

School inspection report

28 to 30 January 2025

Notting Hill Prep School

95 Lancaster Road

London

W11 1QQ

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. Pupils enjoy coming to school as a result of the warm and positive interactions that leaders promote. Pupils feel valued as individuals and comfortable knowing that leaders prioritise both their academic and pastoral needs.
2. Governors and leaders collaborate well to provide strategic direction for the school. They are attuned to the unique ethos of the school, which centres on pupils' wellbeing and strong links with the local community. They keep this ethos firmly in their minds as they take actions to improve the school further.
3. Leaders write and implement suitable policies and procedures, many of which are provided on the school's website. At the beginning of the inspection, the current policy for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) was not on the school's website. The attendance policy on the website was not up to date. These issues were rectified before the end of the on-site inspection.
4. Promotion of effective 'learning habits', such as communicating with clarity, is a distinct part of the curriculum. Pupils reflect on strategies that will make them more effective learners. They engage in critical thinking and display mature reasoning skills.
5. Pupils make good progress as a result of the well-chosen curriculum and effective teaching. Typically, teachers adapt the content of their lessons, and the way they deliver them, to meet individual pupils' needs. However, this is not consistent and, at times, teachers do not take enough account of pupils' prior attainment. When this is the case, pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
6. Health and safety is managed skilfully with detailed risk assessments and a comprehensive monitoring programme. The school site is kept secure so that pupils feel safe.
7. Pupils have a well-developed social conscience. They display empathy and altruism when engaging with the local community and raising money for charities.
8. Pupils are respectful and make positive friendships. They are aware of the need for inclusion and they celebrate diversity. They treat each other with kindness and empathy.
9. Safeguarding is a key priority. Leaders, staff and governors are suitably trained and understand their role in promoting a positive safeguarding culture. The safeguarding team responds sensitively to any concerns and follows the required procedures promptly.

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:

- strengthen systems for when policies are reviewed to ensure that the most up-to-date versions are always available on the school's website
- ensure that teaching consistently meets the needs of all pupils, by taking into account their prior attainment, so that they make as much progress as possible.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders provide a safe and happy environment where individuality is celebrated through recognition that all pupils have something special to offer. Leaders develop warm and nurturing relationships with pupils and their families so that they get to know them well. This creates a genuine sense of belonging and community spirit. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel settled and valued.
11. Governors successfully support and challenge the work of school leaders to ensure that they fulfil their roles effectively. They promote a variety of useful professional development opportunities so that leaders can enhance their knowledge and skills further. Through governors' regular visits to the school and thorough scrutiny of leaders' reports, leaders and governors collaborate well to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
12. Leaders and governors work closely together to evaluate and decide the strategic direction of the school. They listen to the views of all members of the school community in this process and also carefully consider any potential risks. Leaders and governors reflect on how they can further enhance the provision for pupils whilst maintaining the values of the school. They ensure that pupils' wellbeing and the needs of the school community are at the heart of any decisions they make.
13. Leaders implement policies effectively so that the Standards are consistently met. They provide many of these policies, as well as other key information, to parents via the school's website. However, at the beginning of the inspection, the most up-to-date versions of two policies were missing from the website. The policy for pupils who speak EAL had not been uploaded. The policy for attendance was not the most recent version so did not reflect the school's current processes and relevant statutory guidance. These oversights were amended before the end of the on-site inspection.
14. Governors oversee risk assessment rigorously. Leaders understand this area well and are effective at identifying and mitigating risks. There is a thorough system in place for monitoring risk assessments to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. Risk assessments for trips and events are completed with accuracy. They are adapted for different levels of risk depending on the activity being undertaken and the age of the pupils concerned.
15. Leaders liaise with external agencies, where required, to ensure that the site is safe. This includes external auditing of fire equipment and testing of electrical equipment. Leaders work with external professionals, such as psychologists and speech and language therapists, to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), where appropriate.
16. Leaders comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. There is a detailed accessibility plan in place which is implemented fully and regularly reviewed. This helps to ensure that pupils are not discriminated against and that reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate the needs of the whole school community.
17. The procedure for parental complaints is comprehensive and has suitable timescales for the completion of different stages. The complaints policy is available for parents on the school's website. Parents' concerns are managed swiftly and empathetically by school staff.

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

18. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Pupils enjoy and benefit from a broad and well-rounded curriculum. It enables them to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a suitable range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, history and French. Creativity is a key feature of the curriculum. Pupils learn to express themselves in drama, music and art, and develop their skills and aesthetic appreciation.
20. The curriculum is enhanced by enabling pupils to reflect on how to learn and think effectively. Leaders have implemented a series of 'learning habits' for pupils, such as striving for accuracy and thinking flexibly. Teachers successfully use the learning habits as part of their teaching, for example by encouraging pupils to apply knowledge they already have to new situations. This enables pupils to develop their critical thinking skills. Pupils build on these skills in philosophy lessons, during which they consider open-ended questions. In these lessons, pupils give reasoned and well-thought-out answers and confidently express why they agree or disagree with each other's opinions.
21. Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points. They learn first-hand about the world around them through an active, play-based curriculum. Teachers adapt planning to incorporate topics and activities that are tailored to children's needs and interests. This fosters engagement and development of oral language skills. Children talk animatedly whilst they are playing. They respond well to teachers' probing questions, which helps develop their vocabulary and comprehension. Reading is taught effectively so that children quickly learn to read and write simple sentences.
22. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which they use effectively to plan lessons that are appropriate to pupils' ages. Teachers promote a respectful learning environment so that pupils engage positively with their learning. They provide detailed feedback which allows pupils to fully understand the steps needed to improve. As a result, pupils make good progress.
23. Teachers are adept at supporting pupils with different learning needs. For example, they use visual aids or additional questioning for pupils who have SEND to ensure that they develop their understanding. Teachers also adapt their teaching to provide suitable stretch and challenge for pupils with higher prior attainment, using additional tasks or questions to extend their thinking. However, this is not always the case. At times, teachers do not take enough account of pupils' prior attainment when planning lessons. This means that teaching, and the tasks pupils are given to do, is less closely matched to their individual needs. Where this is the case, some pupils make less progress than they are capable of.
24. Teachers use a variety of assessment methods to monitor pupils' progress. As well as assessing how pupils are learning within lessons, teachers analyse information from formal assessments. This enables them to check that their teaching is effective and to identify any pupils who might require extra support. Assessment information is often shared with pupils so that they can reflect on their personal progress and consider how they could improve further.
25. Pupils who have SEND are supported well. Specialist staff liaise effectively with teachers to identify individual pupils' needs and consider suitable ways to meet those needs in class. Individual plans are written and monitored to support pupils who have SEND, ensuring that they make good progress. Appropriate resources are utilised to help pupils in class, such as different chairs to assist with

concentration. Targeted groups are established to meet the needs of pupils who require additional support, such as working on letters and the sounds they represent.

26. Staff have effective procedures for identifying pupils who speak EAL and considering the level of support they require. Pupils who speak EAL are supported according to their individual needs, including acquisition of vocabulary and development of comprehension skills. They are monitored closely to ensure that they make good progress.
27. Pupils have access to a varied programme of extra-curricular activities, which covers many different areas, including coding, chess, learning new languages, drama, dance and sport. This enables pupils to broaden their skills further as well as pursue new passions and interests.

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

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

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

29. The school's focus on 'learning habits', such as reflecting, evaluating and being independent, enables pupils to develop knowledge of their own strengths as learners and how they could improve further. Pupils develop their self-esteem through positive interactions with teachers and receiving recognition for working hard and behaving well. Pupils demonstrate confidence in their understanding that mistakes are not to be feared. Even the youngest children in the school know that learning from 'marvellous mistakes' is central to effective learning.
30. Pupils behave well and show respect towards others. Regular discussion about the school's code of behaviour, known as 'ready, respectful, safe', encourages pupils to make good behaviour choices and to think about other people's feelings. Pupils appreciate the value of treating others as they would like to be treated. Children in the early years develop their understanding of how to behave towards each other through discussions with their teachers about topics such as 'how to be a good friend' and 'how to resolve conflict independently'.
31. Pupils are taught about bullying and the forms it can take. They learn about what to do if bullying ever happens to them or to someone else. As a result, pupils have a well-developed understanding of the term 'bullying' and why this type of behaviour is not tolerated. On the very rare occasions that bullying occurs, leaders and teachers resolve the situation quickly and appropriately.
32. There is a suitable relationships and sex education (RSE) programme in place. Through carefully planned lessons, teachers are effective at ensuring that pupils learn about relationships in age-appropriate ways. Younger pupils understand the importance of healthy friendships. Older pupils understand the importance of consent and the physical and emotional changes they will experience as they mature. Parents are aware that they can withdraw their child from sex education lessons if they wish.
33. Well-planned lessons in personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education enable pupils to develop their understanding of how to be healthy. Pupils understand the advantages of being physically active for their physical and mental health. Pupils understand that making sensible choices about their lifestyles is beneficial. Pupils are offered a variety of healthy food options. Initiatives such as 'rainbow plates' contribute to pupils' understanding of eating a balanced diet. Pupils benefit from regular mindfulness sessions which help them to know how to promote their own wellbeing.
34. Pupils experience a comprehensive physical education (PE) curriculum that promotes fitness as well as the development of skills. They learn how to collaborate as part of a team and develop competence in a variety of sports and activities. Teaching in PE is effective at helping pupils to make good progress and to understand how they could improve further.
35. Physical development is a key aspect of the early years curriculum. Children take part in regular PE lessons during which they improve skills such as running, jumping, balancing, throwing and catching. Activities in the classroom and outdoor areas are planned to enhance physical development. These improve children's muscle strength, particularly in their fingers and hands, as a precursor to handwriting, and develop their coordination skills.

36. Pupils reflect on their spiritual understanding in theology, philosophy and religion lessons and in assemblies. At these times, pupils deepen their understanding of their own beliefs and broaden their knowledge of the beliefs and cultures of others.
37. Pupils in Year 8 have the opportunity to undertake positions of responsibility. There are numerous leadership roles for pupils within the school and the house system. These enable pupils to act as role models for younger pupils and to consider how their actions can positively impact the school.
38. There is a thorough approach towards health and safety so that a safe physical environment is provided for pupils. The premises are maintained well as a result of robust knowledge and attention to detail. Fire safety is effective, with regular fire drills and testing of equipment. Supervision of pupils is vigilant and there are tight measures in place to ensure site security. First aid is effective, with suitable training for staff, including paediatric first aid for early years staff.
39. Attendance and admission registers are appropriately maintained. Leaders inform the local authority about pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times of the year. Action is taken if there are any concerns about a pupil's attendance.

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

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

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

41. Pupils develop an age-appropriate awareness of diversity and an appreciation of the importance of inclusion. They learn about respecting different cultures through the curriculum and through visiting speakers. Pupils learn about ways that people can be different, for example in terms of disability, religion and sexual orientation. This enables pupils to be suitably prepared for life in British society by understanding that they should be inclusive and caring citizens of their community.
42. Leaders have established successful links with the local community. For example, pupils engage with local elderly people through regular tea parties. They sing as part of a community choir with pupils from local primary schools. This helps pupils to be well informed about the local community and to celebrate the diverse range of people they encounter in their lives at school and beyond.
43. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the importance of service and charity. They show maturity and empathy in their understanding that there are others who are less fortunate than themselves. Pupils take responsibility for their own fundraising events within the house system and choose local, national and international charities to support.
44. Pupils develop economic literacy skills to help prepare them for life in society. In PSHE lessons, they consider topics such as budgeting and saving. They learn how to calculate different sums of money in mathematics lessons. Children in the early years play with pretend money in role-play activities such as shopping. Older pupils extend their knowledge by taking part in enterprise activities, such as trying to make a return on a small sum of money and writing and pitching business ideas.
45. Leaders provide support for future school choices through thorough preparation within the curriculum. This is enhanced through interview practice and talks from secondary-school headteachers. In keeping with leaders' aim of treating pupils as individuals, bespoke advice is offered for pupils and parents about 11-plus and 13-plus entrance procedures so that pupils find the right secondary school to meet their needs.
46. Pupils in Year 8 benefit from a careers programme that helps them reflect on the direction their lives might take beyond education. A wide range of visiting speakers, such as journalists, designers, medics and sports people, help pupils to understand the variety of options available to them and the importance of striving to achieve their goals.
47. Pupils take part in elections at school to help them develop their knowledge of democracy. These age-appropriate activities range from voting for the names of the school chickens to choosing pupil representatives for the school council. The curriculum for humanities develops this understanding further so that older pupils learn about topics such as public institutions, civil and criminal law and the concept of individual liberty within democratic society.

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. Leaders have established a robust safeguarding culture by ensuring that staff understand their responsibilities with regard to protecting pupils from harm. Staff and governors receive safeguarding training at induction and subsequently have regular refresher training to enhance their knowledge. They are aware of, and comply with, relevant statutory guidance. This enables them to know how to look out for any safeguarding concerns and how to respond when they arise.
50. The safeguarding team are effective in monitoring and responding to concerns about pupils. They have developed a thorough record-keeping process that enables them to communicate effectively and to ensure that they support individual pupils appropriately. They liaise with external agencies, as necessary, for advice, support and guidance. They ensure that their own training equips them with the skills they need for their roles.
51. Leadership of safer recruitment is effective. Staff are knowledgeable and have an in-depth understanding of their role in this important area. All the pre-appointment checks are carried out in a timely fashion to ensure that new staff are suitable to work with children. The checks are recorded in a well-maintained single central record (SCR). Governors oversee safeguarding procedures vigilantly and use their training and knowledge well to ensure that the school's practice is rigorous.
52. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe. Teaching about safety is comprehensive and takes place in PSHE lessons, digital literacy lessons and externally provided workshops. All pupils learn how to cross the road safely when they move with their teachers from one school building to another. As they get older, pupils learn about substance abuse and the associated dangers. They take part in regular fire drills and lockdown practices and learn why rehearsing these is important for their safety.
53. Pupils learn about the suitable use of social media, not sharing inappropriate images, password security and the importance of seeking adult help should they encounter anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Leaders have implemented robust filtering and monitoring systems to ensure that pupils cannot access inappropriate material when online at school. These systems are tested and reviewed regularly.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Notting Hill Prep School
Department for Education number	207/6401
Address	95 Lancaster Road London W11 1QQ
Phone number	02072 210727
Email address	admin@nottinghillprep.com
Website	www.nottinghillprep.com
Proprietor	Dukes Education Group Ltd
Chair	Mr Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Mrs Maxine Shaw
Age range	4 to 13
Number of pupils	384
Date of previous inspection	16 to 19 November 2021

Information about the school

55. Notting Hill Prep School is a co-educational day school located in Notting Hill, West London. The school was founded in 2003. It comprises three sections in separate buildings: the pre-prep department, which includes the early years and Years 1 and 2; the middle school, for Years 3 to 5; and the upper school, for Years 6 to 8. Since the previous inspection, the school has become part of Dukes Education Group Ltd and there is a board of governors who are responsible for strategy and compliance. A new headteacher was appointed in 2024.
56. There are 35 children in the early years in two Reception classes.
57. The school has identified 118 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are no pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
58. The school has identified 19 pupils as speaking English as an additional language (EAL).
59. The school states its aims are to combine academic challenge with the joy of childhood and for pupils to understand what it means to think and thus to thrive. It aims for school to be full of adventure, for pupils to rejoice in taking risks in their learning, to make mistakes without fear and to follow their passions, enabling them to become independent thinkers and problem solvers.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 to 30 January 2025

60. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

61. 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.

62. 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

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