

School inspection report

16 to 18 April 2024

North London Collegiate School

Canons, Canons Drive

Edgware

Middlesex

HA8 7RJ

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'.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS | 3 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS..... | 4 |
| RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS | 4 |
| SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE..... | 5 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE | 5 |
| SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION | 6 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION | 7 |
| SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING | 8 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING | 9 |
| SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY..... | 10 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY | 11 |
| SAFEGUARDING | 12 |
| THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING | 12 |
| SCHOOL DETAILS | 13 |
| INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL..... | 14 |
| INSPECTION DETAILS | 15 |

Summary of inspection findings

1. The governing body ensures that leaders have suitable skills and knowledge and that they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. Governors play a key role, alongside leaders, in setting an ambitious strategy for the school. Leaders work closely with governors to provide a high-quality education for pupils.
2. The curriculum is flexible and well constructed. Pupils select from a wide range of GCSE subjects and older pupils undertake extended project qualifications alongside A levels. Provision is made for those who opt for the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma programme. Pupils make good progress, and attainment in public examinations is consistently high.
3. Teaching is effective and meets the needs of pupils. In the junior school, teachers nurture pupils' eagerness to learn and equip them to embrace academic challenge. In the senior school, teachers raise the degree of challenge so that pupils can achieve well. A digital strategy is being developed, which seeks to enhance learning experiences enabling pupils to use information technology (IT) as a dynamic tool to extend their attainment. Leaders seek consistency in the use of IT as a means of ensuring pupils gain suitable presentation and independent study skills.
4. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive suitable support so that they achieve well.
5. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning, evident throughout the school, combining intellectual curiosity and eloquent self-expression. Staff support pupils' personal development so that pupils understand this aspect of their education is a priority alongside their achievement in academic studies. Leaders promote pupils' self-confidence, which develops well in the school's nurturing environment.
6. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes are well considered. Pastoral support is effective and pupils' emotional needs are looked after well.
7. The co-curricular programme provides pupils with a range of activities that complement the academic curriculum. Pupils participate fully, balancing their studies with activities outside the classroom to promote their physical and mental wellbeing.
8. Pupils behave consistently well. They display kindness and respect towards others. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy being part of the school community.
9. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Leaders ensure suitable safeguarding arrangements are in place, kept up to date and are effective. Risks are managed well and timely referrals to external agencies are made, as appropriate.
10. The premises are well maintained. Fire procedures reduce risks, and health and safety practices are robust.

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:

- embed and extend the use of technology to further enhance pupils' learning experiences.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school, which is well communicated. The school's aims are widely known and understood by pupils, staff and parents. Leaders have high expectations of teachers so that pupils, who are highly motivated learners, can achieve their best.
12. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing, which is particularly evident in use of the wellbeing centre that provides pupils with access to a quiet space to be reflective where they can access support.
13. Leaders are reflective, evaluating and reviewing the effectiveness of school systems. Leaders understand and consider the needs of young people in modern society. Risks pupils may encounter are understood, such as online or whilst away from the school's campus. Risks are identified and strategies are put in place to manage them effectively. Pupils are encouraged to be bold and explorative learners, pushing the boundaries of attainment with confidence, whilst also considering how to manage their workload.
14. Systems, policies and procedures are up to date and appropriate. Leaders and governors ensure that policies are understood and followed closely by staff. Governors have suitable oversight of the work of school leaders. They have systems in place to assuring themselves about the quality of teaching, through monitoring and tracking, and regular reviews of the school's provision.
15. Leaders and governors fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring an accessibility plan is in place, and is suitable. Supported by governors, leaders enable reasonable adjustments to be made when required based on pupils' individual needs. Pupils can access the curriculum with the necessary support in place. Leaders ensure that pupils understand that discriminatory behaviour is unacceptable, resulting in a cohesive and inclusive school community.
16. The school provides a wide range of useful information on its website. Pupils' progress is reported in writing to parents termly, and parents' evenings provide regular contact with teachers. Staff liaise when required, for example with parents of pupils who have SEND who may benefit from more regular updates. An annual report is provided to local authorities for any pupils who are funded or partly funded by the local authority. The school handles complaints effectively and in accordance with its procedures.
17. Suitable safeguarding training is undertaken by leaders and governors. They understand the responsibilities their roles carry. Governors are diligent in their oversight of safeguarding arrangements and implementation so that the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Pupils follow a well-designed and suitably resourced curriculum. Children in the early years learn through a cross curricular approach. Teachers enable children to have a range of learning experiences in lessons. In Years 1 and 2, pupils learn about individual subjects. Junior school pupils follow a curriculum that incorporates academic and creative subjects, with pupils from Reception upwards benefiting from subject teaching by specialists in PE, drama, music and modern languages in addition to their class teachers. Pupils from Year 3 upwards benefit from further specialist teaching in computing and the humanities, alongside an emphasis on creative subjects including art and design technology.
20. Senior pupils are given a wide range of subject choices to study at GCSE level. In the sixth form, the International Baccalaureate (IB) sits alongside A levels, both of which offer pupils choice, with more than twenty subjects available.
21. Children in the early years are supported well in learning to understand the world around them. Children demonstrate the ability to engage with confidence with others in a social context and in an academic learning environment. Teachers in the early years know the children well and enable them to develop their knowledge and skills effectively.
22. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. They are challenged appropriately so that they achieve outcomes in line with their high prior attainment. Pupils achieve well in public examinations. Their achievement reflects their positive attitudes to learning and their determination to achieve highly.
23. Lessons are planned and taught well by skilful teachers who are passionate about their subjects. Teachers give pupils a broad range of individual or collaborative tasks to complete that are well chosen and effective in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils are given appropriate challenge and are encouraged to become independent learners. Pupils are intellectually curious, asking thoughtful questions to extend their knowledge. Staff support pupils well and inspire them to take risks with their learning. Teachers plan lessons which use technology to enhance pupils' learning. Leaders have planned further enhancements in their digital strategy to embed their approach to pupils' use of IT.
24. Teachers make links between subjects, wherever meaningful and appropriate, that encourage pupils to think more deeply about their learning. For example, in French pupils are encouraged to make connections between the vocabulary they learn and other aspects of the curriculum, such as linking references to Descartes to learning in philosophy. The curriculum focuses well on speaking and listening so that pupils develop their oracy skills effectively. Pupils learn to debate, listening carefully to others' opinions and countering them in a confident, mature and measured manner.
25. Provision for pupils who have SEND is effective. Pupils' needs are identified and suitable provision is promptly put in place to support them. Teachers routinely employ strategies in lessons that support pupils who have SEND, such as the use of clear, step by step instructions and explanations. Pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.
26. Very few pupils require specific support because they speak English as an additional language. They receive appropriate and effective support as required.

27. A detailed assessment framework is in place. Staff hold regular meetings to review how well pupils are doing against their targets. They use this information to help them put individual support in place for pupils. Academic and pastoral staff work closely together to ensure that any issues are identified and addressed quickly. Staff communicate regularly and routinely with parents so that they are fully involved in their children's education.
28. An extensive co-curricular programme enriches pupils' experiences of school life. Pupils take part in several activities each week, selecting from the large number of choices on offer. For example, younger pupils enjoy activities such as jewellery making, cookery and book club, alongside sports and academic enrichment. An extensive visiting speaker programme is provided, as well as conferences and assemblies on a range of subjects and celebrations of key events such as international women's day.
29. Pupils enjoy the educational visits that complement and enrich their academic studies, enabling development of their personal development and social awareness.

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

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

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

31. Pupils feel able to share their opinions and take a questioning approach which supports their growing confidence and resilience. There is a culture of mutual respect, positive relationships and an understanding of pupils' needs.
32. Pupils learn about the differences between people, such as race and religion, through assemblies, the PSHE curriculum and many student societies. Pupils are encouraged to be respectful of others and to celebrate the differences in society.
33. In addition to the many sporting team fixtures, pupils are encouraged to develop a healthy attitude towards sport and exercise. Pupils play competitive sport in a range of sports, including netball, lacrosse, badminton and swimming. Sport as recreation and exercise is prevalent throughout the age range. Pupils also value the social benefits of participation in these activities.
34. The RSE and PSHE programmes of study are relevant and appropriate to pupils' ages. The PSHE curriculum is mostly delivered in the senior school by pastoral staff, who know the pupils well. In the junior school PSHE is delivered by class teachers and meets the needs of the pupils including in the early years. The programme is structured around three themes: enabling pupils to learn about health and wellbeing, living in the wider world, and relationships. Teachers check regularly that the content of PSHE curriculum is understood and useful to pupils. Topics relating to RSE and diversity are mapped within the PSHE curriculum, enabling their delivery by subject teachers and by specialist teachers. Outcomes of the RSE and PSHE programmes are tracked, enabling leaders and managers to monitor the programmes' effectiveness. Pupils' progress and engagement in this area of the curriculum is secure.
35. Behaviour around the school is consistently positive. Pupils enjoy the freedom of the campus and spending time in each other's company. The behaviour management policy is followed consistently. Pupils behave responsibly and display considerable maturity because of the approach taken, which encourages ownership of responsibility. Leaders have developed an effective anti-bullying policy and have put suitable strategies in place to prevent bullying. When incidents occasionally occur, leaders take prompt and effective action to deal with them.
36. Pastoral care is effective. Pupils use the wellbeing area, when they need to, and have access to school counsellors. Older pupils are trained to act as peer mentors for younger pupils. The first aid arrangements, including staff training, are suitable and effective. The medical centre is readily accessible to pupils, when required.
37. Admissions and attendance procedures are suitably kept. Staff inform the local authority when pupils join or leave the school. Pupils are supervised appropriately both in lessons and during less structured parts of the day.
38. School buildings are clean and well maintained. The school is well resourced and provides an appropriate environment for teaching, learning and co-curricular activities. Leaders have put comprehensive arrangements in place regarding fire, health and safety and risk management. They ensure that these are followed properly.

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

39. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

40. The school is welcoming and individuality is celebrated. Staff encourage respect for others through assemblies, the PSHE curriculum and student societies. Pupils understand that people should not be judged on characteristics such as their race or sexual orientation or other characteristics. Assemblies often focus on themes such as diversity and appreciation of different cultures and faiths. The curriculum supports fundamental British values and facilitates the personal development of pupils. Pupils' diverse ethnicities and religious beliefs are valued and celebrated. Leaders promote a culture whereby pupils develop a mature moral understanding and learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils behave with compassion and respect towards their peers.
41. Pupils have opportunities to take democratic decisions, such as voting for members of the school council in the junior school, which helps to develop their understanding of how democracy works. Pupils feel their views are listened to and valued. Pupils share their thoughts and interests including through opportunities for pupil journalism. The school's 'News Canon' is published weekly and provides opportunities for pupils to share their own experiences and opinions.
42. Pupils understand the importance of making a difference in society. They enjoy contributing to school life and the community. Pupils' participation in charity efforts, and with community links, is extensive. Pupils carry out community service as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the IB diploma. Community service is a key aspect of school life. Pupils volunteer at local charity shops, youth clubs and a community kitchen. They visit care homes, run a community choir, participate in Harrow Youth Parliament and coach swimming.
43. Pupils are given plentiful opportunities to take responsibility and develop leadership skills. Older pupils lead a range of societies such as dance and chess, human rights and climate change. Pupils readily accept roles of responsibility within the school. Pupil leaders are respected by others and act as role models within the community.
44. Economic education forms part of the PSHE programme. In the Junior school pupils learn about buying, selling, and budgeting. Older pupils focus on the functions of credit and debit cards. Sixth formers learn about student finances for life at university.
45. Pupils are provided with a breadth of information about potential careers and next steps, including about apprenticeships. Pupils are given the support they need with university applications. A recent careers initiative was well received by Year 11 pupils who took part in work experience and application skills forum. Pupils are prepared for life beyond school in a variety of methods including through their participation in work experience, interactions with alumni and curriculum content. Their involvement with partnership activities with pupils from other schools, such as science and music workshops, helps pupils gain self-awareness and encourages them to develop a wider perspective beyond their school.

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. The school has a well-established safeguarding culture. Governors are appropriately trained and fulfil their duty to ensure that leaders protect and promote the wellbeing of pupils.
48. An appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding policy is in place. Staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training as part of their induction, including about internet safety and extremism. They are given regular updates, ensuring that the latest guidance is followed. Staff understand their responsibilities to report any concerns and do so promptly.
49. Arrangements are in place to keep the school site secure.
50. Pupils feel safe in school. They readily express their opinions and know how to raise any concerns that arise. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online. The school's digital safety policy and effective filtering systems help to keep pupils safe when using the internet at school.
51. The early years staff receive appropriate training so that children's needs are understood and met well. Younger pupils in the junior school know how to seek support and that there is a range of adults to help them. They also learn to contact the emergency services if necessary.
52. Safeguarding concerns are acted on appropriately. Referrals to children's services, the local authority designated officer or the police are made in a timely manner. With appropriate guidance from the safeguarding team. Staff are vigilant and their approach to safeguarding is sensitive and rigorous.
53. Pre-employment checks are completed before adults commence work at the school. The record of appointments, which records the safeguarding checks on those working in the school is well maintained and reviewed regularly.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

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| School | North London Collegiate School |
| Department for Education number | 310/6075 |
| Registered charity number | 1115843 |
| Address | North London Collegiate School Canons, Canons Drive Edgware Middlesex HA8 7RJ |
| Phone number | 020 8952 0912 |
| Email address | office@nlcs.org.uk |
| Website | www.nlcs.org.uk |
| Chair | Mr Robert Hingley |
| Headteacher | Mrs Victoria Bingham |
| Age range | 4 to 18 |
| Number of pupils | 1099 |
| Date of previous inspection | 3 to 5 December 2019 |

Information about the school

55. North London Collegiate School is a selective girls' day school in the London Borough of Harrow. The school consists of a junior school, for pupils aged four to 11 years, and a senior school, for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. It is run as a registered charity known as the North London Collegiate School Foundation of Frances Mary Buss. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2023 and a new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection.
56. The junior school includes an early years setting for children from the age of four years. There are 40 children in two Reception classes.
57. The school has identified 147 pupils as having SEND. A very small proportion of pupils in the school has an education, health and care plan.
58. English is an additional language for a small proportion of pupils.
59. The school states that its aims are to provide an ambitious academic education within a nurturing and modern environment, enabling pupils to make the most of their intellect and abilities, and equipping them to recognise and achieve excellence.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

16 to 18 April 2024

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

61. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of co-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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

62. 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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