

School inspection report

19 September 2023 to 21 September 2023

Lyonsdown School

3, Richmond Road
New Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN5 1SA

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 understand their responsibilities and have appropriate skills to actively support pupil wellbeing. They ensure that, in line with the school motto, pupils are 'kind, bold, brave and the best they can be'. Leaders throughout the school ensure that through a curriculum that underpins the development of all aspects of pupil wellbeing, pupils receive a broad education that enables them to make good progress.
2. The proprietor, through the governing body, ensures that all aspects of school life are suitably reviewed and evaluated. They use the information to ensure that leaders plan and appropriately prioritise for future school improvement. Governors have the appropriate skills and knowledge to challenge and hold leaders to account.
3. Leaders emphasise the importance of the early acquisition of the key skills of phonic awareness and number work in the early years. This continues to underpin learning in literacy and numeracy throughout the school. By the time pupils leave the school, they have well-developed knowledge and skills in these subject areas.
4. Pupils also achieve well in the other areas of learning. Their creative skills are particularly well developed. Teaching engages the interest of pupils. However, teachers do not always make best use of their knowledge of pupils' prior attainment to ensure that learning consistently meets the needs of pupils.
5. Leaders prioritise good mental health and wellbeing as being important in enabling pupils to 'be the best they can be'. Leaders have reviewed the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme to ensure there are a variety of appropriate opportunities to enable pupils to learn various strategies to build their emotional resilience. While most pupils behave well, leaders have not developed a consistent approach to help staff manage low-level behaviour incidents when they occur.
6. A strong sense of community belonging pervades the school. Pupils have a positive sense of how they can contribute and make a difference to the school community. The school is beginning to build partnerships through the Mill Hill School Foundation and through the parent body to further broaden the pupils' horizons and encourage outreach to the wider community.

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

- Ensure systematic use of evidence from prior learning and assessment, so that teaching is consistently adapted and well planned to meet the needs of all groups of pupils.
- Ensure that strategies to deal with minor behaviour infringements are in place and reflected in the behaviour policy.
- Build on the commitment the pupils make to their school community by broadening their experiences in contributing to the wider local and regional communities.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders conduct an effective self-evaluation process, which has identified areas they wish to change and further improve. As an outcome of this, governors have recently enhanced leadership roles and expanded them to include a new post with responsibility for development of teaching and learning. This role adds capacity to leaders' work to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. This monitoring provides teachers with helpful developmental feedback to further enhance their practice and continually improve outcomes for pupils.
8. Leaders ensure that appropriate information is made available to parents on the school website or via the school office. Parents receive information about their child's attainment and progress. Leaders ensure that many appropriate policies are effectively implemented. These policies are disseminated effectively and understood by all staff. The behaviour policy and the assessment and marking policy however do not fully support teachers when trying to manage minor behavioural issues or planning to meet the needs of pupils across the ability range.
9. Leaders and governors enable the school to meet its aims through a focus on the 'Lyonsdown learning habits' of independence, curiosity, creativity, collaboration, perseverance and reflection, which are fully embedded into the curriculum.
10. Leaders provide a breadth of clubs and activities which improve pupils' knowledge and skills in areas such as creative and physical learning.
11. Governors monitor leaders' work systematically through sub-committees and by discussions with directors who have specific oversight of areas within the foundation, such as safeguarding. Governors provide appropriate challenge and leaders report regularly to the governing body regarding their areas of responsibility. The Director of Safeguarding provides a thorough annual safeguarding review enabling governors and leaders to reflect on the school's practice. As a result of the review, leaders provide helpful guidance to ensure that appropriate attention is given to all areas of up-to-date legislation and requirements.
12. Governors ensure that leaders are vigilant on matters that affect the health and safety of pupils. The risk assessment policy guides staff in how to identify and minimise risks. Staff carry out regular risk assessments to ensure that the school environment and school trips are as safe as possible for pupils. Governors have been proactive in managing the change associated with becoming part of the Mill Hill School Foundation. The impact of this has been positive in supporting leaders through the use of relevant policies and systems across the schools in the Foundation. In this way, leaders are building on best practice across the foundation.
13. Leaders promote mutual respect between all groups of pupils. The accessibility strategy, to ensure equality of access for all pupils, is reviewed and updated regularly.

14. Governors ensure that leaders in the early years provide a diverse curriculum to meet the needs and interests of the children. This is regularly reviewed by the whole teaching team, with input from parents. Good use is made of the woodland environment as staff engage and develop the interest children have in the natural world. Leaders have planned opportunities in the curriculum to use the woodland resource to develop children's vocabulary and early mathematical concepts. Reports to parents give appropriate information about progress against the early learning goals and guidance on their child's next steps. The positive relationships between adults and children in the early years help to ensure that children are happy and thrive.

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

15. Leaders have developed a suitable curriculum that is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets the needs of pupils. Leaders monitor teaching and learning including the specialist support that some pupils receive to develop their skills. Pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress.
16. Leaders have maintained a sharp focus on the early development of linguistic and mathematical knowledge and skills. This has resulted in pupils from an early age becoming confident speakers who enjoy reading and do so with competent fluency and understanding of complex vocabulary. Whilst pupils have highly developed number skills, they have more limited opportunities to apply their understanding through problem solving activities.
17. The technology curriculum is supported by a good range of quality resources. Pupils develop a wide range of skills and knowledge in technology, and they have many opportunities to apply these skills in other subjects. Pupils are highly creative. They use a variety of media confidently in their artwork. Effective cross-curricular planning in subjects such as history, music, art and drama enables pupils to make links with their knowledge and develop a thorough understanding of historical events.
18. Pupils attain well and almost all attain entry to local selective state and independent schools of their choice.
19. Most teaching engages pupils so that pupils enjoy their experiences and are happy in school. Teaching encourages pupils to be intellectually curious, especially when discussing their work. In most lessons where careful planning takes into account the needs of pupils and enables them to be active learners, pupils make rapid progress. However, some teaching does not meet the needs of all groups of pupils by building on previous learning effectively to challenge and support pupils to achieve even more.
20. In the early years teachers identify when they need to provide individual support to children to develop their early reading or numeracy skills and provide the help that is needed. Teachers also provide opportunities for children to explore and practise concepts for themselves through well-resourced and stimulating activities. Teachers conduct regular assessments and constantly adapt their planning to ensure all children make good progress. Teachers pay appropriate attention to accurate letter formation and a sound understanding of the sounds letters make, to underpin future development of reading and writing.
21. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is suitably enriched by a varied programme of trips, visits and clubs that stimulate and spark interest in pupils. These enable pupils to apply their skills with increasing independence.

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

22. Leaders ensure that pupils understand the importance of respecting other people. A comprehensive religious education and assembly programme ensures that pupils have a well-developed understanding of not only the various world faiths but also the impact of faith on those who believe. Individual reflection is encouraged using quiet spaces in the school grounds and through meditation practices. Pupils have demonstrated meditation techniques to their peers in assemblies, to share their techniques to promote good mental health. Pupils are very spiritually aware because of the many opportunities to share different faith practices of families, with their peers from across the school community.
23. Leaders promote physical and emotional wellbeing by ensuring access to high-quality sports resources and facilities away from the school site to supplement those on site. This enables pupils to develop an appreciation of, and skills in, a wide range of physical activities. Pupils play a variety of team sports including football. Pupils enjoy clubs such as yoga and outdoor adventure activities on residential trips. These and other opportunities enable pupils to appreciate the importance of good physical and emotional health.
24. Leaders provide an effectively planned and implemented PSHE programme, which is in line with the school's ethos and includes a suitable relationships education curriculum that meets the needs of the pupils. The PSHE programme is supplemented by a series of lessons focused on wellbeing, which pupils value and enjoy. The curriculum includes a variety of research-led strategies which enable pupils to develop positive strategies to support their mental health. Pupils' well-developed understanding of the importance of mental health is supported by the provision of the 'Sparkle room'. This is a space where pupils can talk through any concerns and feel supported. Pupils know that they have a variety of people to whom they can turn for support, but some pupils do not always use this provision for help with minor disagreements.
25. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave very well in lessons, when working with others and when moving around the school. Pupils are always supervised appropriately. The school's behaviour policy promotes positive behaviour strategies and rewards and is largely effective. The policy sets out clear sanctions and approaches to deal with poor behaviour. However, the policy is not explicitly clear to pupils or to all staff how more minor infringements will be managed. Some pupils do not feel that they are always supported in solving minor friendship issues or that appropriate action is taken to resolve issues.
26. Staff deal with any bullying appropriately. The effective anti-bullying strategy is implemented well and is supported by parents.
27. Leaders ensure that the school premises are well maintained and are a safe environment for pupils. Suitable precautions are taken to reduce the risk from fire. The school's evacuation procedures are well understood and practised. Leaders regularly review the fire risk assessment and swiftly implement any recommendations to mitigate risks.

28. Leaders provide a suitable place for pupils to receive medical help. Suitably trained staff provide first aid when necessary.
29. Leaders ensure that the school's admission and attendance register is suitably maintained. Staff are vigilant in following up destinations for school leavers to ensure that pupils are safe.
30. Staff in the early years know the children well and support them to resolve any small disputes that arise. The use of the outside and woodland environment promotes children's physical development. For example, teachers design enjoyable activities using large tweezers to pick up objects to promote the development of children's fine motor skills.

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 school encourages pupils to value and understand various cultures in British society and the wider world. This understanding is developed through the curriculum and the well thought through programme of assemblies. French lessons enable pupils to learn about both the language and the culture of France, with Year 5 pupils having French pen pals.
32. The curriculum provides opportunities to reflect on current affairs in an impartial way. Pupils have a broad knowledge of public institutions and services in Britain. Leaders ensure fundamental British values are actively promoted. For example, pupils have many opportunities to experience democratic action in school life. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and the importance of rules in society. This is embedded through opportunities to reflect and establish their own class rules. There is an emphasis on good manners and thinking of others. Pupils know that people have different views and that it is right that these varying opinions should be respected.
33. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is flexible to adapt to the emerging needs of pupils, to answer questions and quell anxieties when change occurs, so that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their lives and for life in British society. Older pupils are supported through exam preparation and interview techniques. They take part in activities to develop their understanding of citizenship. Leaders ensure that transition to other schools and between year groups is well-managed. The PSHE curriculum ensures coverage of topics which enable pupils to develop social skills.
34. Pupils take initiative and contribute positively to their school community. For example, Year 6 pupils all have positions of responsibility with some roles in other year groups too. The pupil council has an active voice within the school. The council has initiated change, such as in the provision of healthy food, the style of teaching pupils value and in the provision of a therapy dog to help them engage with reading and promote emotional awareness.
35. Opportunities for pupils to understand how they can make effective contributions to their wider community are more limited. Pupils' charity ambassadors ensure pupils support local and national charities. Pupils contribute to their wider community through visits to groups in need and supporting initiatives from local community leaders.
36. Leaders ensure children in the early years are helped to develop their social skills through a range of activities that involve learning to work and play well together. Resources to enable teachers to fully promote cultural awareness reflecting all of British society are more limited. Children interact positively with one another and share resources effectively to learn collaboratively. They confidently interact with members of staff to express their needs.

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. Leaders ensure that suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils, including those in the early years, are in place and implemented effectively.
38. All staff, including those in positions of responsibility are well trained both when they join the school and through regular updates. Staff fully understand their roles in keeping children safe.
39. Staff report any safeguarding concerns to the appropriate person as soon as issues are known. The school liaises appropriately and in a timely manner with external agencies when the need arises. Leaders of safeguarding also take prompt action where concerns are raised, or incidents occur.
40. Pupils know that they have a variety of people to whom they can turn for support. Pupils receive a supportive response when they express concerns, and adults take appropriate action.
41. Pupils understand how to keep themselves and others safe, including when online. Leaders have reflected on their guidance for pupils and parents and are acting to enhance knowledge and understanding in this area. Filtering and monitoring of the use of technology within the school is in place and appropriate.
42. Staff recruitment procedures follow all relevant guidance, and a suitable register of pre-appointment checks is maintained. Leaders oversee processes regularly. They recently identified an issue and took action to ensure all required checks are completed before adults begin working in the school.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to safeguarding:

All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	Lyonsdown School
Department for Education number	302/6006
Registered charity number	312591
Address	3 Richmond Road New Barnet Hertfordshire EN5 1SA
Website	www.lyonsdownschool.co.uk
Proprietor	The Mill Hill School Foundation
Chair	Mr Elliot Lipton
Headteacher	Mrs Rittu Hall
Age range	3 to 11
Number of pupils	155
Date of previous inspection	18–20 June 2019

Information about the school

43. Lyonsdown School is for female pupils aged 3–11. The school is in Barnet in North London. It was founded in 1906 and became a charitable trust administered by a board of governors in 1973. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher took up post in January 2022. The school became part of the Mill Hill School Foundation in March 2022, which is a registered charity made up of eight schools. The Court of Governors govern the school.
44. There are 33 pupils in the early years comprising one pre-reception and one reception class.
45. The school has identified eight pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
46. English is an additional language for six pupils.
47. The school states that its aims are to deliver an education that supports personal success, to encourage girls to enjoy childhood, to develop a Lyonsdown learner, to spark and cultivate interests, to develop strong community minded pupils, to enable the achievement of personal success by collaborating as a school family.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 19 to 21 September 2023

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

48. The inspectors:
- spoke to pupils, leaders, teachers and the chair of governors
 - observed lessons
 - undertook learning walks with members of the school leadership
 - evaluated school policies and supporting documentation
 - visited the school premises including those for the early years setting
 - looked at examples of pupils' work and discussed these with leaders and pupils.
49. 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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