

School inspection report

5 to 7 March 2024

Bute House Preparatory School

Luxembourg Gardens

Hammersmith

London

W6 7EA

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. Leaders successfully promote the delivery of the school's aims and ethos in line with the school's motto 'every girl runs her own best race' at all levels. This is embraced by all the different members of the school community, which combined with the commitment to diversity and inclusion, actively promotes pupils' wellbeing.
2. Leaders have developed a broad and innovative curriculum which is carefully planned and quality assured and enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well across all areas. The dedicated team of staff work together in a cohesive and collaborative way. They know pupils well. Along with the positive behaviour approach, each individual pupil is supported and nurtured, which enables them to flourish.
3. Governors collaborate well with the leaders and successfully fulfil their responsibilities to check and to support their work. They oversee certain areas such as safeguarding effectively and ensure that the Standards are consistently met.
4. Leaders promote tolerance, understanding and respect for others. Pupils appreciate and celebrate difference. The shared language of learning known as the 'Bute House Learning Powers,' is fully established throughout the school. Through the daily use of this language, pupils of all ages grow to be happy, confident, articulate and proud of their school. It is a significant strength of the school.
5. Pupils experience a bespoke wellbeing curriculum which helps them to manage and regulate their emotions and relationships. Pupils achieve well at all stages from Reception to Year 6. Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support and learning is adapted well for them. Pupils are well prepared for their journey through school and the transition to the senior school of their choice.
6. There are a broad range of extra-curricular activities and trips to enrich pupils' experience and support their mental and physical wellbeing. Pupils are regularly successful in regional and national sporting competitions.
7. Children in the early years make good progress. The curriculum is suitably matched to their needs with effective planning in place. The available outdoor learning area is used well but the school has identified this as an area to develop to more fully to enhance knowledge and skills outdoors.
8. Leaders know and understand their pupils, encouraging them to become self-confident, self-assured and resilient learners with technology. The use of technology is well established and enhances pupils' learning experience in all subjects.
9. Safeguarding arrangements are effective, and leaders consult with local agencies promptly when it is needed. Health and safety systems are robust, ensuring that pupils are safe in the school. The school premises are well maintained and provide a safe place in which to learn.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the quality of provision for children in the early years is of a similarly high standard across the indoor and outdoor learning areas.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the school meets all the standards consistently. They promote the wellbeing of pupils. Governors have a clear oversight of all aspects of school life including by attending events, being a critical friend and challenging leaders about the effectiveness of new projects. Leaders and governors understand their responsibilities in terms of health and safety and plan to make all necessary adjustments to accommodate accessibility requirements of the Equality Act 2020. Risk assessments are in place, which take account of the school context, and these are reviewed regularly.
11. Leaders successfully enable the school to fulfil its aim of being a non-competitive academic school where the pupils are encouraged to 'run their own best race'. They have a clear ethos and vision which is inculcated throughout all aspects. Parents, pupils and staff talk about the importance of each pupil learning how to navigate and manage relationships effectively and this ethos is reflected by pupils' positive behaviours and attitudes.
12. The school's 'learning powers' philosophy remains highly visible and is carefully woven into all areas of the curriculum. The learning powers reflect the aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) which are paramount to the school. The ambassadors for the learning powers and EDI lead high-quality assemblies which focus on wellbeing and inspire pupils to develop themselves without comparing themselves to each other. The learning powers of independence, empathy, equity, curiosity and resilience inspire the pupils to challenge themselves as well as genuinely care for one another.
13. Leaders know pupils well and respond to their needs which encourages them to be initiative-taking and confident. The positive relationships between adults and children in the early years, facilitates children to settle quickly, make rapid progress and feel secure and happy. Children show a solid grasp of phonological knowledge. They write words and sentences well, making phonetically plausible attempts at spelling and helping each other to find irregular words on their key words mats. Children access the different areas of learning, playing calmly and co-operatively with their peers.
14. Leaders make sure that staff ratios and resources are generous. Pupils master their use of technology from Year 4 to 6 where each pupil has access to their own device. Pupils were adept at recording a film in a geography lesson for a competition.
15. Parents are provided with appropriate information via the school website. Leaders regularly communicate to parents during events such as year group curriculum evenings or through emails when required. Parents receive appropriate information about pupils' progress including an annual letter report which highlights all their child's achievements during the year.
16. Leaders monitor both informal and formal complaints and manage them effectively. All recent ones have been adequately recorded and responded to in line with the school policy. Governors regularly review the school's surveys and any complaints to keep well informed and to take appropriate action.

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. The broad and enriched curriculum provided by the leaders and welcomed by pupils reflects the non-competitive academic ethos and aim of helping each pupil to reach their personal best. Specialist teachers have substantial subject knowledge and inspire pupils of all ages to achieve well as they progress through the school.
19. Staff create a calm and purposeful learning environment through a well-planned curriculum and engaging lessons. Pupils are focused and well behaved in lessons and make rapid progress. Pupils, including those who have SEND and the more able, feel well supported and challenged because of effective staff support including from the learning enrichment department. Leaders systematically check the quality of teaching and learning and that pupils are given effective support to achieve as well as possible.
20. Staff appreciate the leaders' highly instructional coaching which includes reviewing lessons, work and planning, to improve and build on good practice. Data from assessments is analysed and used to track pupils' progress to highlight any pupils who need additional support or challenge. Subject leaders use an annual subject review cycle and vertical progression maps to develop an interconnected curriculum which makes relevant links with pupil learning in other subject areas.
21. More able pupils also have the opportunity to extend their learning in subjects such as mathematics. Pupils work to a very high standard and can justify and explain their choices. They are encouraged to try things, learn from mistakes and to direct their own ideas and creativity through the care, support and expertise of their teachers.
22. Older pupils appreciate the flexibility to present their work in different ways, as seen when using mind maps or typing on their devices, where they feel this helps them learn better. Teachers encourage pupils to be independent by using the 'brain, buddy, boss' approach of thinking for themselves, then asking a friend, and finally asking an adult for help. The breadth of the curriculum and non-competitive ethos ensures that all children focus on their own strengths and weaknesses, making impressive progress. Most pupils are highly articulate and self-confident as seen when one pupil's exhortation to return the Rosetta stone to Egypt was so enthusiastic and articulate, it swayed the views of many.
23. Pupils make good progress because of well-resourced rooms and dynamic teaching. Teaching challenges and inspires pupils, enabling them to achieve outcomes beyond age-related expectations. This is evident in music. For example, Year 2 pupils' focus on composing a rhythm before moving on to include notes from the pentatonic scale, building on prior knowledge of notes on the keyboard, singing their own rhythms and performing to the class.
24. Teachers provide additional learning aids and a wide range of intervention programmes to assist pupils with EAL to access learning. Their progress is carefully tracked using a sophisticated system which staff use well. Language assistants are used effectively to stretch bilingual pupils who are fluent speakers of French or Spanish.
25. The curriculum in the early years is carefully planned with an emphasis on developing children's phonics proficiency, in readiness for early reading and writing. Leaders in the early years have identified a higher proportion of Reception children with speech and language needs, which are not

related to EAL. These pupils receive additional support from an external speech therapist which focuses on children's attention, social skills, and expressive language.

26. A high proportion of pupils take part in after school clubs, including the STEM car-making club, which cater to pupils' interests while extending intellectual, physical and creative efforts.

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

27. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

28. Leaders encourage pupils to be kind and respectful towards each other, appreciating each pupil's own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils behave extremely well and understand the system for sanctions for unwanted behaviour, though they say that poor behaviour is rare. This is because staff help them to learn from their mistakes. Through the weekly beliefs and ethics, wellbeing and connection and reflections lessons which includes the 'friendology' programme, pupils are helped to make friends and sort out low-level problems together. Pupils feel that being 'mean on purpose' is rare and that by taking part in anti-bullying week they are learning about friendship issues. They are confident that staff would deal with bullying incidents swiftly if they occurred.
29. Staff and pupils work well in teams to plan and lead regular assemblies focusing on each of the school's learning powers. Pupils share examples of the powers, such as the power of persistence. Pupils are given a time for a moment's reflection after lunch each day, where they consider a big question. Pupils can visit the calming wilderness garden where they learn about nature and take part in creative activities. A wellbeing hub for mental health is being used to expand upon the range of wellbeing activities for pupils and the local community.
30. Pupils enjoy success in a wide range of areas. Sporting success is notable with pupils becoming national champions in netball and competing at a similar level in gymnastics and swimming, whilst also ensuring that there are opportunities for all.
31. Pupils feel listened to by school leaders. They complete regular surveys throughout the year to give their feedback on different aspects. Form captains attend school council meetings led by Year 6 pupils and feel confident in the school council's voice being heard both in choosing charities and when coming up with ideas for school improvements. Pupils showed great enthusiasm and a commendable desire to support a variety of charities.
32. Leaders have established a health and safety culture within the school ensuring that the premises are well maintained and provide a safe, bright environment for pupils. All required checks and risk assessments are carried out regularly and fire evacuation drills termly. First aid provision and procedures are suitable, and records include concise details of pupils' medical needs and accidents.
33. Leaders monitor attendance carefully. They follow up any unexplained absences diligently. As a result of these procedures, pupils have a high level of attendance. The admissions register contains the required information and provides details of all joiners and leavers which are reported to the local authority as and when necessary.
34. Pupils enjoy a range of healthy food at lunchtimes. Most are positive about the lunch menus, but some would like more choice over what they eat. Pupils demonstrate good manners while eating their lunch. They talk confidently to adults and engage in social conversation with their friends.
35. Early years staff are effective in promoting the wellbeing of all children in Reception. Leaders in the early years are skilled and knowledgeable in their roles and fulfil their responsibilities so that children are well cared for and learn well. Pupils play and interact harmoniously in the well-equipped playgrounds. Reception children play in their own outdoor area where they develop gross motor skills and develop physically when using climbing equipment and toys. The available outdoor

learning area is used well but the school has identified this as an area to develop more fully to enhance knowledge and skills outdoors.

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

36. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

37. Leaders promote values of inclusion and respect. They provide pupils with opportunities to make valuable contributions to the school community and the wider society. By taking on roles as a school councillor or a subject or EDI ambassador, pupils understand responsibility and how they make a difference to decision-making such as choosing the school charities, purchasing water butts to recycle rain after running a craft fair and changing to meat-free Wednesdays.
38. A culture of mutual respect pervades the school. The recent mirrors and windows initiative helps pupils to recognise the similarities and differences between each other. This is further enhanced by parents coming into school to talk about home cultures, careers and religious festivals which has led to an implicit understanding of equality between genders, beliefs, religions and cultures.
39. Active links between subjects such as humanities and philosophy enable pupils to think more deeply about what they see and about right and wrong. Pupils become aware of issues in the wider world. Year 6 pupils speak passionately about environmental issues such the negative impact that plastic bottles have on the environment. Pupils are supported by leaders with ideas about fundraising opportunities. Currently, pupils are actively involved in fundraising for a local migrant centre.
40. Pupils learn about neurodiversity and speak eloquently about the need to be respectful of people's differences. They welcome new pupils into class, especially pupils who have SEND.
41. Pupils' social and cultural knowledge is enhanced by visiting speakers or authors from a range of diverse backgrounds, cultures and genders. The library ambassadors led an assembly which demonstrated a love of reading and highlighted some career opportunities for the future.
42. Pupils develop their spiritual and moral understanding effectively through a daily reflection at lunchtime, which is linked to the school's learning powers philosophy. In assemblies, pupils sing with joy and passion. Pupils develop a deep appreciation of the non-material aspects of life in the school's wilderness garden. They learn to reflect and take time to be calm and quiet.
43. Pupils, including those who have SEND and EAL, are prepared well for the next stage of their education. In addition, past pupils return to the school in the autumn term to explain what their new school is like. Pupils are helped to develop their economic and social awareness through the connections and reflections programme with visiting speakers such as Magistrates and visits to the Bank of England and the court of justice. Pupils gain confidence for the future with pupil led events, fundraising initiatives and being tour guides at open mornings.
44. Fundamental British Values are effectively promoted through the ethos and constant reinforcement of learning powers. Pupils develop their understanding of democracy by participating in a lengthy voting system with manifestos to explain why they are the right person for the role of one of the Year 6 school councillors.
45. Children in the early years are given opportunities to understand feelings and emotions and understand strategies they can use to be ready to learn. Pupils in Year 1 use a colour coded system of preparedness including a green zone meaning they are ready to work.

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

46. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

47. Governors ensure that there is a positive safeguarding culture with practice which is implemented in line with statutory guidance. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the safeguarding governor are suitably qualified and in regular contact with each other. They monitor the updates to the policy, the training, ongoing cases and the annual review. Safeguarding is a standing item at governors' meetings which gives governors a comprehensive oversight of procedures.
48. The school has very clear safeguarding procedures which are understood and implemented effectively by staff including whistleblowing, early reporting and reporting of low-level concerns. Appropriate training takes place for staff with a combination of online and face-to-face training facilitated by external providers. Leaders have established an effective relationship with local children's services and the LADO.
49. Staff at all levels feel confident about what to do if they have a safeguarding concern. A reporting system is used effectively to record any concerns in detail and to monitor any patterns or trends. Information is shared appropriately taking into account confidentiality requirements. Staff are confident when challenging visitors to enforce the school's policy on mobile phone use. Staff in the early years have regular supervision meetings with the leaders, where they can raise any safeguarding concerns confidentially.
50. Information about online safety, safeguarding and who to talk to if pupils are worried is clearly displayed around the school. Pupils are confident they have someone to talk to if they needed to raise concerns, and some had also made use of the school's online worry box. Pupils know that there is technology filtering and monitoring in place to keep them safe and they understand the school's expectations in relation to acceptable age-appropriate resources including in the use of social media.
51. Safer recruitment checks are completed for staff members, volunteers and governors in a timely manner. These are recorded accurately on the record of appointments which is monitored regularly by the safeguarding governor.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Bute House Preparatory School
Department for Education number	205/6216
Registered charity number	312739
Address	Bute House Preparatory School Luxemburg Gardens Hammersmith London W6 7EA
Phone number	020 7603 7381
Email address	mail@butehouse.co.uk
Website	www.butehouse.co.uk
Proprietor	Bute House Prep School For Girls
Chair	Mr Jonathan Beckitt
Headteacher	Ms Sian Bradshaw
Age range	4 to 11
Number of pupils	323
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 October 2019

Information about the school

53. Bute House is a preparatory school for female pupils between the ages four and eleven. The school has three phases: lower, comprising Reception, Year 1 and Year 2; middle formed of Year 3 and Year 4; and upper which is Year 5 and 6. The school is an educational trust run by a governing body and is part of the Mercer Company group of schools. The current headteacher has been in post since 2021.
54. There are 24 pupils in the early years, in one Reception class.
55. The school has identified 36 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which includes dyslexia and language difficulties. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. English is an additional language for 254 pupils although the majority are fluent users of English.
57. The school states its aims are to encourage self-discipline, respect and consideration for others and a sense of community; to identify and foster every child's abilities and talents, encouraging self-motivated learners and confident communicators; to help each child do their best, to reach their potential and inspire personal best in a non-competitive academic environment; to provide a broad and rich curriculum which encourages a love of learning that goes beyond what is taught and to maintain a happy, positive environment.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 March 2024

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

59. 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 other governors
- 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
- observations of break and lunchtimes
- work scrutiny of samples of pupils' work, some of them with the pupils
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

60. 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

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