

School inspection report

12 to 14 March 2024

Brighton Girls

Montpelier Road

Brighton

East Sussex

BN1 3AT

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. Governors and trustees have cultivated a close working partnership with leaders. This enables them to provide support and challenge to hold leaders to account for the school's work. Governors, supported by the trust, have ensured that leaders have the right skills and knowledge to carry out their responsibilities effectively, so that the Standards are met consistently and over time.
2. The well-balanced curriculum, both within and beyond the classroom, enables pupils to learn successfully, develop their self-esteem and acquire new interests and talents.
3. Leaders have introduced a range of measures to gather information about the school's performance. The analysis and evaluation of this information has begun to identify areas for improvement. However, not all data is analysed and evaluated in sufficient depth.
4. Leaders are increasingly effective in monitoring the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning. In most lessons, teachers provide activities that support pupils to learn important content. However, there is some variation within and between some departments when teaching activities are not always sufficiently challenging to enable pupils to make as much progress as they could.
5. Safeguarding is a high priority in the school. The well-trained safeguarding team ensures that staff know the correct procedures to follow should any concerns arise. Pupils feel safe at the school. They now know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They are taught to navigate any potential dangers of online platforms.
6. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive the nurturing support they need to develop fluency and communicate confidently in English. This enables them access to all areas of the curriculum.
7. In early years, effective teaching and nurturing help children to develop self-confidence and self-esteem and have a positive impact on their wellbeing. Staff deploy a range of carefully planned activities that encourage children to express their feelings and emotions. These interactions build their self-awareness and helps them to develop their social, communication and early reading skills.
8. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their different starting points. Teachers identify pupils' additional needs. Teachers work closely with learning support staff, to put suitable strategies in place so that pupils who have SEND succeed in their learning.
9. The buildings and premises are well maintained. Suitable risk assessments are in place to ensure any risk to pupils are mitigated which may affect their welfare, health and safety. Watchful and caring staff supervise pupils appropriately at break and lunchtimes.

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:

- deepen the analysis of information they gather from self-evaluation processes to identify any weaknesses and the necessary actions required to improve the school further
- make more consistent use of quality assurance systems to highlight where teaching is strongest and where this needs to improve so that pupils receive a consistently high-quality education.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders' actions are improving the school's systems and pupils' achievement and wellbeing. Leaders have reviewed and strengthened the school's facilities, communication with parents, catering arrangements and the provision for pupils who have SEND. Leaders focus on ensuring high-quality teaching across the school and the provision of a wide range of clubs for pupils to attend.
11. The well-planned and broad curriculum is successful in developing pupils' subject knowledge, self-esteem and confidence. Staff are good role models. They demonstrate how to behave in a variety of social situations. Pupils learn how to treat people with kindness and respect. Staff understand that they should avoid bringing their own personal and political views into their teaching. They know that they must design activities that promote well-balanced arguments that enable pupils to consider a variety of viewpoints. Pastoral arrangements are effective in supporting and promoting pupils' safety, health and wellbeing.
12. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes are the cornerstone of the school's curriculum and promote pupils' wellbeing and pastoral care. Pupils understand that tolerance and respect for individual differences helps to create a safe and secure community. An appropriate plan is in place which ensures that suitable adaptations to the school's buildings are made so that pupils can access all subject areas across the school site. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
13. Governors ensure that leaders have the required knowledge and skills to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively. They make regular visits to the school to check that the school's policies and procedures are working well. Governors check carefully that leaders are doing all they can to achieve the school's aims and ethos. Together they ensure that the Standards are met consistently, and the wellbeing of the pupils is actively promoted.
14. Leaders have developed systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work. Leaders gather a wealth of data over time, for example, from surveys and visits to lessons. However, not all information is analysed in sufficient depth to enable leaders to pinpoint precisely which areas are working well and which need further development to improve the quality of education. Also, processes to feed back to pupils and staff regarding their suggestions submitted through surveys, are underdeveloped.
15. A suitable three-stage complaints procedure is available on the school's website and is implemented effectively. Leaders respond appropriately to any concerns raised and in a timely manner.
16. Attendance and admissions registers are maintained appropriately in accordance with requirements. Staff ensure that if pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times, they report this to the local authority. Regular analysis of data ensures that any concerns about pupils' attendance are picked-up swiftly.
17. All the required information regarding policies and procedures is available for parents and prospective parents on the school's website. Parents receive suitable reports and regular updates regarding their child's progress and attainment across all subjects. For those pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, leaders provide local authorities with the required information about how the school spends the funding it receives.

18. The role of subject leaders is improving. Subject leaders regularly visit lessons to see their subject being taught. They feedback to teachers and provide coaching and guidance as necessary. Subject leaders have an increasingly accurate view of the quality of teaching in their subjects and how successfully pupils learn. However, there remains some inconsistency in how effectively subject leaders check the quality of teaching and learning. Consequently, teaching in some subjects is better than in others.
19. The early years' curriculum is well balanced and meets requirements. Staff plan a range of relevant activities to meet children's learning and developmental needs. Staffs' thorough knowledge and understanding of each child's individual needs and their role-modelling of appropriate behaviours, ensures that children's safety and wellbeing are promoted well. By the end of pre-prep, most children can read independently. They talk confidently about their favourite authors and texts.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The ambitious curriculum covers all the required subject areas and is designed to meet pupils' diverse needs and enthusiasms. Strategic decisions to strengthen the curriculum have been taken to increase the range of complementary studies. For example, the extended project qualification offers sixth-form pupils additional academic challenge. Leaders respond to pupils' requests to study different courses. For example, younger pupils study beach craft while older pupils can complete examinations in classics and philosophy. This experience enables pupils to be well prepared for their next steps.
22. Pupils enjoy a wide range of cross-curricular and recreational activities. Across the school, pupils are encouraged to explore and acquire new interests, enthusiasms and self-confidence. Pupils engage in a variety of activities ranging from crocheting to cross country and from rock climbing to skateboarding. Leaders check participation rates carefully to ensure all groups of pupils are gaining the most from the experiences on offer.
23. Older pupils lead well-attended clubs for younger pupils, providing useful opportunities to develop their leadership skills. Older pupils also promote the fundamental British values of liberty, mutual respect and tolerance to younger pupils. Through clubs, societies and events, including those organised by the LGBTQ+ Alliance, the school helps pupils to be respectful of different groups and not to judge people based on stereotypes, such as faith, race and sexuality.
24. At GCSE and A Level, pupils make good or better progress from starting points across a wide range of subjects. In 2023, pupils achieved particularly well in Latin and music at GCSE, and in art and English Literature at A level.
25. An effective system is in place to check pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers increasingly use this information to plan lessons, together with their detailed knowledge of pupils' skills and aptitudes. Although the system is at the early stages of implementation, staff are increasingly confident in identifying gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. They target support for pupils, as appropriate.
26. Pupils who have SEND are supported effectively both within and beyond the classroom. Pupils' different needs are accurately identified by teachers and learning support staff who use this information to set appropriately demanding targets. Staff work together with subject leaders to develop strategies and resources to teach important knowledge in small steps so that pupils who have SEND make good progress.
27. Teachers provide effective support for EAL pupils. Lesson activities and resources are suitably adapted so that pupils develop their skills in using the English language. As their fluency and confidence improves, pupils access and enjoy all areas of the curriculum.

28. Subject leaders are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects. Positive professional relationships are successfully promoted between teachers and pupils. Overall, lessons are well planned and taught which help pupils to make good progress. In the best teaching, teachers use targeted questions that challenge pupils to apply what they know and can do. Occasionally, in some lessons, pupils do not learn as well because the activities they are given are not sufficiently challenging.
29. Pupils are keen to learn. They readily accept feedback from their teachers to redraft and edit their work. This supports pupils to make links with what they have been taught and deepen their learning.
30. In the early years, thoughtful planning, based on a detailed knowledge of children's needs, enables children to learn well, particularly in reading. Children's communication and language skills are regularly assessed. Effective nurturing of children's personal development skills by early years staff enables children to work, play and socialise together. Staff model language to children and encourage children to develop their vocabulary and practise their communication skills. Children develop their physical skills and explore their environment. They develop their curiosity through creative play activities such as investigating the school's outdoor areas. This experience enables children to meet their developmental goals and achieve well.
31. Parents receive regular updates and reports regarding their child's performance across all subjects.

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

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

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

33. As they move through the school, pupils are taught a range of strategies to navigate their own mental wellbeing, for example for coping with the stress that examinations can cause. Pupils' wellbeing is promoted through the school's aims which teach pupils to act responsibly and to show respect and kindness.
34. The school promotes positive and effective relationships. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is impeccable. Staff know pupils well. They listen carefully to pupils' views and act on any concerns they may have. Staff set clear expectations, which creates consistency for pupils. Through their teaching and their interaction with pupils, staff demonstrate appropriate behaviours that help pupils develop their self-knowledge and their self-esteem. Pupils are given appropriate duties and responsibilities designed to improve their self-confidence.
35. The school has developed a comprehensive co-curricular programme of recreation, physical and sporting activities. Pupils know that participation in competitive games and physical pursuits will support and improve their physical fitness, mental health and emotional wellbeing.
36. Pupils develop an appreciation of the spiritual and moral aspects of life through the curriculum, particularly in art, music, religious studies and philosophy. Younger pupils deepen their understanding of spiritual growth and meaning by exploring different customs and traditions during their Ramadan assembly. Older pupils engage well in academic discussions to consider how Buddhists seek the truth about life (enlightenment). Pupils have many opportunities to reflect on their feelings and support their spiritual development in the peaceful spaces around the school site.
37. The school's premises and buildings are safe and maintained to a suitable standard. Appropriate premises, health and safety protocols are followed. Pupils have access to suitable medical care from qualified staff in well-resourced medical accommodation, located in the recently refurbished wellbeing centre.
38. Fire safety is managed well through staff training and regular fire evacuation drills. Effective security measures are in place, including electronic systems to filter and monitor the use of the internet. Leaders are aware of the activities which pose most risk to pupils and have set up appropriate measures to mitigate them. Systematic checks and records are maintained, which are supplemented with visits from external specialists in relation to asbestos, electrical testing, fire and health and safety.
39. In the early years and pre-prep, children show independence when selecting which equipment to use at playtime. Younger children understand the importance of good hygiene. They know it is important to wash their hands before eating. Children perform this task independently. Older prep pupils demonstrate suitable levels of empathy and understanding when discussing how to maintain healthy friendships.
40. Pupils are carefully supervised during breaks and lunchtimes with staff readily available to help and interact with pupils.

41. The school's anti-bullying strategy has been revised and strengthened. Greater consistency and the implementation of more effective interventions is having a positive effect in reducing the small number of incidents still further.
42. The school provides several opportunities for pupils to have their voice. An anonymous reporting system allows pupils to report any worries or concerns. This has been successful in addressing individual and group issues. Pupils are taught to celebrate difference. They understand that not everyone has the same viewpoint.

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

43. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

44. Pupils receive helpful and impartial guidance from staff about a range of careers available to them. This includes specific individual advice about subject choices. Responding to pupils' requests, leaders arrange talks from women in industry and business to give advice on economic matters and independent living. Pupils make effective use of a commercial online careers platform to identify their strengths and match them to a range of potential career options. Pupils are successful in gaining places at their chosen institutions of higher education, where they study a wide variety of courses.
45. The school prepares pupils well for life in British society. The curriculum has been designed to prioritise important life skills. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in economic, human and social aspects that prepare them for adult life. From a young age, pupils readily develop their financial literacy skills. Right from the start children are taught how to manage money. They consider wise budgeting when buying ingredients and preparing sandwiches for a tea party. Staff draw on financial and business expertise of alumni to help older pupils learn how banks and credit cards work, how to check pay slips and the effects of the cost of living. Pupils participate in a range of enterprise projects to develop the skills to navigate real-life economic scenarios, such as calculating profit margins.
46. Pupils readily take on roles such as head student, sports captains, prefects and charity and LGBTQ+ representatives. These posts of responsibility help pupils to appreciate the views and opinions of others as well as honing their leadership skills.
47. Early years and pre-prep leaders provide a secure learning environment where children learn how to share resources. This helps them to develop social skills that enable them to cooperate successfully with one another. Staff stimulate children's interests and enthusiasms by designing a range of activities and help them to begin to understand the world around them.
48. Pupils know right from wrong. They understand the need for rewards, rules and sanctions to protect individual interests and promote a calm community. Staff and senior pupils act as role models in helping to promote the school's aims and values. Pupils gain an understanding of British values by studying democracy, laws and legislation. They apply this knowledge to issues surrounding global warming and carbon emissions by appreciating how people are affected by their environment.
49. Mutual respect is strongly promoted through presentations from outside speakers, the taught curriculum and the way in which pupils are cared for. Pupils understand not to judge people based on stereotypes, such as disability in sports. They also understand the modifications that staff and counsellors make to support pupils with a range of neurodiverse needs. The qualities of kindness, tolerance and respect permeate the school community.
50. Pupils decide democratically which local and national charities and initiatives to support. This year, sixth-form pupils participated in the LEAD programme run by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) in conjunction with a Russell Group University.
51. By organising fundraising activities pupils gained a better understanding of those who are less fortunate than themselves. This initiative challenged their thinking and enhanced their skills of

empathy, self-confidence and resilience. The impact of this competition has led to some pupils changing their university option as they wanted to be more closely involved in improving the lives of others.

52. In planning their lessons, teachers ensure that they present a range of viewpoints, particularly if political issues are being considered and discussed.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. Effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote pupils' welfare. Staff demonstrate a culture of openness and report any potential issues at the earliest opportunity. When concerns arise, staff understand their responsibilities. They know the correct procedures to follow and to whom they need to communicate.
55. Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities well. They bring a wealth of local intelligence and knowledge about the contextual risks to the school and are effective in mitigating them. They signpost leaders to advice about the challenges for pupils living in a busy and diverse coastal city with increasing deprivation and criminal activity. Governors regularly commission safeguarding audits and check safer recruitment procedures. They are actively involved in and engage with pupil voice. They check pupils' views against feedback from school leaders. The findings are shared and discussed with leaders to evaluate risks and implement strategies that help to protect pupils from harm.
56. The safeguarding leadership team are well qualified and knowledgeable about their roles. They have developed strong working partnerships with external agencies. This enables them to draw on professional advice and guidance, as required. The designated safeguarding lead ensures staff receive regular safeguarding training throughout the year so that staff have the confidence, knowledge and skills to safeguard the children in their care. Staff know they must refer any concerns about a member of staff to the headteacher.
57. Pupils feel safe in the school because there are a range of staff to whom they can seek support if they have any concerns. Pupils' physical and mental health are important to staff. Pupils value the recently created wellbeing centres in both the prep and senior sections of the school.
58. Pupils' online safety is given prominence in the curriculum. Effective filtering and monitoring systems help to keep pupils safe when using the internet. Pupils learn how to stay safe when using online platforms. Older pupils are aware of the potential dangers of using online dating apps.
59. An effective online system for recording and managing safeguarding concerns is in place. This enables relevant staff to retrieve and use information quickly which helps to keep pupils safe. Staff understand and implement the agreed protocols regarding the use of mobile phones.
60. Pre-employment checks are carried out appropriately and are recorded in the single record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Brighton Girls
Department for Education number	846/6014
Registered charity number	306983
Address	Brighton Girls Montpelier Road Brighton East Sussex BN1 3AT
Phone number	01273 280280
Email address	enquiries@brightongirls.gdst.net
Website	www.brightongirls.gdst.net
Proprietor	Girls' Day School Trust (GDST)
Chair	Ms Victoria Taylor
Headteacher	Ms Rosie McColl
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	402
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 November 2019

Information about the school

62. Brighton Girls is an independent day school for females. Founded in 1876, the school has charitable status and is a member of the GDST, whose council provides oversight for the school. A local advisory governing body is also in place.
63. The school comprises four sections: a pre-preparatory department for pupils aged 4 to 7; a preparatory department for pupils aged 7 to 11; and a senior department for pupils aged 11 to 16; and a sixth form for pupils aged 16 to 18.
64. The school has identified 86 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. There are very few children in early years.
66. English is an additional language for 66 pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to create an environment where pupils act with and demonstrate kindness because they appreciate the value of community. They are bold and courageous because they know where their strengths lie. The school hopes that pupils will develop the confidence and the character to go out and make a positive difference in the world, understanding that real impact is delivered when courage and kindness combine.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

12 to 14 March 2024

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

69. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons
- observation of registration periods and a sample of co-curricular activities
- discussions with the GDST's director of innovation and learning and the local chair of governors
- discussions with the headmistress, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils and examination of sample of pupils' work, some in conjunction with department leaders
- visits to the learning support area, libraries and facilities for physical education
- examination of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

70. 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**.

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