

School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

Norwich High School for Girls GDST

95 Newmarket Road

Norwich

Norfolk

NR2 2HU

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 work with the local governing board and the proprietor to promote the school's aims of nurturing and challenging pupils to be the very best they can be. Leaders are ambitious for the school's ongoing development. They produce a comprehensive annual development plan, which prioritises pupils' wellbeing and success. Leaders ensure the plan is implemented fully so that the school continually improves.
2. Lessons are planned and delivered well by knowledgeable teachers. Pupils throughout the school make good progress and results in public examinations are consistently high. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive additional support for the development of their spoken and written English so that they also make good progress.
3. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs assessed and identified accurately. They receive effective help from the learning support department, either individually or in small groups. The learning support department produces comprehensive plans and guidance for teachers to use, and teachers know their pupils' needs. However, pupils are not consistently provided with the support they need in lessons, particularly in the senior school. Where this is the case, some pupils who have SEND do not always assimilate and understand taught material as well as they could.
4. Leaders regularly assess the progress pupils make from their starting points. Where necessary, effective strategies are put in place to support pupils. Teachers provide pupils with useful feedback that helps them to improve their work and make better progress.
5. Leaders prioritise pupils' safety. They methodically identify and assess risks and implement suitable measures to reduce them. Safeguarding is managed well throughout the school. Leaders and staff receive suitable and regular safeguarding training. They are vigilant and take prompt action to address concerns when they arise.
6. Leaders have developed a caring and nurturing environment where kindness and mutual support are evident throughout the school. Teachers and leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing through the effective pastoral care system.
7. The content of the RSE curriculum is in line with current requirements and is taught well. However, the sequencing of topics does not always meet the needs of some pupils.
8. Pupils are well behaved and show understanding of and respect for others. Service to others is a key element of the school's vision and pupils make valuable contributions to the school and local community.
9. In the early years, children's communication and language, physical, and personal, social and emotional skills are developed well. They are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

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:

- improve the consistency of provision for pupils who have SEND, particularly in the senior school, so that pupils always receive the support they need.
- review the order in which the elements of the RSE curriculum are taught so that aspects are better timed to more closely meets pupils' needs.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Governors have ensured that leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills for their roles. The school's ethos and aims are understood well by staff and pupils and are effectively implemented. The school's focus is on enabling pupils to 'be the best they can be'. To this end, leaders provide a wide range of opportunities, both within and beyond the classroom, which promote pupils' self-confidence and self-belief. Local governors and the proprietor support and challenge leaders appropriately so that the school consistently meets the Standards.
11. Governors and leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders have established links with safeguarding partners and agencies, and follow reporting procedures when there are concerns. Leaders have established a culture of mutual respect and tolerance which contributes to pupils' happiness and wellbeing.
12. Leaders and governors have a strong understanding of risk management processes. They identify possible risks across all areas of the school's work and ensure that effective measures are put in place to mitigate them. Suitable risk assessments are also put in place to support vulnerable pupils. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and help to ensure that the school is a safe place. The proprietors understand the context of the school and regularly consider all matters, local and national, which may impact upon it.
13. Leaders regularly review their practice and evaluate the school's performance. They produce an annual school development plan which focuses on improving outcomes for pupils. The effective quality assurance procedures, overseen by the proprietor, assist leaders to continually monitor the provision and to develop all aspects of the school. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and its future. They regularly consider ways the school can develop its offering and take actions to achieve them, such as making changes to the curriculum to provide opportunities for pupils to think more deeply.
14. All required information is available on the website or from the school office. Parents receive regular reports providing details of their children's attainment and progress. Staff are available to talk to parents at consultation meetings and at other times. In the early years, an online reporting system allows parents to see evidence of their children's activities almost as soon as they take place.
15. All necessary policies to promote the wellbeing of pupils are in line with current guidance. Leaders ensure that policies are known and understood by staff and pupils and are implemented fully and effectively. Pupils' attention is regularly drawn to relevant policies and procedures, such as about online safety and anti-bullying, so that they understand key messages. Throughout the school, there are highly visible motivational notices reminding pupils of the school's values.
16. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met. Leaders carry out an annual review of accessibility arrangements. They produce and follow a detailed plan to ensure that the school and curriculum is fully accessible. Where improvements are identified, such as better access for wheelchair users, leaders are quick to respond.
17. The school has a suitable complaints policy. Procedures are followed closely and timeframes adhered to. Detailed notes are kept of any complaints that are made. The proprietor is informed of, and reviews, all formal complaints.

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 are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum that is appropriate to pupils' ages and aptitudes. In the prep school, the curriculum is designed to foster intellectual curiosity. It includes subjects such as food technology, swimming and project work. The school ensures that pupils learn a broad range of skills from an early age. Senior school pupils study a broad range of subjects. At GCSE, alongside a core curriculum, pupils are given a large number of options including a range of foreign languages and creative subjects. There is a wide range of subjects for pupils to choose from at A level.
20. The early years curriculum thoroughly covers the seven areas of learning and meets children's needs well. Children are provided with a varied programme of activities, with planning often adapted in response to their own ideas and interests. Early reading is given a strong focus. Children have daily phonics sessions that are matched well to their ability, and they are supported and challenged effectively. Teaching of early mathematics is also strong. Children learn to use mathematical vocabulary, such as 'heavier', 'lighter' and 'balanced', confidently and accurately. A wide range of well-planned activities, including learning to ride scooters and bicycles, helps children to develop their physical skills.
21. Throughout the school, the curriculum gives reading, writing, speaking and listening a high focus. Pupils are routinely given opportunities to think deeply about topics and to discuss them. Consequently, they develop strong linguistic skills, speaking confidently and fluently on a range of subjects. The school has a wide-ranging science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programme, encompassing product design and textiles. In the sixth form, many pupils take the extended project qualification, which enhances their research and presentation skills.
22. Leaders regularly check pupils' knowledge in each subject and track the progress they make. They use this to set targets and identify when additional support may be needed. Pupils make good progress across the full range of subjects on offer. Results in public examinations, including GCSEs, A levels and the extended project qualification are consistently high.
23. Pupils who have SEND are identified promptly. Their needs are carefully assessed and appropriate support is put in place. Teachers know all their pupils well and have a thorough understanding of the needs of pupils who have SEND. Effective support is usually provided in lessons but this is not always the case. While pupils who have SEND make good progress overall, when support in lessons is less effective, pupils' understanding within those lessons is not developed as quickly or as deeply as it might otherwise be.
24. Pupils who speak EAL are well supported and make good progress. Teachers provide appropriate support and ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged. For example, teachers routinely ensure pupils' understanding of tasks that are set.
25. Teachers are knowledgeable and lessons are well planned so that pupils understand what they are taught. Classrooms are well equipped and resources are used effectively to support learning. Teachers build upon pupils' prior knowledge so that they consistently develop new skills and understanding. Pupils' attitudes to their academic studies are positive. They are highly motivated and want to learn. They participate in lessons enthusiastically, confidently exploring ideas with their peers and teachers.

26. Teachers provide regular feedback that encourages pupils to reflect on how they can improve their work. Pupils find this feedback helpful. It helps them to understand their subjects and to make better progress.
27. The school provides a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs which includes a range of sports, such as kayaking and football, as well as crafts, music, chess and archaeology. The school offers a range of residential visits, both within the UK and further afield, such as recent trips to Austria for music and Iceland for geography. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is a popular choice for many pupils.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. Mutual respect is a major element of the school's ethos. From a young age, pupils are encouraged to consider their feelings and those of others, and to share their thoughts respectfully. Every year the Head Girl's Team selects a theme to be promoted across the school community. This year's theme is 'empathy'. This pupil-led initiative contributes positively to pupils' personal development and supports the school's aim to be a caring environment in which all are respected and valued.
30. Pupils' understanding of characteristics such as race and gender evolves through their time at the school. In religious studies, pupils learn about different religions and develop their understanding of, and respect for, different cultures. In the senior school, philosophy is a popular subject choice that provides opportunities for pupils to consider moral questions. The curriculum broadens and enriches pupils' perspectives and encourages them to consider their place in society.
31. The 'changemakers society' provides a vehicle for pupils to express their views about current issues. The group works to promote appreciation of diversity across the school. For example, pupils lead events, such as 'pride' day, providing a range of activities that interest and engage their peers.
32. Children in the early years are provided with activities that promote their self-confidence, such as role play discussions. They learn about living a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating and the importance of exercise, such as when 'taking their tennis ball for a walk'. Outdoor learning, especially in the woodland environment, helps children to learn to work co-operatively with their classmates.
33. As they progress through the school, pupils develop their self-esteem through the many opportunities leaders provide for pupils to take on roles of responsibility. The wide range of clubs and activities provides pupils with opportunities to experience new challenges and to develop new skills. This helps them develop confidence and self-belief. They are supported in their endeavours by the nurturing environment and the effective pastoral care system.
34. The comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum gives pupils a deep understanding of a range of matters. They learn about British values, such as democracy and the rule of law, as well as matters related to health and wellbeing, healthy relationships and financial decision-making. This prepares them well for life in modern British society.
35. The extensive physical education and games provision helps pupils to keep fit and enjoy physical exercise, as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. School lunches are healthy and nutritious, with fresh fruit and vegetables freely available.
36. The extensive relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum is delivered well by knowledgeable staff. However, some topics are taught after pupils have independently sought out the knowledge they require and so the RSE curriculum does not always fully meet the needs of some pupils.
37. Leaders have high expectations about behaviour. Pupils show courtesy and kindness, and poor behaviour is rare. The school deals with any incidents effectively. Where appropriate, discussion and reflection is used in place of sanctions. Pupils know that bullying is unacceptable. There are few bullying incidents and staff deal with any such behaviour swiftly and firmly.

38. Pupils are supervised effectively throughout the school day. In the early years, there are an appropriate number of suitably qualified staff on duty at all times. Prefects have well defined roles and are themselves supervised when performing their duties.
39. Health and safety procedures are implemented effectively. The proprietor provides support and training on all health and safety matters. Appropriate measures are taken to reduce risks from fire.
40. Admissions and attendance registers are suitably maintained. Pupils attend well and any absences are routinely followed up. The local authority is duly informed if pupils move to another school or if there are any prolonged unauthorised absences.
41. First aid is administered effectively and staff are appropriately trained. Suitable records are kept of illness or injury and parents are informed appropriately. Appropriate accommodation is provided for pupils who become unwell

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

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

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

43. Pupils learn about British values, such as the rule of law and democracy, through both the PSHE programme and the teaching of other subjects. For example, teachers routinely link topics with current issues, such as studying the Beveridge Report in history and comparing it with the stance taken by today's major political parties on social welfare. Pupils learn about democracy and then see it in action when electing fellow pupils to positions of responsibility. In this way, the school actively promotes pupils' knowledge and understanding of British values.
44. Economic education is matched well to pupils' ages so that they develop an appropriate understanding of finance. In the early years, children begin to learn about money, such as when 'buying' items from their 'café'. In the prep school, pupils are taught about managing their pocket money so that they develop an understanding of financial responsibility. Senior pupils learn about budgeting, bank accounts, loans and debt. Sixth formers learn about student finances for university. Year 10 and Year 5 pupils are paired on an 'enterprise day' for which they devise a scheme to raise money for charity.
45. Leaders value pupils' opinions and provide plentiful opportunities for them to share their views, including through the effective school council. Pupils are confident that they will be listened to. The Head Girl's team run initiatives to support pupils, including 'big sister' whereby sixth formers are paired with Year 7 pupils, who have shared interests such as sport or music, to act as buddies and helpmates. There is a similar programme where Year 6 pupils support younger pupils to act as mentors.
46. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community by, for example, picking up litter on a local beach, visiting a care home and taking part in conservation projects. Senior pupils help run a variety of clubs, including coding, swimming and science, for local primary school pupils. Pupils also support a range of local, national and international charities, including a local bereavement support group, a children's hospital and a hospice. These charities are chosen democratically by the pupils, who also decide what fundraising activities they will adopt.
47. In the early years, children's social development is promoted by the wide range of activities available. The outside role play area is used to encourage children to communicate with each other imaginatively in 'real life' situations. Staff encourage children to work collaboratively, communicate effectively and to take turns.
48. The school places much emphasis upon the value of community and the importance of respect for all. This is reflected in the importance attached to pupils supporting others and so actively promotes pupils understanding of right and wrong. From an early age, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and their actions. This has resulted in a warm and caring environment where pupils look out for each other, are happy in school and feel safe.
49. The extensive careers programme provides pupils with the information they need to make informed decisions about their choices of subjects, universities and future careers. As well as one-to-one sessions, there are talks about the various routes open to pupils, including apprenticeships. External speakers, including former pupils, share their career experiences. Pupils are encouraged to attend

the 'SIX+' programme that supports pupils at A level and beyond. The school uses an online programme to support pupils as they make career and study choices.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. The relaxed and trusting relationships which exist between staff and pupils contribute to a nurturing school environment in which pupils feel safe. They know they can approach staff if they are worried about anything. Pupils can also report concerns via an online system, post their concerns in a box outside the library or visit the 'wellbeing lodge' where the school nurse, the designated safeguarding lead and the school counsellor are based.
52. When concerns arise, external agencies are consulted appropriately. The school liaises effectively with them so that incidents are suitably managed. Detailed records are kept. Leaders and governors have a good understanding of risks and take robust measures to mitigate these. Leaders produce thorough and appropriate plans to support vulnerable pupils.
53. The school's safeguarding policy follows the most recent guidance. Local governors and the proprietor carry out a comprehensive annual review of procedures, providing robust and effective oversight of safeguarding matters.
54. All staff and volunteers receive suitable safeguarding training on induction, including in relation to risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. This training is regularly updated so that staff know and understand the latest guidance. Staff know how to use the school's online reporting system. They recognise and report safeguarding concerns promptly. Leaders monitor safeguarding concerns closely so that they can identify patterns and support pupils swiftly and effectively.
55. Leaders are trained in safer recruitment and appropriate checks are carried out for all staff and volunteers, and a suitable central record of appointments is kept. The safeguarding governor and the proprietor scrutinise all pre-employment checks on a regular basis.
56. The school ensures that pupils know how to stay safe, including online. The school's internet system has suitable filtering and monitoring systems in place.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Norwich High School for Girls GDST
Department for Education number	926/6123
Registered charity number	306983
Address	Norwich High School 95 Newmarket Road Norwich Norfolk NR2 2HU
Phone number	01603 453265
Email address	admin@nor.gdst.net
Website	www.norwichhigh.gdst.net
Proprietor	Girls' Day School Trust
Chair	Mrs Liz Sillitoe
Headteacher	Miss Alison Sefton
Age range	3–18
Number of pupils	593
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 February 2020

Information about the school

58. Norwich High School for Girls was founded in 1875. It is a single-sex day school for girls aged between 3 and 18 years. It is owned and governed by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). A local board of governors also provides support and guidance. The school comprises a nursery, a pre-preparatory school, a preparatory school, senior school and a sixth form, sharing a site near the city centre.
59. The early years setting comprises one Nursery class and one Reception class.
60. The school has identified 113 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. English is an additional language for 16 pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to give pupils a broad range of opportunities to flourish by ensuring they are nurtured, challenged, and empowered to be the very best they can be. The school states it does this by providing a bespoke environment where girls are known as individuals and are confident to be themselves.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 April – 2 May 2024

63. A team of 5 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. 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 headteacher, 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.

65. 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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