ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

28 to 30 April 2026

Putney High School GDST

35 Putney Hill

London

SW15 6BH

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'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS **3**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS **5**

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS 5

SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE **6**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE 7

SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION **8**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION 9

SECTION 3: PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING **10**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING 11

SECTION 4: PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY **12**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY 13

SAFEGUARDING **14**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING 14

SCHOOL DETAILS **15**

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL **16**

INSPECTION DETAILS **17**

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders promote the school's ethos of the 'Putney Spirit' which enables pupils to develop a sense of belonging. They establish effective partnerships with parents and listen to the views of pupils to plan school developments. Leaders take effective action to mitigate risks. For instance, they ensure that pupils' wellbeing is prioritised when seeking to improve academic outcomes. Pupils understand the need to balance academic ambition with personal growth. As a result, they develop independence, resilience and responsibility.

2. Trustees and governors provide effective oversight. They visit the school and meet with leaders regularly to assure themselves that policies are implemented effectively. Governors use reports and audits to ensure that the Standards are consistently met.

3. Leaders provide an aspirational curriculum that helps to prepare pupils for the future. They promote the concept of 'modern scholarship' which fosters a spirit of enquiry. Pupils across the school are curious and motivated to learn. Leaders engage with experts, parents, pupils and staff to shape the curriculum. Pupils gain knowledge and develop skills suited to the modern world. They have frequent opportunities to solve problems and debate relevant topics. This approach has a positive impact on pupils' progress and academic outcomes. Pupils develop self-confidence in their decision-making. Pupils are highly ambitious and motivated to achieve well. They apply intellectual, physical and creative effort in a range of opportunities available to them. This is a significant strength of the school.

4. Teachers enable pupils to make good progress. They plan lessons that are matched to pupils' needs and build on their prior attainment. Pupils reflect on their work and use teachers' feedback to improve. Pupils achieve well in public examinations and develop knowledge and skills for life in modern society.

5. In the early years, leaders design the learning environment to allow children to be curious and share their ideas. Staff enable children to develop a sophisticated vocabulary through a planned phonics programme.

6. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and make good progress. Staff use resources and strategies effectively to meet pupils' individual needs.

7. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive effective support. They make good progress in their language skills and their personal and social development.

8. Leaders plan the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum and relationships and sex education (RSE) to meet pupils' needs. Pupils are taught how to regulate their emotions and how to seek help as needed.

9. The school has effective behaviour policies. In a few lessons in the senior school, the behaviour policy is not implemented consistently. In these instances, learning is disrupted.

10. Leaders prepare pupils effectively for life beyond school. Pupils develop a practical understanding of budgeting, taxation and renting. They hear from people in diverse careers to help them make informed choices. Pupils contribute to the local community by taking part in environmental projects and by supporting pupils in local primary schools.

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11. Pupils in the sixth form develop independence and responsibility. They develop practical skills in leadership, first aid and self-defence. This ensures they are confident about their next steps.

12. Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff are knowledgeable about potential risks to pupils. They are vigilant and understand how to report a concern. The school has systematic procedures to record concerns and actions. Leaders develop effective partnerships with the local authority to promote pupils' wellbeing. The school has robust recruitment procedures. These are regularly reviewed by governors.

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 staff in the senior school implement the behaviour policy consistently so that the pace of learning is maintained in all lessons.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Leaders communicate the school's values clearly to promote an inclusive environment. They are aspirational and seek to improve provision continually to promote pupils' academic outcomes and wellbeing. Leaders promote an ethos founded on modern scholarship, community collaboration and mutual respect.

14. Leaders use the views of pupils, parents and staff to inform the school's self-evaluation. They identify risks and consider unintended consequences within their development plans. For instance, leaders recognise the pressures pupils face regarding academic achievements. They plan opportunities for pupils to develop a range of interests in sports, drama and music. Leaders ensure that pupils are knowledgeable about global current affairs. They provide pastoral support to help pupils navigate the news. Staff convey facts in age-appropriate ways so that pupils maintain balanced views. Leaders ensure that pupils understand how to make ethical decisions regarding the use of technology.

15. Leaders have a robust approach to risk management. Staff are trained to ensure that risk assessment processes are systematic. Leaders monitor the effectiveness of risk assessments and make adjustments where necessary. Governors have appropriate oversight of risk management. They carry out internal and external audits to mitigate risk.

16. Trustees and governors ensure that leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles. They provide appropriate support and challenge. Governors review policies and meet with pupils and staff during school visits to ensure they are implemented effectively. Trustees undertake audits to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.

17. Leaders maintain effective relationships with the local authority and police to seek advice and make referrals. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information related to those pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan). They notify the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition times.

18. Leaders provide a range of information for parents via the school's website. They communicate regularly with parents to share the school's vision. Parents receive up-to-date information about what their child learns in school. Leaders provide opportunities for parents to meet with staff. These include sessions on specific topics such as understanding dyslexia. Parents receive formal reports and meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress.

19. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The accessibility plan includes actions to facilitate access to the curriculum and premises for pupils who have SEND. Leaders seek advice from external advisors to ensure the accessibility plan meets the evolving needs of pupils. Staff receive training on how to recognise unconscious bias. 'Diversity prefects' lead pupil groups helping to consistently promote the importance of having respect for others.

20. The school has an effective complaints policy. Leaders document logs of complaints and appropriate actions taken, securely. Leaders review these records to identify patterns. Governors oversee the complaints policy to ensure it is consistently implemented.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders plan the curriculum effectively to meet pupils' needs. They consult with parents and experts to ensure that the curriculum is challenging. The curriculum develops pupils' academic, creative, technological and social skills. Pupils are confident and ambitious. They develop resilience through frequent opportunities to enquire, debate and discuss ideas.

23. Leaders regularly review the curriculum to deepen pupils' knowledge based on their prior attainment. In the early years and junior school, the phonics programme enables pupils to develop a rich vocabulary. Pupils apply phonics knowledge to read, write and spell accurately. In the junior school, pupils test ideas through curiosity-based projects. Pupils apply their knowledge of mental mathematics to solve problems in numeracy. They use practical resources to help deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts. Leaders in the senior school adapt the delivery of topics based on pupils' views. Courses such as python coding and design thinking enable pupils in Year 9 to develop problem-solving skills. They apply mathematical and technological skills across different subjects. From Year 10, pupils choose subjects such as philosophy, politics and economics which helps to inform their choices at A level.

24. In the early years, staff build on children's interests and ideas. The learning environment is developed effectively to stimulate curiosity and wonder. As a result, children make good progress. They develop effective social, communication and language skills.

25. In the sixth form, pupils are given subject matter in advance of lessons to encourage deeper discussion. They investigate topics beyond the A-level syllabus. This deepens their knowledge in chosen subjects and areas of interest.

26. Teachers have expert subject knowledge. They use a range of resources effectively, to inspire pupils and motivate them. Lessons are well planned and address pupils' individual needs. Teachers develop positive learning environments. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas and reflect on their performance. Pupils receive useful feedback from teachers so that they understand how to improve their work. Staff offer a range of lunchtime clinics to help pupils extend their learning. As a result, pupils, including those with higher prior attainment, make good progress.

27. The leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND ensure that needs are identified early. Pupils who have SEND receive effective support. They have comprehensive individual education plans, which are reviewed regularly. Staff receive regular training so that they consistently use strategies and resources that enable pupils to make good progress.

28. Pupils who speak EAL receive effective academic and social support. Staff vary their language and questioning in lessons to assist pupils. Teachers provide one-to-one support and lunchtime lessons to develop pupils' English language skills. Pupils who speak EAL are encouraged to take part in clubs to develop their language across different disciplines.

29. The school has a robust assessment framework. Leaders analyse data to inform curriculum planning and teaching. They act on assessment information to provide support for individual pupils. Pupils achieve above national averages at GCSE and in A-level examinations. They successfully gain places at universities in the UK and abroad.

30. The school provides a broad programme of recreational activities. Pupils have opportunities to develop skills in sport, music, drama and coding. Pupils across the school have opportunities to pursue their talents and develop new interests, such as in choir and gymnastics. They engage enthusiastically and develop independence. From Year 7, pupils can participate in the 'Athena' programme to develop an academic curriculum vitae. Challenges include writing book reviews, producing podcasts and attending seminars. These opportunities develop pupils' wider knowledge and prepare them effectively for the future.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. The PSHE curriculum reflects the school's ethos of inclusion and respect. Teachers supplement PSHE lessons through discussions in tutor times and focus weeks such as 'wellbeing week'. Pupils of various faiths have access to a 'multi-faith and mindfulness' room for reflection. Pupils develop confidence and an understanding of diversity.

33. Leaders review the effectiveness of the PSHE curriculum through analysis of data and discussions with pupils. As a result, the curriculum is adapted to meet pupils' needs. For instance, leaders have responded to older pupils' requests to include an understanding of media influence and global conflict. Pupils learn about the 'science of learning' to develop an understanding of how they learn and an awareness of their own progress. During wellbeing week, activities such as 'sparkle and shine' day are used to support pupils' self-esteem. Older pupils are taught strategies to self-regulate as they prepare for external examinations. Pupils are taught how to cope with change and how to make healthy choices. Pupils gain skills that develop self-esteem and resilience.

34. Leaders develop the RSE curriculum in consultation with parents. Pupils learn how to develop positive relationships. They understand the need for boundaries in age-appropriate ways. Pupils learn about personal safety and online safety through sessions led by trained professionals. In the sixth form, pupils attend talks on the dangers of pornography and substance misuse. They develop an understanding of the impact of these issues on young people.

35. In the early years, the programme of activities promotes personal and physical development effectively. Children are confident to express themselves and explore new ideas. They develop gross motor skills in the outdoor learning area and woodland area. This is further supported by physical education (PE) lessons. As a result, children deepen their understanding of the world.

36. The school has effective behaviour policies. Pupils understand expectations, including rewards and sanctions. Positive behaviour is promoted effectively. As a result, pupils across the school behave well. In a few lessons in the senior school, the school's behaviour policy is not implemented consistently. In these instances, the pace of learning is disrupted.

37. The anti-bullying policy is implemented effectively. Consequently, bullying is rare. Expectations for conduct are clearly outlined in 'student handbooks'. Activities during 'anti-bullying week' enable pupils to recognise and resolve incidents. Older pupils deliver workshops to younger pupils to promote mutual respect and positive friendships.

38. Pupils across the school experience a broad and inclusive PE curriculum. Pupils in the junior school develop skills in a range of sports including cricket and gymnastics. Older pupils participate in sports such as lacrosse and rowing. Pupils are taught how sport and food nutrition have an impact on their physical and mental health. A range of clubs allows pupils to pursue specific interests and develop strength and conditioning. Staff ensure that pupils who have SEND are supported so that adapted provision meets their needs.

39. The school's premises are suitable for the needs of pupils. Leaders ensure that the school complies with health and safety laws and fire safety regulations. Checks are carried out systematically and

regularly, including through external audits. Regular fire drills and lockdown drills are carried out. This ensures that pupils know how to respond in an emergency.

40. The school has a robust approach to first aid provision and accident reporting. The medical centre provides a suitable space for pupils to be treated. Staff attend appropriate training, including paediatric first aid training for those working in the early years. Leaders implement clear plans for managing medical needs and allergies at mealtimes.

41. The school maintains an admission register that includes all required information. Leaders review attendance data regularly to identify trends. They implement targeted pastoral support to improve attendance where necessary. Unauthorised absences are followed up promptly.

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

42. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

43. Leaders actively promote fundamental British values through a well-planned PSHE curriculum. Pupils explore democracy and the rule of law in real-life contexts. This includes visits to the Houses of Parliament and discussions with visiting members of parliament. These deepen pupils' understanding of democracy. Community police officers deliver sessions on personal safety. These include the risks of county lines and substance misuse. This enhances pupils' awareness of the rule of law. Older pupils explore themes of equality and inclusivity. Partnerships with organisations such as Amnesty International, support pupils' understanding of international human rights.

44. The school fosters a culture of kindness, respect and social responsibility. Leaders have modified the curriculum in the senior school to help pupils to develop balanced views. Initiatives such as the 'power of good' and 'kindness' projects encourage pupils to demonstrate empathy. Library projects encourage pupils to read books by authors from around the world. These help to deepen pupils' cultural understanding. Younger pupils learn about different faiths and cultures through visits to places of worship. This includes visits to a gurdwara, synagogue and mosque. These experiences are complemented by classroom learning that promotes respect for others.

45. Current affairs are addressed sensitively across all phases. In the junior school, teachers select resources to support age-appropriate discussion. In the senior school and sixth form, pupils engage in detailed exploration of global issues. Classroom practice encourages open discussion and balanced views. Pupils are taught to critically evaluate the reliability of sources and understand how misinformation can spread.

46. Across the school, pupils understand rules and responsibility. Staff set expectations and model kindness and respect in registration time and in lessons. They actively promote a clear understanding of right from wrong. Pupils in the sixth form understand their role in modelling these behaviours to younger pupils.

47. In the early years, staff promote positive interactions among children. They plan opportunities for children to collaborate in different groups. Staff model the behaviours they expect from children. Children learn to show mutual respect and to develop independence in resolving their own problems.

48. Leaders ensure that pupils are prepared effectively for opportunities and responsibilities of life in British society. This includes a focus on managing personal finances. In the early years, children are introduced to basic concepts of money through play-based activities. Pupils in the junior school learn how to manage and protect money. In the senior school, pupils plan budgets based on real-life scenarios. For example, they take part in practical exercises on mortgages and salaries. Enterprise initiatives, such as the 'ten-pound challenge', provide experience of business and financial planning.

49. Leaders prepare pupils for the world of work. They provide a comprehensive careers education, supported by a network of external speakers and parents. School-specific events, such as 'careers week' and 'working breakfasts', provide opportunities for pupils to engage with professionals. These include representatives from the European Space Agency and medical professionals. Pupils learn about the skills required for different careers to help them make informed choices. Pupils in the sixth form receive one-to-one support for university applications. This includes assistance with

admissions tests for overseas universities and guidance for specialist subjects. Pupils develop confidence in interview skills through practice with staff and governors.

50. Pupils in the sixth form gain practical experiences to develop life skills. They learn to manage weekly budgets, complete laundry and perform first aid. They receive information about student loans and the legal aspects of renting accommodation. Pupils understand how taxes are calculated in payslips. Leaders enable pupils in the sixth form to extend their learning through the 'futures programme'. Pupils research a topic of interest and present their findings to their peers. This prepares them effectively for their next steps.

51. Leaders embed charity work across the school. Pupils vote for house charities and organise fundraising events. Partnerships with organisations such as Age UK provide opportunities for meaningful social interaction. This includes community service and intergenerational projects. Pupils contribute to the local community through reading programmes and coaching sports in primary schools. Environmental responsibility is promoted through sustainability clubs and gardening projects. Pupils reflect on their impact on the environment and contribute to sustainable practices.

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

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

53. Safeguarding arrangements at the school are comprehensive and effective. The safeguarding team possesses the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their roles. They attend training provided by the local authority and the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). Trustees ensure that governors have the necessary training to oversee the school's safeguarding arrangements.

54. Leaders maintain appropriate links with the local authority and children's services. They collaborate with pupils and parents to provide support. Safeguarding logs are detailed and recorded chronologically. Leaders review these to identify patterns and provide training as necessary. Records demonstrate that leaders take appropriate and timely action in response to any identified concerns.

55. There is comprehensive induction training for staff when they join the school. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that staff understand the procedures for reporting a concern about pupils. Staff understand how to recognise contextual risks to pupils. This includes knowledge of child-on-child abuse, online bullying and sexual harassment. Annual safeguarding training is followed up with frequent briefings on changes to statutory guidance and quizzes to refresh topics. As a result, staff are confident in how to be vigilant and how to report a concern.

56. Staff are trained in how and when to report a concern about an adult in the school. This contributes to the school's culture of vigilance. Leaders review these records to inform further staff training.

57. Pupils can report a concern in a range of age-appropriate ways. In the junior school, pupils can post a note or can message a member of the safeguarding team online. Older pupils use digital codes to report concerns anonymously. There are posters around the school signposting pupils to a range of adults they can talk to if they have a concern.

58. The school has effective internet filtering and monitoring arrangements. Leaders follow up any alerts quickly and sensitively. This includes monitoring pupil device usage during school holidays. Systems are tested regularly to ensure that they are appropriate and effective.

59. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and understand the benefits of a mobile phone-free environment. They know how to create secure passwords and be mindful of information they access or share.

60. Safer recruitment procedures are robust. Leaders carry out all required checks for staff and contractors. These are recorded accurately on the single central record (SCR) of appointments. Governors and leaders regularly review the accuracy of the SCR.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

61. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Putney High School GDST
Department for Education number	212/6310
Registered charity number	306983
Address	Putney High School GDST 35 Putney Hill London SW15 6BH
Phone number	020 8788 4886
Email address	putneyhigh@put.gdst.net
Website	www.putneyhigh.gdst.net
Proprietor	Girls' Day School Trust
Chair	Mrs Vicky Tuck
Headteacher	Ms Jo Sharrock
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	1060
Date of previous inspection	25 to 27 April 2023

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Information about the school

62. Putney High School GDST is an independent day school for female pupils located in Putney, London. The school is overseen by trustees of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), a registered charity. It is supported by a local governing body. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2023. A new chair of trustees was appointed in July 2023.

63. The school comprises junior, senior and sixth-form sections. There are 44 children in the early years in two Reception classes.

64. The school has identified 190 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.

65. There are 372 pupils who speak English as an additional language in the school.

66. The school states that its purpose is to educate girls to be well rounded, well qualified and well prepared. The school aims to draw on the power of great teaching and expert care to build women of character, consequence and compassion, instilling fearless curiosity, intellectual agility and a joyful ambition for originality and adventure.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	28 to 30 April 2026

67. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. 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
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

69. 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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