk management and mitigation. They conduct detailed risk assessments for all pupils that address many aspects of school life, including for trips and residential. Leaders remain alert to the risks facing vulnerable pupils and adapt risk assessments to meet the needs of individuals or specific groups. Risk assessments specify how risks are reduced, such as through additional pastoral support, and staff implement these strategies effectively. Regular training ensures staff can identify hazards and apply control measures. Leaders regularly analyse, review and update risk assessments to ensure they remain effective and relevant.
16. Leaders establish and communicate a transparent policy for handling and responding to parental complaints. Staff build effective relationships with parents and maintain daily contact, enabling them to address concerns swiftly. Leaders maintain comprehensive records of concerns and complaints, along with the school's corresponding actions.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders design and implement a broad, balanced curriculum. They continually adjust it to meet the diverse needs of each pupil, based on each pupil's current level of attainment. The curriculum blends essential academic learning with support for pupils' social and emotional needs, and emphasises skills such as resilience and collaboration. Pupils earn a range of nationally recognised accreditations, such as a Unit Award or Arts Award, and move on to examination pathways. They typically leave the school with qualifications in functional skills, BTEC Firsts or GCSEs.
19. Leaders create cross-curriculum links and design a personal development programme, known as 'PD' to support this. The personal development programme provides enrichment for one day of each week, enabling pupils to use the local environment and join activities that foster teamwork and connect to the curriculum. For example, when pupils study *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* in English, they visit a Holocaust museum on a 'PD' day, and explore Judaism, as well as issues of discrimination and emotion in PSHE lessons.
20. Pupils increasingly develop their vocabulary and effective use of English in both written and spoken form. They systematically build mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding and apply their learning in practical ways across different subjects. For example, they convert currencies in mathematics, interpret graphs in science and measure quantities in food technology. Teachers create numerous opportunities for pupils to enhance their practical and creative abilities, such as in art lessons and cooking sessions.
21. Leaders carry out a range of baseline checks to fully understand pupils' needs when they first join the school. Staff record this data, together with information from EHC plans, in individual 'pupil passports', which include details of pupils' additional needs, aptitudes and interests, appropriate teaching approaches and hopes for their future. Staff communicate daily to keep these details up to date. Staff routinely train in strategies that support pupils' needs, including using visual explanations and targeted questioning. When needed, teachers give pupils movement breaks and time for reflection. These actions, along with staff building positive relationships, help pupils reduce anxiety, engage with learning and gradually increase their knowledge and understanding.
22. Consistent classroom routines and targeted individual or small-group support help pupils maintain focus and organise tasks. Specialist teachers with good subject knowledge use a wide range of resources to actively engage pupils in practical activities. For example, pupils observe iron filings interact with magnets to develop their knowledge in science. Teachers gauge understanding through probing questions and regularly encourage pupils to reflect on their learning. Staff support pupils in organising their work and pupils respond positively to the regular verbal and written feedback they receive. This response enables pupils to understand their next steps. Pupils steadily grow in perseverance and responsibility, which leads them to make good progress from varied starting points.
23. Leaders provide a framework to assess pupils' progress. This has recently been enhanced so that pupils are regularly assessed against clear learning outcomes and progress is closely monitored. This system offers precise information on pupils' development of knowledge and skills. Typically, teachers use this information well to plan and tailor lessons for effective learning. However, the information is not yet used consistently to identify gaps, achievements and weaknesses or to plan the most effective lessons to support all pupils' learning.

24. The school provides pupils with a range of well-planned opportunities to enhance their learning and discover new interests. Activities take place during the 'PD' enrichment programme, such as go-karting, trampolining or fishing. Within the school day there are activities to complement the curriculum. For example, pupils can cultivate critical thinking through chess, or creatively articulate their ideas through art club. Pupils have access to suitable recreational resources to use during breaktimes, such as gym equipment and footballs.

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 use their understanding of childhood trauma to shape a school culture that is highly effective in supporting pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. They design the school's processes and procedures to meet pupils' needs and adopt a number of trauma-informed approaches, such as pupils typically being taught in the same room. This helps build trust and create a stable, predictable learning environment where pupils are valued and understood.
27. Staff actively foster pupils' self-confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge by recognising and celebrating individual achievements, such as through work displayed on the 'WOW' board. Teachers encourage pupils to set personal goals, reflect on their progress, and participate in a variety of enrichment activities. Staff ensure that every pupil can experience success by setting realistic targets and celebrating achievements. This helps pupils build a positive sense of self and become more confident and resilient learners.
28. The physical education (PE) curriculum develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across several sports, such as swimming, basketball and athletics. Teachers help pupils appreciate the mental health benefits of healthy exercise and the social benefits of regular interactions with others and being part of a team. Teachers adapt PE lessons to meet pupils' needs and increase engagement, for instance by varying group size. Pupils experience a range of competitive opportunities, which helps them understand the importance of following rules and coping with disappointment.
29. Through separate weekly timetabled SMSC lessons that supplement high-quality PSHE and RSE teaching, pupils learn about caring for their mental health and the feelings of others. Pupils develop their understanding of different religions with trips to places of worship during 'PD' days or the celebration of festivals supporting this. Pupils understand the importance of sleep and healthy eating, and the ways in which social media and mobile phone use can be detrimental to their wellbeing. Pupils learn how to recognise when they are feeling anxious and develop techniques to regulate their emotions, such as undertaking breathing exercises or going for a walk. Relationships and sex education covers national requirements, and understanding is appropriately assessed. It promotes respect, equality and safety and supports pupils in developing the knowledge needed to form healthy relationships. This includes carefully managed discussions regarding appropriate use of touch to help pupils feel empowered to express their boundaries.
30. Leaders and staff promote positive standards of behaviour through clear, well-communicated expectations. There are robust, consistent procedures in place to identify and manage poor behaviour and any isolated incidents of bullying. Pupils learn about the harm caused by bullying. Leaders work with pupils, families and external agencies, when needed, to build positive relationships so that they are respected and heard. Leaders and staff are aware that behaviour is a form of communication, so they respond calmly and with understanding. They successfully use a restorative approach which encourages pupils to reflect, communicate and repair relationships when difficulties arise. This helps develop pupils' understanding of acceptable behaviour. Staff receive regular training regarding positive behaviour management and de-escalation techniques. Pupils are clear that the school is a mobile-free environment.

31. The school maintains its suitable premises well through robust health and safety procedures. Appropriate checks, including for electrical safety and water temperature, are carried out. Leaders maintain up-to-date and comprehensive records of safety checks, including alarm testing and fire and lockdown drills. External specialists carry out a range of audits, including fire risk assessments. Any required improvements are implemented promptly.
32. The school provides pupils with suitable first aid and medical provision. Leaders maintain accurate records of any illness, injury or medication administered. An appropriate number of staff have first aid qualifications. Staff ensure that medication is securely stored and dispensed appropriately.
33. Vigilant staff provide active, engaged supervision, starting with a positive morning routine. They greet each pupil at the gate and a trusted adult escorts each pupil to class. Teachers review the day during a nurture breakfast, and many pupils complete a 'sensory circuit' of physical activities during this time. Through this close supervision, which continues throughout the day, staff notice subtle indicators of wellbeing, provide timely support, and respond as necessary.
34. Admission and attendance registers comply with statutory guidance. Leaders monitor attendance closely and address absences each day. This includes attendance of pupils who attend alternative provision for learning. Staff maintain close communication with pupils, parents and carers to ensure teachers are fully informed about pupils' situations. This assists leaders in adopting bespoke strategies, such as a reduced timetable, to limit obstacles that prevent a pupil from attending school. Leaders maintain regular contact with the local authority to support pupils with low attendance and increase school engagement.

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. Staff emphasise respect and value diversity, which helps pupils learn the importance of respecting differences. Pupils articulate that differences can often be positive and recognise that, although everyone's identity and life experiences are different, all are equally important. Staff teach pupils that they have a right to make personal choices, including those protected by law, such as sexual identity. These experiences encourage pupils to appreciate different perspectives and understand the harm caused by discrimination. They study role models who have challenged prejudice. Trips, such as to the Slave Museum in Liverpool, reinforce this understanding and promote justice and inclusion. Teachers often link issues to pupils' experiences such as, for instance, debating, 'Do we need to feel the same to belong?' or discussing times when they have felt excluded or witnessed unfair treatment. This helps pupils to empathise with others and recognise the importance of inclusivity.
37. Teachers integrate economic education into the curriculum. Pupils learn to calculate amounts of money and change in mathematics lessons, develop an understanding of other countries' wealth in geography, prepare a family meal within a budget in food technology and discuss topics like bank accounts, loans and wages in PSHE lessons. Weekly 'PD' trips further enhance pupils' understanding by engaging in activities such as purchasing lunch and receiving a receipt. Pupils develop entrepreneurial skills by producing goods to sell at a local market to raise funds for the school, community or charities, such as one for therapy dogs.
38. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to learn about various religions and cultures and to explore global issues. Teachers facilitate discussions on topics such as deforestation, flooding, and plastic pollution in oceans. In geography, pupils study differences in cuisine, clothing, and religions between countries such as Japan and Brazil. They explore global festivals, including the Chinese New Year and Eid, through stories, art projects and discussions that emphasise significance and traditions. Pupils engage in interactive activities like preparing international recipes and collaborating on group projects that celebrate cultural diversity, such as making a wreath for the Jewish festival of Shavuot.
39. Leaders provide a careers education programme that helps pupils plan their next steps according to their individual needs. Teachers assist pupils in understanding the connection between the skills they are learning and future employment opportunities. For example, during cookery lessons, they discuss various jobs in the food and catering industry. Planned opportunities, such as support during work experience offered through 'PD', equip pupils with essential citizenship skills and social competencies needed for independent and responsible living.
40. Leaders help pupils understand right from wrong by engaging them in real-life scenarios and current events, such as the recent proposal for a social media ban. Pupils typically grasp how their actions can affect others and the concept of ethical and legal responsibility. Teachers help pupils understand the idea of living in a democratic society and link this knowledge to participation in elections. They guide respectful conversations about the justice system, highlighting differences between English law and the laws of autocratic countries. Learning is reinforced by role-playing scenarios, with pupils taking on roles such as a judge or a jury member. Teachers ensure that pupils discuss and appreciate these distinctions in a supportive environment and that any political discussions are conducted impartially.

41. Leaders have established suitable links with the local community, and pupils actively support charities such as MIND and Macmillan Cancer Support. Pupils have opportunities to contribute their ideas through the school council, which meets fortnightly. Pupils' self-esteem is enhanced by the changes they have initiated, such as new headsets and mice for the computers, as well as rewards for 'WOW' work or supportive behaviours. Pupils learn the importance of being supportive and making a meaningful difference to the lives of others.
42. A well-planned programme within the curriculum develops pupils' understanding of the institutions and services in Britain. The 'being me in my world' topic in PSHE addresses the structure, roles and importance of public institutions such as law courts and the police, helping pupils become informed. Understanding is further enhanced through trips and speakers, such as visiting the Houses of Parliament, speaking to members of the fire service, and learning how to access health care and contact emergency services.

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. Leaders embed a robust safeguarding culture throughout the school, which underpins the work of staff. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities are well trained and knowledgeable. They implement clear policies and procedures that align with current statutory guidance. Governors communicate regularly with the safeguarding team, enabling them to understand ongoing issues, track emerging trends and evaluate the actions taken. Governors undertake a thorough annual review of safeguarding policy and procedures.
45. Staff adopt a consistent approach to safeguarding concerns. Any issues that arise are identified promptly and appropriate action is taken. Staff know how to report low-level concerns about adults working in the school and how to respond to child-on-child abuse. Leaders keep thorough records of safeguarding matters, including the decisions and actions taken in response to them. They identify and record trends in pupils' personal records and take suitable action, for instance, identifying particular events that impact pupils' wellbeing.
46. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undertake regular training, including on broader risks to pupils, such as those attending alternative provision or those in the care of the local authority. The safeguarding team works closely with a variety of local authorities and other outside agencies such as the police and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). They understand the thresholds for referral to local authorities and when to seek advice, including for pupils who experience or have experienced school avoidance. Caring staff support these pupils effectively.
47. New staff undergo thorough induction training that provides them with a solid understanding and confidence in their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders arrange regular training for staff that covers critical topics, including the 'Prevent' duty, understanding misinformation and raising awareness of mental health issues. Staff are aware that pupils who have SEND may find it harder to communicate their needs, and leaders take this into account in staff training and safeguarding work.
48. Leaders promote a culture of listening by offering different ways for pupils to share concerns, such as during the daily 'nurture breakfast'. Staff are aware of the particular vulnerabilities of the pupils, such as those who have experienced trauma. Staff know pupils well, which helps them to quickly recognise any changes in pupils' mood or behaviour. A range of staff, including different therapists and trained counsellors, are available.
49. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They adapt their teaching carefully to ensure that pupils develop their understanding of a range of issues and are cautious regarding scamming communications. Pupils are aware of the different risks they may encounter when using the internet and the need to be careful. For example, pupils know not to share any personal information. Leaders implement a suitable internet filtering and monitoring system that is regularly reviewed. Any alerts received are promptly addressed.
50. Suitably trained staff implement safer recruitment procedures effectively. All of the required checks are carried out on adults before they work at the school. Staff files contain the appropriate information, and a single central record of appointments (SCR) is maintained accurately.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Park House School
Department for Education number	370/6000
Address	Park House School Wentworth Way Tankersley Barnsley South Yorkshire S75 3DH
Phone number	01226 744870
Email address	admin.parkhouse@keyseducation.ac.uk
Website	www.keyschildren.co.uk/schools/park-house-school/
Proprietor	Keys Care Limited
Chair	Mr David Manson
Headteacher	Ms Ann-Marie Oliver
Age range	7 to 17
Number of pupils	20
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 June 2023

Information about the school

52. Park House School is an independent, co-educational specialist day school located near Barnsley in South Yorkshire. It provides for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. The school is owned and operated by Keys Care Limited with oversight provided by a regional director. The headteacher took up her position in September 2025. The previous inspection of the school was by Ofsted in June 2023. This is the first inspection of the school conducted by ISI.
53. At the time of this inspection, there were no female pupils on the school roll, and the school was using two alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
54. All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
55. There are no pupils in the school who speak English as an additional language.
56. The school states its aims are to provide a quality education. It seeks to ensure that specialist support tailored to each individual's unique needs helps all pupils achieve their full potential.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

16 to 18 June 2026

57. A team of two 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 regional chair and other staff from Keys Care Limited
- 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

For more information, please visit isi.net