

# School inspection report

9 to 11 September 2025

## **Bedford Modern School**

Manton Lane

Bedford

MK41 7NT

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 communicate the school's aims well to pupils and parents and promote them effectively through the curriculum. Pupils are tolerant, respectful and caring of their peers.
2. Governors maintain a knowledgeable oversight of all areas of school life and ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities in meeting the regulatory requirements. Leaders monitor the school's implementation of its policies systematically so that the Standards are consistently met.
3. Leaders at all levels prioritise pupils' wellbeing and have a commitment to continuous improvement. They use self-evaluation effectively so that the provision meets pupils' needs. Their robust approach to risk management means that any potential risks to pupils are identified. They take decisive action to mitigate any concerns.
4. Leaders successfully implement a consistent approach to education across the junior and senior schools, which fosters ambition alongside an enthusiasm for learning. This approach ensures a smooth educational journey through the school for pupils. The curriculum is broad, stimulating and planned to take account of pupils' academic and wellbeing needs. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps and achieve well in public examinations.
5. Leaders identify any gaps in pupils' learning promptly. They take appropriate steps so that pupils' needs are met at every stage, and they make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well because of the targeted support they receive. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported to extend their fluency so that they access the curriculum confidently.
6. Beginning in the junior school, pupils acquire moral understanding, self-knowledge and respect through an effective personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. They understand the important roles that positive behaviour, mental health and wellbeing play in achieving their goals. This awareness is promoted consistently by leaders throughout the school. As a result, pupils are kind and show care and respect for their peers.
7. There is an appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum in place. It covers key areas such as consent. However, it does not always build effectively on the topics previously taught. Where this is the case, the programme becomes repetitive, and some pupils lose interest.
8. Health and safety procedures and related policies are implemented effectively. Pupils' welfare needs are met consistently. The premises are well maintained and secure. Suitable risk assessments are reviewed regularly.
9. Leaders create a diverse and inclusive community, with a clear commitment to promoting respect and tolerance through the effective equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) programme, assemblies, pupil leadership initiatives and events such as 'cultures week'. This enables pupils to broaden their perspectives and understand different people in society and in the wider world.
10. The school provides comprehensive careers advice, economic education, and a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop social responsibility and support the school and wider community. Pupils build their knowledge of money management from a young age. They are aware

of the dangers of debt and gambling. This means that they are well placed to make the right decisions to support their future ambitions and personal wellbeing.

11. Safeguarding arrangements, including those related to pupils' online safety, are robust, effective and well known by staff. Staff and governors receive regular training which is adapted to reflect any local risks and school needs. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding through regular communication with leaders and the review of policies and procedures.

## 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:

- review the RSE curriculum to ensure that it builds on and extends material previously taught, thereby engaging pupils' interest and meeting their needs consistently.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. The school's ethos is reflected in its aims, policies and practice. Leaders create an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity and equality for all. Leaders actively promote the wellbeing of all pupils, which lies at the heart of their planning and decision-making. This is achieved through the curriculum, co-curricular activities and pastoral systems. Leaders are highly approachable and, as a result, pupils feel comfortable to speak with them to air their views.
13. Leaders are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. A detailed development plan is generated from systematic, ongoing evaluation of all aspects of the school's work. This appropriately takes account of the opinions of staff, pupils and parents. Well-focused improvement actions ensure that the Standards are met consistently. For example, the governors' decision to enhance provision for wellbeing and mental health has had a demonstrable positive impact on wellbeing outcomes for pupils, as reflected in the school achieving a national award. Leaders prioritise and systematically promote pupils' wellbeing.
14. Governors scrutinise the impact of leaders' management of the school through committees and regular reports from school leaders. They actively engage in school life to support their monitoring, making regular visits to school to speak to leaders and pupils and check the implementation of policies. Consequently, governors provide effective oversight of the school's provision and its impact on pupils' wellbeing and academic and personal development. They are assured that leaders have the skills and knowledge to implement their responsibilities effectively.
15. Leaders and governors prioritise safeguarding and risk management. Risk strategies are comprehensive. They are constantly reviewed to take into account changing current and potential risks, including those associated with the building works undertaken over the last two years to address RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) issues. Risk assessments are detailed. They cover the school site and all activities undertaken by staff and pupils. All staff receive training in risk assessment. They are responsive to risks that develop over time. There is a robust approach to the planning and approval of educational trips, including pre- and post-trip evaluations to inform future planning.
16. Leaders fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The accessibility plan is well focused on continuing to improve access to the school and its curriculum for a wide range of pupils who have different needs. The accessibility plan is regularly audited and is implemented in full.
17. There is a clear and transparent complaints procedure for parents. It encourages parents to share concerns, which leaders address promptly. Parental concerns are typically dealt with at the informal stage before they escalate into formal complaints. Leaders maintain a detailed record of all complaints and low-level issues. These are regularly reviewed by leaders and governors to ensure that any trends are identified and acted upon.
18. A wide range of appropriate information is provided on the school's website. The policies provided are up to date and implemented correctly within the school. Parents receive suitable information and updates, including regular reports about pupils' achievement and progress.
19. Leaders are proactive in engaging with external agencies and others in the wider community. This includes regular communication with the local authority and the police when appropriate. This

enables leaders to keep up to date with the latest developments and promote pupils' wellbeing 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. The curriculum is broad, balanced and successfully engages pupils' interest. Leaders carefully plan the curriculum so that pupils develop the essential knowledge and skills they need, as well as an enthusiasm for learning. It develops pupils' knowledge over time across a wide range of subjects including science, technology, mathematics, languages, humanities and the arts. The curriculum offers pupils a suitable range of GCSE options, including the higher project qualification (HPQ). The sixth-form curriculum is academically ambitious and offers A levels and the extended project qualification (EPQ).
22. Pupils make good progress over their time at the school. They achieve well at GCSE and at A level because of the effective support and guidance provided by teachers. As a result, many pupils gain their preferred choice of higher education course, including highly competitive courses in medicine and at international universities.
23. Subject plans are flexible and adapt to pupils' needs. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop communication, literacy and numeracy skills. In English, pupils' writing and reading skills evolve effectively through extended creative writing and regular use of libraries. Pupils apply their mathematical skills confidently across different subjects such as science, geography and economics. In music and drama, pupils show well-developed creative skills. Pupils' understanding of aesthetic values is reflected in the vibrant artwork they create.
24. The system used by leaders to monitor pupils' progress is regular and systematic. The information gathered from standardised tests, marking of pupils' work, and effort and achievement grades enables leaders to identify any gaps in pupils' learning and action effective measures. Teachers provide pupils with regular verbal and written feedback. This is highly valued by pupils, as is the practice of evaluating each other's work, which enables pupils to extend their thinking and further improve their work.
25. Teachers typically plan lessons well. They use a range of teaching strategies and good-quality resources to engage pupils effectively. They know pupils' needs and have positive relationships with them. This motivates pupils to learn and achieve well. Pupils are confident to ask questions to enable them to understand how they can improve their work.
26. Pupils who need additional support receive effective provision for their learning needs. Teachers are well trained in strategies to adapt their teaching to the needs of their pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants in the junior school work closely together during lessons and provide valuable learning support to individual pupils. Leaders work with teachers to carefully monitor and review pupils' individual support plans. This informs teachers' planning so that teaching is effective and enables pupils who have SEND to make good progress from their starting points.
27. The very few pupils who speak EAL are supported well. Teachers adapt their teaching to provide pupils with the right help, including reinforcement of key subject terminology and encouragement to speak in class. Teachers use resources effectively so that pupils who speak EAL demonstrate increasing accuracy and fluency in English. This supports pupils as they build their knowledge, skills and confidence so they make good progress across the curriculum.



28. Teachers skilfully incorporate British values such as respect and democracy through the curriculum and pupil societies focused on discussion, debate and listening to others' viewpoints. This promotes pupils' understanding of key values and prepares them well for their future lives.
29. Leaders encourage pupils to explore their interests and develop their intellectual, social and physical skills through a wide range of well-planned activities beyond the classroom, including sports, music, drama, Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE). The programme provides a balance to pupils' academic work. Leaders monitor individual pupils' participation to ensure their needs are met and that they are not overloaded or put under undue pressure.

**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 have developed an ethos that focuses on building positive, trusting relationships based on mutual respect and kindness. This is taught through an effective PSHE curriculum, themed pupil-led assemblies and the daily interactions between pupils and staff. This ethos is further developed through a consistent emphasis on the school's values and teachers' high expectations for how pupils treat each other. As a result, pupils gain respect for different people and understand their own place in the world.
32. A clear behaviour policy is in place and is implemented effectively. Leaders communicate their behavioural expectations clearly, so that pupils are aware of the behaviour expected from them. Effective supervision is a high priority, so pupils are carefully monitored. The school teaches pupils about bullying and the harm caused by inappropriate use of language through the curriculum and assemblies. Leaders' careful recording of incidents enables them to track and manage pupils' behaviour. Teachers skilfully promote the school's values through their teaching and daily contact with pupils. This creates an environment where pupils understand their behaviours and model respectful interactions. Incidents of bullying or anti-social behaviour are rare and leaders deal with these effectively should they occur. Leaders ensure that pupils understand sanctions and rewards and apply them fairly. As a result of these measures, pupils' behaviour in school is typically thoughtful.
33. The RSE curriculum is appropriate and reflects the requirements of current statutory guidance. Younger pupils learn about the importance of good relationships. The RSE curriculum covers all key areas to develop pupils' knowledge of important issues such as consent. It involves input from visiting speakers and consultation with parents. However, it does not always build effectively on the topics previously taught and, where this is the case, some older pupils lose interest. As a result, some pupils do not derive full benefit from the programme.
34. The school develops pupils' spiritual and moral understanding effectively. Pupils learn about different religions and traditions through the curriculum, assemblies, societies and visits to different places of worship. An illustrative calendar published throughout the school reminds pupils of key religious and cultural events which are celebrated in school by everyone. Junior pupils develop spiritual awareness through 'prayer spaces' for quiet contemplation and creative thinking. All pupils in Year 7 have philosophy lessons where they discuss ethical issues such as wars. Older pupils regularly debate moral questions such as women's rights in debating society.
35. Pupils understand the need for exercise, through physical education (PE) and sport, as part of a healthy lifestyle. All pupils, whatever their needs, have access to sports and activities that suit their abilities and interests, supporting their physical and emotional wellbeing. Leaders adapt the curriculum to take into account pupils' feedback, such as by ensuring that all sports clubs are for all sexes. As a result, pupils' participation is high.
36. The site is well maintained and care is taken to minimise risk. The extensive building works undertaken to remove RAAC have been thoroughly risk assessed and carefully managed by leaders, with particular emphasis on safety and maintaining safe evacuation routes in the event of a fire. There is an appropriate fire risk assessment with a coded action plan that has been implemented. There are regular fire drills. Leaders plan the use of the facilities carefully, so that the educational

and pastoral needs of pupils are met. This includes adapting areas to increase physical access for any pupil who has a disability as they transition from the junior to senior school.

37. First aid procedures are effective. Medical leaders are well trained and experienced. The medical suite is suitable, and all medicines are securely stored. Leaders maintain a suitable record of any administration of first aid. There are robust systems for managing accidents.
38. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained in line with current statutory guidance. When necessary, leaders put appropriate measures in place to support and improve pupil attendance, consulting with the local authority and other external agencies as appropriate. The school informs the local authority, as required, of any pupil who joins or leaves at non-standard times.

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

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

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

40. The curriculum is designed to cover a range of issues and perspectives which encourage mutual respect and develop pupils' social and cultural understanding. In PSHE, pupils learn about the harm of prejudice and discrimination through unbiased and careful consideration of sensitive and current issues, such as racism and gender discrimination.
41. Pupil-led assemblies highlight pupils' own experiences of prejudice. Junior pupils learn about the Windrush generation and the impact of intolerance on people's lives. The school takes every opportunity to celebrate diversity. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) club is active in raising awareness of the unacceptability of discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexuality. A whole-school 'cultures week' enables pupils to experience different global cultures through foods, talks and projects. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable about different people's lives. They learn to distinguish right from wrong and express balanced, well-formed opinions in a thoughtful manner. They become respectful and tolerant young people, ready for their next steps after school.
42. The school's effective promotion of inclusion contributes to pupils' understanding of fundamental British values such as mutual respect and tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils visit Parliament, conduct mock elections and learn about British law. This equips them well for life in British society. Staff ensure that any discussions or visits from outside speakers that include political themes are carried out impartially and without bias.
43. The pupil-led student councils in the junior and senior schools consider all aspects of pupils' lives at school. They successfully gather opinions and discuss ideas from across the school. Alongside surveys, leaders routinely use the councils as an effective way of keeping informed about pupils' views and how to improve their experiences. Pupils speak enthusiastically about changes as a result of their work, as in the recent change of uniform.
44. Pupils show a well-developed social conscience. Senior pupils help mentor younger pupils and support them through the house structure. They successfully engage with charitable work through the community service programme. Junior pupils are actively involved in charity events to raise money in support of local community projects such as organising clothing and shoe donations and food bank collections. Musical pupils work with a local dementia group. Pupils volunteer to help in local primary schools. Pupils develop leadership skills and learn how others in society live. This upholds the school's aims of developing young people who are kind, responsible and inclusive of others.
45. Pupils are well prepared to make informed choices about their futures and benefit from a responsive programme of economic education, including talks on money management and online gambling, which has been developed in response to pupils' feedback. Junior pupils learn about savings and investment, and use coins and notes in real-life contexts during school trips. This develops their economic knowledge effectively in an age-appropriate manner.
46. Leaders promote social and cultural awareness through a carefully planned enrichment programme of local, national and international trips. These include joint departmental trips to Berlin and New York, modern language exchanges, international music tours and sports tours to South Africa.

Leaders encourage wide pupil participation through careful wellbeing support and preparation. As a result, pupils broaden their experiences of life in different contexts beyond school.

47. Pupils receive effective careers advice that follows nationally available benchmarks. This helps pupils to identify their aptitudes, strengths and weaknesses, so they can make informed decisions about their future career or educational choices. Pupils benefit from talks by recent school leavers, external speakers and parents. Leaders promote a wide range of higher education courses, including apprenticeships, that suit pupils' needs and interests.

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

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

## Safeguarding

49. Leaders consistently promote a positive safeguarding culture across the school. Staff are vigilant and know that everyone is responsible for acting on concerns to keep pupils safe from harm. This includes the self-reporting of low-level concerns. Staff know what procedures to follow should they have concerns about a pupil or an adult.
50. There is a thorough induction programme for new staff. This includes coverage of online risks to pupils and those associated with the 'Prevent' duty. Induction training promotes a secure understanding of the school's expectations and the responsibilities of staff in keeping children safe.
51. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and in line with current statutory guidance. Governors provide consistent and rigorous oversight of safeguarding. Leaders and governors routinely assess and review risks, including developments in the local community, to keep pupils safe. The safeguarding governor regularly visits the school to monitor any trends and review actions taken. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding maintain detailed safeguarding records in line with statutory requirements.
52. Policies and procedures are clear and up to date, incorporating the latest statutory guidelines. Staff and governors undertake regular training. This ensures that they are knowledgeable about changes. Members of the safeguarding team receive additional training for their role.
53. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe, including when online, through the curriculum and assemblies. Leaders provide information to parents, including in relation to specific risks such as county lines, and encourage them to attend safety talks. A suitable internet filtering and monitoring system is in place and tested regularly. Leaders take appropriate action should any alert occur. Governors discuss monitoring strategies and leaders regularly evaluate these to keep pupils safe from inappropriate content or harmful social media.
54. Pupils can easily turn for help to a variety of staff, including the wellbeing team, if they are worried. They can also report concerns anonymously online. Leaders take concerns seriously and record these in appropriate detail, taking suitable action when required.
55. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities maintain effective working relationships with external agencies. They readily seek advice when safeguarding issues arise, and, when required, refer safeguarding concerns to relevant safeguarding partners. Safeguarding records accurately describe discussions and the rationale behind decisions made.
56. Staff recruitment procedures are robust. All necessary pre-appointment checks are carefully completed for all staff. Leaders maintain a meticulous single central record of appointments, which is regularly scrutinised by the safeguarding governor.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Bedford Modern School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	822/6011
<b>Registered charity number</b>	204817
<b>Address</b>	Bedford Modern School Manton Lane Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 7NT
<b>Phone number</b>	01234 332500
<b>Email address</b>	Info@bedmod.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.bedmod.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Harpur Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Fordham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Payne
<b>Age range</b>	7 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1223
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 to 4 February 2022

## Information about the school

58. Bedford Modern School is an independent co-educational day school. It is one of four schools within the Harpur Trust, the origins of which date back to 1556. The Trust has strategic responsibility for the school and operational governance is delegated to the Bedford Modern School governing body. The junior and senior schools occupy buildings on the same site and share many facilities. The current headteacher took up his position in January 2024.
59. The school has identified 265 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
60. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 26 pupils.
61. The school states its aims are to inspire excellence, and to inspire, engage, encourage and cultivate pupils. It seeks to promote values of kindness, resilience, independence, respect, responsibility, integrity and ambition.



## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

9 to 11 September 2025

62. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

63. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of co-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and safeguarding governor
- 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.

64. 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)