

School inspection report

27 to 29 February 2024

St Paul's Girls' School

Brook Green

Hammersmith

London

W6 7BS

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors ensure that the school's leaders and managers possess the appropriate knowledge and skills to ensure the wellbeing of the pupils. Effective governance provides oversight and challenge for the school to improve continuously.
2. Leaders plan a curriculum that is broad, stimulating and takes into account the needs of the pupils. Shared values, such as how identity is formed from diversity and being bold and ambitious, permeate the curriculum and other activities. The pupils' self-understanding, approach to their learning, and treatment of each other reflect these values.
3. Leaders' carefully planned recruitment of skilled teachers who are provided with an effective programme of continuous professional development is a significant strength of the school. Teachers' expert subject knowledge and understanding of how to promote effective learning creates an environment where pupils are confident to take academic risks. Teaching is carefully planned so that it meets individual needs and also develops pupils' intellectual curiosity. Leaders have developed a system of assessment which emphasises personal progress as well as overall attainment. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points.
4. There is open communication between leaders, staff and pupils, so the views of all members of the community are understood. Easily accessed support systems are in place to support pupils' emotional wellbeing and mental health. Pupils are involved in decision-making, which fosters a sense of value and belonging as they can see changes made as a result of their feedback. Pupils' attitudes reflect leaders' promotion of the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion.
5. Pupils volunteer in school and the local community, developing leadership skills and a sense of service. Older pupils help to organise and lead the extensive range of co-curricular activities and provide both academic and social support of their younger peers.
6. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are few. Leaders have high expectations and communicate them with clarity through the shared values and subsequent teaching. Pupils learn to moderate their own behaviour and are adeptly supported by adults if necessary. Leaders analyse behavioural records, look for potential trends and plan effectively to address any emerging issues.
7. Leaders plan the relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum in consultation with parents. Although it covers the required content, it is not always well matched to the diverse needs of pupils.
8. Facilities are well-maintained. Policies, including health and safety, fire safety, and risk assessment, are followed with care. External advice is used effectively by leaders when necessary, and security measures are in place to ensure a safe learning environment.
9. Leaders maintain a rigorous safeguarding culture, and staff are alert to potential issues. Pupils learn about personal safety and have access to effective support systems. There is prompt communication with external agencies when required. The school has robust recruitment procedures in place.

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 curriculum for RSE is fully matched to the needs of the pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders have high expectations of both staff and pupils across the school and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They have a bold ambition to create a school which enables pupils to feel that everything is possible. Through a carefully planned and enacted strategy, this ambition creates an environment where pupils can develop as future leaders and lead successful adult lives.
11. Leaders are pro-active in promoting pupils' physical, emotional, social, and economic wellbeing. The school's strategic plan is based on the school's aims and values which were co-written by leaders and pupils. This consultation exemplifies the listening culture that informs decision-making throughout the school. Pupils' views are heard through sources which reflect different perspectives in the community. This seeks to mitigate the risk of the opinions of the majority being the only ones heard.
12. The school's strategic plan recognises the need to recruit and continuously develop highly skilled teachers. Leaders are successful in doing so, which contributes directly to the progress made by pupils.
13. There is a highly developed understanding of known risks and an acute awareness that some may be unknown but nevertheless present. Leaders work to reduce risks, such as the risk from fire and movements between different sites. Leaders also identify and mitigate some pupils' desire to achieve high academic outcomes, regardless of their impact on their welfare. Unintended consequences and barriers are identified, and the provision is regularly reviewed.
14. Information that allows current and prospective parents to understand the school's ethos, key policies and how the school keeps pupils safe is readily available. Current parents receive informative reports on their children's progress. Leaders plan carefully how to increase accessibility to the curriculum and facilities to reduce the risk of unintended discrimination. There are appropriate adaptations to teaching and site access has been improved.
15. Leaders use well-planned monitoring systems to review the quality of the school's work and that policies are implemented effectively. Activities include observation of teaching and learning, emotional wellbeing surveys, and the regular review of health and safety provision. They make effective use of external agencies such as the local authority safeguarding team and health and safety consultants to provide specialist advice. The outcome of this advice leads to change, including additional staff training where necessary.
16. Parents are highly supportive of the school. Concerns are resolved quickly and informally in accordance with the published complaints policy, and records reflect any actions leaders take in response.
17. Leaders have created partnerships, providing collaboration with local primary and secondary schools. This develops leadership and personal skills in those pupils involved.
18. Governors provide oversight through the scheduled governing body and committee meetings, review of documents and visits to the school. They bring a breadth of experience to their role and have received appropriate training to evaluate the various aspects of the school including safeguarding. Recently, the governing body has recruited additional information technology and mental health specialists and increased their diversity to further represent the school community.

They ensure that leaders and managers have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their duties effectively.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. An atmosphere of mutual respect is evident throughout the school community, and pupils benefit from the supportive environment created by leaders. Teachers know the pupils well, which facilitates support for individuals. Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes. Academic risk-taking is commonplace, encouraged and celebrated by confident teachers.
21. Pupils have highly developed oracy skills as a consequence of leaders' decision-making to ensure opportunities are provided throughout the curriculum. They listen carefully to each other and offer well-reasoned and articulate responses. Their aesthetic, musical and creative skills and appreciation develop rapidly due to the well-resourced and expertly taught curriculum. Linguistic, numerical and scientific skills are supported by the school's carefully planned language and general science courses for younger pupils. In some subjects, such as computing and music, leaders have developed the school's own GCSE equivalent to broaden and deepen pupils' understanding beyond that of the existing syllabus.
22. Teachers assess pupils' prior learning at the outset of lessons and adapt the content in response. Teacher subject knowledge is high. Leaders enable extensive whole school and departmental training, which has driven development in pedagogy. As a result, staff have improved their skills, such as effective use of questioning and strategies to improve pupils' understanding of how they learn. This depth of teacher knowledge stimulates in pupils an active sense of academic enquiry, which extends beyond the curriculum. Teachers provide individual support in lessons, exploring pupils' understanding, addressing misconceptions, and extending their thinking through targeted questions. Consequently, the pupils are intellectually curious, have an enthusiasm for learning and make good progress from their starting points. Attainment of the pupils at GCSE and A level far exceeds national averages.
23. Pupils are highly motivated, often reading around the topics and adding notes and annotated diagrams to their work to deepen their learning. The regular pattern of homework is a source of anxiety on occasion. However, the pupils recognise they often desire to push themselves and hand in the best work possible. Leaders recognise this risk and mitigate it through strategies such as reading weeks and constant reinforcement of the importance of personal wellbeing.
24. Leaders monitor the implementation of policies to ensure that teaching considers pupils' individual needs, including English as an additional language (EAL), and makes appropriate changes. Adaptions include support with written English and informal conversational language.
25. There is an effective data tracking system in place. The engagement and progress of all pupils are assessed throughout the year. Leaders and teachers use this data to monitor progress and plan additional support. Support includes well-structured programmes from the learning support department. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive suitable support, such as access to a learning mentor and typically progress in line with their peers. Teachers publish lesson slides online so that pupils can pre-read, review or catch-up following absence. Recently, the equality, diversity and inclusion group of pupils and teachers have developed approaches which have increased the understanding of neurodiversity. These approaches are evident in teachers' planning, which allows pupils to access the curriculum in a way in which it suits them.

26. Pupils are proud of their work and teachers' feedback supports their learning. They receive advice in a variety of forms, but they feel that the outcome is they always learn. Pupils appreciate that, even though their work may be of a high standard, their teachers still encourage them to find ways to improve.
27. The extensive range of curricular and co-curricular activities planned by leaders supports the development of knowledge, skills and understanding and provides recreational opportunities. Co-curricular opportunities include chess, model United Nations, debating and an environmental action committee. These contribute to the pupils' progress in technical and social skills.

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. Leaders ensure that the physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils are well supported. Their strategic planning includes relevant staff training and promoting both pupil and parental awareness of potential issues. This has created a culture where issues are recognised and addressed. Open access to the wellbeing centre enables the pupils to drop in to talk or request counselling.
30. Pupils of all ages have an input into the school's operation and, consequently, feel their views are valued. The routine practice of leaders listening to their opinions develops mutual trust and contributes to pupils' self-esteem. Pupils say the school's aims, which they participated in the writing, reflect who they are: bold in their ambitions, and serious, but having fun.
31. Pupils are encouraged to set limits in their study time. They engage in opportunities to relax such as weekly mindfulness sessions in form time and co-curricular activities. They learn to manage setbacks, supported by the teachers who model how to improve their work and embrace their own mistakes. Leaders are aware of the pressures pupils place on themselves to do their best and take steps to alleviate stress when reasonably possible. The process of assessment encourages pupils to focus on personal progress rather than compare themselves to their peers.
32. Leaders set few school rules. Staff and senior pupils lead by example and model positive working relationships. Pupils usually moderate their own behaviour, and are supported on the rare occasions that it is not the case. Consequently, they build trusting relationships and are happy, relaxed and behave notably well.
33. Leaders have created a proactive anti-bullying strategy. Expectations are clear, and supported by the staff and a culture of restorative justice, so that cases of bullying are few. If events occur, staff resolve them suitably. Leaders analyse incidents, seek to identify potential trends, and take appropriate action.
34. Pupils' physical well-being is supported by an extensive physical education curriculum, sport fixtures and co-curricular activities. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and choices as part of the broad personal, health and social education curriculum. Leaders and teachers adapt this curriculum in response to pupil needs, outcomes from surveys, weekly reflection sessions and feedback from pupil ambassadors. Subjects such as religious studies and philosophy, and assemblies successfully develop the pupils' spiritual and moral knowledge by providing opportunities to reflect and deepen understanding.
35. The RSE policy and curriculum is developed by leaders in consultation with parents and pupils. Leaders respond to feedback and make changes. However, pupils' experiences of RSE vary. Although pupils recognise the need for topics such as consent to develop with maturity, the curriculum does not always match their needs. Pupils feel that some content is repetitive, delivered too early or too late. The work of the consent and respect group of older pupils, who volunteer to discuss issues more informally, is appreciated by their younger peers.
36. Teaching spaces and specialist facilities are suitably maintained. Careful planning has ensured that changes made to manage recent building work have not negatively impacted on the quality of

education or safety. Lighting, acoustic management, and the provision of water and toilet facilities meet the requirements.

37. Effective health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment policies are in place. These include fault reporting, rectification, and review. Where appropriate, external advice is sought by leaders. The school has appropriate security measures. Adults adequately supervise pupils. Leaders analyse data such as accidents, and if trends emerge, they act quickly to make changes.
38. Leaders maintain admissions and attendance records in line with regulations. Staff members contact the parents of pupils who are late or absent and information about pupils joining or leaving the school is accurately recorded and shared with the local authority.
39. Appropriate training, facilities and procedures ensure that first aid is administered promptly and competently.

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

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

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

41. Leaders ensure pupils receive impartial and up-to-date careers advice, including opportunities to question visiting speakers and engage in discussion seminars to help shape future career paths. Younger pupils are encouraged to explore a wide variety of possible options. As they become older, tailored personal advice is given. Teachers use both planned and unplanned opportunities to build pupils' understanding of the changing world of work, particularly the influence of emerging technologies. Pupils value this guidance, particularly the support when they apply for entry into higher education. The vast majority gain places at universities in the UK and abroad, many with challenging entry requirements.
42. Curriculum reviews take advice from the pupil-led inclusion committee and have included 'decolonising' the curriculum. Pupils make suggestions to help develop the content, confidently raise concerns and challenge the views of others. They are well prepared for life in British society and actively engage in debate about equality, diversity and inclusion. Teaching fosters an embedded respect for law and public institutions and a tolerance and understanding of difference.
43. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to benefit through the partnership and volunteering programmes. Participation in initiatives such as the local partnership programme and the Jupiter project actively develops leadership skills and raises the aspirations of others. The programmes also encourage pupils to appreciate better the opportunities available to them and the inequalities that exist in society. Year 12 pupils commit to a term of service to others. This service includes supporting in care homes, developing links in the local community, the Thames clean-up project, and working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
44. Older pupils lead the committee responsible for charity awareness and fundraising. They collaborate with their younger peers to organise the charities' fair and coordinate voting to select supported causes. Consequently, participation is high and a further understanding of the democratic process is developed. Pupils recognise the personal freedom and influence they have. They value this, acknowledging their role in creating trust and linking it to life beyond school.
45. The pupils receive an extensive curriculum of financial and economic learning. The programme includes financial literacy, equality, an introduction to capitalism, and the public and private sectors. During the GCSE years, the optional five-week 'business basics' programme has a high uptake amongst pupils.
46. Staff and pupils collaborate in developing the richness of school life. Pupils take responsibility for leading many clubs and societies. They appreciate not only the opportunity to develop leadership skills but also the chance to contribute to the school community.
47. Pupils develop social and cultural knowledge and respect those with different opinions, faiths and beliefs. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, including the equality of characteristics such as race, sex and disability. This development results from the leaders' carefully planned curriculum and co-curricular opportunities which reflect the school's value of identity being forged from diversity.
48. The ethical dilemmas surrounding many issues, for example, gene sequencing of new-born children, are discussed as they emerge in lessons. Pupils examine the benefits and disadvantages, and they

develop personal viewpoints. Debate in societies such as Model United Nations enables pupils to compare and contrast cultural norms and empathise with others' situations. Pupils are respectful of views, considerate in their responses, and supportive of each other.

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

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

50. Staff are alert to potential risks to pupils' safety. Leaders ensure staff, including the safeguarding team and newly recruited staff, are trained in line with the latest guidance. In consequence, issues are quickly identified and managed. Safeguarding information is managed effectively, balancing appropriate sharing with confidentiality.
51. Leaders teach pupils to understand the importance of personal safeguarding. Approaches such as encouraging friendships between younger peers in the same travel area make a positive contribution to this. Systems for preventing, reporting and managing child-on-child abuse are effective. Pupils can identify a person to whom they could go, and be listened to, if worried.
52. Safeguarding leaders work effectively with a wide range of outside agencies. They understand the referral systems of the individual London boroughs and act accordingly. When appropriate, specialist advice is sought and acted upon. Robust procedures are in place for managing the conduct of staff, including recording any low-level concerns. The strategy for preventing radicalism is embedded and staff appropriately trained to minimise the risk to pupils.
53. Pupils know how to access online resources safely. All school-issued devices access the internet via the school's system, regardless of location. When the robust filtering and monitoring systems detect potential issues, the safeguarding team are notified immediately. Consequent liaison with form tutors ensures that individuals are supported appropriately.
54. The policy for recruitment of suitable staff and volunteers is implemented effectively and ensures a consistency of practice. Appropriate checks are done prior to adults beginning work at the school and these checks are suitably recorded.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	St Paul's Girls' School
Department for Education number	205/6011
Registered charity number	1119613
Address	St Paul's Girls' School Brook Green Hammersmith London W6 7BS
Phone number	02076032288
Email address	frontoffice@spgs.org
Website	www.spgs.org
Proprietor	St Paul's Girls' School
Chair	Mr Simon Wathen
High mistress	Mrs Sarah Fletcher
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	805
Date of previous inspection	24 to 26 September 2019

Information about the school

56. St Paul's Girls' School is an independent day school for female pupils aged between 11 and 18 years. The school, founded in 1904, is a charitable trust, and since 2007, a company limited by guarantee, whose governors hold proprietorial responsibility. The high mistress has been in post since August 2017. The school appointed a new chair of governors in September 2020.
57. The school has identified 62 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
58. English is an additional language for three pupils.
59. The school states its aims are to educate women to fulfil their potential, giving them the skills and confidence to take their place with pride in a modernising and fast-moving world. The school seeks to enable its students to become thinkers and leaders, to stimulate intellectual curiosity and open young minds to new ideas.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

27 to 29 February 2024

60. A team of seven 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 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
- 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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