

# School inspection report

26 to 28 November 2024

## **Mount Kelly Foundation**

Parkwood Road

Tavistock

Devon

PL19 0HZ

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. The governing board is appropriately experienced and committed in promoting the wellbeing of pupils, offering suitably rigorous challenge and oversight of leaders' work. Governors are mindful of ensuring that pupils are well prepared for life. They support leaders and staff to ensure that pupils are provided with a wide range of relevant learning, enrichment and co-curricular experiences.
2. Leaders ensure that effective teaching allows pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL), to make good progress. Pupils recognise that an important aspect of their success comes from their teachers' support and encouragement. Teachers deliver carefully structured, well-resourced lessons, resulting in pupils of all ages, including in the early years, engaging and learning well. Many pupils become fully involved in the social and cultural life of the school through membership of a wide range of committees and clubs.
3. Leaders provide pupils with effective support for their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. As they get older, pupils grow in confidence, show initiative, manage relationships and take on additional responsibility through the many opportunities to develop leaderships skills, for example, on the sports field, at committee level and in the boarding and day houses. The school provides high-quality specialist swimming provision which supports pupils to swim at national and international levels. However, school meals do not always support the nutritional needs of pupils on this programme.
4. Pupils develop a strong understanding about how to positively contribute to society. They take part in, learn about and benefit from the local environment through activities and challenges on Dartmoor. Through Ten Tors, moor walks and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) expeditions, they learn teamwork, resilience and an appreciation of the natural world. Through the many opportunities to support charities pupils broaden their perspective of others' needs. The well-considered whole school careers programme ensures that younger pupils gain a broad understanding of the world of work whilst older pupils make suitably informed choices about study programmes and post-school pathways.
5. Decisions made by boarding leaders directly positively contribute to pupils' progress and welfare, and boarders benefit from the academic and pastoral support available in the boarding house. Boarders appreciate the strong sense of community within the houses, valuing the opportunities to socialise across the year groups. Their ideas to further enhance the boarding experience are listened to and taken on board.
6. Leaders of the early years setting focus on the wellbeing of the children as they develop physically, mentally and emotionally. They are cared for in a positive, supportive, safe environment. The children are taught, supervised and assessed effectively because staff are appropriately trained to do so. Early years staff monitor and self-evaluate their practice regularly and effectively, to improve provision for children.
7. The importance of safeguarding is promoted and prioritised by leaders throughout the school. They arrange effective regular training for all staff. Pupils feel safe because they recognise that leaders act promptly on any concerns. If necessary, leaders make referral to external agencies, to secure timely and effective support for pupils.

## 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 pupils on sporting programmes, including those related to swimming, are provided with consistently appropriate nutrition and nutritional guidance, to support their training regime effectively.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. The governance of the school, together with leaders and managers, have the suitable knowledge and skills to ensure that policies are effectively implemented and Standards are consistently met. Arising from this, pupils receive a wide-ranging education that is appropriately personalised and enables them to make good progress. Governors maintain a well-informed oversight of how leaders fulfil their responsibilities. They hold leaders to account through regular committee meetings, school visits and discussion with pupils and staff.
9. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and, with the support of the governing body, have put in place plans which aim to mitigate contextual risk across the school, including in the early years. Thorough self-evaluation of academic, pastoral and co-curricular areas has allowed leaders to develop the curriculum appropriately and support pupils' wellbeing effectively.
10. Leaders understand their responsibilities. The active promotion of pupil wellbeing is at the heart of all their decision-making and, as part of this, the school complies with its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The school's values of compassion, courage, humility, respect, commitment and integrity underpin leaders' decisions. Leaders put in place processes to support building positive peer relationships. Leaders ensure that the school is an inclusive community, including through a well-considered accessibility plan, through the equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committee, and through the PSHE curriculum, assemblies and tutor and form time programmes across the school.
11. Boarding leaders ensure that the boarding experience is constantly reviewed and evaluated so that it is a happy and enriching one. Boarders of all ages feel supported and safe and learn to live together amicably as a result. Boarding records, documentation and policies are clear and detailed so that boarders' welfare is promoted.
12. Parents and guardians are provided with a range of helpful information which is available through the school's website. This includes all required information. The weekly news features a range of pupil achievements and activities as well as podcasts on aspects of school life. Leaders provide parents with termly personalised reports on pupils' achievements with suggestions for further progress. Leaders also provide required information to the local authority with regard to any pupils in receipt of an education, health and care (EHC) plan who receive additional funding.
13. Leaders take a balanced approach to risk management, ensuring that risks are identified and addressed as effectively as possible through a systematic approach to mitigation, monitoring and evaluation. Leaders ensure that suitable training for staff is in place. Dynamic risk assessment is in place for activities such as canoeing, Ten Tors and overseas trips. Regularly reviewed risk assessments are also used for other areas such as boarding houses, the Reception playground, and minibus use. Individual risk assessments to support pupil wellbeing are thorough and shared on a need-to-know basis.
14. Leaders ensure that the school's complaints policy is published on the website and adhered to. Complaints are rare. They are recorded systematically and in detail. Leaders respond within published timescales. Together with the governing body, records are reviewed regularly by leaders and areas of concern are addressed effectively.

15. Leaders with safeguarding responsibilities liaise effectively and in a timely manner with external agencies so that pupils may receive suitable support as necessary.

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

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

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a curriculum that is suitably wide-ranging and covers the required areas of learning. This starts with the youngest children in Reception and builds year-on-year. It ensures that pupils, as they get older, access a suitable variety of academic choices and qualifications which reflect their abilities and interests. There are a range of qualifications on offer for pupils in Years 10 and 11 including a range of GCSEs. In the sixth form, there is a range of A-level options, as well BTEC sports qualifications and the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).
18. In Reception, staff ensure that children access a range of planned and play opportunities that develop their language and communication skills. Teaching uses skilful questioning to encourage children to communicate clearly, developing their use of different vocabulary. Staff help children to persist when they find activities difficult, identify the problems and find solutions. They provide resources that help children develop their fine and gross motor skills, and their understanding of early number, shape and space. As a result, children develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to be ready to move into Year 1
19. Teachers are knowledgeable and experienced in the subjects that they teach. They produce good quality resources and techniques to enhance pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 5 science lessons on magnets, the use of clear timeframes and targeted questioning ensured that pupils were absorbed in their investigation and could prove their hypothesis. In a Year 7 English lesson on the effects of punctuation in a Gothic literary extract, an incremental approach to analysis ensured that all pupils understood the writing techniques used.
20. Pupils are very well supported by their teachers. Teachers use a range of techniques to check on pupils' understanding. They identify pupils who need extra support and provide this, including through booster sessions and clinics. Teachers regularly provide pupils with guidance about how they can improve, including through their written work. This feedback allows pupils to understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Pupils are taught to reflect on how well they prepared and how they can improve their learning and understanding. The school provides parents with regular feedback on pupils' knowledge, understanding and progress that report on school-wide assessment and tracking procedures.
21. Pupils, including those who have SEND, enjoy their learning, are self-motivated to do well and focused in lessons. They work well individually and in groups, listening to each other and sharing and developing ideas. For example, in Year 9 critical thinking lessons, pupils discuss moral dilemma scenarios, using their understanding of different ways of approaching a situation. In Year 11 geography pupils collaborate to produce a blog on weather hazards in different eco-systems.
22. Leaders have established subject assessment that is carried out regularly and against agreed criteria, across all year groups. Teachers and leaders use assessment effectively to support pupils' learning and to inform their academic planning. Leaders and governors scrutinise examination results against national standards. This process informs decisions for academic improvement at a strategic level. For example, leaders have approved the adoption of a whole school approach to the teaching of thinking skills. This is starting to help pupils to think critically and consider a variety of perspectives, leading to a nuanced understanding of topics. This results in pupils becoming increasingly confident, well-informed independent learners. Consequently, pupils in the prep school meet or exceed

national expectations in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics. Most older pupils attain well at GCSE, BTEC and A level, from a variety of starting points.

23. The personalised learning department, which focuses on those pupils who have SEND, know pupils well and provide precise guidance to staff. This information is disseminated to teachers who plan their lessons accordingly so that pupils who have SEND make progress in line with their peers. Leaders also provide bespoke interventions and additional support, including for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
24. Pupils who speak EAL benefit from specialist teaching. They make rapid progress in their speaking and literacy skills. In lessons they are provided with personalised support, such as subject-specific word banks and educational videos with English subtitles to reinforce pupils' understanding. This helps them to learn effectively.
25. Pupils of all ages benefit from developing new knowledge and skills through a wide range of activities such as gardening, beekeeping, dance, stocks and shares, badminton, choral singing, drama productions and the Combined Cadet Force. Boarders also gain socially and culturally from a range of recreational activities, such as weekend trips to Exeter, skating and beach activities.

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

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

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

27. Leaders have designed a personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) curriculum at the centre of which is respect for all, reflecting the school's ethos. For example, leaders in the early years introduce the concept of charitable giving through pupil visits to local charity shops. In the prep school pupils learn about discrimination and how to tackle it through the Think Equal global initiative whilst older pupils organise anti-racism awareness events. A comprehensive and age-appropriate programme of relationships and sex education (RSE) is taught throughout the school. Lessons are adapted to support pupils' needs and informed by pupils' questions so that they find the information useful and relevant. As a result, relationships among pupils reflect a culture of tolerance and respect.
28. Alongside an appropriate anti-bullying strategy, leaders have implemented a clear behaviour policy which includes rewards and sanctions, creating an environment where expectations and consequences are understood. Consequently, behaviour throughout the school is of a high standard. Pupils are proud to be recognised in weekly assemblies for positive contributions to school life. Bullying is rare. Where incidents do occur, leaders act swiftly to provide appropriate support and education as applicable, and proportionate sanctions.
29. Leaders of boarding ensure that pupils feel very well cared for. For example, those new to boarding access staff quickly and effectively, because of the carefully thought-out programme of support and allocation of rooms. There are effective arrangements for boarders to contact their families and friends. Boarding accommodation is comfortable, well maintained, and well equipped and boarders describe their houses as friendly and inclusive. Boarders in leadership roles encourage mixing of all ages through in-house competition and buddy schemes.
30. Children in the early years develop their self-knowledge through an age-appropriate programme of indoor and outdoor activities. These are designed so that children benefit from their teacher's individual attention and feedback which allows them to grow in self-confidence as they learn to cooperate with their peers and understand their own and others' feelings. Pupils build physical confidence through their use of playground equipment, at the same time learning to listen to instructions and take turns.
31. The school has an extensive, very well managed physical education programme which affords opportunities to develop skills in a wide range of sports including a very successful girls' performance football programme, cricket, hockey, rugby and netball as well as supervised walks on the nearby moors for those not keen on competitive sports. Pupils develop physical and mental stamina as they train for Ten Tors, DofE expeditions and the annual Devizes to Westminster canoe race. They appreciate that good physical health impacts positively on their wellbeing.
32. Specialist swimming provision is a significant feature of the school, offering a high-calibre sporting development programme. Led by experienced coaches, the personalised training ensures tailored support that facilitates rapid progress. Pupils participating in these programmes regularly compete at national and international levels with notable success. Leaders understand the physical, mental and emotional pressures that are part of an intensive sporting programme and have put in place suitable support. However, arrangements for the provision of suitable meals after evening training

are not consistently effective. For example, swimmers do not always receive the nutrition they need at the end of the day.

33. The school's medical facilities are appropriate and include a sick bay for boarders who require close observation. A suitable number of staff are trained in first aid, including in the boarding houses. Staff in the early years are trained in paediatric first aid. Leaders have put in place a number of mental health pathways by which pupils can access help and speak to trained counsellors. This results in pupils feeling heard and well supported to overcome difficulties.
34. Supported by governors, leaders ensure that health and safety and fire safety action plans are drawn up and implemented within an appropriate timeframe. Thorough record keeping and a system for tracking routine maintenance allows leaders to provide a well-presented, safe environment and ongoing staff training. For example, staff receive regular fire training with termly fire drills conducted and logged. Premises and accommodation are suitable and well maintained and pupils are supervised appropriately at all times.
35. Attendance and admissions registers are appropriately recorded and stored. The school reports to the local authority on pupil attendance as required and informs of leavers and joiners to the school at non-standard transition points.

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

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

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

37. Leaders promote and model British values and these are reinforced through the curriculum. PSHE lessons inform pupils about the historical, political and ethical roots of liberalism, democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. Pupils are educated in the broad outlines of the political and legal system in Britain. This prepares them for life in British society.
38. The school is proactive in promoting the importance of protected characteristics. PSHE, religious studies lessons and assemblies promote equality and diversity. For example, pupils study world religions and develop an understanding and respect for other faiths. Activities, such as a school-wide international festival, celebrate cultural diversity at the school and allow pupils to gain a deeper understanding of others' customs and beliefs. An equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committee, made up of staff and pupils, drives initiatives that promote inclusivity. The committee contributes to the school's accessibility plan. As a result, pupils are considerate of one another and accept each other for who they are.
39. Children's social development in early years is developed in a range of ways, including through adult interactions, well-considered routines, when they play and through outdoor learning. Staff role model important behaviours, such as kindness, turn taking, and playing co-operatively. Children learn to share playground equipment and consider each other's ideas, for example, when preparing for a reenactment of a version of the Three Billy Goats Gruff tale.
40. Careers education enables pupils to become well prepared for life beyond school. Leaders have organised an extensive careers programme which begins in the prep school where pupils are exposed to the world of work focusing on a variety of jobs. Pupils also benefit from external speakers, including from local businesses and the military, careers fairs, visits to higher education providers, and support in their application, including to apprenticeships and university. This programme ensures that pupils are given well-considered information about a wide range of further education, training, employment and careers opportunities.
41. Opportunities for economic education are firmly embedded across the school. The youngest children learn about money through play. Younger pupils plan 'make and sell' projects and learn about entrepreneurial activities from visiting speakers. Older pupils learn to be critical consumers and manage their personal finances effectively as well as gaining knowledge of saving and borrowing and interest rates as part of the PSHE curriculum.
42. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and have plenty of opportunities to be a force for good in the school. They canvass opinion and propose school improvements through membership of the food and house committees and school council. Pupils recognise the importance of this involvement and are keen to represent their peers in order to 'give something back' to the school community. Recently, pupils successfully canvassed for girls' games to enjoy a higher profile and include a greater choice of options.
43. Through the co-curricular programme, leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a variety of volunteering opportunities. They learn about the needs of others through an extensive volunteering programme which includes local community cafes and care homes. Pupils appreciate the magnificence of the surrounding countryside; they help to protect it through a number of litter

picking and gardening projects in the locality. The new skills and knowledge that pupils in the prep school have learnt through acquiring Eco-Schools status has led to informed discussions about locally sourced food and the planting of fruit trees.

44. Pupils of all ages regularly take the initiative to organise events to raise money for charities such as Children's Hospice South West and the School in a Bag scheme. In doing so they grow in their understanding of the needs of others both locally and globally.

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

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

## Safeguarding

46. Safeguarding is led by a very well-trained and approachable safeguarding team. They have implemented a well-considered safeguarding policy and comprehensive safeguarding protocols. Their approach to safeguarding ensures that pupils' wellbeing is prioritized enabling them to thrive in a secure, nurturing environment.
47. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in safeguarding, including those who work in the boarding houses. Training is regularly updated as required and includes risks posed by extremism. A useful weekly safeguarding bulletin is posted to all parents and staff which includes up-to-date topics such as information about risks associated with specific online games.
48. Boarding and day pupils are confident that there is always someone to whom they can report concerns, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the safeguarding team. They are confident that staff will do what is necessary to support them and address any issues effectively. Pupils are also aware of the arrangements to report their concerns anonymously, if preferred, through the use of a QR code, posted around the school.
49. Safeguarding records include the rationale for actions taken. Incidents are dealt with quickly and, where appropriate, the school makes timely referrals to relevant external services including children's services and the local authority designated officer. Incidents are reviewed regularly by safeguarding leaders and reported to governors so that the school is aware of any emerging patterns. This information informs ongoing training for staff and further support for pupils.
50. Governors ensure that they provide effective oversight to ensure that leaders are doing all that they reasonably can to safeguard pupils, including boarders. They visit regularly, check leaders' and staff training records, review safeguarding documentation, and seek the views of pupils and boarders.
51. Pupils learn to stay safe, including when online, through PSHE lessons. Lessons teach pupils how to address potential dangers, including when using new technologies. The school's filtering and monitoring systems help safeguard online learning and activities at the school and in boarding.
52. Leaders are effectively trained in safer recruitment. All required checks for adults working with pupils and boarders are carried out and correctly recorded appropriately on a single central register of appointments.
53. The school understands the link between attendance and pupil wellbeing. There are clear processes in place for immediate follow up of any absence, alongside arrangements to support individuals to attend school when difficulties occur.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Mount Kelly Foundation
<b>Department for Education number</b>	878/6009
<b>Registered charity number</b>	306716
<b>Address</b>	Mount Kelly Foundation Parkwood Road Tavistock Devon PL19 0HZ
<b>Phone number</b>	01822 813100
<b>Email address</b>	reception@mountkelly.com
<b>Website</b>	www.mountkelly.com
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mount Kelly Foundation
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian MacQueen
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Guy Ayling
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	596
<b>Number of boarding pupils</b>	202
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 to 12 November 2021

## Information about the school

55. Mount Kelly Foundation is an independent co-educational day and boarding school, located in Tavistock, Devon. The school is a charitable company limited by guarantee, whose trustees act as governors. It occupies two sites, one on each side of the River Tavy in Tavistock. The preparatory school on Mount Tavy Road is for pre-prep children and pupils in Reception to Year 2, and prep for pupils in Years 3 to 8. The second site at Parkwood Road, for the college, is for pupils in Years 9 to 13.
56. Boarding is available for pupils in Year 3 to Year 13. Prep school boarders between Years 3 to 8 reside in a mixed house on the prep school site. Boarders from Year 9 upwards are accommodated in four single-sex houses situated on the school's college site.
57. The early years provision currently comprises one Reception class of eight children.
58. The school has identified 226 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Eleven pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for 54 pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to deliver a values-led education which promotes the characteristics of spiritual growth and moral fortitude, excellence through innovation, valuing the individual, service to others, local roots with a global outlook, tradition with creativity, and breadth of access, diversity and inclusion.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

26 to 28 November 2024

61. A team of eight 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, form time 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 principal, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)