

# School inspection report

31 October 2023 to 02 November 2023

## **Wimbledon High School**

Mansel Road

London

SW19 4AB

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and managers use their skills and knowledge effectively to promote the wellbeing of pupils throughout the school. They ensure the school's motto, 'ex humilibus excelsa' (from small things, greatness) underpins the day-to-day life of the school. When new pupils arrive at the school leaders ensure they feel welcomed and supported embodying the school's aim of 'stepping in'.
2. The curriculum is broad and well planned. It provides an enriching experience that promotes pupils' academic and emotional wellbeing. Teaching stretches and challenges pupils to achieve their best. Pupils demonstrate appropriate confidence and humility in the way they approach their academic studies, fellow pupils, teachers and visitors. They take ownership of their learning, work independently and reflect on their strengths and relative weaknesses.
3. Understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity is important to leaders, who have created an inclusive environment. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have individualised programmes of support designed to support their learning, but in some lessons in the senior school, the strategies suggested to support pupils who have SEND are not applied.
4. In the early years setting, leaders use progressive, research-based educational thinking to drive classroom practice. This sets the course for children to continue their learning journey equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for a successful and productive education. The school's adopted approach around the power of learning through play, 'playful scholarship', is used throughout the school.
5. The most senior pupils embrace the many leadership opportunities afforded to them. They are positive ambassadors for the education that the school offers. Pupils have great self-confidence and their interpersonal skills are well developed. Strong expectations of behaviour promote good learning outcomes and a sense of safety and security amongst pupils. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive and productive. Regular pastoral check-ins assist and promote pupils' positive mental health and wellbeing.
6. Leaders are reflective, proactive and dedicated. They foster a positive and productive culture. This is mirrored in the conduct of pupils, who use the wealth of opportunities provided to help them reflect on how they can improve both their own lives and those in the wider society.
7. Leaders seek feedback from parents in a variety of ways. They use this feedback to inform their decision making and strategic planning. The school's website provides parents with wide-ranging and helpful information about the school's approach to learning and details of the school's various policies. However, the composition of written reports about pupils' attainment and progress varies across year groups; and some parents find reports to be overly complex.
8. Leaders have provided a wealth of opportunities, responsibilities and experiences for pupils to develop leadership skills, experience diversity and contribute positively to the lives of those locally and internationally. This is a significant strength of the school. It embodies projects such as

collaborating with a local prison to understand the plight of women in prison and giving small Christmas gifts to inmates in a young offenders institution. Senior pupils accompany younger pupils each week to a local care home to read and interact with residents. Pupils in both the junior and senior school support pupils from local primary schools in mentoring sessions delivered both during the week and at weekends. The school has developed a number of international partnerships. For example, exchanges with schools in Japan and Germany. Pupils also work with schools in Kenya and Sri Lanka. Pupils praised the programme identifying the demonstrable and highly beneficial impact it has had on them.

### **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 and managers should:

- review the composition and content of the reports which are provided to parents to ensure clarity and consistency across all year groups
- ensure greater consistency of provision for pupils who have SEND in the senior school to raise the achievement of these pupils.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders, at all levels, have the skills, knowledge and experience to fulfil their roles. They promote the wellbeing of pupils and consider pupils' wellbeing when making decisions, forming policies and in the day-to-day running of the school. For example, the governing body, supported by the GDST and its trustees conduct annual audits of policies and their effectiveness. As part of this process, they conduct pupil and parent surveys. Leaders, managers and governors play pivotal roles in shaping pupils' educational experiences. Co-ordinated leadership, professional development, effective staff collaboration, and robust strategic self-reflection have ensured that the school consistently meets the Standards.
10. Compassionate leadership fosters an environment where pupils respect both their surroundings and each other. This is evidenced by their highly respectful behaviour, active participation in class discussions and positive peer-to-peer interactions, all of which align with the high expectation of their teachers.
11. Leaders play a proactive role in ensuring the wellbeing of pupils. They initiate ideas and empower pupils to take ownership of them, fostering self-confidence and independence. For example, pupils valued their work in the wider community so much that they now initiate their own projects and work with school leaders to develop their ideas.
12. The school's aims are subtly woven into all strategic decisions, creating a welcoming and supportive environment for pupils. Pupils' confidence and life experiences are fostered, making them empathetic, culturally aware and socially adept.
13. In the junior school staff are provided with training and professional support to help them deliver education using the school's individual approach to learning. The early years setting is well led. The experienced and qualified staff promote the progress of children well.
14. Throughout the school, pupils' wellbeing is given the highest priority, alongside a strong focus on academic, social and emotional growth. Processes for regular feedback from various sources (for example parents, pupils and under-represented groups) inform leaders' drive for continuous improvement. The school has effective policies and procedures in place, with a forward-looking approach to quality assurance.
15. Governors, supported by the proprietors, monitor safeguarding, health and safety and pastoral matters effectively. Leaders have a robust strategic approach to risk management. Comprehensive training and monitoring help to ensure a safe and secure environment is provided for pupils. Leaders ensure that all staff are well informed about health and safety protocols, are alert to harmful behaviours and play a positive role in preventing harm.
16. Leaders ensure that there is close collaboration with parents. Parents are consulted regularly through surveys, parent forums, welcome breakfasts or evenings at the start of each academic year, termly year group coffee mornings and timely communications. Their views are sought on a range of matters including behaviour management and safeguarding. Parents of pupils who have SEND are regularly consulted on the impact of the support the school provides. Parents feel confident in the school's governance and leadership. However, the reports the school provides to parents, about

their child's progress and attainment, are overly complex. As a result, for some parents, pupils' reports are confusing and less helpful than they could be.

17. Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring inclusivity and diversity. They make decisions based on these principles. For example, leaders adjusted the assessment process for entry into the early years by removing unnecessary assessment procedures to broaden the school's appeal to more families. Across the whole school, leaders have adapted the school's admissions strategy with an aim to becoming more accessible to families. Pupils appreciate the inclusive nature of the school.
18. Leaders ensure that the behaviour policy is implemented fairly and consistently. They reinforce positive values through the curriculum and actively engage with the views of pupils. The complaints procedure is appropriate and effective. Leaders respond swiftly to address concerns that arise.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders plan the curriculum to provide pupils with a well-rounded education that covers a wide range of subjects and topics. The curriculum includes topics related to ethics and the differences between people, building an appreciation of the world around them. The curriculum is matched well to pupils' ages and stages of development, ensuring that pupils are suitably challenged and supported to achieve well.
20. Leaders monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in the school. Various strategies, such as curriculum reviews, the observation of teaching, and the regular sharing of good practice at departmental meetings contribute to the quality of education provided to pupils.
21. In developing the curriculum, the school has adopted a philosophy which connects sciences, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics with all other subjects (known as 'STEAM+'). This encourages pupils to make connections between subjects to become inter-disciplinary thinkers.
22. Leaders and staff promote understanding of British values through the curriculum, in extra-curricular activities and assemblies. For example, an assembly on the crisis in Gaza highlighted extreme media reporting on the conflict and enabled pupils to sensitively question the issues with consideration of individual liberty, respect, and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.
23. Teachers plan their lessons effectively, considering the individual needs of each pupil. Teaching encourages independent analysis and intellectual inquiry, fostering responsible and independent learners. Pupils are self-motivated. They enjoy opportunities to collaborate and to reflect on their learning.
24. Pupils appreciate teachers' feedback. They respond with maturity to advice. Pupils use guidance to improve their work and apply the advice to subsequent work. It helps pupils to monitor their learning progress, encouraging a proactive and self-directed approach to their education.
25. In the early years, research-based educational practices inform teaching. The school considers 'playful scholarship', throughout the school, as a way of equipping pupils with the requisite skills and depth of knowledge to engage in ambitious and rigorous intellectual thought, whilst also holding on to the joyfulness and light-heartedness of childhood. The junior school's focus on this approach is evident in the younger years. However, it is less evident as pupils advance to Year 6.
26. Pupils value co-curricular activities and opportunities to work with pupils from different year groups. The school's 'shine' programme involves staff and sixth form pupils mentoring pupils from local primary schools in subjects ranging from poetry to sport, to baking. This showcases pupils' commitment to helping others and engaging with the community.
27. Pupils in the junior school, including those who have SEND, make good progress. In the senior school, a high proportion of pupils achieve the top grades in external examinations. However, pupils in the senior school who have SEND achieve less well relative to their peers. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress.
28. The neurodiversity and learning support department, supported by vigilant teachers, identifies pupils who have SEND. Individualised support plans have been introduced to ensure that all teachers

are aware of the specific needs of these pupils to adapt their teaching accordingly. However, there are instances in the senior school where the suggested support for pupils is not consistently in place.

29. Leaders ensure there is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, many of which are suggested and run by senior pupils. These activities not only enrich pupils' academic and personal growth but also provide them with opportunities to contribute to the wider community. Programmes like 'wild girls' allow pupils to explore and learn beyond the classroom, strengthening their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

30. The school places a strong emphasis on promoting the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of its pupils. As a result, pupils embody the school's aims in their day-to-day lives. They learn to foster selflessness and humility, as well as developing an understanding of their own advantages. Pupils demonstrate a genuine interest in understanding and embracing other cultures and lifestyles without prejudice, reflecting the school's inclusive values.
31. Pupils' physical wellbeing is promoted through weekly physical education lessons and extra-curricular clubs. Leaders use external organisations and experts to encourage pupils to have a healthy relationship with food, exercise and body image. The 'this is me' character-building programme in the junior school encourages pupils to be explicitly and overtly aware of the components they need to develop to flourish and lead a healthy life.
32. Leaders prioritise spiritual and moral development through their 'grow' pastoral programme. It incorporates personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE), and has wider influences across the whole school. 'Special breakfasts' highlight to pupils the social and reflective aspects of sharing a meal. During off-timetable 'grow' days, age-appropriate themes are explored, and one-to-one conversations take place with tutors to develop pupils' social awareness.
33. The PSHE curriculum helps pupils develop self-esteem, self-confidence, respect and tolerance for others. The curriculum covers important topics including personal relationships and social media pressures. The 'civil discourse' programme in PSHE equips pupils with the ability to disagree respectfully. They are encouraged to express their feelings sensitively. In the junior school pupils share their worries including by using class 'worry boxes'.
34. Extensive leadership opportunities give pupils the self-confidence to take on responsibilities in areas of life that interest them. This enhances their sense of self and helps them to develop a can-do attitude. Pupils are encouraged to express their views. Pupils can set up and run their own initiatives such as year 10 pupils who set up a 'Go Fund Me' page to support the Moroccan earthquake appeal and pupils in the sixth form created 'the charter' with a local boys' school to raise awareness of violence towards women. Pupils across the senior school use their bilingual language skills to support EAL pupils of the same cultural and linguistic background at a local primary school. Debating and public speaking competitions foster respect for different viewpoints and political issues in an age-appropriate manner.
35. The behaviour policy encourages impeccable conduct through appropriate rewards and sanctions. Pupils demonstrate responsibility, respect for each other and a courteous approach to adults. On the infrequent occasions when pupils do not follow the rules, they are encouraged to reflect on their actions and learn from their mistakes.
36. The school has an effective anti-bullying system, which pupils agree has made bullying rare.
37. Pupils are supervised well throughout the school day. This ensures their safety and wellbeing during lessons, breaks and recreational periods.

38. In the senior school, student leaders are appointed through a fair and thorough system. They are clear about their responsibilities and how each role works to ensure the wellbeing of the wider pupil body. The school's vertical house system ensures that pupils from different year groups meet weekly. Pupils in the sixth form lead self-esteem lessons with pupils in Year 7. Older pupils work with younger pupils on friendship issues promoting meaningful interactions and a sense of community.
39. Leaders take a range of proactive measures to promote the welfare of pupils, such as regular pastoral check-ins with pupils and training for staff on issues like disordered eating, mental health first aid, teen suicide and safeguarding scenarios. Pupils appreciate the range of ways they can express concerns and consider helpful strategies. For example, to overcome minor friendship issues. Teachers help pupils to work through feelings and challenging situations, including by using role play, whole class conversations and one-to-one support.
40. Pupils communicate confidently with staff and visitors to the school. Leaders encourage pupils to be curious and courageous, as well as to have a healthy approach to risk and to stand up for others.
41. The school provides a stimulating and attractive learning environment that nurtures pupils' wellbeing. There are spacious and well-resourced classrooms and recreational spaces. Leaders have created spaces that encourage positive interactions among pupils from different phases of the school.
42. The school has a robust approach to health and safety. Systematic processes, accountability and reflective practices ensure a safe and secure environment for pupils. Leaders ensure that all staff are well-informed about risk management and pupil protection protocols. Strong incident-handling procedures are also in place.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

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

43. The school's values not only encourage pupils to contribute positively to society but also foster a motivation in pupils to improve the lives of those in the local community and beyond.
44. Leaders have instilled philosophical thinking into the curriculum, promoting respect for others and an understanding of diverse issues and cultures. This approach encourages empathy, tolerance and acceptance among pupils. There is a sense of community and loyalty that permeates from leaders who value and respect everyone in the school and encourage this respect among pupils to others.
45. The curriculum aligns with the school's objectives and promotes respect for all individuals. Pupils actively engage with British values in their work, enhancing their social and cultural awareness. This holistic approach to education equips pupils with a strong foundation in understanding and respecting the diverse society to which they belong.
46. The school's commitment to preparing pupils for their future choices is evident in its comprehensive careers guidance programme. Pupils appreciate the speaker programme and the range of internships and work experiences available to them. The biennial careers fair, with participation from representatives of a range of professions, empowers pupils to make informed choices about their future.
47. The junior school provides practical life skills, such as road safety, managing homework and navigating adolescence. This equips pupils for future life experiences and helps them feel comfortable in society.
48. The school ensures a highly diverse and extensive array of activities, preparing pupils for opportunities and responsibilities in society. Pupils appreciate the school's focus on political knowledge, financial literacy, and cultural understanding through subjects like history, geography, and the school's politics, philosophy and economics course (PPE).
49. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to show initiative and contribute to the lives of those locally and in wider society. This has a profound impact on the personal and social development of all pupils. Pupils engage in various initiatives, such as working with a women's prison and supporting care agencies. It provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills and experience social and economic diversity. Pupils develop knowledge of the world around them.
50. Leaders have considered the hard-hitting impact that some of the experiences may hold. Staff and students are properly supervised and supported. Pupils are passionate about the school's initiatives and describe how it has impacted them, emphasising their commitment to helping others. Pupils speak movingly about working with a local prison and how this has changed their outlook on life and shaped their ideas about a future career.

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

All the relevant Standards are met

## Safeguarding

51. Leaders adopt a robust and strategic view of safeguarding. They foster a clear sense that safeguarding is a collective responsibility. Staff receive regular training and are well equipped to report concerns, track patterns and assess risks. When concerns arise, the school collaborates effectively with external agencies and families, as appropriate. Leaders demonstrate a proactive approach to safeguarding by swiftly implementing or tightening procedures in response to changes in national guidance or emerging local issues.
52. The diligent culture of safeguarding at the school is clear through the effectiveness of arrangements to keep children safe. Leaders are resolute in identifying and managing risks that may be hard to spot. Leaders ensure procedures, and the rationale behind them, are well-understood by all staff, promoting the safety and welfare of pupils at all times.
53. Leaders diligently monitor pupils' attendance and look for patterns of non-attendance.
54. The school places a strong emphasis on online safety through its digital safety strategy. The school's behaviour policy includes a zero-tolerance stance on the misuse of mobile phones and a proactive approach to social media incidents. The measures to educate pupils about good behaviour and prevent bullying are co-ordinated to overlap with online safety. Pupils are guided to make safe decisions and parents are offered advice, guidance and support on these matters.
55. Safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and governors and a suitable record of appointments is kept. An in-depth annual safeguarding audit takes place to monitor the effectiveness of the school's procedures.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met

## School details

<b>School</b>	Wimbledon High School GDST
<b>Department for Education number</b>	315/6071
<b>Registered charity number</b>	306983
<b>Address</b>	Wimbledon High School Mansel Road Wimbledon London SW19 4AB
<b>Website</b>	wimbledonhigh.gdst.net
<b>Proprietor</b>	Girls' Day School Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Rebecca McKinlay
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Fionnuala Kennedy
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	1052
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 to 19 Sept 2019



**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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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