

School inspection report

24 to 26 March 2026

Greater Manchester Independent School

Unit 3

Peel Street

Failsworth

Manchester

M35 0UF

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	4
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	4
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	6
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	7
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	9
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	10
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	11
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	12
SAFEGUARDING	13
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	13
SCHOOL DETAILS	14
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	15
INSPECTION DETAILS	16

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders have a clear vision for school development based on effective monitoring and an accurate evaluation of what the school does well and what could be better. The proprietor maintains close and efficient oversight of the school to ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders have a strategic approach to the management of risk and take effective and appropriate action to mitigate any risks identified.
2. Parental complaints are managed effectively through a systematic three-stage process. However, at the start of the inspection, the complaints policy and procedures did not enable parents to always access a person independent of the school. This was rectified during the inspection.
3. The curriculum is suitably broad with an appropriate focus on core skills such as numeracy, literacy and the development of pupils' confidence. Staff are well trained to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils make good progress.
4. The curriculum is complemented by an extra-curricular programme which benefits pupils of all ages and needs. The programme is well co-ordinated to enhance pupils' educational experience. It promotes pupils' skills, interests and personal development effectively.
5. Pastoral arrangements ensure that pupils are well cared for. Pupils have a good understanding of how to show respect to others. The school enables pupils to develop their spiritual and moral understanding, self-knowledge and self-esteem. However, pupils are not always confident to express their ideas and views with others.
6. Leaders have developed carefully planned systems to manage pupils' behaviour in response to their needs. These are implemented expertly by well-trained staff. Consequently, behaviour is good and bullying is rare.
7. Leaders have a systematic approach to the management of health and safety, including fire safety protocols. Appropriate first aid and medical care are readily available for pupils when required.
8. Effective links with the local community ensure that pupils are well informed and well prepared to participate in, and contribute positively to, British society. Pupils benefit from a well-structured careers education programme.
9. The proprietor, with the support of an advisory governor, maintains a rigorous oversight of safeguarding practices at the school. Staff understand and implement the school's procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns that arise. Staff liaise closely with local authorities and with families to safeguard pupils' wellbeing. Leaders carry out recruitment checks as required by current statutory guidance and these are recorded appropriately. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
10. At the beginning of the inspection the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), although effective in the role, was not a member of the senior leadership team. This is contrary to statutory guidance. Leaders addressed this while inspectors were on site.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the complaints procedure always gives parents appropriate access to someone who is independent of the school
- improve how the school develops pupils' confidence to share and discuss their ideas and opinions with others
- ensure that the designated safeguarding lead role is carried out by a member of the senior leadership team.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders have the required knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, including actively promoting pupils' wellbeing. The proprietor assures herself that the Standards are met by effective scrutiny and monitoring of the school's practice and procedures. She is assisted by the board of governors. Together they provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders.
12. Leaders have an accurate view of the effectiveness of the school and areas for development. They carefully consider the impact of their actions on pupils' wellbeing and achievements. Leaders are methodical and detailed in their self-evaluation which informs their strategic school development plan. This plan focuses on improving pupils' education and wellbeing in all areas of the school's provision.
13. Leaders manage any parental complaints appropriately. Complaints are addressed within the timeframes stated in the school's policy. However, when the inspection began, the school's policy did not set out how parents could always access someone independent of the school during the complaints process. This was corrected when inspectors were on site.
14. Parents receive reports which provide them with information about their child's attainment, progress and attitudes to learning. These are clear and provide helpful information for parents regarding their child's next steps so that parents can support their child at home.
15. Required information about the school, including its aims and ethos, is made available to parents largely through the school's informative website. Pupils' individual education, health and care plans (EHC plans) are reviewed annually and information is provided to the local authority as required.
16. Leaders maintain a suitable range of policies which are well known to staff, parents and pupils so that everyone is clear about the school's routines and expectations. These are effectively and consistently implemented. Pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted as a result.
17. Leaders have a comprehensive and robust approach to risk management. They have an effective understanding of physical, welfare and safeguarding risks. Leaders respond with urgency and diligence to mitigate areas of potential risk when these are identified. Risk assessments are thorough and set out appropriate steps to reduce or remove risks. Leaders systematically monitor risk assessments to check their continued effectiveness.
18. Leaders foster effective links with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils. They maintain close liaison with pupils' families in order to support pupils better. Leaders have effective working relationships with the local authorities who place pupils at the school and with local safeguarding partners.
19. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Leaders have developed a detailed accessibility plan that includes actions to enable full access to the curriculum and the school's facilities for all pupils. Leaders' actions respond to pupils' particular and sometimes complex needs. For instance, the school has developed resources and strategies to help increase pupils' engagement during lessons which supports their learning and progress.

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. Leaders design and implement a curriculum that is informed by pupils' needs, aptitudes and prior attainment. Each pupil is taught a curriculum that matches their specific needs so that they gain relevant skills and knowledge and make good progress.
22. The curriculum focuses on developing pupils' core skills in English, mathematics and science as many pupils need to catch up in these subjects so they can apply key knowledge, skills and understanding in their daily lives. A range of GCSE, vocational and practical courses are provided to pupils based on their needs, prior attainment and interests. Older pupils prepare for externally assessed qualifications in these core subjects that best meet their needs. For instance, some pupils complete a Functional Skills Level 1 qualification in mathematics and others study the GCSE mathematics programme. This ensures that pupils are appropriately challenged and achieve qualifications that equip them for the next stage of their learning.
23. There are detailed plans in place to inform teaching. Schemes of work are designed so that pupils have sufficient opportunities to learn key content from a range of subjects through specific topics. Pupils are suitably challenged and supported so they can achieve ambitious goals and achieve well.
24. Lessons across the school are well structured. Teachers consistently use effective teaching methods and activities that are matched to pupils' needs. For instance, in English lessons, pupils are provided with structured guidance for extended writing tasks so that they are able to produce more complex work. Pupils acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding and develop their skills.
25. Leaders ensure that a consistent approach to assessing pupils' learning is embedded across the school. Pupils' progress is systematically tracked and monitored. Pupils benefit from teachers' accurate understanding of their attainment and individual progress. Pupils' work is regularly marked and assessed to identify what pupils have learned and what they need to be taught next. Through this effective feedback, pupils understand what they do well and what they need to improve. Teachers encourage pupils to keep going and deepen their learning.
26. Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils are identified and catered for. Training for both teaching and non-teaching staff is extensive. Consequently, staff have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to address the wide range of pupils' needs. Effective support is in place for pupils who struggle to manage their social and emotional behaviour. Teachers have a detailed understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of pupils, gained from their thorough understanding of pupils' EHC plans and other documented assessments. Pupils are interested to learn and benefit from expanding their knowledge, skills and understanding.
27. Leaders ensure that a comprehensive and diverse programme of recreational activities meets pupils' needs. This programme is a fully integrated and a core part of the curriculum. All pupils access a wide range of recreation activities which develop their practical skills, confidence and resilience. Pupils benefit from well-delivered enrichment opportunities that link to their bespoke curriculum pathways. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 participate in a timetabled and extra-curricular programme which includes cycling, boxing and fishing. Weekly outdoor activity days support and enhance this programme. Pupils in Year 9 and above have weekly lessons related to The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE). They undertake expedition training and physical activities, which include organised walking in the wider locality, physical skills at a local gym and individualised activities such

as music, woodwork and pottery. Additionally, older pupils take part in vocational and practical activities such as those related to construction, mechanics and hair and beauty. This well-planned programme complements and supports the work experience provided for pupils.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. The school's academic curriculum and extra-curricular programme encourage mutual respect. Pupils benefit from a school culture where everyone is valued and where difference is understood and celebrated. The school's inclusive learning environment teaches pupils to respect and help others. Pupils flourish in an environment where everyone is encouraged to be themselves.
30. Pupils successfully develop their spiritual and moral understanding. This is grounded in day-to-day routines, in pupils' regular exposure to the natural world and habits of kindness that permeate the positive relationships within the school. Pupils develop a clear understanding of moral codes and are encouraged to conduct themselves with integrity.
31. The school's ethos supports pupils' self-knowledge and raises their self-esteem and self-confidence. Leaders ensure that staff are trained effectively in techniques and practices that underpin the support given to pupils. The school's approach revolves around bespoke and personalised learning experiences for each pupil that are designed with their individual needs in mind. Pupils' self-confidence is promoted through their interactions with staff and each other. However, pupils sometimes lack the confidence to articulate their thoughts and ideas. This makes it difficult for others to understand their opinions and limits pupils' opportunities to reflect and learn from each other.
32. There is a comprehensive and varied physical education (PE) curriculum in place. This includes a diverse and broad range of physical activities across the school that meet the needs of all pupils. They access a range of local facilities such as the velodrome at the National Cycling Centre, a squash centre and football spaces. Pupils take part in a variety of sports including handball, basketball, badminton, volleyball, squash and football. All pupils study the BTEC First qualification in sport as part of the core curriculum and many achieve the qualification. Pupils acquire a range of physical skills that support their social, emotional and mental health. Pupils develop and demonstrate sporting values such as respect, teamwork, and leadership.
33. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) is broad and effective. This includes relationships and sex education (RSE). The curriculum is tailored to the educational needs of pupils and teaches them how to respond to potential risks they may encounter. Leaders and teachers provide pupils with the vocabulary they need to express themselves in relation to their personal development. Pupils develop their understanding of healthy relationships, consent and how to access external sources of support.
34. Leaders have designed and implemented an effective behaviour policy with clear systems for rewards and sanctions. These are understood by pupils and staff. Staff are trained to manage behaviour so that consistent and effective processes are applied. This encourages pupils to behave in line with the school's expectations so that they learn and develop positive behaviour traits. Staff make use of praise and encouragement and implement a calm, restorative approach when behaviour falls below expectations. This helps pupils to reflect on and take responsibility for their actions, recognise their mistakes and make better choices in the future. Pupils' behaviour during and outside of lessons is positive and this supports their wellbeing.

35. The school's anti-bullying strategy is appropriate, nuanced and effective. It is an integral part of the school's behaviour policy. Leaders record and monitor incidents diligently so that any patterns are identified and addressed. There are very few instances of bullying. When they do occur, these are dealt with quickly and effectively, with thoughtful resolutions and appropriate strategies.
36. Leaders ensure that the physical environment of the school is appropriate to meet pupils' needs alongside promoting the school's aims and ethos. Pupils' emotional regulation and behaviour management are well provided for by the careful planning and use of space. The many break-out areas are designed around traditional classroom spaces and are used effectively to support pupils' wellbeing where necessary. Although space is limited, this is used intelligently and consistently, with pupils' health and safety at the core of all decisions.
37. Pupils are supervised effectively. Staff are highly visible throughout the day and across the school site, including during break times and pupils' arrival and departure times. Consequently, staff have a comprehensive overview of where all pupils are at any given time. Pupils have ready access to trusted adults at all times should they need to share any worries or concerns.
38. Pupils are registered twice each day and any absences are followed up through effective communication with families or through home visits. The monitoring and reporting of pupils' attendance is embedded into school routines. Leaders involve parents and relevant agencies in any conversations and actions around attendance issues. The school reports any attendance concerns correctly to the local authority. Leaders liaise appropriately regarding pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.
39. Leaders ensure that regular fire-drill practices are carried out effectively. This ensures that fire evacuation procedures are well understood by pupils and staff. Routine health and safety checks, including for fire equipment, are completed and monitored robustly by the leadership team. These checks contribute to an organised and well-maintained physical environment where pupils feel safe and supported.
40. Leaders ensure a systematic first aid and medical provision so that protocols are followed rigorously, both on and off site. Accidents are recorded accurately and monitored to identify any potential trends. There are appropriate systems for the secure storage of medicines. All members of staff are trained in first aid and several members of staff are trained to a higher level. Pupils benefit from effective care of their medical needs.

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 learn about different faiths and traditions. They are taught about religious, cultural and national events such as Ramadan, Black History Month, Pride, Holocaust Memorial Day and VE Day. Leaders support pupils to reflect on relevant themes. For instance, pupils recently explored racism and the linked terminology in response to negative views which some pupils were hearing in the wider community. The school actively promotes British values. Pupils learn to be empathetic. They are confident to challenge behaviours that don't promote inclusivity and treat each other with respect.
43. Leaders ensure that pupils develop financial awareness in preparation for future economic decision-making. As part of the PSHE curriculum, pupils learn about budgeting, housing costs and other essential life expenses. This equips pupils with skills for independent living in modern British society.
44. Pupils contribute positively to their school environment such as through the school gardening project and the joint creation of the pupil memorial space. Pupils' views play a key role in school decision-making. Leaders conduct regular pupil surveys and enable pupils to contribute positively to their community. For example, pupils influence decisions such as choices for the lunch menu. Pupils' respect for democracy is embedded in everyday routines, with decisions agreed through voting and upheld by majority rule.
45. Leaders understand pupils' potential pathways and guide pupils to consider possible destinations. Leaders work closely with parents as well as pupils to ensure that destinations are appropriate, ambitious and reflect pupils' needs and interests. Leaders are knowledgeable about the provision of local colleges and the support that they provide. There are dedicated days each term where pupils are given focused support to consider their skills, potential destinations, application processes and possible careers. Local colleges and professionals liaise with the school so that pupils benefit from a variety of sources and up-to-date information. Most pupils successfully move on to vocational courses in mainstream colleges.
46. Leaders ensure pupils experience a rich curriculum through well-designed outdoor learning provision that supports their social understanding. Pupils develop teamwork, resilience and community responsibility supported through well-planned activities such as exploring local parks and participating in litter picking. Pupils engage in environmental projects which develop their practical life skills, confidence and independence. Pupils show an understanding of how to improve their local community, including the concept and impact of recycling. Pupils demonstrate a growing awareness of how to be active and responsible members in society.
47. Leaders provide pupils with roles of responsibility in response to their talents and interests. For example, responsibility lanyards are issued to selected pupils for trusted roles such as the games club co-ordinator. Pupils learn the benefits and expectations of helping others and playing their part in the smooth running of the school.
48. Leaders have established effective community links, including a partnership with a local care home. As part of the school's provision, pupils study health and social care and visit residents in the home.

This supports pupils in their personal growth, particularly in the development of communication and interpersonal skills.

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. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders ensure that policies and procedures are appropriate, up-to-date and available via the school's website. At the start of the inspection the DSL, although knowledgeable and effective regarding the role and responsibilities, was not a member of the senior leadership team. This conflicts with statutory guidance. During the inspection, a suitably trained and experienced member of the senior leadership team was appointed to the DSL role.
51. Members of the safeguarding team respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that arise. They consult with external safeguarding partners, such as the local children's services and refer safeguarding concerns to them when required. Suitable arrangements are in place for the handling of allegations including low level concerns against staff or senior leaders. These are well understood by staff and followed when required. Leaders keep thorough records of safeguarding concerns and the decisions and actions taken in response to these.
52. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The proprietor is appropriately trained. An advisory safeguarding governor visits the school regularly and carries out a range of activities to ensure that safeguarding procedures are suitable and carried out effectively.
53. Safeguarding training for staff and the safeguarding team is thorough, regular and in line with statutory and local requirements. A suitable induction process is in place to ensure that new staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are equipped to carry these out. Leaders train staff effectively in relevant safeguarding risks facing pupils beyond the school, including those relating to radicalisation and extremism. Staff receive training about the 'Prevent' duty that relates to such risks and teaches staff how to respond to these. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and the particular vulnerabilities of pupils at the school. They report concerns in a timely and appropriate way.
54. Leaders provide a number of ways for pupils to raise any concerns that they might have. Pupils are informed of whom they can go to should they wish to share any concerns. They are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Suitable internet filtering and monitoring procedures are in place to check pupils' online activity. These systems are tested regularly and any alerts are immediately reviewed by members of the safeguarding team who take action as required.
55. Leaders ensure that all appropriate pre-employment checks on adults are made in a timely manner and are accurately recorded in a suitable single central record of appointments (SCR). Staff files contain the appropriate information.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Greater Manchester Independent School
Department for Education number	353/6006
Address	Greater Manchester Independent School Unit 3 Peel Street Failsworth Manchester Greater Manchester M35 0UF
Phone number	0161 222 8168
Email address	admin@gmis.org.uk
Website	www.gmis.org.uk
Proprietor	Greater Manchester Independent School (North) Limited
Chair	Miss Louise Hodson
Headteacher	Miss Louise Hodson
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	62
Date of previous inspection	1 to 2 March 2023

Information about the school

57. Greater Manchester Independent School is an independent co-educational day school catering for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. Founded in March 2019, the school has limited company status. A board of governors supports the proprietor's oversight. The main site of the school is located within an industrial unit in North Manchester. Two other satellite sites are located in southern suburbs of Manchester.
58. The school has identified 62 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
59. The school has identified no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
60. The school states its aims are to develop well-rounded, confident, independent, responsible and respectful young people who aspire to achieve their full potential. The school seeks to achieve this by providing a welcoming, happy, safe, encouraging and supportive learning environment to help pupils flourish.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

24 to 26 March 2026

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

62. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and the advisory governor
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

63. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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