



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**Blackheath High School GDST**

**March 2022**

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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	Blackheath High School			
<b>DfE number</b>	203/6295			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	306983			
<b>Address</b>	Blackheath High School Vanbrugh Park London SE3 7AG			
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8853 2929			
<b>Email address</b>	info@bla.gdst.net			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Carol Chandler-Thompson			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Girls' Day School Trust			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	754			
	<b>EYFS</b>	82	<b>Juniors</b>	253
	<b>Seniors</b>	340	<b>Sixth Form</b>	79
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22 to 25 March 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Blackheath High School is an independent day school for female pupils aged between 3 and 18. The school first opened in 1880 in Blackheath and the junior school remained on this site when the senior school moved to its current location in Vanbrugh Park. The school is divided into Early Years, a junior school, a senior school and a sixth form.
- 1.2 The school is part of the Girls' Day School Trust which is a registered charity, controlled by a council of trustees. There is also a local governing body for the school.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection the redevelopment of the site has been completed and there have been changes within the leadership and governance teams.
- 1.4 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.5 The school seeks to inspire and equip its pupils to strive for personal excellence in all their intellectual, physical, creative, cultural, social and moral endeavours. It aims to prepare and empower pupils for the future by providing an atmosphere in which academic curiosity is cultivated, confidence is built, and a balanced, open-minded outlook is nurtured.

### About the pupils

- 1.6 Pupils come from a wide geographical catchment that covers the southern part of Greater London. The majority of pupils live in the Greenwich and Blackheath areas and come from a broad range of family backgrounds. The school has identified 107 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), primarily dyslexia and linked needs, all of whom have additional specialist help. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 42 pupils, of whom 6 have additional support with their English. The school provides challenge and enrichment opportunities for all its pupils, including those identified as more able, in order for them to achieve their full potential.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2019 to 2021, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2019 to 2021 have confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.7 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.8 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.9 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.10 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.13 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

## **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

2.14 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

**2.15 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.16 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.17 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.18 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

**2.19 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.20 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.21 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

**The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

#### Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils show a high level of knowledge, skills and understanding across the school.
- Pupils are highly articulate and effective listeners and communicators, both orally and in their written work.
- Pupils make excellent progress with their work, all through the school.
- Pupils work very effectively both as independent and collaborative learners.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils are highly confident and resilient individuals, who help determine their own learning and development.
- Pupils show high levels of respect for each other as individuals and celebrate the diversity of their community.
- Pupils have a deep sense of personal responsibility and support each other fully in achieving their common goals.
- Pupils involve themselves wholeheartedly with life in school and contribute fully and significantly to their community.

#### Recommendation

3.3 The school should make the following improvement:

- Ensure all pupils across the school develop their confidence and engage fully and independently in all their lessons.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils at the school achieve a high standard of results, exceeding the predictions from standardised assessments at every level. Over a third of pupils were awarded A\* or A grades at A level and nearly two-thirds received the highest grades at GCSE. Centre assessed grades in 2020 and 2021 show results were consistent with this attainment. Pupils with SEND and EAL also achieve results which are above expectations in line with the main cohort. Almost all of Year 13 leavers go onto university with a large majority going to their first-choice destinations at competitive institutions, to study a variety of



courses. Data from the junior school also indicates that the majority of pupils from the EYFS upwards, are working at levels which are above expectations for their chronological age. Pupils make strong progress across the school and achieve high standards in their daily work, supported by engaging and effective teaching which understands the needs of all pupils and challenges them to make the most of their potential.

- 3.6 Pupils display an excellent knowledge of their subjects throughout the school in all areas of the curriculum. In the junior school pupils display excellent physical skills, decidedly strong technological skills, high levels of musicality and advanced mathematical skills. In the senior school, pupils employ a range of creative skills to enhance their learning, as seen in a sixth form English lesson, analysing poems by *Seamus Heaney*. They involve themselves fully in their work, as seen in a senior history lesson where pupils were discussing perceptively the New Deal in America of the 1930s. Pupils show a particularly strong level of skill and understanding in both the science and creative subjects, reflected in their high grades in public examinations. Pupils work confidently and develop their skills successfully, in an environment which is non-judgemental and where it is recognised that making mistakes is an excellent way to learn. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents commented on their children being challenged and supported equally, so they feel encouraged and are able to achieve their potential. Pupils also declared that their skills and understanding were improving continually, through their lessons.
- 3.7 Pupils in the senior school are highly articulate communicators inside and outside of the classroom. They listen carefully to each other, contribute fully to discussions and produce thoughtful and detailed written work. This was seen both in lessons and in the scrutiny of written work, across all year groups. Pupils are helped in their learning by constructive feedback from teaching, both in their books and on their electronic devices. From an early age pupils make rapid progress with their reading and writing. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils showed highly impressive linguistic skills as they considered the meaning of the aspect of *The Rabbits* story, with detailed explanations and links being made to previous learning. The pupils' vivid appreciation of the context of the story enabled the development of sophisticated ideas and provided suggested motivation for the characters. Pupils in the junior school develop excellent communication skills through their reading, through writing creatively and opportunities to speak in public, where their oracy is particularly strong. They are also excellent listeners as they are keen to learn and make progress. In a junior humanities lesson, several pupils utilised appropriate terminology about the Mayan civilisation and slavery and enjoyed giving their own insights into hierarchical organisations such as the government. Pupils in a sixth form lesson in modern foreign languages, expertly delivered presentations in French and answered spontaneous questions from the group, displaying a mature confidence when handling ideas and information in the target language.
- 3.8 Pupils display excellent attitudes to learning in fulfilment of the school's aim to create a positive environment in which all pupils can feel confident and want to make the most of their learning. Pupils are equally successful as independent and collaborative learners from the earliest age. Children in the EYFS show considerable independence in selecting their activities. Junior pupils initiate collaborative opportunities to stretch their understanding, practising their ideas in a way that allows refinement and an effective final submission or response. In the senior school, pupils are highly focused in class and clearly want to improve their understanding. They have a patient approach, listening carefully to one another when they are collaborating in groups of various sizes. Their thoughtful questioning and desire to explore new ideas demonstrates their readiness to make decisions about their learning. When independent tasks are set, most pupils are very focused and able to undertake the work without undue reliance on adults in the room.
- 3.9 Pupils in the senior school display very competent numerical skills and apply these across the curriculum. Pupils were seen making excellent progress in their knowledge and skills when using trigonometry in a GCSE lesson. In a science lesson pupils showed an excellent understanding of how to apply their mathematical knowledge when differentiating between correlation and causation

during a discussion about vaccination efficacy. The majority of pupils in the junior school have high levels of competence and confidence in their numeracy skills. They readily engage with the task and can make swift, independent progress through it. This was seen with pupils describing two-dimensional shapes in French and when using scales and map coordinates in geography.

- 3.10 Pupils have excellent skills in ICT and make effective use of technology in the way they work, particularly as a means of research and as a way to produce creative responses to their tasks. Junior pupils write stories and use coding software to create robots out of building bricks and storyboards. In another lesson, Year 9 pupils demonstrated excellent coding skills and were able to identify errors in the programme being used and then fix them. Older pupils use a wide variety of online resources and revision materials to consolidate their understanding of wider areas of the curriculum. Pupils of all ages make effective use of technology and its ready availability in school, to teach one another and to facilitate communication between each other and with their teachers. Provision of tablets and laptops for all pupils by the leadership and governance of the school, is a significant support for the development of pupils' expertise with information and communication technology (ICT).
- 3.11 Pupils are very effective learners and display a wide range of study skills which are fostered in lessons dedicated to this subject. Pupils seek to break down complex tasks into manageable stages as a matter of course. They readily draw on their study skills to analyse information and present their findings in ways which reflect their own understanding and that of their peers. In a junior school mathematics lesson, pupils considered a balancing problem and the means by which they would solve it, rather than just immediately finding the answer. They showed strong analytical skills in a critical thinking lesson, when considering different facts on animals and then judging them by their relative importance. In a senior school religious studies lesson, pupils demonstrated the ability to analyse Saint Augustine's thinking perceptively when discussing the concept of original sin.
- 3.12 Students are actively engaged in the co-curricular opportunities at school and their achievement is excellent across all the different clubs on offer. Pupils' artwork has been featured in the Royal Academy summer show for young artists, and some have also gained national arts awards, including at gold level. In the UK Maths Challenge competition, pupils achieve gold awards at all levels, and a pupil in the senior school achieved a competitive place on a summer science school in the USA. Pupils have gained national recognition for their foreign language expertise. A senior pupil achieved a prestigious Arkwright scholarship in design technology, and fashion shows produced by the seniors reflect the talents of the pupils in this area. Pupils enjoy success in LAMDA and ABRSM examinations, including the highest levels. The choirs in both junior and senior schools produce excellent musical performances. The junior school chamber choir were heard singing a song inspired by their experiences of lockdown and the senior choir sang unaccompanied in assembly, in perfect harmony. Pupils display strong skills in their drama productions, as seen in films of their recent performances. Pupils engage fully in sporting opportunities and individuals are encouraged to develop fully their talents in a wide variety of arenas, such as weightlifting, archery and triathlon.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils show exceptional levels of self-esteem and have a mature approach to life in school in a positive environment where they feel confident in themselves and able to make the most of their opportunities. They are highly resilient individuals, well rounded characters and fully grounded in the practicalities of daily life, talking positively and enthusiastically about their futures. Pupils display excellent levels of self-awareness and know what they need to do to further develop their own performance and to prepare themselves for what, in many cases, will be highly ambitious next steps when they leave the school. Children in the EYFS talked about the mistakes they had made with their spellings and how they could improve. Pupils in the junior school showed good adaptability to new situations on campcraft skills. Others showed their confidence when sharing their computing

presentations with the class, explaining the specific techniques they had incorporated. Pupils readily meet challenges within lessons and recognise that they have the inner confidence needed to complete the work set, even if it appears difficult. Pupils throughout the school embrace the philosophy that it is all right to take risks with your learning because this is how you can make progress and improve yourself. This is reflected in parents' questionnaire comments, saying how their children thrive in the nurturing and caring environment.

- 3.15 Pupils display an exemplary attitude of respect for each other's differences in response to the strong focus of school leaders and staff on creating a united community. Highly respectful and tolerant towards to each other and the wider community, they recognise and celebrate the diversity of their school. Pupils interviewed talked with enthusiasm about the assemblies given by their peers about their different cultures and faiths, and parent questionnaire responses identified the inclusivity of the school as a particular strength. Pupils respond with empathy and understanding to those who are different from themselves and say that they will not tolerate discrimination in any form. Pupils initiate discussions and presentations around a variety of diversity issues. They are proud of their community, such as when discussing the definition of gender in their school and they are highly aware of stereotypes, cultural differences and changing attitudes. Pupils in the junior school readily share their family experiences with their peers to help them appreciate their differences. In assembly, pupils' sensitive response to the theme of neurodiversity and its consequence for individuals, reflected their support for each other.
- 3.16 Pupils collaborate in a highly supportive way, accepting a significant level of responsibility for maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect and helping each other gain success in all their endeavours. They work effectively with others, inside and outside of the classroom, in an extremely constructive manner. Children in the EYFS showed excellent social skills in working together to create bridges outside, so they could practise their balancing skills. Senior pupils undertaking The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, explained how this activity had strengthened their approach to teamwork and helped their success in gaining the award. Pupils interviewed said that they were more effective learners and people when part of a team, each with a role to play, seeing this as an important social skill. Pupils engage fully with opportunities to present their own views; this reflects strongly on their social awareness and has brought about through the school council, changes such as wearing shorts in the junior school during the summer term.
- 3.17 Pupils are strongly committed to supporting each other in school, doing so naturally and with a genuine care for the well-being of their peers. Pupils of all ages recognise the importance of how they treat everyone within the school community as a way of improving the experience of others. Senior school peer mentors and junior school buddies play an important role in supporting others. Junior school pupils make positive contributions to the school community through their many leadership positions, older pupils help younger pupils with their reading, and house captains celebrate pupils' achievements in assemblies. Pupils involve themselves wholeheartedly in helping in the wider community, volunteering with local charities, care homes and local schools. Pupils demonstrate mature social skills and responsibility in response to the school's outward-looking ethos and schools leaders' encouragement of community action. Pupils in the senior school are heavily involved and often take the lead in charity and community initiatives. Having worked with Afghan refugees, helping them to settle in the community and supporting them with learning the language, pupils interviewed stated their intention to adopt the same approach for incoming refugees from the Ukraine.
- 3.18 Pupils have a strong understanding that the decisions they make can determine their own success and well-being. They involve themselves fully in the key points of decision-making for options at GCSE and A level and appreciate the careers programme which prepares them for their longer-term futures. Pupils make considered decisions on a daily basis in the way they work and in all aspects of the wider curriculum. This leads to a great sense of responsibility in response to the school's practice of involving pupils in making choices and decisions as a matter of course. In the junior school, pupils fully consider the possible outcomes and which option might be best for them when selecting the type of technology

task or ICT presentation to use. Pupils in Year 8 spoke positively about how they had discussed in lessons, the process of making decisions in life, based on their individual characteristics and that they had learnt much from this.

- 3.19 Pupils have a great appreciation of the world around them as a result of the many opportunities to explore a range of spiritual and non-material issues and to ask searching questions. Pupils think deeply about the ideas they are presented with in their work and look to produce responses which reflect their thoughts and personal feelings. This was seen in a sixth form classical civilization lesson, where pupils considered the concept of mourning the dead and the different attitudes to this. Pupils show a deep awareness of environmental issues and have fully engaged in ways that they can support these initiatives. As a consequence, single-use plastic has been phased out in the dining room and elsewhere in the school. Their concern with wider issues was seen in a senior school lesson on philosophy and ethics, discussing the morality of killing animals for food. Pupils in the junior school show an excellent appreciation of the wonders of nature through the opportunities to engage with the natural environment at the school, such as in their secret garden. Children in the EYFS expressed their wonder at the power of Nature as they watched eggs hatch.
- 3.20 Pupils show an excellent ability to distinguish right from wrong and a strong respect for systems of rules and laws. In a sixth form lesson on the play *A Streetcar Named Desire* pupils displayed great insight and understanding when discussing whether the lead character brought about her own fate and deserved the consequences or whether others should take some responsibility. Pupils accept responsibility for their own behaviour, including towards others. They readily accept their mistakes and try to put matters right and will challenge misbehaviour and unkindness sensitively. Pupils are highly supportive of each other, creating a very calm and positive atmosphere in which kindness and consideration towards others are regarded as a given. Pupils interviewed said that they regulate their own behaviour effectively and do not necessarily need the imposition of external rules, whilst fully accepting that these exist for everyone's benefit. Their mutual respect is evident from their responses to each other's perspectives in the classroom and in their descriptions of the school's positive environment in interview. In the questionnaires also, pupils spoke positively about their behaviour matching the school's expectations of high standards.
- 3.21 Pupils develop a healthy outlook and a readiness to tackle life's challenges head on, in fulfilment of the school's aim to provide an enriching curriculum that supports a balanced approach to school and the world beyond. Pupils understand the crucial importance of leading healthy lives, both in terms of their physical health but also in terms of their emotional well-being. They talk positively about the benefits they gain from the varied opportunities for exercise in school and healthy options at lunch time. Pupils express a strong appreciation for the support they have been given for their mental health by the school, through the well-being programme and how this has helped their confidence. Children in the EYFS spoke about the need to drink water when the weather was sunny and pupils throughout the junior school appreciate the importance of spending time relaxing, so they can control their emotions effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe online and the school supports them in this, through effective monitoring systems and lessons designed to prepare them for every eventuality. This is also confirmed in the questionnaires, where pupils declare their school to be a safe place.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Mrs Sue Clarke	Accompanying inspector
Mrs Rachel Debenham	Compliance team inspector (Registrar, HMC school)
Mr Warren Honey	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Christopher Lee	Team inspector (Head of department, HMC school)