

School inspection report

24 to 26 September 2024

Highgate School

North Road

London

N6 4AY

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

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	5
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	5
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	5
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	7
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	9
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....	10
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	11
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	12
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	13
SAFEGUARDING	14
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	14
SCHOOL DETAILS	15
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	16
INSPECTION DETAILS	17

Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors are active in the school and regularly engage with leaders to provide focused challenge and support to ensure that the school meets all Standards. Leaders carry out thorough self-evaluation of the effectiveness of provision to ensure that it effectively promotes pupils' wellbeing.
2. Close collaboration between academic and pastoral senior and middle leaders helps pupils to develop their capacity to balance academic demands with measures to support their own mental health.
3. Pre-prep and junior school leaders create a nurturing and effective learning environment within which pupils develop key communication and social skills. The well-designed curriculum stimulates learning, helping children and young pupils to achieve well and be prepared for the next stage of their education.
4. Throughout the school, a comprehensive curriculum covers all required areas and fosters high levels of scholarship and pupils' individual talents. The curriculum is ambitiously designed to enable pupils to study subjects beyond age-related expectations.
5. Highly knowledgeable teachers with strong pedagogical skills have a profound impact on the learning of pupils of all ages. Teaching instils an appetite for intellectual effort and fosters in the pupils an ability to think and learn for themselves. Teachers pursue their own subject-knowledge research, exemplifying the scholarship which they advocate for their pupils. As a result, pupils develop a deep connection to their work and make good progress. This is a significant strength of the school.
6. Leaders and teachers support pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and English as an additional language (EAL), through tailored teaching, learning support, and close monitoring, ensuring they make good progress from their starting points. The school promotes academic development without discrimination.
7. Leaders promote respect and inclusivity. Pupils learn to respect diversity, challenge discrimination, and engage democratically through pupil councils. The curriculum is planned to include frequent opportunities to explore issues relating to diversity and inclusion.
8. Well-structured personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes contain content that meets pupils' needs, including those of pupils who have SEND. Feedback from pupils, parents and staff informs the evolution of the programme.
9. Effective behaviour management, featuring the encouragement of positive behaviour, a focus on reflection on the consequences of action and consistent use of sanctions, ensures that standards of behaviour are high.
10. Leaders ensure that health and safety policies and practice are suitable. The physical environment of some common inside areas and classrooms in the senior school site are less well maintained.

11. An up to date and effective careers and higher education programme provides comprehensive, impartial guidance, helping pupils to make informed decisions about their future.
12. Leaders prepare pupils for modern British society by threading essential life skills through the curriculum from the early years onward. Pupils learn about responsibility, collaboration, financial literacy, the risks on the internet and social media risk, and personal health.
13. Comprehensive training ensures that staff understand their safeguarding duties. A robust safeguarding culture is in place. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to share worries and respond effectively whenever any safeguarding concerns are raised. Effective links with external agencies are in place and prompt effective action is taken when necessary.

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:

- maintain the physical environment of common inside areas and classrooms in all parts of the senior school site to a good standard.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

14. Governors monitor the school effectively to ensure that leaders exhibit the skills and knowledge to provide clear strategic direction and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They provide both support and challenge to senior leaders. This collaborative approach ensures that leadership responsibilities are carried out effectively, contributing positively to pupil outcomes and ensuring that the Standards are met consistently.
15. Leaders and the governing body are mindful of, and committed to, the aims and ethos of the school. Robust self-evaluation, informed by deep engagement with the school community, ensures informed decision-making.
16. Leaders make certain that there is regular communication between teaching and pastoral staff, so that academic and pastoral support for pupils are well co-ordinated. Leaders review policy and practice regularly to ensure the effectiveness of teaching and that support for pupils' emotional health and wellbeing is thorough. Leaders ensure that staff understand key policies and provide ongoing training to support their implementation.
17. Leaders have a clear, well-articulated vision for the school that is regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with the school's values. They are successful in communicating the school's aims of fostering scholarship, being a reflective community and promoting a life of physical and mental health.
18. In their decision-making leaders strike a deliberate balance, enabling pupils to reach high academic standards whilst paying close regard to their personal wellbeing. As a result, pupils feel that any personal or academic concerns are effectively addressed.
19. Leaders have appointed specific wellbeing, mental health and inclusion leaders. This furthers the culture of respect, equality and trust.
20. All required information is made available to parents and prospective parents. Parents receive regular and useful updates and reports on their child's progress. The school meets requirements by providing the local authority with relevant information, such as that relating to pupils' attendance.
21. Complaints are handled in accordance with the processes and timeframes within the policy. Clear records are kept. Leaders analyse these records for learning points.
22. The school has effective links with external agencies, including safeguarding partners and providers of specialist support. Clear communication and collaboration between leaders and these agencies allow pupils to access appropriate support beyond the school when required.
23. Governors and leaders place a high priority on analysing and understanding potential contextual risks. There is comprehensive evaluation, and governors use external, independent analysis as well as the direct views of pupils and parents to plan mitigation measures. For example, there are well-managed arrangements in place to support pupils' safety when they move between the different school sites.

24. The school complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders ensure that teaching is accessible and inclusive. The accessibility plan is suitable.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

25. Leaders have developed broad and engaging curriculums across the three sections of the school. Academic variety allows children and pupils to develop their curiosity and desire for intellectual challenge. Coverage of all required curriculum areas is planned methodically, as are opportunities to build on individual pupils' achievements and interests. From the early years on there is a sustained emphasis on lessons that provoke thinking. For older pupils, substantial schemes of work are designed to go beyond set examination specifications to develop their understanding of complex ideas.
26. Staff and leaders in the early years provide well-planned, creative lessons and activities that emphasise curiosity and successfully encourage children to explore and observe, including when outdoors. Children make good progress, particularly in the prime areas of communication and language, physical, and personal, social and emotional development. The vast majority achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception.
27. In the junior school, praise for effort and reinforcement of the value of achievement through, what the school terms, the 'Curiosity, Respect, Empathy, and Determination' (CRED) strategy, promotes responsibility and positive attitudes to learning. Effective teaching of speaking and listening skills, and letters and the sounds they represent, ensures a secure foundation in literacy.
28. Lessons across the school are very well planned. Teachers use a highly effective variety of teaching methods and well-chosen resources to engage pupils deeply. Lesson-planning takes into account pupils' aptitudes and builds on their prior learning. Teachers' passion for their subjects motivates pupils, while their clear communication of substantial subject knowledge enables pupils to learn highly effectively and make good progress. Additional learning activities across the range of subjects are pitched at a high academic level, contributing to pupils' academic success.
29. Leaders work closely with departments to ensure that lessons are aligned with the school's ethos of academic ambition. Subject leaders monitor and provide support where needed to maintain the consistent effectiveness of teaching. Leaders provide teaching staff with thorough induction training and encourage them to pursue their own subject research, thus deepening their subject knowledge to the benefit of the pupils' learning.
30. Pupils who have SEND are supported through tailored teaching strategies and specialist support, ensuring they make good progress from their starting points. Teaching across the school is inclusive and promotes academic development without discrimination.
31. Teachers evaluate pupils' progress regularly through tests and assessments. Detailed and effective departmental and whole-school tracking systems enable leaders to identify pupils who might benefit from additional support. Such support contributes to the good progress and high attainment typically achieved by pupils. Teachers' ongoing feedback to pupils clearly identifies the most effective features of their work and where further development is needed. This enables pupils to reflect on their own achievement and understand how to further improve their work. Pupils and parents are kept well informed of progress through regular reports.

32. The pre-prep, junior and senior schools offer an extensive age-appropriate range of co-curricular and recreational activities. Clubs are often pupil-initiated and led, encouraging independence and leadership. Compulsory weekly activity sessions cater to all tastes and help foster pupils' physical, intellectual, and social development. Pupils develop new skills, build self-confidence and resilience. These opportunities, with their emphasis on inclusivity, contribute to increased pupil wellbeing.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

33. In the early years, the curriculum effectively promotes personal, emotional, and physical development. Play-based learning and exploration focus on fostering curiosity and independence. Systems like the 'buddy bench' and 'kindness tree' encourage kindness and peer support. Teaching successfully develops the children's fine and gross motor skills, guides them in how to recognise emotions and share how they are feeling.
34. Leaders across the school promote respect and understanding of people's differences through assemblies, visits, the PSHE and RSE programmes, and day to day classroom practice which models such respect. For example, in the senior school English department, the use of texts that invite exploration of themes of diversity and inclusion develops pupils' understanding of equality and discrimination. Through curriculum themes such as food, festivals, faith, and migration, pupils in the junior school and pre-prep learn about differences between people from different countries, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. Children are encouraged to be sensitive to each other's needs and behaviours, promoting a culture of respect from an early age. Pupils challenge and report discriminatory behaviour and respect differences, appreciating the diversity within their community.
35. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is underpinned by the school's programme of assemblies, chapel, meetings of other faiths, religious education and philosophy lessons. Younger pupils develop spiritual understanding by exploring emotions through art, drama, and music.
36. Pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence are enhanced both through classroom learning and the extensive activities programmes. Involvement in assemblies, music and drama performances, such as after-school informal concerts in the junior school, encourages pupils to express themselves and so fosters self-belief. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to use and understand words like struggle, resilience, and reflection, building a useful vocabulary to promote self-knowledge. Pastoral care systems and the wellbeing arrangements further support the development of pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
37. Within the PE curriculum, a wide range of sports and exercise activities, both recreational and competitive, promote individual and team skills. Sports such as fencing, netball, dance, and football are accessible to all pupils, with an emphasis on participation. Junior school pupils and children in the early years are encouraged to engage in outdoor play and explore the outdoor environment to promote gross motor skills, strength and balance.
38. The RSE programmes fulfil statutory guidance and address the needs of pupils across all year groups, including those who have SEND. From 'all about me' and 'being positive' in the early years, through to learning about the 'the joys and challenges of parenthood' in the sixth form, the RSE programme is designed to equip pupils with the knowledge and skills to navigate life confidently, and the majority of pupils find the sessions relevant and helpful. Opportunities for reflection and discussion help pupils develop a clearer understanding of the topics and issues. Leaders regularly review the programmes based on pupil, parent and teacher feedback, as well as data gathered from school monitoring systems. The school promotes positive standards of behaviour through clear, well-communicated expectations. Behavioural issues are addressed promptly and fairly through effective

use of sanctions and an emphasis on developing pupils' reflections on the consequences of their behaviour.

39. Bullying is rare and dealt with quickly and effectively when it occurs. Pupils learn about bullying and how it might be managed and challenged and they confirm that concerns can be reported easily. Support systems such as pastoral mentors, access to counsellors, and suitably trained pupil leaders in the sixth form, help foster a supportive community that reduces bullying. Leaders maintain clear records of incidents and monitor any trends to inform any actions required. Senior pupils are trained to contribute to the wellbeing of younger students, including as mental health first-aiders.
40. Supervision of pupils is organised methodically and is effective throughout the school. In the early years, required ratios of staff to children are maintained.
41. Health and safety policies are thoroughly implemented. Premises are regularly maintained and records indicate that fire safety checks, drills and training are up to date. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and staff are trained to identify and mitigate potential risks. Some common areas and classrooms in the senior school are less well-maintained.
42. The school implements suitable procedures for any administration of first aid or medication. There are a sufficient number of trained aiders to meet pupils' needs, including paediatric first-aiders in the early years.
43. Admission and attendance registers are kept appropriately and regularly backed up. Leaders monitor attendance and follow up any non-attendance swiftly. Leaders inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times of transition.

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

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

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

45. Pupils understand the principles that underpin British values of tolerance and respect. From modelling respectful and courteous interactions in the early years, neurodiversity awareness, events such as 'One World Week', 'European Day of Languages', parent and pupil local community involvement and the education of older pupils on microaggressions, leaders ensure these values are embedded across the curriculum.
46. Pupils learn about democracy through PSHE, as well as through the wider curriculum, for example in Latin and politics. Pupils vote in school council elections and are directly involved in decision-making via the lower school and middle school pupil action committees.
47. In the pre-prep and early years class, social development is achieved through general classroom behaviour expectations such as waiting their turn and sharing when playing games, and additional initiatives such as teaching and using sign language.
48. Older junior school pupils visit other schools in the community to listen to younger readers. Junior classes visit the charities they raise money for to better understand the work that they do. The opportunities taken by pupils to offer support in the community stem from leaders ensuring that long-standing links with partnership schools and institutions are intertwined with the co-curriculum.
49. Pupils take on leadership roles and responsibilities that contribute to both the school and the wider community. Leaders encourage pupils to contribute positively by supporting a range of causes by fund raising and volunteering for causes, such as a local food bank and several other pupil-selected charities.
50. Engagement in the eco-councils in the pre-prep and junior schools and the environment committee in the senior school develops their sense of responsibility towards the environment. Pupils are active in promoting sustainable consumption practices within the school.
51. The school prepares pupils for life in wider society by teaching skills such as finance and managing money, and awareness of the impact of social media. Through PSHE and assemblies, cultural trips, and a wide variety of visiting speakers, pupils are introduced to key aspects of civic life, including knowledge of public institutions and the law. As a consequence, pupils appreciate the importance of balanced arguments and that the opinions of people with different views from their own should be respected.
52. Underpinned by the behaviour policy, pupils, including those in the early years, understand the difference between right and wrong and can take responsibility and reflect when their own conduct falls short of expectations.
53. The information received by pupils when deciding which GCSEs and A levels to pursue, allows them to make informed choices. The school offers comprehensive and up to date guidance on careers and university applications. From Year 5, pupils are provided with visits from employers, university fairs, and visiting alumni and parents representing different careers and offering interpersonal skills

training. Specialist careers advisers provide individually tailored advice, with the great majority of pupils going on to university study.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. Leaders have established a robust safeguarding culture across the school. The safeguarding teams across the three sites ensure that staff in all departments understand their safeguarding responsibilities, including the need to report any safeguarding concerns that might arise.
55. The safeguarding policy and procedures reflect current statutory guidance. Leaders respond quickly and appropriately to concerns and keep suitable and thorough records of these, and of decisions and actions taken in response to them. The safeguarding team liaise with external safeguarding partners appropriately, including by referring concerns to them when necessary. Through the designated leads and the school's safeguarding champions, the school is vigilant and responsive to low-level concerns.
56. Governors systematically and effectively monitor the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. The designated governor for safeguarding liaises regularly with the safeguarding leads. Through regular reporting and meetings, governors check that the school follows appropriate procedures. This culture of oversight and evaluation contributes to the promotion of pupils' welfare.
57. All staff and governors receive safeguarding training upon joining the school and training is kept up to date. The safeguarding team undergo additional training to equip them for their role.
58. The school encourages pupils to share concerns. Pupils feel that they can turn to a trusted adult and know how to use anonymous channels to report any worries.
59. Starting in the early years, pupils receive regular education on personal and internet safety, equipping them with strategies to navigate the online world securely. The school has suitable systems in place for filtering and monitoring online activity.
60. Leaders ensure that staff and volunteers are recruited using procedures aligned with statutory guidance. The single central record of appointments is well maintained and regularly checked.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Highgate School
Department for Education number	309/6001
Registered charity number	312765
Address	Highgate School North Road London N6 4AY
Phone number	020 8340 1524
Email address	office@highgateschool.org.uk
Website	www.highgateschool.org.uk
Proprietor	The Governing Body of Sir Roger Cholmeley's School at Highgate
Chair	Mr Bob Rothenberg
Headteacher	Mr Adam Pettitt
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	1948
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 3 December 2021

Information about the school

60. Highgate School is an independent co-educational day school situated in Highgate Village, London. The pre-prep (including the Early Years Foundation Stage), junior and senior schools are a single foundation overseen by a board of governors. The school is situated on three sites within walking distance of each other.
61. The early years provision comprises three Reception classes for 60 children aged four to five years.
62. The school has identified 298 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Very few pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
63. English is an additional language for 147 pupils.
64. The school states its aims are to be an academic school, a reflective community, and an exemplar for the healthy life. It seeks to promote 'scholarship for all' and asserts an academic imperative to teach pupils how to be independent learners, and to normalise academic struggle, so pupils see challenge as an enjoyable and valuable aspect of their learning.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

24 to 26 September 2024

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

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 safeguarding governor
- discussions with the head, 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.

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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

For more information, please visit isi.net