

School inspection report

18 to 20 March 2025

Francis Holland School

Regent's Park

39 Ivor Place

London

NW1 6XR

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. Trustees maintain a knowledgeable overview of all areas of school life and ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities in meeting the regulatory requirements.
2. The trust and school leaders have effective strategies for collecting evidence to inform the next stage in the school's development. They regularly consult with parents, pupils and staff. They have established and implement effective quality assurance procedures to ensure that the wellbeing of pupils continues to be promoted.
3. The curriculum and co-curricular programme meet the needs and interests of pupils. The taught curriculum allows pupils to choose from a broad range of subjects. Teachers encourage pupils of all ages to take additional study to further stimulate themselves intellectually.
4. The visiting speaker programme and opportunities to work with professionals such as authors, engineers and architects enable pupils to further extend their knowledge and skills.
5. Co-curricular activities allow pupils to expand their interests outside academic study. Leaders provide a broad range of sports to encourage participation and enjoyment.
6. Teachers have secure knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject. They engage pupils' interest and manage behaviour effectively.
7. Teachers set ambitious expectations in lessons and allow time to confront difficult concepts in all subject areas. They question astutely. Pupils are unafraid to hypothesise answers.
8. Teachers give effective feedback in lessons and in written work. Pupils use it successfully to reflect and improve. As a result, pupils make at least good progress in all year groups.
9. Teachers adjust planning and teaching effectively for pupils the school has identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils persevere in overcoming the difficulties of challenging work. However, teachers do not always ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified early during their time in school in order to adapt provision for them, where it is beneficial to do so.
10. The behaviour policy and anti-bullying strategy are understood by staff and pupils and are effective. Pupils are well behaved, and bullying is rare.
11. The two school buildings are well maintained. Leaders ensure that risks to pupils are minimised through the systematic and detailed checks of health and safety, fire procedures and effective supervision arrangements.
12. Pupils take a variety of formal and informal leadership roles. They support each other through peer mentoring and house activities. Pupils raise large amounts of money for partnership schools and charities. Senior pupils undertake voluntary work in the local community.
13. Pupils value and respect diversity. Leaders encourage discussion and the formation of societies that represent different religions and national backgrounds. The curriculum enables pupils to deepen their understanding in these areas as they move through the school.

14. Effective careers education is provided throughout the school. Pupils receive individualised advice, including guidance to help them make decisions about subject choices. The speaker programme provides pupils with opportunities to listen to those from a variety of professions. Pupils are supported in finding work experience. Pupils move on to a wide range of universities and courses after leaving school.
15. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum deepens pupils' self-knowledge. It is enhanced by a programme of visiting speakers and meets all the requirements of current statutory guidance with regard to relationships and sex education (RSE). Leaders ensure that male perspectives as well as female ones are represented when relevant. The PSHE programme deepens pupils' self-knowledge.
16. Pupils follow an additional life skills course that prepares them practically for their everyday lives, for example in handling finance or keeping themselves safe.
17. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. The safeguarding team identifies and responds quickly to any safeguarding concerns and provides individual pupils affected with appropriate support. Safeguarding leaders liaise effectively with external agencies. Recruitment procedures are thorough.

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 needs of pupils who have SEND are identified early enough for the school to adapt its provision to meet these needs as effectively as possible.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

18. Trustees support leaders in ensuring that the Standards are met. They achieve this by making sure that leaders have the required resources and training to ensure that they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. Trustees undertake regular visits, receive reports in key areas, and interrogate documentation and data to ensure that leaders utilise their knowledge and skills to promote pupils' wellbeing well.
19. The school has identified four cornerstones of 'compassion, knowledge, perseverance and spirit' on which the curriculum is built. Leaders frequently refer to these values. They are published on the website and underpin the life of the school. For example, the curriculum provides pupils with the opportunity for leadership in the school and wider community, to develop their academic and personal knowledge, and to find ways to exercise these values.
20. Leaders continually evaluate all aspects of the school to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is promoted effectively. They regularly consult parents, pupils and staff. Leaders are self-critical and formulate clear plans for improvement. For example, they have recognised the need for earlier identification of the special educational needs and/or disabilities of a very few pupils, and that reports to parents need to more individualised. Leaders use data and direct observations to measure pupils' academic performance as they move through the school. Subsequently, they provide additional support when required, such as focused sessions in which pupils can revisit areas where they feel uncertain.
21. Leaders regularly draw on the opinions from pupil councils and focus groups to influence their planning. They promote discussion and appreciation of diversity, including by encouraging pupils with differing religious, national and cultural backgrounds to share their views. As a consequence, they maintain a harmonious and respectful community in which pupils feel that their voices are heard, and their identities are respected.
22. Trustees and leaders have a clear picture of the risks to pupils. They identify risks analytically and mitigate them with suitable control measures. They routinely focus on any unforeseen consequences for individual pupils or minority groups in their decision making. Leaders regularly review the effectiveness of the actions taken.
23. The school's website provides clear and accessible information for pupils and parents of both current and prospective pupils. This includes all the policies and documents required. Parents receive annual reports and other frequent information about their child's progress. There are no pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan funded by local authorities.
24. The school's complaints procedure is in line with requirements. It encourages parents to share concerns with whomever they think appropriate. All concerns are recorded in detail. Leaders respond quickly whenever complaints are submitted and follow the agreed process if complaints move to the formal stages. Records are stored securely and available only to those nominated in the suitable published procedures. Leaders and governors regularly review the record of complaints to identify any themes or patterns.
25. Leaders cultivate effective communications with external agencies to promote the wellbeing of pupils. In particular, they work closely with local safeguarding partners and health professionals.

26. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders make appropriate arrangements for those with a disability through an accessibility plan. They implement reasonable adjustments to enable any pupils with a disability to take a full part in school life, as far as is possible. They adapt teaching methods and are successful in overcoming potential challenges of movement around multi-level buildings. All necessary documentation is made available in accessible formats.

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

27. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

28. Leaders have established a curriculum that enables pupils to develop their knowledge and skills in a broad range of areas. There is balance between creative subjects such as drama, music and art, and computer science, science and technology and the humanities. During their first year, pupils experience four different modern foreign languages and must study at least one to GCSE. Pupils study all three sciences until the end of Year 11.
29. Sixth-form pupils study at least three A levels and an elective that allows them to advance their research and collaborative skills in an area of their interest. They work closely with professionals such as authors, architects and engineers, or take extra qualifications such as French for business. Some pupils work towards the extended project qualification (EPQ), exploring topics relevant to their A-level studies, for example in art history or medicine.
30. Leaders encourage pupils to enter national competitions and Olympiads, such as in mathematics, the sciences and creative writing. In this way pupils are provided with further intellectual stimulation and challenge. Many achieve awards.
31. Subject leaders promote specialised events such as ‘We Love Physics’ or ‘Drop everything and read’ week. Leaders ensure pupils have time to engage in societies in, for example, languages, robotics, and politics. Visiting speakers are chosen to represent a range of academic backgrounds. As a result, pupils retain an interest in scholarship in a breadth of areas of study, whatever their own examination specialisms.
32. Leaders ensure that teachers are provided with detailed information about pupils’ prior attainment. As a result, teachers plan lessons that enable pupils to achieve clear objectives through engaging activities and assessments. Teachers manage class time effectively. They vary activities, using a range of good quality resources in practical subjects. Effective teaching methods ensure that pupils are attentive and interested in their work. Teachers have secure subject knowledge in their specialisms. They draw out pupils’ understanding with skilful questioning. As a result, pupils develop an enquiring approach. They quickly make links with other subjects or previous learning and are unafraid to share their own ideas. Teachers encourage pupils to explore and debate topics beyond the plan of the lesson and challenge them to refine their arguments. As a result, pupils develop advanced critical and intellectual approaches to academic work.
33. Teachers provide continuous feedback to pupils that enables them to reassess and enhance their understanding. Written comments are supportive, recognise high achievement, but are focused on areas for improvement. Pupils respond positively. Leaders implement a structured programme of formal testing that gives pupils a clear understanding of their attainment. Pupils routinely use the tests to analyse the areas on which they need to focus or seek further help.
34. Teachers encourage pupils to develop their own learning strategies. However, this sometimes hinders early recognition of those who might have SEND and therefore the provision of any additional support that might benefit them. Leaders provide comprehensive guidance to teachers on strategies to support pupils who have SEND. This guidance is effectively implemented. As a result, pupils whom the school has identified as having SEND make good progress from their starting points.

35. Pupils who are formally identified as having English as an additional language (EAL) have a fluent understanding of English, and hence no special provision is required.
36. As a result of a stimulating curriculum, effective teaching and detailed assessment, pupils make at least good progress in each year as they move through the school. Typically, pupils achieve substantially higher grades at GCSE and A level than those initially predicted from their starting points. Typically, about nine-tenths of GCSE results are at grade 7 or above, and around three-quarters of A-level results are A* or A.
37. Leaders balance the intellectual stimulation of the taught curriculum and co-curriculum with a promotion of recreational activity. They set a culture in which pupils are encouraged to participate in sport, whatever their ability. Pastoral leaders arrange walks for pupils in nearby Regent's Park. The primary objective of many house events is enjoyment. As a result, pupils develop an appropriate balance of emotional, intellectual, social and creative skills.

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

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

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

39. Pastoral and subject leaders support pupils to become self-reflective. Teachers encourage pupils to analyse their performance in each assessment and to evaluate their revision strategies. As a result, pupils develop a keen knowledge of their own strengths and targets for improvement. Wellbeing clubs and life skills lessons in the sixth form encourage pupils to recognise the contribution of a sense of purpose and contemplation to a balanced life.
40. Leaders encourage pupils to take risks intellectually and physically. They provide a curriculum that challenges pupils outside the formal examination subjects, for example solving problems in tribology as part of engineering awards. Many pupils develop their self-esteem through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and other expeditions, through public speaking, or success in national competitions such as the mathematics and science Olympiads.
41. Pupils' physical health is supported by a well-planned physical education (PE) curriculum. Pupils develop their physical proficiency through opportunities to rock-climb, learn self-defence or through dance. These have a positive impact on their self-confidence.
42. Leaders cultivate pupils' spiritual understanding in lessons, assemblies and acts of worship. Through these they develop an understanding of different world religions. Teachers create opportunities for pupils to reflect in lessons, for example in contemplating the influence of black holes in the galaxy or the beauty of language. Pupils of all faiths attend Christian-based services as well as Muslim, Jewish and Christian societies.
43. Pupils develop well-honed moral attitudes. They are unafraid to argue their case but respect the views of others. They intelligently debate ethical dilemmas in medicine and the prioritisation of scarce resources.
44. The PSHE curriculum is well structured and effectively supports pupils' personal growth. Leaders regularly adjust content and delivery of the course in response to pupils' feedback. The weekly PSHE lessons and complementary visiting speaker programme ensure that pupils are well prepared emotionally and socially for the next steps in their education. The life skills course equips pupils to develop practical competencies and to identify healthy life choices.
45. The relationship and sex education (RSE) programme is integrated into the PSHE curriculum. It provides detailed guidance and support, and the opportunity for pupils to discuss concerns or anxieties. The programme is enriched by bespoke presentations from specialists in the areas of health, relationships and adolescent development. In this way the PSHE and RSE programme is appropriate and relevant to the age of pupils.
46. The school's written behaviour and anti-bullying policies are understood by pupils and implemented consistently by staff. Leaders promote good behaviour through clear communication about behavioural expectations, including in assemblies and the PSHE curriculum. Pupils are well ordered in their movement around the school. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare and responded to effectively by leaders when they do occur.

47. The main and satellite buildings provide suitable accommodation in which pupils can study and enjoy recreation. Those responsible carry out all required health and safety checks and maintain buildings and grounds to a high standard. Fire drills are held regularly. Leaders take appropriate actions in response to the regularly updated fire risk assessment. Pupils are appropriately supervised by well-deployed staff. As a result, the school meets the requirements of health and safety and fire legislation, and provides a well-maintained, secure environment for pupils.
48. The medical centre and wellbeing area meet the needs of pupils who are sick or need first aid. It provides a place where pupils can seek physical or emotional support. Leaders have created a wellbeing area where pupils can find respite. Qualified medical staff administer medicines appropriately. First aid equipment is provided in key areas on- and off-site, for example in PE and games sessions in Regent's Park. As a result, pupils who have accidents are promptly attended to.
49. The school maintains appropriate and accurate admission and attendance registers. Leaders have updated their policies and procedures relating to attendance in line with the latest statutory guidance. They understand their responsibilities should pupils have a prolonged absence. Leaders inform the appropriate local authority of any pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard transition points in the school year.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

51. Leaders promote understanding of the importance of respecting people of diverse race, religion and sexual orientation through assemblies and the PSHE curriculum. Teachers use opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to contextualise the concept of respect: for example, in discussing the potentially colonial role of the soldier in some eras of history, or cultural appropriation in art. Teachers are adept at linking historical perspectives to contemporary social values. As a result, pupils deepen their understanding of cultural, religious and racial diversity.
52. Leaders support the pupil-led diversity, feminist and religious societies in challenging attitudes and behaviours. Leaders use opportunities such as Black History or Pride months to ensure that pupils are aware of and confront prejudice. Leaders ensure that debates represent balanced views so that pupils develop tolerant and empathetic attitudes. Teachers plan lessons in which pupils engage practically with democracy by writing letters to their political representatives.
53. The curriculum encourages social and cultural engagement in the community. For example, pupils draw on London landmarks to design a new textile for London Underground.
54. Leaders enable pupils to achieve a clear understanding of civil and criminal law and of the country's public institutions. As well as learning about these through the curriculum, a programme of visiting speakers enables pupils to listen to experts in the areas of legal and political leadership.
55. Leaders routinely seek pupils' views, such as about possible topics for the sixth-form lecture series. Pupils route their suggestions through form and school groups. They represent each other's opinions clearly and accurately. As a result, the pupil council is effective in influencing changes to school life, for example the timings of tests or homework.
56. Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to take leadership roles. Senior prefects, the team of head pupils and house and sports captains are elected after public presentations and elections. Prefects help younger pupils with their academic work, or by giving support over friendship issues. They lead some assemblies and support staff in ensuring the smooth running of the school.
57. Leaders provide a well-planned careers programme. The PSHE curriculum and form time curriculum in the younger years encourages pupils to reflect on their own skills and aptitudes. Pupils are introduced to software that enables them to explore different careers. Leaders support pupils in organising work experience. The life skills course equips pupils to develop an understanding of personal finance and national economics.
58. The school's visiting speaker programme enables pupils to listen to those from a wide range of professional backgrounds. Tutors and specialists give pupils individual advice on subject and university choices. As a result, pupils leave school to follow a broad range of degrees and degree apprenticeships. Courses in science and engineering are particularly well represented.
59. The PSHE curriculum gradually develops pupils' understanding of finance. Pupils apply their knowledge in their fund-raising activities and competitions that necessitate budgeting, buying and

selling. The life skills course prepares sixth-form pupils in detail for many aspects of life after school, and includes lessons on tax, national insurance and student loans.

60. Leaders emphasise to pupils their responsibility to serve others and articulate the school's cornerstone value of compassion. Pupils of all ages raise money for charities in the locality or for long-standing partnerships overseas. Senior pupils volunteer at foodbanks and coach sport or support pupils with their work in local schools.

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

61. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

62. Safeguarding arrangements are clearly described in the school's safeguarding and linked policies, such as those to prevent the risk of radicalisation of pupils and to protect them online. Policies are regularly updated to reflect any changes in statutory guidance. They include protocols to promote the safety of pupils from the potential contextual risks associated with a central London site.
63. The safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively. Trustees receive safeguarding training. They rigorously monitor the effectiveness of all aspects of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. They achieve this through regular reviews of anonymised records and discussion with the school's safeguarding leaders.
64. Trustees have appointed a separate trustee with responsibility for the overview of online safety. Filtering and monitoring software protects pupils online and identifies any inappropriate use of the internet. Leaders test the effectiveness of the software each week. The safeguarding team, school leaders and the nominated trustee analyse records of internet use. Pupils receive, through the curriculum, guidance about keeping safe online.
65. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities have the necessary knowledge and training to carry out their role effectively. They provide regular and up-to-date safeguarding training to all staff. They ensure that self-employed or contracted staff receive training appropriate to their roles. Staff have an effective understanding of arrangements. They are aware of the range of potential risks faced by pupils. Staff report concerns quickly and reassure themselves that action has been taken. They report any low-level concerns about adult behaviour to safeguarding leaders.
66. Pupils feel safe both inside, and in the immediate environment outside school. They have a range of adults to speak to if they are concerned. Leaders provide methods which are appropriate for pupils of different ages to share their concerns anonymously, either through written notes or electronically. Pupils use this opportunity. Safeguarding leaders follow up all communications.
67. The safeguarding team makes effective and methodical use of the school's reporting systems to record and communicate safeguarding issues. Records are well organised and explain the reasons for decisions made. Leaders assess the risk to pupils and, where appropriate, share formal written risk assessments with relevant staff. Leaders regularly review the effectiveness of actions taken.
68. Leaders work closely with relevant safeguarding partners, including children's services in several London boroughs, the police and the local authority designated officer (LADO). They act on the advice given. This includes with regard to any allegations against adults.
69. All appropriate pre-employment checks are made on adults before they come into contact with pupils. The suitability of adults contributing to the school's visiting speaker programme is rigorously checked. Staff maintain an accurate single central record of appointments and files relating to safer recruitment checks.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

70. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

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| School | Francis Holland School |
| Department for Education number | 213/6037 |
| Registered charity number | 312745 |
| Address | Francis Holland School Regent's Park 39 Ivor Place London NW1 6XR |
| Phone number | 020 7723 0176 |
| Email address | admin@fhs-nw1.org.uk |
| Website | www.fhs-nw1.org.uk |
| Proprietor | Francis Holland Schools Trust |
| Chair | Mr Patrick Sherrington |
| Headteacher | Mrs Katharine Woodcock |
| Age range | 11 to 18 |
| Number of pupils | 567 |
| Date of previous inspection | 26 June 2024 |

Information about the school

71. Francis Holland School, Regent's Park is an independent day school for female pupils. Along with its sister schools Francis Holland School, Sloane Square and Francis Holland Preparatory School, the school is administered and governed by a charitable trust. The school occupies a main site on the edge of Regent's Park and a nearby building for pupils in Years 12 to 13.
72. The school has identified 152 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
73. The school has identified English as an additional language for 14 pupils.
74. The school states its aims are to provide an excellent, balanced education within a supportive, friendly and happy community in which teaching and pastoral care are of the highest quality, built on the cornerstones of compassion, knowledge, perseverance and spirit.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

18 to 20 March 2025

75. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

76. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education, including those off-site
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

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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For more information, please visit isi.net