ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

1 to 3 October 2024

Northwood College

Maxwell Rd

Northwood

London

HA6 2YE

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. Governors meet regularly with leaders to provide oversight of the school's provision on behalf of the proprietorial body. However, they have not ensured that leaders fulfil their responsibilities so that all the Standards are met.

2. Leaders and governors have not ensured that those responsible for health and safety have carried out their duty to ensure that potential risks are mitigated regarding the locking of doors, including the swimming pool door when unsupervised.

3. Leaders have a clear development plan and vision in keeping with the aims of the school. They set high expectations. Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development to support effective learning and pupils' wellbeing.

4. Academic leaders provide a suitable curriculum, which is diverse and inclusive in nature. Schemes of work include a wide range of source materials and authors so that pupils have a greater understanding of the wider world. Teaching is effective, enabling pupils to make good progress.

5. Pupils' progress is monitored in lessons and through regular formal and informal assessment; however, assessment is not embedded consistently across all subjects in the junior school.

6. Leaders in the early years ensure that children are well supported and cared for. They settle well, learn effectively and are suitably prepared for the next stage in their learning. Routines for managing the health and safety of children in the early years are well established and understood by staff.

7. Pastoral leaders work closely with academic leaders so that individual pupils' progress is considered in the context of their wellbeing.

8. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the extensive co-curriculum and sports programme. They may choose from a wide range of clubs, societies, sports, performing arts and activities.

9. Pupils have many opportunities for leadership throughout their time in the school which prepares them well for their next steps.

10. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) including statutory relationships and sex education (RSE) is well planned and delivered by staff who are trained appropriately.

11. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective. Safeguarding leads are appropriately trained, knowledgeable and work with relevant agencies as required. Safer recruitment procedures are followed; however, there was a minor omission from the single central record which was rectified on inspection.

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The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not 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 not met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- all staff understand their responsibility in identifying, managing and mitigating potential risks to pupils
- the health and safety policy is always adhered to in practice, maintaining the safety of the school site for pupils.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should ensure:

- that assessment information is used effectively across subjects in the junior school so that teachers are well informed about pupils' prior knowledge
- that all details of appointments are accurately recorded in the single central record.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. The proprietorial body understands their statutory responsibilities. However, they do not ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities so that the Standards are met consistently.

13. Leaders do not have consistent oversight with regards to health and safety. They do not ensure that doors are always locked as needed, or that the swimming pool is always suitably supervised if unlocked to ensure the safety of pupils.

14. Leaders provide thorough support for pupils' academic and personal development. Pastoral and academic leaders meet regularly to ensure that pupils are well cared for. Leaders ensure that they work with external agencies to support the needs of pupils when required. The school informs the local authority regarding the use of funds for pupils in receipt of an education, health and care plan.

15. Academic leaders have reviewed the curriculum to ensure that it is diverse and inclusive in order to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world. Schemes of work are adapted by heads of department to ensure breadth and depth within the requirements for individual year groups and for GCSE and A level.

16. Leaders in the early years have established a well-sequenced curriculum that allows children to learn through a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Leaders facilitate support through team teaching, observations and drop-in sessions. They oversee curriculum planning so that the children cover the required areas of learning and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders work with outside agencies to ensure that children have the appropriate help if required. Routines for managing the health and safety of children in the early years are well established and understood by staff.

17. Procedures for fire safety, first aid and the administration of medicines are secure. Educational trips and visits are suitably risk assessed. However, risk management procedures are not always adhered to in terms of safety within the school site.

18. Pupils take part in an extensive co-curricular and sports programme which includes a wide range of clubs, performing arts events, visiting speakers and enrichment activities. Pupils enjoy the development squads in various sports where they hone their sports skills. Pupils take part in house competitions, dramatic performance, school musicals, choirs, orchestras and small ensembles, all of which builds confidence, strength of character and resilience.

19. The school website includes an appropriate range of polices and provides suitable information and guidance for parents, and others. Parents receive detailed termly reports on their children's progress across all aspects of their learning and wellbeing. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010. An accessibility plan supports pupils' educational needs and access to the school.

20. Leaders ensure that they respond promptly to any concerns raised. Complaints are responded to and recorded appropriately in keeping with the complaints policy.

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

21. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. The curriculum has relevance, depth and breadth and effectively extends pupils' knowledge and understanding across the required areas of learning. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills across all curriculum areas. They make good progress from their individual starting points and attain highly at GCSE and A level.

23. Schemes of work include a diverse and inclusive range of authors and source materials to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the wider world. The English department use shared resources and critical thinking initiatives to enhance oracy and comprehension skills. In the mathematics department, leaders identify and address gaps in pupils' learning providing appropriate support as needed. Pupils are particularly adept in applying their skills to practical subjects such as textiles, art, drama and music. Teachers ensure that pupils understand success criteria, particularly at GCSE and A level.

24. Children in the early years and lower school develop their speaking, reading and numeracy skills through an effective reading programme and well-planned mathematics scheme. Children learn to recognise sounds, letters and numbers and build on their knowledge to begin to read, write, count and problem solve. They demonstrate a clear grasp of subject specific vocabulary across all areas of the curriculum and develop good communication skills. Children make good progress from their initial assessments. Leaders ensure that children's personal, social and emotional development is woven into curriculum planning. Children are settled and eager to learn. They are well prepared for the next steps in their learning.

25. In the junior school, well planned, cross curricular links ensure that pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects. They listen and focus well in lessons, ask probing questions and collaborate effectively to support each other in their learning. Pupils are eager to learn and make good progress from their individual starting points. They are well prepared for the transition to senior school.

26. Teachers typically check pupils' understanding in lessons. Pupils complete regular formal and informal assessments; the data is used to identify pupils who may benefit from individual support outside of lessons, or further explanations in class. Those achieving beyond expectations have extension opportunities which challenge them to develop their disciplinary knowledge. However, assessment information is not consistently available across the junior school to improve the tracking of pupils' knowledge and understanding in all subject areas.

27. Teachers are knowledgeable within their subject areas. They use an effective range of resources to plan lessons, taking the needs of the class into consideration. Subject teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for their subject which stimulates curiosity and pupils' self-motivation.

28. Pupils' additional needs are well supported in lessons by teachers who know them well. Pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well and are provided with appropriate materials to help them to access the curriculum. Small group work and individual sessions provide pupils with further support.

29. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are provided with appropriate resources to enable their prior learning of subject specific vocabulary so that they can effectively access the curriculum and make good progress in their learning.

30. Pupils in the sixth form demonstrate a spirit of inquiry in their learning. Pupils complete the extended project qualification in Year 12, learning how to manage an essay project over a long duration in preparation for university study. Teachers provide one-to-one support, where needed, to help pupils to improve their work.

31. Leaders provide an extensive and inclusive co-curricular and sports programme. Attendance at clubs is high and consistently monitored. Pupils are offered a wide range of activities including the literary society, film club, the poetry hub or beginners Greek. Senior pupils lead clubs, societies and enrichment activities for younger pupils. Pupils play a wide range of competitive sports for enjoyment. Pupils have been successful both locally and nationally. Musical groups abound with choirs, small ensembles and whole school orchestras as well as school concerts, musicals and dramatic performances.

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

32. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

33. The school has not established a culture where all staff share responsibility for health and safety. Leaders do not ensure appropriate supervision of all parts of the school site. Doors are not always locked when required and the swimming pool door is not always locked when unsupervised, posing a risk to pupils' safety.

34. Leaders and staff help pupils feel valued. They focus on character education as well as academic learning. Tutor times are well planned to include, 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' with a focus on exploring health issues and emotions and the impact this has on a pupil's day. Assemblies encourage pupils with inspirational topics, sometimes presented by pupils themselves. Children in the early years interact confidently with friends and the adults who support them.

35. Leaders and staff set high expectations and model mutual respect. This is exemplified in the positive interactions between staff and pupils. Staff challenge any instances of unkind behaviour effectively. Pupils are reminded regularly to be kind and considerate of others. Incidents of bullying are rare. They are appropriately investigated and followed up promptly. Staff listen to pupils if they report worries or concerns and act appropriately in response.

36. Behaviour throughout the school is conducive to positive learning. Pupils listen attentively in lessons. Leaders have a restorative approach to behavioural issues. They take time to work with individual pupils to help them to manage their behaviour. Leaders effectively assess any risks to pupils through regular reviews with interventions if deemed necessary. Staff allow pupils to learn from their mistakes. Parents are supported through workshops to reinforce this approach to behaviour at home.

37. The RSE policy and curriculum meet statutory requirements. The programme is well planned to cover a range of age-appropriate topics. Pupils learn about health and wellbeing, living in the wider world and positive relationships. Children in the early years learn about families and people who help them. They have had recent visits from a doctor and a dentist. Junior age pupils learn about respectful relationships and online safety. Pupils reflect on their learning and provide feedback on the topics covered. Staff know the areas pupils would like to explore more and revisit topics to ensure pupils have responses to their questions.

38. Pupils have regular opportunities for physical exercise as part of the planned curriculum. They understand the link between physical health and wellbeing from their health lessons. They choose from a wide range of individual and team sports and particularly enjoy the development squads where they hone and improve their skills. Junior school pupils develop their netball drills and skills, practise yoga, learn ballet and contemporary dance and develop their physical strength in gymnastics or running club. Senior pupils develop their skills in sports squads such as football, hockey, swimming, dance and gymnastics; enhance their coordination and confidence through learning salsa; or exercise regularly in the gym or through cross country running which supports their health and wellbeing.

39. Pupils are largely supervised appropriately. There is usually a member of staff within easy reach. Pupils enjoy the outdoor areas. Younger pupils and early years children particularly enjoy the play equipment that helps to develop their physical development.

40. Attendance and admission registers are maintained as required. Leaders have updated the attendance policy in keeping with the latest statutory guidance. Staff follow up any unexplained absence promptly. Leaders notify the local authority of any pupils joining or leaving the school at non-standard transition points.

41. Fire safety and fire prevention are well managed. The premises are well maintained and security arrangements for access to the school site are appropriate. Suitable accommodation and systems are in place for pupils' medical needs and for first aid. The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing.

42. Leaders should ensure that risk is mitigated through a more rigorous approach to site safety with regard to the locking of doors including to the swimming pool when pupils may not be supervised.

43. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

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

44. Leaders and teachers listen to pupils and treat them with respect. PSHE lessons, assemblies, and tutor times promote pupils' understanding of respect for others. Leaders have created a community in which diversity and inclusion champions throughout the school are consulted on the school's approach to initiatives such as Black history month and Asian history month. They lead initiatives in equality, diversity and inclusion. This contributes to pupils being accepting of difference, and of different traditions and customs. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of tolerance and discrimination.

45. Leaders ensure that pupils receive a suitable programme of economic education and preparation for life beyond school. Younger pupils learn about currency, interest rates and the basic handling of money. Older pupils learn about managing personal finances, cooking on a budget, loans and credit cards. Regular visits from outside speakers supports pupils in preparation for the world beyond school.

46. Pupils understand democracy. They vote for a number of roles in school such as class representatives on the school council and heads of house and school. Younger pupils explore topics on the rule of law, crime, and human rights. Pupils in Year 6 take part in a 'break the rules day' to understand the significance of rules in society. External speakers from the police and fire service provide pupils with clear insights into the need for law and order. Senior pupils' involvement in the youth-led virtual conference on climate change and Model United Nations debates allows pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding of a range of social issues.

47. Pupils have strong links with the local community. They take part in their annual harvest festival fund-raising initiative to provide food for local foodbanks. A whole-school book drive provided thousands of books for the Children's Book Project. Pupils in Year 8 raise funds for children in other countries to have clean water. These activities begin to help pupils to consider the experiences of others.

48. Pupils understand right from wrong. They explore topical issues to help them navigate the complexities of the world. Children in the Nursery share resources and take turns, learning to be considerate of others. Junior age pupils reflect on their learning in PSHE lessons, developing self-awareness and self confidence in making the right decisions in terms of their behaviour and attitudes to including others in activities and in play. Wellbeing initiatives are integrated throughout the curriculum, ensuring pupils feel safe to express their views whilst learning to balance different perspectives.

49. The well-planned careers programme ensures pupils have access to impartial guidance and support. Children in the early years begin to understand the world of work from the visits of those who help them. Through discussions, junior pupils begin to develop an awareness of their strengths, skills and subject preferences. From this, pupils build up to focusing on subject choices, and GCSE and A-level options. The careers department takes time to help pupils with their choices. Talks from invited speakers including alumnae, practice interviews, apprenticeship information and university open days support pupils to be prepared for their next steps.

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

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

51. Safeguarding is effective. The safeguarding policy is reviewed annually and updated to meet statutory requirements. Staff are trained in safeguarding procedures and understand that safeguarding is the responsibility of all staff. They are knowledgeable and know how to follow guidelines appropriately from the school code of conduct and other related policies. They record concerns in line with the school's guidelines through the online system.

52. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and safeguarding team are experienced and support the work of the school in managing the needs of pupils. They meet regularly and work closely with the pastoral team so that any identified concerns are followed up promptly. The safeguarding team work closely with local agencies and contact them for advice and guidance when required. Safeguarding leads work to ensure that pupils have appropriate support. Pupils know that there are staff members that they can turn to, should they wish to talk.

53. The DSL and deputies are suitably trained and qualified. Regular training ensures they are enabled to carry out their work in keeping with the latest guidance. Leaders and governors are suitably trained to support the safeguarding leaders in the school.

54. All staff receive update training and new staff receive an appropriate induction when they join the school, including mid-term. Staff understand the risks posed by extremism and the potential for radicalisation.

55. Regular age-appropriate education around online safety is provided to pupils so that they understand how to navigate the internet safely. Suitable monitoring and filtering systems are in place and these are checked regularly. Pupils use their devices in school with the appropriate filters.

56. The necessary recruitment checks are completed for adults who are employed by the school. A minor omission in the record of recruitment checks was rectified on inspection.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

57. All the relevant Standards are met.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR[1] Part 8, paragraph 34(1)	The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school –
34(1)(a)	demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
34(1)(b)	fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
34(1)(c)	actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that –
16(a)	The welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment; and
16(b)	Appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified

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

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11	The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.

[1] The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('ISSR')

School details

School	Northwood College
Department for Education number	312/6001
Registered charity number	306983
Address	Northwood College Maxwell Road Northwood London HA6 2YE
Phone number	01923 825446
Email address	info@nwc.gdst.net
Website	Northwoodcollege.gdst.net
Proprietor	Girls' Day School Trust
Chair	Mrs Zara Hubble
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Brown
Age range	3-18
Number of pupils	881
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 3 December 2021

Information about the school

58. Northwood College for Girls is an independent day school for pupils aged between 3 and 18. It is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils. It is part of the Girls' Day School Trust, with its own local governing body but regulatory oversight is the responsibility of the Trust.

59. The school was founded as Endsleigh House and moved to its present site in 1892. In 2014, a merger with Heathfield School created Northwood College for Girls. The current headteacher took up the post in September 2021. Since the previous inspection a new science block has been completed.

60. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has two nursery classes with 15 pupils in each and three reception classes with 20 children in each.

61. The school has identified 117 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

62. English is spoken as an additional language by 68 pupils.

63. The school states its aims are to empower each pupil with the knowledge, insight and motivation to enter adulthood as a conscientious, ambitious, confident and happy member of society; one who is equipped to turn challenge into opportunity, to embrace change and innovation, to maintain a life-long love of learning and to succeed in a path that is most advantageous to individual strengths and aspirations.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	1 to 3 October 2024

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

65. 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 head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

66. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

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- 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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