ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

21 to 23 April 2026

Christian Fellowship School

Overbury Street

Edge Hill

Liverpool

L7 3HL

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, including governors, have created a culture of respect and kindness which runs throughout the school and actively promotes the wellbeing of all pupils. Pupils value this culture and form authentic and respectful relationships with staff and one another. This is because leaders set a clear culture which aligns with the aims and ethos of the school modelling and embedding this culture across the whole school community. Leaders work tirelessly to ensure all decisions reflect the aims and ethos of the school and are made in the best interests of the pupils. Pupils benefit from this thoughtful, inclusive leadership.

2. Leaders and governors collectively ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently. They provide all relevant information to parents and external agencies, as required. However, at the start of the inspection, the attendance policy was not up to date with the latest statutory guidance and did not reflect the school's highly effective work. This was rectified during the inspection.

3. A suitable curriculum, including in the early years, is in place throughout the school, which is broad and balanced, whilst also reflecting its aims and ethos. The curriculum is enhanced by some well-considered activities, trips and visits. However, these do not give pupils the opportunity to routinely engage in co-curricular clubs to develop their skills and interests over a sustained period.

4. Teachers secure subject knowledge supports pupils' learning effectively, and staff build positive, respectful relationships with pupils. Most teachers use assessment effectively to identify and support pupils to learn effectively. Some teachers do not use assessment information precisely, to adapt their lessons and support pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. This is especially the case for some pupils who are ready to apply their learning in more complex ways.

5. Leaders oversee a comprehensive curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) to which they add moral education and refer to as (PHSME). The curriculum is planned and delivered effectively, enabling pupils to learn about the wider aspects of life, including consent, sexually transmitted infections, alcohol and drugs. Pupils also develop their understanding of healthy relationships and promoting positive mental health.

6. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and learn about contributing to society meaningfully. There is an appropriate careers programme, which includes a careers fair and individual subject teachers discussing careers in their subjects. However, some pupils feel that they do not receive information about the range of careers that precisely align with their abilities, interests and aspirations. Some pupils' understanding about the careers available to them is underdeveloped.

7. There is an effective safeguarding culture in the school. Staff understand their role and responsibilities to keep children safe and leaders take prompt action when safeguarding concerns are raised. Leaders work with local safeguarding partners and other external agencies to ensure pupils receive timely support when required. There is a systematic approach to pre-employment checks that are carried out promptly.

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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:

- use assessment information systematically to inform curriculum planning and teaching, ensuring that pupils are supported to make the progress of which they are capable
- develop the breadth of the enrichment programme to involve more pupils in sustained engagement with the opportunities available
- further develop careers education so that older pupils learn about a broader range of careers that are in line with their interests and aspirations
- ensure that policies accurately reflect up-to-date statutory guidance and the effective practice in the school.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders actively promote the school's vision and make decisions in the best interests of pupils. The impact of this work is evident throughout the school, where pupils are valued as unique individuals. Pupils are safe, secure and well supported.

9. Governors check on the effectiveness of leaders' work. They visit the school regularly and have frequent contact with leaders, staff and pupils. They review a wide range of information at regular board meetings on key aspects of the school's work to assure themselves that the leaders have the knowledge and skills to carry out their roles. As a result, governors are well informed and provide effective challenge and support to the leadership team.

10. Leaders are forward thinking and aspirational for the school. They use a range of information to evaluate how well the school is serving pupils and where they could improve. For example, leaders carry out regular curriculum reviews to ensure that planning, teaching and learning fulfil the needs of the pupils. This enables staff to reflect on the effectiveness of their curriculum design. As a result, pupils benefit from an intentionally designed curriculum which maximises their progress.

11. Leaders review policies routinely in response to changes in guidance, and these policies are implemented effectively in practice. Leaders make policies available to staff and parents as required. At the start of the inspection, the attendance policy was not fully updated in line with statutory guidance and the school's effective practice. This was updated during the inspection. The school's website contains all required information for parents. The school provides parents with regular reports that outline progress and attainment for their child.

12. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010. There is an appropriate accessibility plan in place that is routinely reviewed. Leaders ensure that the curriculum and site are fully accessible to pupils and staff.

13. Leaders systematically manage risk for on-site and off-site activities and for vulnerable pupils, by devising and implementing detailed, tailored risk assessments. Staff receive appropriate training to carry out their roles effectively, ensuring risk is consistently identified, mitigated and monitored.

14. Leaders work in close partnership with external agencies, including local safeguarding partners and other organisations, as required. They collaborate effectively with the local authority regarding pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), including providing information related to funding and finance. Leaders also inform the local authority when pupils leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

15. Leaders implement an effective complaints policy that enables parents to raise concerns formally and informally. They maintain detailed records of complaints, including the actions taken to inform improvement where required. Concerns are addressed appropriately and contribute to ongoing school development.

16. Leaders and staff get to know the youngest children well, before they join the school, helping them to make a smooth transition into the early years. Staff work closely with parents to help them understand children's experiences, interests and needs. They use this information to help children feel comfortable and settle quickly when they first start. Staff are well trained and have a secure

understanding of how young children learn and develop. They use a wide range of assessment methods to check on the learning and development of the youngest children.

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 have implemented a coherent, school-wide curriculum that plans for progression in pupils' knowledge and skills as they transition through the different phases of their education. The curriculum is intentionally underpinned by the school's vision and values, while remaining broad and balanced so that pupils receive a rich and inclusive education. This structured approach enables pupils to develop skills that align with their age, aptitude and individual needs. Across the school, pupils access a wide range of subjects that offer breadth and balance. Leaders intentionally prioritise foundation skills in literacy and numeracy for younger pupils, ensuring they are well prepared for the demands of secondary education. The curriculum provides the oldest pupils with the opportunity to study a range of GCSE qualifications and other accreditation.

19. In the early years, teachers and leaders provide a well-planned curriculum in a caring and harmonious environment. Children benefit from an outdoor play area that enables them to connect with the natural world. Teachers ensure that the youngest children develop important foundational skills very well. For example, staff are adept at supporting the youngest children hone their communication and literacy skills. Staff model vocabulary and scaffold children's sentences introducing more complex language to extend their understanding. During story time, for example, teachers encourage children to broaden their vocabulary by introducing new and more complex words. Children are well supported to transition on to Year 1.

20. Teachers use a range of strategies, resources and activities to engage and enthuse pupils in their learning. Most teachers check on what pupils know and can do and use this to plan their lessons precisely. These teachers adapt their lessons accordingly. For example, in mathematics, teachers plan lessons consistently well, using a precise understanding of pupils' prior learning. As a result, pupils' understanding develops incrementally across lessons. However, some teaching does not use a range of assessment information to identify when pupils are ready to apply their learning in more complex ways, or with greater independence. When this happens, some pupils find work too easy and this does not provide effective learning opportunities for them.

21. Leaders have established a clear assessment framework that teachers use to evaluate pupils' learning and inform curriculum planning. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly and reported to parents. Teachers provide frequent and effective formal and informal feedback, which helps pupils understand how to improve their work. Leaders supply staff with a wide range of progress data to support teaching, learning and assessment. In subjects where teachers use assessment information systematically, pupils are well supported to make good progress over time.

22. Leaders identify the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) precisely and accurately. Teachers adapt lessons in line with pupils' individual needs and the guidance provided by leaders. Where needed, pupils receive additional intervention and sessions to support their development. Leaders work collaboratively with pupils, parents, staff and external specialist services to review pupils' provision. Collectively, they ensure pupils' learning and developmental needs are met. As pupils get older, they are supported to transition into adulthood and appropriate next step destinations. Leaders liaise appropriately with the local authority teams about pupils who have EHC plans. Leaders and teachers ensure pupils access the curriculum successfully alongside their peers, learn effectively and achieve well.

23. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) have their needs and appropriate support put into place promptly. Pupils who speak EAL are supported with their social integration as well as their academic progress. Teachers use adapted teaching strategies to support pupils who speak EAL to ensure they can access learning effectively. Leaders monitor and track pupils' progress closely, and they provide early, targeted support where a pupil who speaks EAL needs additional support to develop their linguistic skills.

24. Leaders provide enrichment opportunities that contribute to pupils' development. For example, pupils are currently preparing for a Dutch exchange, in which all pupils in Year 10 are supported to participate. Pupils benefit from the school's biennial production, which helps them to develop their confidence and self-esteem. However, the range of regular enrichment activities is less well developed, and pupils therefore do not routinely engage with extra-curricular activities that develop their interests, skills and experiences.

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 have established a culture of respect and care throughout the school. Teachers take time to build trusting and positive relationships with pupils, which helps them to recognise the school as a safe environment where adults will support them when needed. Staff value pupils as individuals and this contributes to pupils' sense of self-worth and emotional security.

27. In early years, staff provide careful supervision and a calm, respectful environment which supports children's emotional wellbeing. For example, during story time, teachers support children to identify the emotions of the characters and introduce wider, more precise vocabulary. This helps children to recognise their own feelings and develop the language they need to express emotions accurately. As a result, children in Reception settle quickly, are happy and confident, develop secure relationships with staff, and have a positive attitude to their learning.

28. Well-trained teachers deliver the PSHE programme effectively. They teach age-appropriate topics that prepare pupils for the next stages of their lives, including topics such as consent, sexually transmitted infections, alcohol and drugs. Pupils discuss the topics from a Christian perspective whilst developing an understanding of, and respect for, other viewpoints. This approach supports pupils' development and strengthens their ability to reflect on complex issues.

29. The relationship and sex education (RSE) curriculum is well planned and age appropriate. Staff are sensitive to the needs of pupils and make suitable adaptations to ensure they can access the content effectively. Leaders consult parents about the teaching of RSE, and parents appreciate a collaborative approach, including opportunities to contribute to parent forums. This partnership supports parents in discussing RSE with their children at home. Leaders ensure a consistent approach to the teaching and learning of RSE across the school.

30. Pupils benefit from a well-structured physical education (PE) curriculum, which teaches pupils how to keep themselves physically healthy through fitness and how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils participate in a lunchtime football, basketball and volleyball and have opportunities for active play outside during breaks. The school allotment provides an additional space for pupils to engage in outdoor activity. These opportunities support pupils' physical wellbeing and their social development. The youngest children develop their fine and gross motor skills through a well-planned curriculum which is enhanced by activities in the outdoor learning area.

31. Leaders implement effective policies and processes related to behaviour that are understood by staff and pupils. Staff implement the policy consistently, and pupils behave well, showing respect and courtesy. Pupils develop mutually respectful relationships with staff and with one another. Staff use praise and positive encouragement to support pupils in making helpful choices. Leaders monitor behaviour closely, identifying emerging concerns or trends and taking appropriate action, when required. When needed, staff support pupils to consider their behaviour and develop greater self-knowledge and understanding.

32. Leaders provide an effective policy and approach to anti-bullying through the school's culture of respectful relationships. Pupils are taught what bullying is, how to recognise it and how to respond, including as a bystander. Incidents of bullying are rare and, when they do occur, staff respond quickly and effectively, ensuring there is support for all pupils.

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33. There is a proactive and systematic approach to health and safety, which ensures that the buildings are maintained appropriately. Leaders ensure that all fire safety arrangements are in place, including a fire risk assessment and regular fire drills. Pupils who are unwell or injured receive appropriate care from suitable trained staff and appropriate accommodation. Leaders ensure that there is appropriate supervision for pupils throughout the school day, including breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils receive direct supervision over lunchtime, including when children in Reception are eating. Leaders and managers ensure that supervision is appropriate during off-site activities and this helps to keep pupils safe.

34. Admissions and attendance registers are appropriate and well maintained. Leaders work closely with families and specialist external teams when there are concerns about pupils' attendance. They inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times, and this is recorded accurately. At the start of the inspection, the attendance policy did contain all required information. This was not reflective of the high-quality practice in the school. The policy was updated during the inspection to accurately reflect up-to-date statutory guidance and the work of the school.

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. Teachers develop pupils' economic and financial understanding through a range of subjects including PSHE and 'equipped to serve' lessons. Pupils learn about budgeting and mortgages, helping them to develop the knowledge they need to serve their communities. They also take part in events, such as a 'tenner challenge' where groups are given £10 to fund a small business. Through this project, pupils learn about the challenges of starting a business and how to overcome them. They decide how to use any profit they make. For example, pupils have previously chosen to purchase basketball hoops for the school playground. This approach helps them to learn entrepreneurial skills alongside development of their economic understanding.

37. Leaders have developed an effective programme that helps pupil to make informed choices about their next steps in further education, training and employment. This includes appropriate independent advice and guidance to support individual pupils. Within the curriculum, pupils learn about many careers. This starts with the youngest children in the early years, for example when learning about the 'teddy bear hospital' and roles in healthcare. Pupils access a range of activities, including online careers assessments and a careers fair which enables them to explore a range of professions and to consider the steps needed to achieve their goals. However, some pupils feel that the curriculum does not provide them with sufficient breadth of careers guidance that is in line with their abilities, interests and aspirations.

38. Leaders support pupils' understanding of important values, such as right and wrong, through the active promotion of the school's values and aims. This is strengthened by the 'equipped to serve' programme, which helps pupils to create a strong sense of personal responsibility and accountability. The programme also promotes respect for British law, other cultures and democratic principles, enabling pupils to understand British society and their role in it.

39. Leaders actively promote learning about other cultures, religions, beliefs and customs. For example, pupils value the fact that a wide range of cultures is represented within the pupil body, and they celebrate this as a benefit of the school community. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to support a charity in Uganda that works to integrate children who have disabilities, recently raising funds at their Christmas fair. Through these experiences, pupils develop a respectful understanding of a wide range of cultures and religions and are prepared for life beyond school.

40. Pupils explore practical ways in which they can contribute to their school and the wider community. This includes supporting a local care home, which the pupils make blankets to send to the residents. Pupils raise funds for a local asylum charity, to which they donate produce from the school allotment. As a result of the school's ethos, pupils serve their local community, developing as proactive, compassionate citizens who are ready to support those around them.

41. There is an active student council where pupils discuss and take forward a wide range of topics, from proposing changes to the girls' sports uniform to leading charitable work locally and internationally. Council members further develop their leadership skills by leading some school assemblies. Pupils are elected by their peers, and they see that their contributions lead to positive changes within the school. Through this process, pupils develop a secure understanding of democratic principles and the impact of collective decision-making.

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

42. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

43. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding. Governors undertake appropriate safeguarding training and are knowledgeable and skilled in their roles. The designated safeguarding governor visits the school regularly and carries out an array of work to gain a deeper understanding of the school's safeguarding culture. Governors are well informed, including through regular meetings, focusing on evidence related to safeguarding. They support leaders in making appropriate, evidence-based decisions about safeguarding practice.

44. Leaders have created an open culture in which pupils and parents are listened to, and their concerns are responded to appropriately. Pupils have a range of ways to raise worries, and staff act on these promptly. Pupils understand how to use these systems and make use of them when needed. This culture is underpinned by appropriate policies and procedures, which are available on the school's website.

45. Leaders implement their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities have undertaken training appropriate to their roles. They take effective action in response to safeguarding concerns, in line with the school's policy. They maintain suitable, confidential records, and work effectively with external agencies and local safeguarding partners to ensure that pupils receive timely and appropriate support.

46. Staff received regular and appropriate safeguarding training, including formal updates throughout the year. As a result, staff have the knowledge and skills to identify and manage safeguarding concerns, including those relating to online behaviour. Staff understand the procedures for reporting concerns about adults who work with pupils. They are vigilant about pupils' welfare and wellbeing and report concerns appropriately.

47. The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including online, through a carefully planned PSHE curriculum. Safeguarding topics are delivered through the PSHE curriculum which equips pupils with the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe and share concerns.

48. There are appropriate filtering and monitoring systems of the school's online systems and devices that are tested regularly to ensure their effectiveness. Staff take prompt action when concerns are identified.

49. Leaders ensure all pre-employment checks are carried out for adults working or volunteering with pupils. They ensure all adults are appropriately vetted. Leaders maintain a systematic approach to the pre-employment checks for staff and ensure that these are recorded appropriately on the school's single central record.

50. In the early years children are taught to keep themselves safe through a well-planned curriculum which guides them to make safer choices. For example, teachers prompt children to think about what they need such as coat, lunch, water or their bookbag, helping them to develop independence and begin to make their own choices about being safe.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

51. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Christian Fellowship School
Department for Education number	341/6040
Registered Charity Number	1079325
Address	Christian Fellowship School Overbury Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool L7 3HL
Phone number	0151 709 1642
Email address	info@cfschool.org.uk
Website	www.cfschool.org.uk
Proprietor	Christian Fellowship School Trust
Chair	Mr G Millington and Mr M Lewis
Headteacher	Mrs R Boulton
Age range	4 to 16
Number of pupils	177
Date of previous inspection	28 to 29 June 2023

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Information about the school

52. Christian Fellowship School is an independent co-educational day school. The school comprises three sections: a lower school, for pupils aged 4 to 8 years; a middle school, for pupils aged 8 to 13 years; and an upper school, for pupils aged 13 to 16 years. The school is a charitable trust and a limited company. Trustees of the school take on roles within the governing body. Two new co-chairs of governors have been appointed since the previous inspection. The headteacher started her role in July 2025.

53. There are eight children in early years, comprising one Reception class.

54. The school has identified 59 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. eight pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.

55. The school has identified English as an additional language for 47 pupils.

56. The school states its aims are to cultivate pupils' personal, spiritual and academic growth and development through Christ-centred learning. The school endeavours to assist parents in developing the hearts, minds and practical capabilities of their children to equip them for a productive life and work, recognising the spiritual and eternal, as well as the physical world, and enabling them to become responsible citizens.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	21 to 23 April 2026

57. A team of three 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 chair and other governors
- 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.

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- 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.
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- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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