

School inspection report

25 to 27 June 2024

The Mulberry House School

7 Minster Road
West Hampstead
London
NW2 3SD

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 undertake systematic and regular review of the school's success in achieving its aims and promoting pupils' wellbeing. They foster a culture in which the views and ideas of adults and children are sought and given serious consideration. Pupils develop a mature understanding of their rights and responsibilities and an understanding of how they can improve their learning.
2. Leaders have implemented a wide programme of activities to enable pupils to embody British values as active citizens in the school and wider community. This is a significant strength of the school. Pupils have a sophisticated knowledge and appreciation of human rights. They use the opportunities provided to make their voices heard to identify and enact means of improving their school and the wider world. Pupils initiate and run clubs, lobby politicians, and create new laws for the school in collaboration with school leaders. They are confident and self-assured, ready to challenge injustices and suggest solutions to resolve them.
3. Leaders implement a curriculum that extends children's skills, knowledge and understanding from the earliest age. Teachers deliver this curriculum effectively so that pupils are well prepared for each new stage in the school and beyond. Teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils. They provide challenging activities alongside effective support and feedback so that pupils make good progress. Children in the early years make good progress over time. However, their progress is limited at times when activities are not sufficiently matched to their ages and prior attainment.
4. Leaders promote pupils' mental and physical health and wellbeing. They promote respect and trust between everyone in the school community through the carefully planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum alongside a wide range of activities and events. This includes in the early years, where staff establish supportive relationships with children in the early years so that they grow in confidence and self-awareness. Older pupils have a mature sense of responsibility as to how they should behave and care for others.
5. Leaders actively promote the safeguarding of the pupils through the effective implementation of suitable policies and procedures. Adults in the school are well trained and have a secure sense of their responsibilities. The directors exercise close oversight of safeguarding through detailed reports and regular visits. Pupils can identify trusted adults in school and are confident that their concerns are taken seriously and resolved effectively.

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 adults in the early years provide activities which are precisely tailored to the ages and prior attainment of children.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing through the effective implementation of suitable policies and procedures. Leaders at all levels have the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They review processes regularly and systematically to ensure that they are consistently meeting the Standards and other statutory requirements, including those in the early years.
7. The directors maintain effective oversight of the school through regular visits and detailed reports on all aspects of school life. They seek out external expertise and advice on specialist areas of provision as appropriate to support leaders in ensuring the Standards and early years requirements are met consistently.
8. Leaders regularly review where the school could further improve provision for pupils. Senior leaders work with subject and year group leaders to evaluate their areas of responsibility. They prioritise the wellbeing of pupils in all their self-evaluation. Leaders are aspirational for pupils, successfully implementing well-researched initiatives to improve outcomes for pupils. Leaders encourage new ideas, implement new approaches carefully and review the effectiveness of their work thoroughly and systematically.
9. Leaders provide suitable training and information for staff and other adults in the school so that they understand their responsibilities in implementing agreed policies and processes. Adults throughout the school regularly reinforce school values, expectations and procedures. Pupils understand and play their part in upholding and implementing these values.
10. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably qualified for their roles. For example, leaders in the early years provide staff with training in a range of learning, development, health and safety and child protection, relevant to the youngest children. Leaders facilitate appropriate additional training to implement any new initiatives. As a result, initiatives such as new teaching approaches in science, the teaching of human rights, and the introduction pupils' learning strategies are well implemented and delivered.
11. Leaders ensure that all appropriate information is provided to parents and other relevant stakeholders. Policies and procedures are available on the school website, or upon request. Leaders provide information to parents about their children's progress and attainment. Parental complaints are managed in line with the school's stated procedures, which are aligned with relevant statutory guidance. Leaders liaise effectively with relevant external agencies when there are concerns about pupils.
12. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, including through the drawing up and implementation of an appropriate accessibility plan.
13. Leaders act appropriately to identify and mitigate the specific risks that they need to consider and mitigate, including those related to the school's locality, the school environment and staff recruitment. Staff, including those in the early years, regularly check the learning environment, and any risks to pupils are swiftly addressed. Leaders are constantly alert to new risks that may arise.

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

14. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders implement a wide-ranging curriculum that enables pupils to acquire and apply skills, knowledge and understanding across a broad scope of subject areas. This includes a wide range of clubs and activities outside lessons to enable pupils to develop and extend their skills and interests. Pupils take an active part in selecting and running these activities in response to the requests of their peers.
16. Leaders place high priority of supporting children's language and communication. Children develop their language skills quickly through daily opportunities to engage in conversation with their peers and adults. As they get older, pupils articulate their views and present their perspectives clearly. They are confident and considerate in debate and discussion, respecting everyone's right to express their views. Leaders provide pupils from an early age to participate in externally accredited courses and examinations, such as the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), in which pupils participate with high levels of success.
17. Teachers identify the needs of pupils who speak English as a second language and provide personalised support so that they develop their language skills effectively and make good progress alongside their peers.
18. Teachers are well trained to deliver the curriculum and knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. They make effective use of good-quality resources to engage pupils' interest and provide them with a range of learning experiences. Teachers use a range of strategies to help pupils develop a richer understanding of subjects. For example, teachers use questioning adeptly, giving pupils time to reflect and give reasoned answers, and apply their learning in more complex ways.
19. Leaders and teachers make effective use of assessment information to identify pupils' needs and implement strategies to support their progress. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils receive personalised support in lessons so that they can access the same curriculum as their peers and learn effectively. Teachers provide effective regular guidance in lessons and in books which helps all pupils to understand how to improve. As a result, pupils make good progress and are well prepared to move on to the next stages in their education, including to selective destination schools.
20. Most adults in the early years have a good understanding of what children know and can do, and their different areas of interest. Suitable planning is in place that takes account of the different ages of children. Adults use regular assessments to identify where children need additional or different activities or adaptations. Most adults provide a range of creative activities that support children's development. On occasion activities are not precisely matched to the ages, needs and prior attainment of individual children. When this occurs, some children find activities too hard, while others find them too easy.
21. Teachers manage class time well and employ successful strategies to foster pupils' positive behaviour in lessons. As a result, pupils are highly motivated, and acquire a sophisticated understanding of topics and skills in their humanities, mathematics and science lessons. They demonstrate mature creativity in their art and design work and through the performing arts. Pupils are adept when using technology for control purposes and in order to pursue individual research.

22. As they get older, pupils acquire critical thinking skills and connect their learning across different subjects. They do this with high levels of independence. This is well supported by the school's own learning strategies, known as 'Mulberry Mindsets'. These strategies help pupils be confident to use these strategies when learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge. They implement these on a daily basis, such as when discussing problems with their peers and learning from their mistakes.

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

23. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

24. Leaders consistently promote and role model mutual respect. They actively promote a culture of trust and active listening, where everyone's rights and responsibilities are understood and acknowledged. They ensure that pupils and adults demonstrate these in their interactions. The school's culture supports pupils to develop a mature understanding of how to behave and treat others, as well as self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities.
25. Leaders ensure that the PSHE and relationships education curriculum are well planned and delivered by staff. Staff encourage pupils to debate and share their ideas openly. This helps pupils to develop a deep understanding of how to foster positive friendships with their peers as well as the different relationships they may find in the wider world. Pupils develop their understanding of the world around them, their place within it and how to establish and maintain healthy relationships.
26. Leaders encourage pupils to reflect on non-material features of life through discussions in PSHE lessons and quiet times in assemblies. This helps pupils learn to appreciate aspects such as family and human rights, understanding their importance to their own wellbeing. Pupils care about others and the environment. They actively seek ways in which to improve the school environment so that they may benefit from the natural world, such as through the creation of a wellbeing garden in the school grounds.
27. Adults maintain positive and supportive relationships with children from the start, fostering good behaviour and supportive peer interactions. Adults actively promote pupils' understanding of right and wrong, and the school's expectations and values. They help pupils to think about right and wrong when writing the class charter. They help pupils use strategies to identify their feelings and ways in which they can improve their behaviour. Staff implement the school's behaviour policy fairly and consistently, role-modelling mutual respect. As a result, pupils behave well, and instances of bullying are rare.
28. The youngest children's personal and emotional development are well supported in the early years. Adults have a detailed understanding of the individual needs of children. They adapt activities using storytelling and puppetry to help children to understand the feelings of others. As a result, children develop patience and regulate their own behaviour. They take turns and behave kindly towards one another.
29. Leaders prioritise pupils' physical development. The youngest children develop their fine and gross motor skills in the outdoor environment and well-resourced classrooms. Pupils of all ages benefit from a well-planned physical education and sports programme, effectively delivered by specialist staff. Pupils broaden their experience through sport-focused visits and visitors as well as clubs and school events. Teachers make meaningful links between physical education and science so that pupils understand the importance of exercise in maintaining good physical health. Pupils learn about the importance of maintaining their own health and hygiene, and are supported in this by the provision of healthy options at lunch and snack times
30. Leaders manage their responsibilities related to health and safety and fire prevention measures systematically and rigorously. They implement effective arrangements to ensure the security of the site and pupils. The premises are suitable for the learning and recreational activities and are well

maintained. Pupil who are injured or unwell are cared for by qualified staff in suitable accommodation.

31. Leaders deploy suitably trained staff to appropriately supervise pupils during the school day, including in the early years. They maintain detailed attendance and admissions registers and monitor these effectively to ensure the wellbeing of pupils. They ensure that they inform the local authority, as required, on pupils who transition into or out of the school at non-standard points.

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

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

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

33. Leaders have planned and implemented a PSHE curriculum which prepares pupils, in an age-appropriate way, to be respectful, kind and considerate members of British society. This is supported by other curriculum areas, and a range of school events and activities. Leaders ensure that an appreciation of individuality and human rights are threaded and fully embedded through all aspects of school life. Pupils have a highly developed understanding of rights such as liberty, respect, democracy, law and tolerance.
34. Pupils actively advocate the importance of people's rights to voice their opinions and make their own choices. Leaders' consistent promotion of the right to freedom of expression helps pupils understand the need to respect people whose views differ from their own. Pupils challenge stereotypes and discrimination, such as when discussing non-gender specific casting of the Year 2 leavers' production or discussing the allocation of roles within school.
35. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the faiths and cultures of people within their school and the wider world. Pupils develop a mature understanding of other people's faiths and cultures through the religious education curriculum, visits from parents and school events. Pupils share a conviction that all should be treated with respect, understanding that everyone is unique and should be valued.
36. Pupils appreciate the importance of contributing to the local community. They value the visits from adults working in important jobs, such as the health service. Pupils contribute extensively to the local community through activities such as litter picking and visits to a residential home. Pupils are active in identifying charities to support and the means by which they might raise funds to do so, such as through the involvement of the whole school in age-appropriate sponsored walks in support of WaterAid.
37. Pupils understand the importance of values such as democracy and responsibility. For example, pupils vote for the members of the school's pupil parliament. They are taught about campaigning, looking for candidates who represent their views and the voting process. Pupils who are voted to become pupil members of Parliament (pupil MPs) listen and seek ways to enhance the lives of others in their school. They establish and run clubs and the pupil buddy programme. They enthusiastically take on responsibility for the wider community through sharing their concerns with local politicians. They are exceptionally high-quality role models for others in the school.
38. Pupils have a thorough understanding of right and wrong and use this in how they interact with others. Pupils actively promote their class charters and the pupil parliament laws. Pupils are taught how to understand the feelings of others and the ways in which they can make amends when they upset their peers.
39. As they get older, pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility towards others. For example, they are adept and pro-active in identifying other pupils who may need their help. They exhibit high levels of independence in taking action to support their peers. For example, unhesitatingly seeking the right support for peers who are upset, supporting peers in lessons, sharing resources and learning materials, and sacrificing a win in a race to support classmates who had fallen over.

40. Children in the early years quickly learn to play cooperatively with their peers and to make good friendships. Leaders respond swiftly to help children to develop their social skills. As a result, children share resources and include others in their play. They learn to take turns and to take the feelings of their peers into account with the support and encouragement of adults in the setting.
41. Pupils of all ages develop their economic understanding at an age-appropriate level. The youngest children in the early years learn about the different methods of payment, including electronic payment systems. As they get older, pupils learn through increasingly complex activities, including making and selling food at the school's annual market, calculating costs and profits when selling their products to parents.

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

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

Safeguarding

43. Leaders have drawn up suitable policies and procedures to safeguard pupils that take account of all appropriate guidance. They ensure that safeguarding policies and practice are clearly understood and implemented effectively. The directors maintain effective oversight of leaders' effectiveness through a range of activity including an annual review of safeguarding procedures, regular reports, and visits to the school.
44. Staff, directors and those with safeguarding responsibilities are suitably trained. Adults receive appropriate induction training prior to working with pupils, and regular ongoing training. Staff understand the code of conduct and their responsibility to report any concerns about pupils or adults. Staff identify, report and record concerns in line with school procedures. Leaders manage these in accordance with statutory guidance and liaise with a range of relevant external agencies. Leaders maintain records securely.
45. Leaders understand the safeguarding risks which are specific to the location of the school and take suitable steps to manage these. They have drawn up an appropriate strategy to minimise a range of risks, including those related to radicalisation.
46. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that their concerns will be listened to and acted upon by trusted adults. They learn about how to stay safe, including when working online, through PSHE and computing lessons. Pupils put their learning into practice on a daily basis. Pupils learn about how to promote their physical safety, including when leaving or arriving at school and when on school premises. They are aware of the potential dangers from traffic and move sensibly and carefully around the school buildings.
47. Leaders have implemented suitable systems for filtering and monitoring online activity in the school. Pupils' and adults' online activity is monitored regularly, and appropriate steps taken when related concerns arise. Staff in the early years and throughout the school understand and adhere to the school's policy, including processes regarding the use of mobile devices when working with children.
48. Leaders undertake the necessary checks on adults to ensure their suitability to work with pupils. These checks are recorded as required in a single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	The Mulberry House School
Department for Education number	202/6392
Address	The Mulberry House School 7 Minster Road West Hampstead London NW2 3SD
Phone number	02084 527340
Email address	info@mulberryhouseschool.com
Website	www.mulberryhouseschool.com
Proprietor	The Mulberry House School Ltd
Chair	Ms Cari Binet-Fauvel
Headteacher	Miss Victoria Playford
Age range	2 to 7
Number of pupils	219
Date of previous inspection	11 to 12 March 2020

Information about the school

50. The Mulberry House School is a co-educational day school located in north-west London. It was founded in 1989 by Bethan Lewis-Powell, its first headteacher and proprietor. Since the last inspection, the ownership of the school has transferred to a limited company. The school has been governed by a board of directors since July 2023. The school comprises two sections: the First School for children aged two years and the Second School for pupils aged three to seven years. These are located in separate buildings on different sites a few minutes' walk apart.
51. There are 187 children in the early years. The setting comprises three classes for children aged two years, six classes for those aged three to four years, and a single Reception class.
52. The school has identified three pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
53. English is an additional language for 46 pupils, of whom four receive support for their English.
54. The school states its aims are to foster pupils' love of learning whilst preparing them for the next stage in their education. It seeks to stimulate kindness and collaboration in its pupils alongside the ability to think creatively and a motivation to learn. The school aims to provide pupils with individual challenge so as to enhance their emotional, intellectual and physical development.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

25 to 27 June 2024

55. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

56. 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
- discussion with the chair and a director
- 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.

57. 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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