

School inspection report

19 to 21 March 2024

Devonshire House Preparatory School

Arkwright Road

Hampstead

London

NW3 6AE

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 actively promote pupils' wellbeing and place their needs at the heart of the school. The local governing board provides robust oversight and challenge to support leaders and managers in their evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.
2. Governors and leaders meet with pupils, staff and parents to understand their views. The discussions they have with different members of the community are carefully considered and contribute towards development planning. Leaders have recognised that provision for relationships and sex education should be strengthened in order to meet the needs of pupils in the Upper School more fully.
3. A broad and balanced curriculum is enhanced by a varied and relevant programme of extra-curricular activities, educational visits and speakers which extend pupils' understanding about topics they are studying. Pupils make good progress with their learning which enables the majority to gain places at schools with selective entry requirements. However, academic data could be used more effectively to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.
4. Pupils are motivated to learn because of the enthusiastic, knowledgeable teaching they receive in the majority of lessons. Most lessons are delivered at a pace that maintains pupils' engagement. The impact of teaching and learning would be enhanced by the consistent and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and sharing of best practice across all subject areas.
5. Children in Nursery and Reception thrive because of the positive, individualised care and attention they receive from staff. A happy, purposeful atmosphere pervades the early years which contributes to the children's progress in their learning and their high levels of wellbeing.
6. Health and safety processes are robust. The safeguarding of pupils is firmly embedded in the school's culture and contributes positively towards the promotion of their welfare. The food available to pupils is nutritious and the regular exercise they enjoy supports positive levels of physical wellbeing. Pupils have access to a variety of resources designed to support their mental health and emotional wellbeing, including means by which they can report concerns and counsellors who can provide professional guidance.
7. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their lives. The diversity of British society is regularly highlighted enabling pupils to appreciate and understand people from a range of backgrounds. Meaningful and impactful engagement with the local community takes place. The school's eco-council plays a prominent part in promoting environmental initiatives in the local area.

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:

- implement an effective system of evaluative monitoring of teaching and learning so that best practice is shared across all subject areas
- use academic data systematically to monitor pupils' progress so that teachers address the needs of all ages and ability groups
- review the relationships and sex education programme so that it more fully meets the developmental needs of pupils across all age groups.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders and managers fulfil their responsibilities effectively in ensuring that pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted and that pupils have equality of access to the curriculum. Leaders seek to ensure that the aims of the school are relevant to the needs of all pupils.
9. The local governing board provides rigorous support and challenge to school leaders, thus enhancing pupils' outcomes. Governors are well qualified to provide oversight of the implementation of policies. Leaders identify the school's strengths and areas for development through a comprehensive self-evaluation process. Progress towards fulfilling goals set in the school development plan is regularly reviewed.
10. Pupils' wellbeing is a priority and is robustly promoted by leaders and managers. Open, tolerant relationships between pupils are evident in the classroom and during lesson break periods. The pupils' relationship and sex education programme needs more fully to respond to the needs of the pupils.
11. Pupils have an active voice at school. Pupils' forums such as the school council are meaningful and have a positive impact on school improvement. For example, the school's highly effective eco-council has campaigned successfully to improve safety on local roads.
12. Leaders oversee a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to pupils' needs. Governors provide appropriate oversight of educational outcomes. There is no discrimination in lessons, and reasonable adjustments are made to allow pupils with disabilities fully to access all educational experiences. Staff have access to regular training that supports the quality of teaching and learning.
13. Most lessons have a positive impact on pupils' progress and achievements: these include the award of places to a high proportion of school leavers at senior schools with selective standards of entry. However, there is a need for greater consistency in the way managers evaluate the quality of teaching across all subject areas in order that appropriate progress is made across all subject areas to better support pupils' outcomes.
14. Leaders and managers enable parents to access appropriate information in order to understand the workings of the school and how pupils' wellbeing and outcomes are supported: this includes clear and helpful policies posted on the school's website. Regular and helpful guidance to parents about pupils' progress is provided through face-to-face meetings and written reports. A complaints policy is readily available to parents via the school's website and its procedures are implemented appropriately by the school. Parents have regular, helpful access to school leaders and governors via open forums and are provided with opportunities to attend parental focus groups in order to understand how they can support the educational outcomes of their children.
15. Leaders and managers ensure that staff meet the needs of children in the early years and that a happy, purposeful atmosphere is evident in Nursery and Reception classes. Children in Nursery and Reception achieve expected levels of attainment within the seven areas of learning and make good progress. They enjoy many opportunities to initiate learning, collaborate with each other and solve problems.

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

16. A broad and balanced curriculum is accessible to all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress across a wide range of subjects. They make good progress within all areas of the curriculum. Leaders oversee the production of appropriate curriculum plans which are regularly reviewed and refined in order to fully engage pupils' interest and support good progress. Governors provide oversight through regular lesson observations and discussion with staff with responsibility for the planning and delivery of the curriculum.
17. Suitable approaches are used to assess pupils' progress. Staff identify and address the needs of pupils struggling to understand concepts taught in lessons, adapting their approach appropriately. However, analysis of the data generated from standardised assessments could be more consistently used across the curriculum to identify gaps in learning so that suitable interventions can be put in place. Because pupils' work is not consistently marked, they are not always clear about how to improve their work.
18. Appropriate adaptations are made to enable pupils identified as having SEND to make good progress with their learning. Leaders address the educational needs of the school's culturally diverse pupil population, including pupils who speak English as an additional language. These pupils are well supported so that they make rapid progress with their speech and language skills.
19. Pupils experience effective teaching in most lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They know their pupils well and plan and deliver lessons that are characterised by suitable levels of pace and interest. Pupils' clear recall of what they have learnt previously is indicative of the positive impact of teaching. Pupils exhibit high levels of motivation in most lessons. In a Year 3 science lesson pupils showed great enthusiasm when given the opportunity to be a 'plant investigator' and Year 8 pupils were engrossed when taking action photos as part of an art project. Teachers deploy creative resources to support pupils' engagement in learning and progress. Pupils' outcomes would be strengthened further through the development of consistently effective evaluation of teaching and learning across all subject areas.
20. Staff in the early years respond to the interests of the children, adapting and modifying plans. Staff skilfully deliver appropriate activities within the seven areas of learning. Children are highly engaged in their learning, both inside and outside the classroom. They make rapid progress in their communication and language development.
21. Pupils develop an appropriate understanding and appreciation of the workings of British institutions such as how people are kept safe by the fire brigade and the laws of the land. Older pupils learn about how the country is governed democratically through a visit to the Houses of Parliament.
22. Pupils have access to a wide variety of opportunities to extend and enrich their educational experience, including through the extensive range of lunchtime and after school activities on offer. A wide variety of educational visits enhances pupils' learning, such as Year 5 pupils' immersive language experience during their annual visit to France. A wide range of speakers visit the school to broaden pupils' understanding of topics they are studying. Pupils enjoy an appropriate amount of

free time during the day and have access to a wide range of resources during break times which promote social, creative and physical skills.

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

23. Pupils demonstrate a rich appreciation of the spiritual aspects of life. They demonstrate a sense of wonder in the way in which they engage in different areas of their learning. Children in Reception were absorbed as they created gastropods using pasta shells, clay and sticks in the school's woodland area. Year 4 pupils performed with great enthusiasm and joy in their drama production.
24. The school's behaviour policy is fair and effective. Pupils demonstrate clear moral values and articulate confidently what are right and wrong choices. Their behaviour is well-managed in lessons and they move around the school site in an orderly manner. Staff receive suitable training in dealing with bullying and the strategies they employ address issues that arise. On the rare occasions when bullying behaviour occurs, it is addressed appropriately.
25. Clear guidance is given to pupils as to how to safeguard their physical and mental health and they enjoy well developed levels of emotional wellbeing. However, the relationship and sex education lessons pupils receive could sometimes be more relevant, engaging and appropriate to their stage of development.
26. Pupils' physical health is promoted through a varied and relevant sports programme which enables all pupils to engage in regular exercise. In physical education (PE) lessons, pupils demonstrate appropriate levels of fitness. They receive clear guidance in how to work successfully together in sports teams. Pupils have a well developed understanding about healthy food choices and have nutritious options available at lunchtimes.
27. The personal, emotional and physical development of children in the early years is actively promoted by skilful staff in a caring environment. Pupils receive age-appropriate guidance in oral hygiene and gain a clear understanding of healthy food choices. Nursery children chat confidently and happily with one another and the adults at their tables during lunchtime.
28. Appropriate medical facilities are in place for pupils who are injured or unwell. First aid is administered by well-qualified staff when required. Patterns in injuries are analysed and appropriate action is taken to address issues that are identified.
29. Leaders take reasonable precautions to keep pupils safe whilst on and off site. The school's premises are well maintained. Maintenance issues that occur are dealt with promptly and trends that arise are reviewed and addressed effectively. There is appropriate space for outdoor learning and play. Suitable supervision of pupils is in place both when they are on the school site and when visiting other locations. The admission and attendance policy is appropriately implemented. The local authority is informed if pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times.
30. Relevant health and safety guidance in relation to fire safety is implemented robustly. Regular fire practices take place and pupils clearly understand procedures to follow when evacuating the school.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

31. The curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to learn about the society in which they live and the wider world. Engagement with different communities within the local area and in the wider world results in pupils developing understanding of and respect for other people from a range of backgrounds, for instance when they visit local care homes to recite poetry and sing. All cultures and beliefs are embraced, valued and regularly celebrated. Pupils visit a range of places of worship, including a gurdwara, a mosque, a synagogue and a church which promotes an appreciation of a diversity of religious beliefs.
32. Pupils learn about different institutions and the way they contribute towards life in Britain. Older pupils learn about the legal framework that governs the United Kingdom which enables them to understand about the impact of the rule of law on people's day-to-day lives. Members of the police force and fire brigade visit the school to explain how their respective roles safeguard people from harm. Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between making right and wrong choices and willingly accept responsibility for their behaviour.
33. Pupils learn that people living in the United Kingdom have the right to express their views openly. Elections to pupils' forums such as school council and other opportunities they receive to vote give pupils first-hand experience of the democratic process. They actively embrace opportunities made available to them to voice their opinions and they learn the importance of listening respectfully to the views of others.
34. Leaders assign a wide range of roles of responsibility to pupils which support their personal development. Nursery children take the role of 'train driver' as they lead fellow pupils to lunch. Year 1 and 2 pupils enjoy their role as playground buddies. Upper school pupils support their younger peers in Year 3 and 4 in their capacity as Golden Apple assembly ambassadors. From Year 3 onwards, pupils regularly meet in forums designed to allow them to raise suggestions which can contribute to improvements in the school.
35. Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their understanding of financial management through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and mathematics lessons. Their awareness of the challenges presented by access to insufficient funds is addressed through guest speakers, such as representatives from the Camden foodbank who visit the school to explain the impact of the cost of living crisis on people living within the local area.
36. Staff prepare pupils to transfer confidently to the next stage of their education. They receive effective support when preparing for senior school examinations. Older pupils experience enhanced levels of independence in order to enable them to thrive at their senior schools. They receive guidance from professionals from the local authority about how to stay safe when travelling to and from school independently. Senior pupils learn about a range of different jobs they might pursue in their adult lives, including during a two-week careers fair arranged for Year 8 pupils.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

37. A strong safeguarding culture exists at the school, characterised by high levels of vigilance. Effective interventions safeguard pupils' wellbeing. Pupils feel safe at school. When issues arise, staff act upon them promptly and effectively, with appropriate support from external agencies when required. Staff see the need to safeguard pupils as a key responsibility.
38. An appropriate suite of policies is in place to safeguard the pupils' welfare. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive, easy to use and accessible on the school's website. Staff are kept informed of updates by leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and have a secure understanding of safeguarding policy and process, including for pupils with SEND.
39. Robust oversight by the local governing board supports leaders in ensuring safeguarding policy and processes are rigorously implemented. Staff with responsibility for leading safeguarding and SEND have appropriate status within the school, enabling them to undertake their roles effectively.
40. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibility undertake training which enables them to fulfil their roles appropriately. The member of the local governing board with responsibility for safeguarding has a suitable background and training to support school leaders appropriately. Suitable safeguarding training takes place as part of the induction of staff new to the school. All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and updates at regular intervals. Staff clearly understand how to address, report and record safeguarding concerns appropriately. Risks to pupils' welfare from access to harmful online content are mitigated by effective filtering and monitoring systems and appropriate guidance in lessons.
41. Risks to pupils' welfare are rigorously identified, assessed and mitigated in order to safeguard them from harm, including those relating to the school's location in London. Leaders ensure that issues of concern are managed appropriately.
42. The management of the recruitment of all staff, volunteers and governors is rigorous. Staff with responsibility for recruitment receive suitable training and are supported by proactive oversight from leaders and members of the local governing board. A suitable register of appointments is maintained.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Devonshire House Preparatory School
Department for Education number	202/6380
Address	Devonshire House Preparatory School 2 Arkwright Road Hampstead London NW3 6AE
Phone number	020 7435 1916
Email address	hmpa@devonshirehouseprepschool.co.uk
Website	www.devonshirehouseschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Dukes Education
Headteacher	Mr Henry Keighley-Elstub
Age range	2 to 13
Number of pupils	506
Date of previous inspection	4 to 5 December 2019

Information about the school

43. Devonshire House Preparatory School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged between two and thirteen years. There are currently no female pupils in Years 7 and 8. Founded in 1989, the school is located on three sites in a residential area of Hampstead. Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new head, in September 2022. Since March 2022 the school has been part of Dukes Education, which operates as a local governing board.
44. There are 144 children in the early years, which comprises five Nursery and four Reception classes. The school has identified 39 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language for 23 pupils.
45. The school states that its aims are to provide a nurturing, happy and safe environment and to develop in its pupils kindness, tolerance and integrity. The school aims to inspire a love of learning while achieving the highest standards of achievement and developing initiative, creativity and innovative thinking.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

19 to 21 March 2024

46. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

47. 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 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
- Scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- Scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school

48. 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.
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