

School inspection report

Date: 6 to 8 February 2024

New Hall School

The Avenue

Boreham

Chelmsford

CM3 3HS

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 and governors ensure that the school's Catholic ethos is reflected in its policies and practice. Through these, the ethos is thoroughly embedded in the life of the school.
2. The leaders of all of the school's divisions work effectively together with governors to review and evaluate the work of the school and develop a clear shared vision. This is translated into effective strategic development plans to actively promote pupils' progress and wellbeing.
3. In seeking to ensure that the gospel values of the school are lived out by its pupils, leaders have created a school community that has service to others at its heart. The New Hall Voluntary Service (NHVS) scheme, in which all pupils participate at some point in their school lives, is a significant strength of the school. The NHVS scheme promotes pupils' social and economic understanding and their contribution to society, as well as fostering self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-confidence.
4. Pupils develop skills, knowledge and understanding across a wide range of academic subjects and co-curricular activities. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress in line with their peers because teachers identify and meet their needs. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are supported to make good progress.
5. Results at GCSE and A level show that pupils make good progress, largely in line with their expected performance and some of them achieve better than this. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. However, senior leaders do not consistently challenge heads of department to track pupil progress to inform strategies to promote higher attainment.
6. Boarding pupils are appropriately cared for and their learning and wellbeing are effectively promoted.
7. Early years provision is effective. Children develop appropriate communication and language skills so they are prepared for the next stage of their education.
8. Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is appropriately trained and staff are well supported. Pupils feel safe and know who to talk to if they have a concern.

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

- Senior leaders should ensure that pupil progress data is used more consistently to inform strategies to promote pupils' progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders ensure that the Catholic ethos of the school is reflected in the aims, policies and practice of all school divisions, from the early years through to sixth form. Staff model the values of care, respect and trust and provide pupils with a range of opportunities, which pupils willingly take up, to live them out.
10. In particular, leaders have developed the New Hall Voluntary Service programme, which reflects the school's aims and founding principles. Leaders provide help and support to vulnerable members of the local community in a range of activities run by pupils. Through participating in the programme pupils develop both respect for other people and their own emotional wellbeing and social skills.
11. Governors provide appropriate support and challenge to school leaders to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Governors work closely with leaders to evaluate the performance of the school in order to develop coherent strategic development plans.
12. Leaders and governors have rigorously evaluated the school's 'diamond model' which separates pupils aged 11–16 by gender for the majority of their lessons. Care is taken to ensure that there is no detriment to any pupil through this arrangement and, as a result, the school fully meets the requirements of the Equality Act. Systematic and regular reviews, combined with consultation of pupils and parents, alert leaders to any challenges and risks, which, when they arise, are thoughtfully mitigated. A three-year accessibility plan is in place.
13. Leaders have created a curriculum and a broad co-curricular programme through which pupils develop secure knowledge, understanding and skills across a comprehensive range of subjects. Leaders in the early years ensure that a wide variety of activities is matched to children's needs and interests so that positive attitudes to learning and respectful behaviour are fostered. Leaders in the prep and pre-prep divisions encourage a creative approach to learning so that pupils make good progress.
14. Senior leaders have established clear expectations to improve the quality of teaching by, for example, ensuring that lessons begin with recall activities. They regularly monitor teaching against these expectations. However, there is inconsistency in the degree to which heads of department use pupil data to monitor pupil progress and make interventions to support learning. Leaders prioritise the professional development and training of staff.
15. The regular schedule of meetings and transfer of 'nightly notes' between boarding and other school staff promotes boarders' learning and their wellbeing.
16. Parents receive extensive information, including an annual written report on their child's progress, and a well-maintained school website contains the policies and information required by the Standards.
17. There is a suitable complaints policy which is implemented effectively. Complaints are handled sensitively and in a timely fashion. Leaders keep due records and governors have oversight of any complaint that arises, including any lessons learned.

18. Governors and leaders have effective oversight of health and safety. Potential risks are identified through risk auditing, and leaders and governors put in place suitable measures to assess and mitigate risk in areas such as fire safety, health and safety and educational visits.
19. There is a robust safeguarding culture.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. The well-planned curriculum fosters intellectual curiosity and self-motivation in pupils. This enables both children in the early years and older pupils to develop appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding and to make good progress. Teaching actively promotes fundamental British values including respect, tolerance and the rule of law.
22. Leaders' careful planning and evaluation of the curriculum and teaching ensures that provision for female and male pupils between Years 7 and 11 is of equal quality when they are taught separately.
23. Pupils develop their emotional, social, creative and physical skills through an extensive programme of co-curricular activities, which includes sport, music, drama and the NHVS scheme. Staff provide additional recreational and cultural enrichment activities for boarders. Participation in these activities enhances boarders' social interaction skills and their emotional wellbeing.
24. In all divisions of the school, leaders ensure that lessons are effectively planned to take account of the ages, aptitudes and interests of the children and pupils. Teaching inspires pupils' active participation, resulting in the development by pupils of eloquent communication skills and technological competence. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and their teaching results in pupils developing positive attitudes to learning and enthusiasm to succeed. In the senior divisions and in the sixth form, pupils improve their research skills and independent study habits through higher and extended project qualifications.
25. In the early years, the curriculum meets the requirements of the early years foundation stage, including in relation to literacy and mathematics. Children are taught with skill and care and there is appropriate support for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Lessons are well planned and age-appropriate and teachers have high expectations of children's behaviour. This motivates the children and they enjoy learning.
26. As a result of innovative lesson planning and the reinforcement of positive learning habits in the pre-prep and prep school divisions, pupils engage purposefully in collaborative projects. Pupils throughout the school are willing to take risks and are vocally and physically daring. The warm relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to pupils' well-developed emotional intelligence and communication skills. Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils well.
27. Results at GCSE and A level show that pupils make good progress that is at least in line with their starting points. Those who have SEND are well supported by the learning department. Their profiles and targets are known by subject staff who adapt teaching appropriately to meet their needs. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive specialist help to improve their language skills and as a result make good progress.
28. Leaders have developed a framework for the assessment of pupils' progress. In most subjects in the senior school divisions, regular written assessment informs the planning of lessons. However, the assessment framework is not consistently adopted in all subject areas. There are tracking systems and pupil support strategies in place, but senior school departments do not consistently plan effectively to promote higher attainment.

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

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. The curriculum reflects the aims and Catholic ethos of the school. This gives pupils throughout the school a sense of shared identity and purpose which contributes to their positive mental health and emotional wellbeing.
31. Many activities, but particularly the NHVS scheme, are carefully designed by leaders to foster pupil self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence as pupils learn to appreciate the contributions they can make to others.
32. High levels of mutual respect are evident both within and outside the classroom. Children in the early years build positive relations with their key person and pupils elsewhere in the school benefit from warm relationships with their teachers and tutors. Pupils talk confidently and articulately about protected characteristics such as race and sex and value the school's approach to inclusion and diversity.
33. Across all divisions, initiatives such as 'wellbeing Wednesday' and themed activities promote pupils' emotional resilience and social skills. These initiatives may have a particular focus, such as preparing for a residential trip abroad. Anti-bullying initiatives and strategies, including pupil ambassadors, 'helping hands' and chaplaincy sessions, help to instil empathy, kindness and respect.
34. Behaviour throughout the school is managed well. Pupils are quietly self-confident and behave courteously to each other, to staff and to visitors. Staff and pupils share high expectations of behaviour, and positive considerate conduct is modelled by staff and older pupils. Instances of bullying are rare and quickly and effectively addressed. This helps boarders, including international students, settle quickly in the boarding house.
35. Leaders and teachers develop pupils' spiritual and moral understanding throughout their time in school. Daily prayers form part of the routine throughout the school and the prayer table is a special area of each classroom in the prep division.
36. Pupils embrace a wide range of opportunities through their physical education (PE) and co-curricular programme. They appreciate the benefits of these for their physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) are age-appropriate and of a high standard. Consultation with parents about RSE means that teaching is sensitive and takes into account pupils' religious background.
37. A thorough programme of induction for boarders and a full programme of social and cultural visits contribute to the creation of a strong boarding community. Boarders' accommodation is well-maintained, comfortable and welcoming. Boarding staff regularly consult boarders to ascertain their views.
38. Facilities are well maintained. Staff in the medical and wellbeing centre cater for the medical and care needs of all in the community. Fire safety policies and measures are appropriately implemented and pupils well supervised. All boarders, including any with particular dietary needs, are provided with an appropriate variety of good quality meals. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained.

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

39. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

40. The school is an inclusive and purposeful community. Leaders and staff strive to model the school's 'gospel values' and reflect the school's priorities of community and staying true to the founders' aims of 'care, trust and respect'. Diversity is celebrated. Respect for others is promoted as an integral part of school culture through the taught curriculum, assemblies, time in chapel and through an extensive range of activities.
41. Pupils develop their appreciation and understanding of the value of evidence-based argument as they move through the school. They show respect for the opinions and feelings of others, typified in a wide-ranging lunchtime debate on the merits of school uniform. A current affairs and debating club for Years 3 to 6 also strengthens pupils' knowledge of democratic processes.
42. Pupils understand the importance of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, preparing them well for the opportunities and responsibilities of life in British society. They receive up to date and impartial careers and university guidance.
43. Leaders promote economic understanding through teaching about the value of money and how to manage personal finances in PSHE. Children in the early years re-enact everyday experiences in their imaginary play, such as using money to pay for goods in a role-play restaurant.
44. As part of the NHVS, significant contributions to the wider community are made by senior pupils who devote time and effort to support a range of projects, for example, hosting lunches for older citizens. Younger pupils volunteer in a gardening project and help at summer camps.
45. All pupils are involved in the voluntary service project at some point in their school lives. This contributes to their understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Younger pupils' involvement includes charity fundraising, collecting items for Christmas hampers and entertaining visitors to one of the scheme's action groups. This volunteering helps them to show initiative and develop their understanding of how they can contribute positively to the lives of others.
46. The culture fostered by staff in the boarding houses actively encourages and promotes respect and inclusion. Boarders develop positive relationships within and across year groups, as well as the ability to resolve conflicts in a constructive way.
47. The positive relationships within the school community also foster and inform pupils' acceptance of personal responsibility for their behaviour and actions.

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

48. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

49. The school's safeguarding culture is robust. Appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are in place, and leaders cultivate an awareness amongst staff that 'it could happen here'.
50. Children in the early years and pupils in all divisions of the school, from pre-prep to sixth form, are confident that their safety is prioritised by the school and are comfortable talking to adults about any concern they may have. Pupils understand what to do if they need to report something that's worrying them and how to seek advice.
51. Pupils understand how to stay safe online. In the prep division, online safety is embedded through the curriculum, and taught in particular in PSHE lessons. The school's filtering arrangements block harmful content. Pupils know how to maintain secure passwords and understand how to block unwanted content.
52. Suitable risk assessments, a watchful staff presence, pupil awareness of how to report anything that concerns them and the use of CCTV contribute to onsite risk mitigation.
53. The school's safeguarding team maintains suitable records of safeguarding matters. Following scrutiny of these for any trends or patterns, the team then acts or intervenes as appropriate.
54. Staff are well trained to address safeguarding concerns and receive regular updates from the designated safeguarding lead. They are knowledgeable and have a keen understanding of their responsibilities. Leaders maintain effective partnerships with external agencies, including the local authority.
55. Senior managers and governors are trained in safer recruitment procedures and the school's record of appointments is correctly maintained. All required pre-employment safeguarding checks on staff, volunteers and governors are completed before employment begins.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding are met

56. All the relevant Standards are met.

The quality of the early years foundation stage in the registered early years provision

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

57. The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is good.
58. Leaders and staff plan the curriculum to meet children's unique needs and interests. For example, as part of settling in, staff meet with parents to find out about what children enjoy doing at home and they include this in their planning. This means that children have good levels of engagement and enjoyment, while developing their skills in the prime areas.
59. Staff listen carefully to information that parents share about children's individual care needs. For instance, they find out about children's routines from the outset and continue to communicate about changes, such as through the online learning journal. This ensures that staff provide a familiar routine, which helps children to feel safe and secure.
60. Children make good progress in their learning and development relative to their starting points and they are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Following regular monitoring and discussion with parents and external services, staff provide additional support for children's specific needs, such as speech and language intervention. This gives children confidence and independence as they begin to learn how to interact with their peers more freely.
61. The key-person system is effective. Staff develop positive relationships with children, who display high levels of personal and emotional security. For instance, children start to challenge themselves to climb and are reassured when staff are nearby to support them. This gives them confidence to persevere and succeed, knowing that a familiar adult is there to help them.
62. Safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Staff understand how to protect children and a strong culture of shared responsibility for protecting children's welfare is evident throughout the nursery.
63. Leaders have good oversight of practice. For example, they regularly evaluate the provision through observation, discussion with room leaders and at staff meetings. This helps to ensure that everybody's input is valued and it helps leaders to plan for future improvements effectively.

Quality of education

64. The quality of education is good.
65. The curriculum is designed to develop each child's knowledge and understanding. Staff carefully sequence learning in the prime areas across age ranges to help children build on their prior learning. For instance, they focus their teaching on supporting the youngest children as they begin to communicate their needs using simple connecting words. They encourage older children to express themselves in conversations with others.
66. Children develop secure speaking and listening skills. For example, as staff share stories with them, they listen attentively and respond by matching toy dinosaurs with corresponding pictures in the

book. Older children articulate their thoughts confidently, such as when they give explanations during independent play with others.

67. Staff assess children regularly to check what they know and can do. For example, they regularly observe children and note their achievements, such as in the online learning journal. Parents also access this and share comments about their children's experiences at home, which helps to inform their continued learning.
68. Staff provide a range of opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. For instance, children develop their large muscle skills as they jump and climb, and their small muscle skills as they move tiny elastic bands onto chopsticks. Staff teach early mathematical concepts naturally during a variety of activities, such as when counting sticks as children load them onto a truck. Children develop secure physical and mathematical skills for their age.
69. Children develop a sense of awe and wonder of the world around them. For instance, they regularly visit the on-site farm and learn about different animals and lifecycles in the natural world. Children enjoy a variety of activities that enhance the curriculum, such as dance, rugby, French lessons and outdoor woodland learning.
70. Overall, children enjoy exploring the learning opportunities that staff provide. However, on occasion, staff are not fully effective at encouraging and supporting children to use the resources and equipment available to develop skills for the future.

Behaviour and attitudes

71. Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding.
72. Practitioners have extremely high expectations for children's behaviour. They promote the school's gospel values of care, trust and respect at the heart of the curriculum. Children take responsibility very seriously when chosen to be the prayer leader and work together extremely well when tidying up. They demonstrate outstanding behaviour and conduct appropriate to their age and stage of development, in line with the high expectations in the nursery.
73. Teaching children the importance of manners is a priority for staff, and children are successfully encouraged to routinely say 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff give clear guidelines to children and these are well understood. For example, children competently and confidently follow instructions to get ready for outdoor play.
74. Staff teach children to learn to recognise their feelings and emotions extremely well. For instance, children learn to associate emotions with different colours. In a group activity, children confidently discuss what makes them happy. Children are encouraged to manage their own feelings at an early age. However, children who may struggle with their emotions are swiftly guided and provided with high-quality support by staff.
75. Children understand right from wrong and demonstrate their ability to share and take turns. At times, children make skilful attempts to work together without adult intervention. They sort out disagreements as they recognise the impact that different behaviours can have on others.

76. Children have extremely positive attitudes to their musical activities. They demonstrate this as they play instruments enthusiastically. They join in and engage well as they react promptly to instructions from staff to play fast or slow, high or low, loud or quiet, as they explore their instruments.
77. Children are highly motivated and extremely eager to be involved with others during their activities. They demonstrate this when rolling malleable materials, painting together and looking at patterns as they drip water on the floor. At other times, children choose to play independently as they build with cylinders and confidently count them. They enjoy high levels of success as they achieve what they set out to do.
78. Staff provide opportunities for children to play imaginatively. Children think creatively, and when deciding their toy car is dirty, they choose their own way to make a pretend car wash to clean it.
79. Parents say that they receive regular and helpful information on their child's progress and achievements, which helps them to promote their children's learning at home. Nursery parents who responded to the survey agree that the school helps pupils to be respectful of different groups, including those with protected characteristics.

Personal development

80. The personal development of children is good.
81. Staff focus on teaching children to be independent. Children demonstrate the skills they have learned at snack time as they confidently butter their toast, pour their water and clear away by themselves. This helps to give children skills for the future.
82. Staff encourage the children to make good choices as they learn about healthy eating and enjoy nutritious food at mealtimes. For instance, children know that fruit is a healthy food option. Staff ensure that they know each child's dietary needs and they manage these with care, such as by using coloured plates and wrist bands to differentiate their needs. As children find their own named place mats, they demonstrate their familiarity with the consistent routines that staff teach them.
83. Staff organise the outdoor environment to enable children to be active and strengthen their physical skills and muscles. Children develop balance, co-ordination and confidence as they play with hoops and negotiate spaces. Children are taught about when they might be at risk from germs and staff teach them to manage their own personal needs. For instance, children learn to wash their hands after going to the toilet, and they know why it is important to brush their teeth regularly. This helps children to apply these skills in their daily routines at home.
84. Staff promote equality as they teach important values, such as democracy, to prepare children for the future. For example, children begin to learn about the concept of voting and how it enables them to make their own choice. They vote with blocks for which story they want to listen to and they count the blocks to see which story has been chosen.
85. Children learn about diversity and difference, such as when learning about the celebrations of Hanukkah and Chinese New Year. They begin to develop their understanding of similarities and differences between themselves and others and know that everyone should be respected and included.

86. Children learn about helping others in their community, such as by collecting food for the local food bank. Additional links that staff have developed within the local community help them to provide opportunities for children to learn about those with important roles in society, for example a dentist and police dog handler.

Leadership and management

87. Leadership and management are good.

88. Leaders have an ambitious vision for providing inclusive care and education. Through regular professional conversations with staff, leaders ensure that staff understand policies and procedures and apply these to their practice effectively. Leaders, including those in each room, have high expectations for continuous improvement. For instance, each room has a development plan, which the room leader monitors and evaluates carefully.

89. Leaders support meaningful professional development to help build staff knowledge of the curriculum and the way that young children learn. Leaders complete regular staff supervisions, which support staff practice and wellbeing. For example, staff have valuable time to discuss any concerns they may have. The leadership team is fully committed to the wellbeing of all staff and understands the pressures they may be under.

90. Early intervention and monitoring are an important aspect of the nursery practice. Leaders act with integrity to ensure that children, particularly those with specific needs, are well supported and receive the care and education to which they are entitled.

91. Governors understand their role and they hold the senior leadership team to account. For instance, the nursery manager provides regular reports to the governors about nursery provision and also attends the governors' education staffing committee.

92. Leaders ensure that staff are suitable for their role and they follow safer recruitment practices well. Once staff begin in role, leaders deliver a robust programme of induction training to ensure that new staff understand their roles and responsibilities from the outset.

Safeguarding

93. Safeguarding is effective.

94. The nursery has a positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first. Leadership and management ensure that practitioners are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.

95. Practitioners understand how to protect children and care for them well. Staff know policies and procedures and update their knowledge through further training in order to stay fully aware of new guidance. Staff know who the designated safeguarding lead is and they fulfil their statutory duties rigorously.

Recommended next steps

- Strengthen staff support and help them to recognise when resources available can be used more effectively to help children develop skills for the future.

The extent to which the school meets the requirements of the early years foundation stage

96. The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

School details

School	New Hall School
Department for Education number	881/6001
Registered early years number	EY2555034
Registered charity number	1110286
Address	The Avenue Boreham Chelmsford Essex CM3 3HS
Phone number	01245 467588
Email address	admin@newhallschool.co.uk
Website	www.newhallschool.co.uk
Proprietor	New Hall School Trust
Chair	Mr Philip Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs Katherine Jeffrey
Age range	1–18
Number of pupils	1336
Number of boarding pupils	284
Number of children in the early years registered setting	147
Date of previous inspection	13–14 November 2019

Information about the school

97. New Hall School is an independent Catholic day and boarding school for pupils aged between one and eighteen years. Founded in 1642, the school occupies a former Tudor palace. Pupils are taught in mixed-sex classes, except in Years 7 to 11 where pupils are mainly taught in single-sex classes. The school operates a divisional structure of nursery, pre-prep, preparatory, girls' and boys' divisions, and sixth form.
98. There are four boarding houses: two for sixth formers and two for pupils in Years 3 to 11.
99. There is a separate early years registered setting, including a nursery, which provides education for children aged one to four.
100. The school has identified 254 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
101. English is an additional language for 110 pupils.
102. The school states its aims are to give students an experience of life in a Christian community, affirming each individual as a unique part of God's creation, and nurturing in each person a sense of dignity and self-worth, fostering caring relationships, a sense of team spirit, and respect for others. In addition, it seeks to provide a broad and balanced education, rooted in the school's Catholic foundation, which is responsive to, and supportive of, the needs and aspirations of the individual by fostering intellectual curiosity, a desire to seek truth, and a life-long love of learning.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

6 – 8 February 2024

103. A team of 11 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

104. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and another governor
- 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
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

105. 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**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit isi.net