

School inspection report

10 to 12 February 2026

More Than Ed Independent School

Cherry Tree Court

Cherry Tree Way

Woodfield Park

Balby

Doncaster

DN4 8QN

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 proprietors have a clear understanding of the particular nature of the school and ensure that leaders promote its aims effectively and fulfil their responsibilities to ensure that the Standards are met. Leaders understand how pupils' experience of trauma impacts on their needs and take effective action to support these pupils to learn well.
2. All pupils in the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). Leaders make effective use of these plans and other information to plan bespoke programmes of study which meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils study a curriculum which covers core functional skills and provides opportunities for wider learning and creative expression.
3. Teachers skilfully adapt their teaching in response to pupils' needs and ensure that pupils make good progress. Teachers use a range of effective techniques to help pupils improve their ability to plan, organise and manage their own learning.
4. Leaders provide a framework for monitoring pupils' academic performance and progress. This is highly effective in English and mathematics, where teachers monitor pupils' progress against clear learning objectives. However, the assessment framework is less well developed in other subjects, with the result that teachers have less understanding of pupils' knowledge and skills in those areas.
5. Leaders use their deep understanding of childhood trauma to shape a school culture that is highly effective in supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing. Leaders provide regular and detailed training for staff on how to recognise and respond to subtle indicators of pupils' wellbeing. Regular and well-documented communication between staff ensures that they are highly aware of each pupil's needs and how to support them on a day-to-day basis. Leaders carefully adapt plans and staffing daily to promote positive relationships between staff and pupils. Leaders and teachers understand the potential risk to pupils' wellbeing of any negative interaction in school and take very effective steps to minimise the occurrence of any such risk. They are highly sensitive to the precursors of poor behaviour and rapidly adapt their teaching to support pupils. This means that pupils behave well and develop positive and trusting relationships with their teachers. As a result, pupils significantly improve their attendance and make sustained progress in their emotional wellbeing. This is a significant strength of the school.
6. Leaders provide a curriculum that prepares pupils well for life beyond school. Pupils learn to keep themselves healthy, manage their finances and live independently. Teachers help pupils develop the social and emotional skills to work with others outside of the school environment through a clearly planned and sequenced set of activities and experiences.
7. A carefully planned careers programme informs pupils of the opportunities available to them when they leave school. Leaders work closely with local partners such as colleges and local charities to provide a range of pathways for pupils when they leave school. Teachers help pupils prepare for these opportunities effectively.
8. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority at the school. Staff are aware of the vulnerabilities of pupils in the school and are vigilant in recognising any risks to pupils. Where they have a concern, staff make effective use of the school's systems to report these. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding work closely with local agencies to support pupils and minimise risks to their wellbeing.

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:

- strengthen the framework for monitoring pupils' progress in non-core subjects so that teachers and leaders have a clearer understanding of pupils' knowledge and skills.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The proprietors of the school have a very clear vision which is focused on actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils. They understand the needs of pupils and effectively evaluate the decisions and actions that the school takes to meet those needs. Those proprietors not involved in the running of the school maintain active oversight of the provision by visiting the school and speaking to leaders, pupils and staff.
10. Leaders have a high level of understanding of the needs of pupils in the school and meet their responsibilities in relation to these well. They implement carefully considered actions to meet pupils' emotional and mental health needs while also maintaining ambitious goals for pupils' academic progress. Leaders are very successful at improving pupils' engagement with school and ensuring that they develop their knowledge and skills consistently.
11. Leaders undertake effective and continuous self-evaluation. They reflect on the effectiveness of their own processes regularly and make effective use of external expertise when useful. Where leaders identify areas for development, they take prompt and appropriate action to improve their provision. For example, recently introduced systems to assess and document the effectiveness of the school ensure that it meets the Standards.
12. Leaders maintain a detailed suite of policies which give clear guidance on the different aspects of school life. By providing regular staff training, leaders ensure that staff understand these policies and implement them effectively. These policies are regularly updated in line with changing statutory guidance.
13. Leaders work closely with local professionals such as social workers and officers with responsibility for SEND provision to support pupils. Leaders participate in reviews of pupils' EHC plans and implement these plans effectively. They provide the required information to the local authority on how public money is spent and when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times. By implementing a suitable accessibility plan and adapting their provision for each pupil in line with their EHC plan, leaders ensure that pupils can access the curriculum and that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
14. The school's website provides all required information to parents and pupils, including details of the school's aims and ethos, its approach to supporting pupils and its curriculum. A full set of policies is published online for pupils or parents to learn more about the school's procedures and practices. Staff communicate regularly with parents when picking up and dropping off pupils and through regular calls and updates. Leaders provide parents with clear information and regular reports on their child's progress, linked to the targets in their EHC plans.
15. Leaders have a high level of awareness of potential risks to pupils' wellbeing. They are proactive in considering these risks and reducing them as far as possible. Leaders use their detailed knowledge of each pupil to adapt risk assessments to meet the needs of particular individuals or groups of pupils. Risk assessments include fine detail of the measures to take to reduce risk and staff implement them successfully. Where leaders have concerns about risks, they ensure that these are addressed in a timely manner, including by involving external organisations where appropriate.

16. Leaders provide a clear policy for the submission of and response to parental complaints. They respond to any such complaints effectively should they arise and keep appropriate records of the complaints and the school's actions in response to them.

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 provide a well-structured curriculum which is continually adapted to meet the needs and current level of attainment of individual pupils. In English and mathematics, pupils study at different levels in each topic in response to their knowledge and skills. In addition, pupils study a range of subjects which develop their scientific, technological, aesthetic and creative skills. Pupils leave the school with qualifications in functional skills and a range of unit-based certificates.
19. Subject leaders and teachers plan each pupil's learning based on their current level of attainment and the information in each pupil's EHC plan. These lesson plans take into account gaps in each pupil's knowledge. Teachers regularly return to core ideas, such as the definitions of words and sentence construction, to secure pupils' understanding.
20. Teachers work with individual pupils or small groups. As the same teacher works with a pupil for the whole day, they are able to adapt their plans in response to each pupil's current wellbeing needs and level of engagement. Teachers make extensive use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and develop their knowledge effectively. Teachers adapt their plans skilfully and provide pupils with appropriate levels of challenge to ensure they make good progress.
21. Teachers help pupils to learn to manage tasks and regulate their activities through specialist lessons and by integrating these skills throughout the curriculum. They develop pupils' ability to sustain attention, for example by challenging them to carefully observe sea monkeys in small tanks. Teachers support pupils in understanding how different facts link together by looking at timelines or understanding how environmental conditions link to plants' survival. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their learning and to develop their ability to notice if they have stopped making progress and take effective action to support their own learning in response.
22. When studying English, teachers set ambitious goals for pupils to read challenging texts and write at a high level. Teachers then use a variety of resources to support pupils in meeting those goals. Pupils produce extended pieces of written work, including non-fiction articles and creative writing. Teachers set clear objectives and help pupils to develop their writing, for instance by using conjunctions to build compound sentences.
23. Pupils develop numerical and geometric skills in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum. Teachers adapt the curriculum to match pupils' interests, for instance by enabling pupils to collect data on their favourite footballers. Pupils engage with their learning and develop their practical understanding of numbers and theoretical understanding, for instance of geometry and shapes.
24. Teachers emphasise cross-curricular links throughout the curriculum. They encourage pupils to integrate their scientific and historical understanding into their creative writing. Pupils make use of their geographical knowledge when carrying out data analysis tasks in mathematics and when cooking food from different parts of the world.
25. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop their practical and creative skills. In science lessons they explore the natural environment and learn about how to care for animals. Pupils develop their creativity in art lessons and during cookery classes.
26. Leaders provide a framework to assess pupils' progress. In mathematics and English this includes clear learning outcomes which link to helpful descriptors of attainment. Pupils are assessed against

these outcomes regularly and their progress is monitored closely. However, beyond the core subjects, the learning outcomes are less specific, and the assessment framework provides less precise information on pupils' development of knowledge and skills.

27. The enrichment programme provides opportunities for pupils to develop their interests in a range of accessible, inclusive activities. Pupils learn to express themselves creatively in arts and crafts sessions and develop critical thinking and strategy by playing boardgames. Pupils explore rhythm and melody by playing the keyboard and guitar.

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. Leaders place the promotion of pupils' emotional wellbeing at the centre of their actions in the school. They have a deep understanding of the complex responses of young people to trauma and design the school's processes and procedures to meet pupils' needs. Leaders provide staff with extensive training on how to understand and respond to these needs. The supportive environment provides stability for pupils and the support from leaders and staff significantly improves pupils' emotional wellbeing. This means that they attend school regularly and engage positively with their learning, often for the first time in their schooling.
30. Staff are highly adept at noticing subtle indicators of pupils' wellbeing. Teachers respond quickly to these indicators, for instance by providing breaks or changing teaching methods. Staff supervise pupils closely to provide them with support when required, monitoring any changes in their behaviour and responding as necessary.
31. Leaders ensure that staff communicate effectively about pupils' needs and how best to support their wellbeing. They review comprehensive records of pupils' behaviour and wellbeing daily and develop a full understanding of each pupil's current situation. This reduces the risk of any adult having a negative interaction with a pupil. Pupils feel secure in school and form positive and trusting relationships with teachers.
32. Leaders plan pupils' days carefully to reduce potential risks to pupils and any barriers to learning. Teachers collect pupils from their homes at the start of each day and support them in the transition to and from school. Each evening, leaders decide which teacher will collect and work with each pupil the next day, so that pupils can develop healthy attachments to the adults that work with them.
33. Leaders provide a clear structure for increasing pupils' self-management and social awareness as they move through the school. In carefully managed discussions, pupils learn to interact with their peers, and teachers track their progress in these sessions carefully. When pupils are ready, teachers support them in increasing their interactions with their peers, for instance by taking part in small-group lessons or collaborative tasks.
34. Staff have clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and model calm, positive interactions throughout the school. Teachers help pupils to develop self-regulation techniques and support pupils in managing their emotions. Leaders train staff effectively in how to respond if a pupil becomes dysregulated so that any possible harm to pupils' progress as a result is minimised. Pupils behave well in school, approach their lessons calmly and develop respectful relationships. They learn about the harm caused by bullying and the importance of avoiding this behaviour. Any instances of bullying are dealt with promptly and appropriately.
35. Pupils explore spiritual, ethical and moral issues in carefully managed discussions. Teachers pose questions that help pupils consider how the correct behaviour may depend on context, for example, in cases of different power relationships. Visiting speakers develop these ideas further and help pupils consider the non-material aspects of life.
36. The physical education (PE) curriculum enables pupils to develop their fitness and physical skills. Teachers help pupils to understand the benefits of physical activity for their physical and mental

health. Teachers adapt PE lessons to meet pupils' needs, for instance by varying the size of groups to promote pupils' participation. Pupils play a range of sports and undertake practical activities such as orienteering and obstacle courses. This develops pupils' physical confidence and their ability to solve problems they may encounter outside of school.

37. Leaders provide a carefully planned curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Pupils learn about how to take care of themselves, including by avoiding the risks associated with drugs and alcohol. Pupils learn about positive relationships, including intimate relationships and sexual health. This programme is sensitively adapted to take into account pupils' past experiences and individual needs.
38. Leaders adopt a robust approach to ensuring the suitability of the school premises and accommodation. Leaders maintain up-to-date and comprehensive records of safety checks, including alarm testing and fire and lockdown drills. Leaders make effective use of external audits to identify any areas in need of improvement and take prompt action to resolve any concerns. Staff maintain the site well and ensure that any hazards are minimised.
39. Leaders provide appropriate facilities for treating any pupils who become unwell and maintain accurate records of any illness, injuries and medication or first aid administered. Staff ensure that pupils' medication is securely stored and dispensed appropriately. All staff have appropriate first aid training.
40. Leaders maintain suitable and accurate admission and attendance registers. The system of having teachers collect pupils is highly effective at improving pupils' attendance, often from previously low levels prior to them joining the school. Staff maintain close communication with pupils' parents and carers so that teachers and leaders are fully informed of pupils' situations and can reduce barriers to their school attendance. Leaders work closely with the local authority to support those with low attendance in order to increase school engagement.

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. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to learn about different religions and cultures from around the world. Visiting speakers share their cultures with pupils. For example, visitors from the local Hindu community help pupils to experience their dress and cuisine. Pupils visit local cultural and historic sites and deepen their understanding further in geography lessons.
43. In weekly discussions, pupils learn about the importance of respect for others and the harm caused by discrimination. Teachers link this to pupils' own experiences, for instance by discussing the evolution of the language used to describe neurodiversity. Leaders are alert to national trends and adapt the curriculum in response, for instance by helping pupils discuss and understand topical issues, such as debates around immigration.
44. Leaders provide regular opportunities for pupils to engage in volunteering and to support their local community. Pupils raise money by baking cakes and packing bags at a local supermarket. Teachers praise pupils for giving to their peers, for instance when sharing the results of their cookery lessons. Pupils learn about the importance of supporting others within and beyond their school community.
45. Leaders integrate an understanding of the institutions and services of the UK into the curriculum. Teachers help pupils to understand the functioning of democracy in the UK and link this knowledge to participation in local and national elections. They ensure that any discussions with political content are conducted impartially. In the 'life skills' programme in Year 11, pupils learn about accessing healthcare and the emergency services and speak to representatives of the ambulance and fire services.
46. A well-planned programme of activities and discussions helps pupils to learn how to distinguish right from wrong. Teachers explain ethical concepts sensitively and take account of pupils' individual circumstances when they do so. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others and the ideas of moral and legal responsibility. Teachers lead workshops on the justice system, and pupils learn about the separation of powers between the police and the court system.
47. Teachers integrate economic education into the curriculum. Younger pupils learn about calculating amounts of money and change in mathematics lessons. Older pupils study bank accounts, loans and budgeting so that they are prepared to manage their finances when they leave school. Teachers provide a range of practical activities for pupils to practice these skills, for instance when shopping for gifts to fill a Christmas box for local families.
48. Leaders provide a programme of careers education which supports pupils in planning their next steps while being sensitive to their needs. Younger pupils work in small groups with an independent careers advisor who introduces them to the world of work and options for further study. Teachers enable pupils to see links between the skills they are learning and future employment. For older pupils, leaders work closely with local partners to help pupils identify suitable next steps in education or employment. Throughout Year 11, teachers adapt the learning environment to prepare pupils for leaving school and teach them the skills they need to manage in the workplace or further education.

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. Leaders prioritise safeguarding in all of the school's activities and maintain a robust safeguarding culture at the school. Staff adopt a consistent approach to safeguarding concerns so that any that arise are identified promptly and appropriate action is taken in response.
51. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undertake regular training with the local authority and understand local systems and thresholds well. Leaders undertake additional training on wider risks to pupils, including those who are in the care of the local authority. Leaders are aware that pupils who have SEND may find it harder to communicate their needs and they take this into account in their safeguarding work.
52. Leaders arrange regular training for staff with the local authority and also on potential contextual safeguarding risks. Staff have a high level of knowledge of safeguarding issues and are aware of the particular vulnerabilities of pupils who have experienced trauma. Staff understand how to report any concerns about pupils or adults that work with them and make active use of the school's reporting systems when required.
53. Staff maintain highly detailed records of safeguarding concerns. Leaders ensure that these records are regularly reviewed and used to plan the support for any individual pupils affected by safeguarding issues. Leaders identify any trends in a pupil's personal record and take suitable action in response, for instance identifying particular days or events that impact on their wellbeing.
54. Leaders sustain very close links with multiple local agencies to support and protect pupils. They make referrals to children's services when appropriate. Leaders work closely with the local virtual school headteacher to support those pupils who are currently or were previously in the care of the local authority.
55. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They adapt their teaching carefully to ensure that pupils develop their understanding, while sensitively avoiding discussions that may impact on pupils' emotional wellbeing due to their previous trauma.
56. Pupils are able to access appropriate online resources when supervised by staff. The school's internet connection is robustly filtered, and the internet filtering and monitoring system is regularly tested to ensure that it is functioning correctly. Staff respond appropriately and supportively should any pupil attempt to access potentially inappropriate content.
57. Staff carry out appropriate pre-employment checks on adults before they work or volunteer at the school. These checks are recorded in a well-organised and accurate single central record of appointments (SCR).

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

58. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	More Than Ed Independent School
Department for Education number	371/6014
Address	More Than Ed Independent School Cherry Tree Court Cherry Tree Way Woodfield Park Balby Doncaster South Yorkshire DN4 8QN
Phone number	01302 957433
Email address	karen.holmes@morethaned.co.uk
Website	www.morethaned.org
Proprietor	More Than Ed Independent School Ltd
Chair	Mrs Karen Holmes and Mr Christopher Holmes
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Holmes
Age range	7 to 16
Number of pupils	25
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 June 2022

Information about the school

59. More Than Ed Independent School is an independent co-educational day school situated in Balby, South Yorkshire. It is a special school for pupils who have social, emotional and mental health needs. The school is owned by a limited company. One of the company's directors is also the school's headteacher.
60. The school has identified all pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. All pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
61. The school has not identified English as an additional language for any pupils.
62. The school states that its aims are to deliver quality education to children who have suffered extreme trauma through a trauma-informed and nurturing approach, including therapies.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

10 to 12 February 2026

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

64. 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 directors of the proprietary body
- 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.

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

66. The previous standard inspection of the school was by Ofsted. This is the first routine inspection of the school by ISI.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

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

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

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