



BHS Riding School National Championships

08 April 2026, Pickering Grange Equestrian Centre

Rule Book 2026

- 1. Introduction.** The aim of this competition is to:
 - 1.1 Recognise the importance of correct horsemanship and riding in promoting and maintaining wellbeing and welfare of the horse.
 - 1.2 Offer BHS Approved Riding Schools and their clients, a progressive pathway to participate in a nationally recognised series of inclusive competitions that cater for a range of age and experience levels.
 - 1.3 Provide opportunities for riding school clients without their own horses/ponies, or with limited access to their own, to benefit from quality instruction in horse care and equitation.
 - 1.4 Enable a pathway for BHS Approved Riding Centres and their clients to celebrate achievement and success at both local and national levels.

2. Code of Conduct

As with any organisation, the British Horse Society and their approved centres are required to operate in a professional manner. It is vitally important for the future of our sector that welfare of the pony/horse is always the primary consideration. This code of conduct should be interpreted in the spirit of integrity, transparency and common sense.

Officials are required to take decisions in a fair and sporting manner and in accordance with the code of conduct and the official steward may stop a horse from competing if there is concern over the horse's welfare. Any breach of code of conduct may result in disqualification from the competition.

The British Horse Society expects all those involved in this event to adhere to the following Code of Conduct covering

- Welfare of the pony/horse
- Conduct of Centre representatives, their participants and attendees

We ask that everyone acknowledges and accepts that at all times the welfare of the pony/horse must be paramount and must never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influence.

Every centre, coach and participant must accept responsibility to uphold the highest level of pony/horse welfare.

During the preparation and training of ponies/horses, welfare must take precedence over all other demands. This includes good horse management, training methods, farriery, tack and transportation to the competition

Ponies/horses and participants together as a combination must be capable, have relevant training and experience at the level they are entered for.

Ponies/horses and participants must be fit, competent and in good health and condition before they are allowed to compete. This encompasses medication use, surgical procedures that threaten welfare or safety, pregnancy in mares and the misuse of aids.

Ponies/horses should not be overworked, and thought should be given to the number of classes entered and the distance to be travelled when competing at the event.

Clipped or shaven sensory hairs around the mouth, nose, eyes and inner ear are not permitted as this may reduce the horses' sensory ability.

Examples of Abuse: Here are some examples (but not an exhaustive list) of what could be considered abuse

Lameness: Riding any unsound pony/horse

Tack: Incorrectly fitted tack; used outside of manufacturer's guidelines

Over-working: Riding or competing on an exhausted, lame or injured pony/horse

Distress: Ignoring the obvious distress of a pony/horse, whether caused by the participant or other external factors

Blood: Any sign of blood on an animal is cause for concern. If blood is seen anywhere on the horse when riding in or competing, then the horse may be eliminated at the discretion of the Official Steward.

The onus is on any spectator, participant, coach, or judge to inform the organiser at an event, if they are concerned about or feel that they have witnessed rough or unfair riding or training. The matter will then be investigated and a decision made on the appropriate action to be taken.

3. The Competition

- 3.1 The National Championship competition is open to riders who have met the eligibility requirements and have been successful in qualifying (within the qualifying period) to compete at the Championship. This competition is managed by and run under the auspices of the British Horse Society. It is the responsibility of individual Centres to liaise with the BHS Approved Centres department upon arrangements related to attendance and competitor entries at the National Championship.

3.2 The Championships will take place on Wednesday 8th April 2026 at Pickering Grange Equestrian Centre, Ellistown Terrace Road, Ellistown, Leicestershire, LE67 1EZ.

3.3 The competition will be run across differing ability groups, as opposed to age groups

Class 2	In Hand	Fancy dress
Class 1	In Hand	Best Handler
Class 3	All Rounder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walk & Trot Equitation 1 (2020)• Showjumping 45cm• Stable Management Quiz
Class 4	All Rounder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to Canter RSC ITC1 2024• Showjumping 60cm• Stable Management Quiz
Class 5	All Rounder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prelim Equitation D1 (2020)• Showjumping 70cm• Stable Management Quiz
Class 6	Equitation	Walk & Trot Equitation 1 (2020)
Class 7	Equitation	Intro to Canter Equitation RSC ITC1 (2024)
Class 8	Equitation	Prelim Equitation D1 (2020)
Class 9	Show Jumping	Clear round pick a height <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 45cm• 60cm• 70cm

3.4 At the National Championship prizes will be in kind and subject to starters, with rosettes being awarded to 10th place in each class.

3.5 A nominated centre representative must be present at the Championships. It is a requirement that a nominated Centre Instructor/Coach should be present at the competition.

3.6 Centre/Competitor Entry fees for the National Championship are currently funded by the British Horse Society.

3.7 In the unlikely event of cancellation or postponement of either qualifying rounds or the National Championships, the BHS will not be able to refund or reimburse any expenses incurred to competitors, organisers or approved centres.

4. Regional Qualifying Competitions

4.1 Regional Qualifying Competitions will only be run at BHS Approved Centres. For the purpose of this schedule, to be referred to as a 'Host Centre'.

4.2 All Regional Qualifying Competitions must be held, and results returned to approvedcentres@bhs.org.uk by 22nd February 2026.

4.3 In qualifying class 1 -8, competitors placed 1st to 4th will qualify to participate at the National Championships. For class 9 the Host Centre can nominate up a maximum of 4 riders to qualify across the three heights (e.g four in the 45cm or one in 45cm two in the 60cm and one in the 70cm) All qualifying places are at the Host Centres discretion subject to what they can accommodate on the day of the National Championship. In the event of the winner of a qualifier class having already qualified for 2026 (same horse and rider combination) then the next highest placed competitor will be eligible to take part in the National Championship.

4.4 The British Horse Society will supply the host centre with the below information to facilitate their qualifiers:

- Regional Qualifier Entry Forms
- Equitation Test Score Sheets
- Show Jumping Score Sheets
- Stable Management Quiz Sheets
- Competition result sheets (to be returned to approvedcentres@bhs.org.uk within 5 days of date of qualifier, or before close of results, whichever is sooner)

4.5 Qualifying round rosettes can be purchased from the British Horse Society for host centres to utilise if they wish by contacting approvedcentres@bhs.org.uk

5. Host Centres

5.1 Host Centres will need to complete and return a Riding Schools Championship Qualifier Confirmation prior to their agreed competition date.

5.2 Host Centres will be responsible for all competition organisation and administration, to include adherence to competition rules and horse/rider eligibility and risk assessment and insurance cover requirements.

5.3 Host Centre organisers are responsible for provision of on the day requirements such as appointment of judges, stewards (inc. for working-in/warm up arena), scorers, nominated first aid coverage, safeguarding and person(s) responsible for safety.

5.4 Number of accepted competitors' entries are limited at the discretion of the host Centre, to those that can safely be accommodated on the day.

- 5.5 Minimum age requirements for competitors are at the discretion of the host Centre, to those that can safely be accommodated on the day.
- 5.6 The Approved Centre Safeguarding Officer (for the Host Centre) should ideally be in attendance.
- 5.7 Should a rider fall off it is recommended they will not be allowed to continue until they have been seen and declared fit to continue by the designated first aider.
- 5.8 Host Centre organisers of qualifiers can provide additional rosettes and prizes in kind at their own expense.
- 5.9 Entries must be made on the competition entry form and sent to the host competition organiser. All regional qualifier entry fees are retained by the host centre.
- 5.10 BHS supplied qualifying rosettes are available to purchase for £2 per rosette plus post and packaging. Minimum order of 4 rosettes. Allow 10 working days for Rosette orders to be posted.
- 5.11 Entries will close seven calendar days before the date of the competition. Late entries may be taken at the discretion of the organiser.

6. Judging

- 6.1 The decisions of designated judges are final.
- 6.2 Appointment of the judge(s) will be the responsibility of the host Centre. It is a requirement that the judge be qualified to a minimum of BHSAI / Stage 3 Complete Coach and be current on the BHS Accredited Professional Coach register.
- 6.3 At the discretion of the judge, a competitor can be asked to withdraw at any stage of the competition.

7. Scoring

- 7.1 The decisions of the organisers are final.
- 7.2 The horse and rider combination with the Highest Overall Score wins the class
- 7.3 Classes 1 & 2:

- a. In Hand Classes phase marks are totalled as an actual mark, e.g. 30 out of 40.

In the event of equal placings:

If the final score gives equality of marks to two or more competitors, the classification is decided in the following order:

- The highest total marks in Handling
- The highest total marks in Harmony
- The highest total marks in Turn out
- The highest total marks in Behaviour

7.4 Classes 3 to 5

- a. Equitation phase movement marks are totalled as an actual mark, e.g. 140 out of 150 would present a provisional score (PS) of 140
- b. Rider Style and Technique (RST) marks are awarded for the Show Jump round, e.g. 38 out of 50 would present an additional score of 38. Thus, the provisional score would now be (E) 140 + (RST) 38 = provisional score (PS) of 178.
- c. The total marks gained from the Stable Management Quiz (SMQ) are added to the provisional scores, e.g. PS 174 + (SMQ) 18 = Final Score 192.

In the event of equal placings:

If the final score gives equality of marks to two or more competitors, the classification is decided in the following order:

- the least amount of Show Jumping faults
- the highest marks for the equitation test
- the highest total of collective marks in the equitation test
- the highest Rider Style and Technique marks
- the highest correct responses from the Stable Management Quiz
- the fastest show jumping round (with least faults)

If still equal after the above has been applied, then equal placings should be awarded

7.5 Classes 6, 7 & 8: Equitation

- a. A combination of horse and rider that enter either Class 6 or 7 cannot enter class 8
- b. For each class, the Equitation phase movement marks are totalled as an overall percentage for each test with the highest percentage gained across each test providing the leading scores.

In the event of equal placings:

If the final score gives equality of marks to two or more competitors, the classification is decided in the following order:

- the highest total of collective marks in the dressage
- the highest single mark within the collectives
- the highest number of repetitive collective marks at the highest level

7.6 Class 9: Clear round

Run as a clear round, competitors who achieve a clear round e.g. no refusals, errors of course or poles knocked down, will receive a rosette upon leaving the arena

8. Competitors and Eligibility

8.1 Competitor categories are per class details

- a. Riders must be clients of the BHS Approved Centre at the time of qualifying and be considered a representative of the centre should they qualify for the National Championships.
- b. Whilst the competition is aimed at participants who are genuine riding school clients, it

should not exclude any participants that may have a horse/pony on either full lease/loan or ownership, provided that the horse/pony is working in the riding school and is on their local authority license.

- c. A competitor who has competed in any affiliated competition is not eligible to enter.
- d. Combination of horse and rider who have won a Championship class within the last three years may only compete in a class at the next level up. e.g. if the horse and rider won the Walk & Trot class in 2025, they must move up to compete at Intro to Canter level for 2026. Intro to Canter winners must move up to Prelim level.
- e. Riders may not enter more than two classes.

8.2 Any horse/pony used in competitions must be on the representative Centre's Local Authority Riding School License.

8.3 It is recommended that a horse/pony does not compete more than three times in one day, but this is at the discretion of the representative Centre Proprietor. Horses may not compete in more than four classes.

8.4 On the day of the competition, no competing horse/pony may be ridden other than by a competitor who is entered for that competition on that horse/pony.

9. Dress Code

9.1 A riding hat to current standards must be worn at all times while mounted. It is the Centres responsibility to ensure that their clients are wearing hats to the correct standard. There are no spare hats available on the day.

9.2 There is no formal dress code. Preferred dress will, however, be jodhpurs, sweatshirt and or shirt and tie. It is recommended that gloves are worn.

9.3 Riding boots, either long or Jodhpur boots must be worn. Half chaps/ gaiters may be worn with jodhpur boots.

9.4 Wearing of body protectors is optional.

9.5 A whip may be carried in both qualifiers and at the National Championships. Permission for carrying a whip is at the discretion of the owner (approved centre) of the horse/pony used in the competition. Use of the whip must be for an appropriate reason, at an appropriate time, on the correct area of the horse and with the appropriate level of response. The type of whip must be appropriate for use, for example, schooling whip can be held during equitation classes and jumping length for show jumping classes

a. Appropriate Reason: The whip must only be used as an aid to support the natural aids in encouraging the pony/horse forward, or to help the rider to encourage the pony/horse in the right direction. For example, it may be used down the shoulder to keep a horse straight on the approach to a fence. It must never be used to vent a rider's temper; any use for such a reason is automatically excessive.

b. Appropriate Time: As an aid, the appropriate time is when the pony/horse is reluctant to go forward under natural aids i.e. seat and legs. Its use, for instance, after a refusal is excessive. Its use after elimination is excessive.

c. Right area of the horse: As an aid to go forward the whip may be used down the shoulder or behind the rider's leg. The use of a whip on a pony's/ horse's head or neck is always excessive use.

d. Appropriate Level of Response: the whip should never be used more than twice during any incident; and if the pony/horse is marked by the whip (skin broken or a welt) its use is excessive. (The rider is expected to know if the pony/horse has sensitive skin and must use the whip accordingly). The arm should never be raised above the shoulder whilst using the whip. The whip should always be carried and used in the backhand (handle pointed upwards) position and never in the forehand position (handle pointed downwards).

Misuse of a whip: If, in the opinion of the judge/official, a whip is misused/overused the participant will be disqualified at the discretion of the Official Steward.

9.6 Wearing of spurs is not permitted at either regional qualifiers or National Championships.

10. Tack and Equipment

10.1 For horse comfort and safety reasons, horses and ponies can be ridden in the tack and equipment that they would normally be ridden in when used in the riding school situation *(the equitation judges are to be made aware of this allowance)*

10.2 No additional training gadgets or equipment may be used in either the warmup or competition. Examples would be running/draw reins although martingales are permitted for both phases.

11. The National Championships

11.1 Competitors need not ride the same horse/pony at the final as the one on which they qualified but any pony/horse attending must be licensed for use in the riding school

11.2 All horses/ponies used in the final should be provided by a BHS Approved Centre (ideally by the centre the riders are representing) and have a valid Equine Passport. Passports will need to be available for checking at the Championships.

11.3 No horses/ponies will be provided by The British Horse Society.

11.4 Overnight stabling is available by contacting Pickering Grange Equestrian directly. Centres are responsible for ensuring they comply with any biosecurity requests such as vaccinations.

11.5 The equitation test will remain the same as those used in the Regional Qualifiers.

11.6 There will be a dismounted prize giving, subject to starters, for competitors placed 1st – 10th in each class, except for class 9 who will receive rosettes upon leaving the arena if a clear round was achieved.

11.7 Throughout the day an overall accumulative points system will be put in place to recognise the Centre's who have so kindly helped and encouraged their competitors to prepare for and to attend the event. Points will be awarded in each class for each competitor placing, 1st

to 3rd, for example, 1st place = 3 points through to 3rd place = 1 point. All points gained will be counted towards the overall Centre Award.

12. Objections

- 12.1 As identified in this schedule, the aim of this competition is to offer riders from our approved Centres the opportunity to train towards a competition to encourage development of their riding and horsemanship knowledge in a safe, friendly and enjoyable environment.
- 12.2 It is hoped that should reason for dissatisfaction occur throughout any aspect of a competition that such matters can be quietly and tactfully dealt with in the manner to which the purpose of this competition is intended.
- 12.3 Should persons wish to lodge any objection to an organiser, then they must be lodged in writing to the organiser of the competition, supported with a fee of £50, within 30 minutes of the occurrence of the event. Upheld objection fees will be refunded by the organiser.

Training and Judging Guidance

This guidance aims to offer an opportunity to further explain the ethos of this competition. In recognition of the competitors riding Centre provided horses, and those on either working livery arrangements, lease or loans, rather than privately owned horses, the equitation tests have been written to support and reward demonstration of correct principals of horsemanship. Below identifies key areas for consideration for both training and judging.

For both flat work and jumping, the level of the horse/pony's experience or schooling will be taken into consideration. Consequently, provision of experienced horses/ponies will not guarantee higher marks as the emphasis for success is upon the skill of the rider in terms of their independence in riding skills, such as preparation and application of correct aids rather than solely upon 'how the horse goes'.

Equitation Tests

The horse/pony does not have to be working "on the bit" but will need to demonstrate obedience to the riders' aids.

Rider Position - The rider should be working towards a correct position that enhances comfort for the horse and effectiveness of the rider aids. Positional security and balance will be considered alongside rider suppleness and straightness. The ability to stay in balance in all paces and demonstrate an appropriate level of independence of the rein contact is important.

Riders Aids – Correct application of the natural aids, including preparation for transitions and accuracy of school movements will be considered. Note will be taken of correct diagonals and correct canter leads; an incorrect strike off may not be penalised, but not correcting it will be.

Handler Competence – The handler should show awareness of safety for their horse/pony, themselves and others when handling and leading their horse/pony. Along with demonstrating empathy in their handling, when turning or changing direction, they should do this in the correct manner and demonstrate safe distancing between themselves and others.

Influence - The ability to ride the horse/pony in a suitable tempo with sufficient impulsion for the

movements to be ridden smoothly will be assessed. Showing empathy with the horse/pony is vital. Demonstrating safe procedures at all times is essential.

Show Jumping

Whilst it is hoped that all competitors gain a clear round in the show jumping to minimise jumping faults reducing a total score, additional grading points are allocated to each rider. These are known as the 'Rider Style and Technique' (RST) grades and are allocated to the rider as per the below guidance.

Rider Position - A balanced seat with a secure lower leg and independent hands are the key factors. Ability to remain in balance with the horse both over and between fences is important.

Aids - An ability to maintain a suitable tempo and rhythm for the jumps to be undertaken must be shown. Excessive driving with the seat is discouraged but correct use of the legs and any artificial aids, when appropriate, will be noted.

Influence - Demonstrate awareness of the importance of the quality of the pace. Show how to ride good lines to the fences. Know how to deal with refusals or unsuitable behaviour of the horse/pony. The maintenance of rhythm is more important than the number of strides to be taken between fences.

Show Jumping Faults

- Knock down – 2 faults
- First refusal – 2 faults
- Second refusal (anywhere on course) – 4 faults (becomes 6 faults)
- Third refusal (anywhere on course) – elimination (but allowed to jump an additional fence)
- Fall (anywhere on course) – elimination
- Rounds are timed for the purposes of splitting results in the event of a tie if needed.
- All other faults as British Show Jumping Handbook

Course Guidelines

- Maximum of 9 fences with a maximum of 10 jumping efforts
- At least one spread fence
- A maximum of one double consisting of one non jumping stride between each element, both efforts to be built as vertical fences.

Stable Management Quiz

At each competition, including the Regional Qualifiers, there will be a Quiz Sheet that covers horse knowledge and stable management questions. These are provided to the centres prior to the competitions.

The topics cover any aspect of stable management up to BHS Stage Three level, to include stable management, horse care, travelling, feeding, safety around the yard etc. and are specific to each group category. Contact approvedcentres@bhs.org.uk for further information.

At the National Championship the format for this section may include practical identification of the many associated items of equipment to be found in a busy stable yard or tack room.

In Hand Classes

The In Hand Classes are a great way for competitors to show off their handling and turnout skills, if they take pride in presenting the horses in a clean and tidy manor and enjoy grooming and bathing the horses this could be the class for them. For this class it is expected that they will have contributed to the turn out of the horse/pony. They will lead the horse in walk around the arena and line up so the judge can look at how well the horse and rider has been presented. The winner will be the horse and rider combination the judge places highest.

The Fancy Dress class will be judged based on novelty of theme combined with the amount of input each participant has provided in the preparation of the fancy dress attire, including their own costumes! It is also expected that the participants will be able to demonstrate correct handling and leading skills as they lead and parade their pony/horse.

All horses or ponies should be led in a bridle and handlers must wear correctly fitted PPE, such as hat, boots and gloves.

Turn out - Alongside how clean and well-groomed the horse is and how clean any associated tack or equipment in use is, this focuses upon the cleanliness and appropriateness of the attire and PPE of the handler, not on their affordability of any bespoke in-hand showing clothing or attire. The horse can be plaited but this is not mandatory.

Handling – How well the competitor handles the horse and the correctness of the handling.

Behaviour – Horses' behaviour in the arena e.g. walking and halting or changing direction when asked etc.

Harmony – Between horse and handler is the horse listening well to the handler, is the handler and horse looking to be working together well.