ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

10 to 12 March 2026

North Bridge House Senior School - Hampstead

65 Rosslyn Hill

Hampstead

London

NW3 5UD

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 **4**

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS 4

SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE **5**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE 6

SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION **7**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION 8

SECTION 3: PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING **9**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS' PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING 10

SECTION 4: PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY **11**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS' SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY 12

SAFEGUARDING **13**

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING 13

SCHOOL DETAILS **14**

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL **15**

INSPECTION DETAILS **16**

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders cultivate a cohesive and supportive community that puts pupils' wellbeing at its core and consistently upholds the school's aims and values. Leaders provide clear strategic direction, base decisions on a shared vision and promote a culture of continuous professional development. Relationships between pupils, leaders and staff shape an inclusive atmosphere where pupils feel valued and receive encouragement to succeed.

2. Governors support school leaders and monitor the effectiveness of their work. Through regular visits and communication, they ensure that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively and that the Standards are met.

3. The school offers a comprehensive and regularly updated curriculum that balances academic achievement with personal development. Pupils benefit from a wide range of creative and co-curricular opportunities. The school provides robust support for pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). This sustains an inclusive environment. Teachers use an array of teaching strategies and rigorous assessment to help develop a range of skills such as problem-solving, resilience and communication. Pupils make good progress from diverse starting points.

4. Leaders cultivate an environment defined by tolerance and mutual respect and encourage pupils to express their views. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme develops pupils' self-understanding and builds self-confidence and self-awareness as it emphasises respectful relationships. Pupils show a clear understanding of behavioural expectations, known as the 'North Bridge House Way', which includes the strategies to address low-level disruption. However, not all teachers apply these strategies consistently.

5. Staff and leaders stay vigilant in assessing and reducing possible risks on site. Routines for health, safety and fire prevention form part of daily practice, and staff provide prompt and appropriate first aid. Staff keep detailed records to ensure all procedures are documented and regularly review them. This collective focus creates a secure learning environment.

6. A supportive and inclusive culture nurtures pupils' wellbeing. Whole-school events, such as 'culture week', educational visits and enrichment activities, develop pupils' understanding of values such as democracy and respect for cultural diversity. As a result, pupils show tolerance and appreciation of individual differences and learn together in a respectful atmosphere. The curriculum provides effective careers guidance and financial literacy education. As a result, pupils are prepared for life in modern British society.

7. Leaders uphold a rigorous safeguarding culture. They maintain close oversight, encourage a proactive staff approach and provide thorough training. Staff promptly report and record concerns. Pupils receive comprehensive support and appropriate education on safety. Staff collaborate with external agencies and carry out robust recruitment checks.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the behaviour policy is consistently implemented so that every teacher uses the published strategies to manage instances of low-level disruption.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. The proprietor maintains effective oversight through a central team that meets with school leaders regularly. This team provides guidance, shares ideas and delivers training. Members of the board of governors receive regular reports, visit the school and engage with leaders. This collaborative approach enables effective monitoring, robust challenge and ongoing development across the school. Staff and pupils understand the clear policies and procedures, which comply with relevant legislation. Policies are reviewed and updated as needed. Governors gain insight and can assure themselves that leaders possess the skills, knowledge and understanding to perform their roles effectively. As a result, the Standards are met consistently.

9. Leaders drive improvement by regularly analysing the school's performance and gathering feedback from across the school community. Their self-evaluation and evidence-based training ensure that development priorities centre on pupils' wellbeing. This leads to specific strategic actions and clear aspirations, enabling pupils to thrive academically, emotionally and socially in a supportive school environment. For example, leaders have recently reviewed and enhanced the enrichment programme. This has had a positive impact on pupils' overall character development.

10. Leaders promote a collaborative and nurturing culture where pupils and teachers build positive relationships. Leaders' decisions align with the school's core aim of guiding pupils to discover their unique talents and personalities, known as their 'true north'. Clear communication ensures everyone understands and embraces this vision, so that pupils' confidence and self-belief are fostered.

11. Leaders maintain the school's unique identity but make use of shared policies and resources from the larger trust of schools of which they are a part. This approach allows for innovation as well as leaders benefitting from broader support.

12. The school makes the required information available to parents, primarily through its website. Parents are well informed about their child's progress and achievements through parents' evenings and written reports. These reports outline pupils' attainment and attitude to learning and provide targets for improvement. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information about the school's use of funds provided for pupils who have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).

13. The school meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. This includes providing an inclusive curriculum and effectively implementing an accessibility plan. Leaders have made adjustments to the curriculum, facilities and the way in which information is provided. These improvements enable a wider range of learners, including those with disabilities, to engage and participate fully in the life of the school. Recent measures have included installing an additional accessible toilet and enhancing the learning environment by improving lighting, soundproofing and flooring.

14. Leaders maintain constructive and timely links with external agencies such as the local authority and the police. This collaboration informs leaders' decision-making and ensures a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding pupils' wellbeing. The school informs the local authority promptly whenever pupils join or leave at non-standard transition times.

15. Leaders' and governors' understanding of risk management forms the foundation for effective practices. They proactively identify risks to pupils' wellbeing, including subtle harmful behaviours

and attitudes that may not be immediately obvious. Suitably trained staff establish thorough, systematic processes for identifying and managing risks. Their detailed assessments address concerns, including those related to the school environment, educational visits and its central London location. Leaders use regular reviews of risk assessments to address lessons learned from any past situations or near misses. This holistic approach ensures that risk management practices stay relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the school community.

16. Leaders address complaints fairly and transparently, in accordance with the school's policy. Staff and leaders listen carefully to parents' concerns and respond in a timely fashion, in line with published procedures. Leaders maintain comprehensive records of complaints and routinely analyse them to identify any recurring issues or patterns.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders have established a broad and appropriate curriculum that is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to suit the abilities and learning needs of the pupils. The curriculum is well structured, with schemes of work demonstrating clear progression. Leaders prioritise the steady growth of pupils' core competencies in oracy, reading, writing and numeracy. School values, including respect, integrity and social responsibility, are embedded in lesson planning. This supports pupils to make well-informed decisions in preparation for their future success in the workplace and adult life. Pupils make good progress from their different starting points to GCSE.

19. The creative arts play a pivotal role in the curriculum. Pupils deepen their aesthetic and creative learning in subjects such as art, drama, photography and music. Teaching across these disciplines is knowledgeable, well resourced and carefully adapted to match pupils' interests and abilities. This approach enables pupils to engage fully with these subjects and make good progress. Teachers encourage pupils to express their unique viewpoints and creativity. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to develop and showcase their talents. A large number of pupils are actively involved in drama productions and display advanced musical skills or produce high-quality artwork, including well-crafted photographs.

20. A detailed assessment framework is in place to monitor pupils' progress and attainment at different points throughout the school year. Teachers and leaders regularly analyse this data to pinpoint pupils' strengths and identify those who may require further help. Marking is assiduous across all subjects and offers comprehensive feedback for improvement, which pupils respond to readily. Pupils understand that mistakes are opportunities for learning. Suggestions for useful next steps and self- and peer-assessment opportunities help pupils develop resilience and take responsibility for their learning.

21. Across subjects, teachers typically exhibit good subject knowledge. They use a wide range of resources, activities and methods, such as effective questioning, timed writing tasks and the consistent use of accurate, subject-specific terminology. This helps pupils acquire new knowledge and maintain focus and interest. Teachers know their pupils well and carefully plan lessons to address individual learning needs. Teachers typically manage class time and pupil behaviour well. However, on rare occasions when agreed behaviour strategies are not consistently used, low-level disruption can negatively affect the lesson. Teachers purposefully integrate the development of core skills, for example communication, through presentations, collaborative work and individually designed tasks. As a result, pupils demonstrate effective analytical writing skills, for example using a variety of figurative language or sentence structures or incorporating vivid imagery and techniques to develop descriptive passages.

22. The leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEND is highly effective. Pupils' needs are identified on entry and addressed through tailored actions, including, where necessary, individual support. Leaders provide teachers with actionable strategies through regular training and discussion. As a result, pupils receive work matched to their needs, and appropriate resources. For example, tasks are broken up into smaller steps and sentence starters provided. In modern foreign languages, teachers use sentence builders, visual cues and a booklet system to reduce note-taking pressure. Pupils who have SEND make good progress throughout their time in the school.

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23. Pupils who speak EAL are assessed upon joining the school, with support tailored to their specific requirements. Teachers implement targeted classroom strategies, such as visual aids or collaborative activities, alongside personalised one-to-one or small-group support, such as vocabulary sessions or reading practice, when deemed necessary. Academic progress is closely monitored through termly reviews to ensure consistent academic and linguistic growth. Staff engage in professional development to remain proficient in effective approaches to EAL teaching and learning.

24. Pupils engage in appropriate co-curricular activities to extend their skills and interests. The breadth of activities offered, including clubs such as religious investigation, chess and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) programme, allows pupils to interact with various year groups and develop self-confidence. Additionally, specific skills, learnt through clubs such as darts, dissection and debate, allow pupils to pursue their own interests and contribute to their growth.

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

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

26. Leaders create a warm and welcoming environment that enables pupils to develop positive relationships and build self-knowledge and confidence. In particular, form time provides a safe space for pupils to discuss difficult topics. Carefully chosen themes and pastoral surveys allow pupils to express their thoughts and feelings with confidence. Leaders use information from pupil feedback to guide planning, including changes such as the introduction of wellbeing walks, which successfully promote self-esteem and reduce anxiety. As a result, leaders successfully develop pupils' self-confidence.

27. Spirituality is nurtured through opportunities for reflection and through a focus by staff on the non-material aspects of life, including kindness and respect. Pupils learn about and celebrate a range of faiths and cultures through assemblies, whole-school events such as 'culture week', and the curriculum. These provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of diversity and the wider world. This often draws on the school community's cultural richness and encourages respect for diverse beliefs and backgrounds. Pupils are accepting of everyone.

28. Pupils benefit from specialised teaching across a suitable sports programme. This includes physical education (PE) and games, which inspire pupils to value exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils participate enthusiastically, developing skills in sports such as handball, football and badminton. These experiences enhance co-ordination, confidence, self-esteem and teamwork, and build resilience. This supports pupils' overall physical and emotional wellbeing.

29. The PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums are age-appropriate and effective. Pupils learn about prejudiced behaviour, such as transphobia. They develop strategies to build healthy relationships, challenge discrimination and deepen their understanding of differences. Teachers cover topics such as consent and contraception, emphasising mutual respect. Regular quizzes assess pupils' understanding and, when gaps are identified, leaders provide relevant workshops, for example on issues such as healthy eating, skin care and exercise, or progressive masculinity. Because form tutors, who know their pupils well, teach PSHE and RSE, they are able to facilitate discussions that help pupils to gain the knowledge and skills to make informed personal choices that support their safety and wellbeing.

30. An effective anti-bullying strategy is in place. Leaders promote a culture that does not tolerate bullying. Staff ensure pupils are taught about all forms of bullying and consider the experiences of victims. Though incidents are rare, staff act swiftly to provide support for both bully and victim. They maintain detailed records in order to monitor trends.

31. Detailed behaviour expectations and protocols known as the 'North Bridge House Way' help foster a culture in which pupils feel safe, supported and valued through a restorative approach. It allows pupils to reflect on the impact of their behaviour. Leaders monitor behaviour through detailed logs and promote pupils' wellbeing by promptly addressing behavioural concerns. Staff receive clear guidance on responding to poor behaviour, aided by training and ongoing support from leaders, such as through a system whereby pastoral and senior leaders offer ongoing guidance on a rota basis. The sanctions system is well established and visible across the school site. However, the behaviour management system is not consistently applied by all teachers, leading to occasional low-level disruption.

32. Suitable first aid arrangements ensure pupils' medical needs are met. Clear records are kept of any accidents and the administration of medicines. Sufficient staff receive training to ensure that first aid is administered competently.

33. The school's premises are maintained to a suitable standard through a planned programme of maintenance and repairs. Health and safety arrangements are effective across the site. Arrangements are in place to ensure all required checks and maintenance are carried out as needed. External specialists conduct compliance checks, including those on legionella, electrical equipment and fire safety. Leaders adopt comprehensive precautions to reduce the risk of fire. This includes systematic checks of fire safety equipment and systems. Staff receive health and safety training and updates as required. As a result, the premises are well maintained and secure for pupils.

34. Pupils are well supervised during breaktimes, lunchtime and at the start and end of the school day. Staff use these times to build positive relationships and help promote responsible behaviour.

35. Staff maintain admission registers effectively and ensure that they log pupils' attendance in line with statutory guidance. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance carefully. They identify pupils who need support with their attendance and intervene appropriately to ensure improvement. This includes communication with parents and talks with pupils to explain the clear link between good attendance and academic outcomes.

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

36. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

37. Leaders prioritise mutual respect and inclusivity. These principles are consistently modelled by staff and older pupils and embedded throughout the curriculum and school life. Pupils lead assemblies and initiate discussions on issues such as discrimination. This promotes understanding of individual rights and freedoms and fosters recognition of the harms of prejudice. Pupil leadership and positive relationships drive this inclusive culture. The school's commitment to equality and respect is evident in initiatives like pupil-led International Women's Day talks and LGBTQ+ breakfasts.

38. A range of experiences broadens pupils' understanding of culture, social responsibility and global citizenship. This is supported through established international partnerships with schools in Spain and Chile. Culture week, for example, helps pupils explore religions, food, cultures and festivals found in countries around the globe. Pupils, often led by prefects, participate in collaborative presentations examining a variety of social and cultural themes, including looking at different countries' views of the Pride movement and art from different cultures.

39. The school successfully develops pupils' economic awareness. Aspects of the academic curriculum teach concepts such as compound interest, payday loans and economic migration. The PSHE curriculum includes a 'living in the wider world' topic, in which pupils learn about bank accounts, consider how spending, saving and investment affect individuals and the economy and learn how to budget. Leaders enhance pupils' financial awareness through enrichment activities, including talks and trips. For example, a visit to Henley Business School, where pupils use a stock exchange simulator, allows pupils to apply their knowledge and skills in a real-world context.

40. The school provides impartial and relevant careers guidance across the curriculum. Pupils demonstrate pride in their achievements and speak confidently about their aspirations. Staff deliver the 'world of work' programme to give pupils practical, up-to-date information. The programme features life and oracy skills and entrepreneurship. Leaders use pupil surveys to plan and improve careers education. For example, teachers have added talks on apprenticeships and writing CVs to the Year 10 curriculum. Diverse guest speakers, including parents and alumni, enrich careers advice. These include surgeons, business owners, lawyers and members of the National Theatre. This provision helps pupils develop confidence and ambition, together with the knowledge to make informed choices about future pathways.

41. Leaders give pupils opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community, encouraging them to develop initiative and compassion. Pupils run stalls and make items for charity during the annual 'winter festival', engaging everyone in giving back. Pupils develop their understanding of service when they take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and work with local organisations, including Jewish centres and the Royal Free Children's Hospital School. These experiences help pupils build empathy, develop teamwork and take on social responsibility, enabling them to make a difference both locally and beyond.

42. Leaders cultivate an environment where pupils take responsibility for their behaviour. Staff use a restorative approach, giving pupils structured opportunities to reflect on their actions, understand how their behaviour affects others, and work to repair relationships. Pupils consequently develop an understanding of right and wrong. Assemblies and lessons reinforce this understanding. These experiences broaden pupils' knowledge of the rules and laws in a democratic society.

43. Teachers facilitate thoughtful discussions that deepen pupils' respect for public institutions. They also engage pupils with themes such as the impact of extremism and populism. Classes discuss complex topics, such as the links between the dystopian society in *The Handmaid's Tale* and the impact of totalitarian regimes like Nazi Germany. This encourages pupils to think critically and address the moral perspective of such events. Staff present any political views brought to pupils' attention in a balanced way.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Governors closely oversee safeguarding, maintaining ongoing communication with the school's safeguarding team. Through regular monitoring visits and discussions, they engage with leaders and examine anonymised records. This enables them to detect any issues, track trends and assess the effectiveness of safeguarding measures. Governors also undertake a thorough annual review of policies and procedures.

46. The safeguarding team has established a proactive culture that encourages staff to report concerns without hesitation. Staff are well versed in safeguarding procedures and record issues as required by statutory guidance. Leaders effectively manage records online. Thorough record-keeping helps identify trends that require action.

47. Staff receive comprehensive safeguarding training. It starts with an in-depth induction and continues with updates, termly sessions and weekly quizzes. This approach ensures staff remain informed about changes to statutory guidance and act quickly and confidently when concerns arise. Staff are vigilant about safeguarding issues, such as concerns regarding child-on-child abuse, and understand the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

48. Leaders foster an environment where pupils feel comfortable sharing their concerns. Staff encourage pupils to voice any issues to adults they trust. Several support options are available, including a counsellor. Staff respond to concerns quickly and ensure pupils receive effective support.

49. Leaders work closely with external agencies, including children's services and the police. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities follow advice and escalate concerns, when necessary, to support pupils' wellbeing.

50. Assemblies, external workshops and discussions during lessons teach pupils how to stay safe, including online. For example, activities during PSHE and computer science lessons equip pupils with the skills they require to assess the trustworthiness of information. They learn to recognise reliable sources and spot inaccurate or deceptive material. The safeguarding team actively maintains an internet filtering and monitoring system that is checked regularly for its effectiveness. The team takes necessary action when an alert is received.

51. Staff responsible for safer recruitment procedures demonstrate secure knowledge, ensuring that procedures meet statutory requirements. An appropriate single central record of appointments (SCR) is maintained and monitored accurately. This ensures that no adults begin to work in the school until all required checks have been completed.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	North Bridge House Senior School - Hampstead
Department for Education number	202/6269
Address	North Bridge House Senior School - Hampstead 65 Rosslyn Hill Hampstead London NW3 5UD
Phone number	020 7267 6266
Email address	seniorschool@northbridgehouse.com
Website	www.northbridgehouse.com/senior-hampstead/
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd
Chair	Mr Michael Drake
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Jones
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	363
Date of previous inspection	17 to 19 January 2023

Information about the school

53. North Bridge House Senior School is a co-educational day school located in Hampstead in north London. The school is one of a group of five schools educating pupils aged from two to eighteen years in the London region. The school belongs to the Cognita Group of Schools and is governed by the educational executive arm of Cognita. Since the previous inspection, the age range has been extended to 18.

54. The school has identified 147 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are eight pupils in the school who have an education, health and care plan.

55. The school has identified English as an additional language for 56 pupils.

56. The school states its aims are to create a dynamic learning environment in which all children discover their 'true north' and to provide an individual pathway to academic success that enables young people to be creative, inspired and to inspire. It seeks to equip pupils with the confidence, humility and resilience to thrive in everything they do.

Inspection details

Inspection dates	10 to 12 March 2026

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

58. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of co-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.

59. 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.
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