

1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

Dear Parents

It's with pleasure that I write to you to share the excellent report from the Independent Schools Inspectorate following their visit last term, and which is attached. This letter provides some guidance on the structure of the report as well as the main findings, and I recommend that you read this letter first before diving into the report itself.

We welcomed inspectors in September to undertake our scheduled inspection, which was one of the first to be completed under ISI's new inspection framework. The new approach has not only changed the process of inspection but also the wording and language style used in the reports, which are markedly different from ISI inspection reports issued before the summer of 2023.

It has taken slightly longer than usual for the report to be finalised because ISI wanted to ensure consistency between the first tranche of reports published within the new framework. We have been unable to share the outcome of the report before now, although we have been bursting to do so since the excellent verbal feedback we received back in September!

For NHSG, the ISI inspection provided an opportunity for our staff and pupils to demonstrate the brilliant work that takes place at NHSG every single day and I am therefore delighted that the report, which I attach, encapsulates and articulates so well our school ethos and lived experience.

### **How the new ISI Framework, structure and wording of ISI school inspection reports have changed**

The structure and wording within ISI reports have changed and schools are no longer given headline judgements such as 'excellent'; instead they are assessed as to whether they meet the expected ISI standards relating to five key areas.

I am delighted to report that NHSG has, in formal terms, met the standards required in every one of these areas. But the report makes it clear that the school didn't just meet the standards; they exceeded them by a considerable margin.

### **Report findings in detail**

Within the attached report you will find a summary of the main findings followed by more in-depth findings relating to the five areas within the inspection framework. The very nature of the new-style report for all schools means that the written report is not as effusive as the outstanding

verbal feedback we received from the inspection team back in September, and the language and style differ considerably from the old-style reports. Within these editorial constraints, however, I could not be more pleased with the outcome.

### **Summary of inspection findings**

It is clear from the verbal feedback we received and the written summary in the report, that the ISI inspectors clearly recognised the NHSG culture of high expectation and performance. Inspectors found that NHSG has a 'strong learning culture', and that our teachers 'prioritise extremely positive relationships' with our pupils. The summary also highlights the culture of pupil 'collaboration and co-operation that exists across all age groups'. I am thrilled that ISI praise our ed tech approach, saying that it is 'highly effective and contributes to the progress made by pupils' across the whole school.

Additionally, it's very important for pupils that we create a seamless transition into EYFS, Year 7, Year 12 and further education and it is therefore pleasing that the ISI report notes that NHSG 'pupils are well prepared to progress from each stage of their education'.

The report covers wider aspects of an NHSG education in the summary and states that 'pastoral leaders actively promote pupil well-being .... developing a caring and nurturing environment'.

Also included in the main findings section is that pupils of all ages 'are tolerant, caring and sensitive towards those from different backgrounds and traditions', that pupils 'speak highly of the value of pupil voice' and are 'keen to help others and make a positive difference'.

These themes of learning culture, engaging teaching, transition, wellbeing, inclusion, pupil, voice and the wider community feature strongly through the detailed sections as you will be able to read for yourself. Here are some of my highlights:

### **Section 1 Leadership and management, and governance**

It's a wonderful endorsement for our school, and all our staff, to read that the school's culture and ethos is strongly promoted and most importantly that we inspire the pupils to have high aspirations and embrace challenge. This is further endorsed in the point that at NHSG the 'atmosphere is both calm and relaxed, whilst fostering a purposeful approach to learning. This is reflected in the pupils' enthusiasm for their lessons and their healthy ambition to perform well'.

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

In this section, inspectors report that NHSG pupils make good progress across all areas of learning and that most teaching excites and challenges pupils. I was also delighted to read that due to the clear and structured lessons, our pupils are 'confident in asking questions and contribute to class discussion, are self-motivated and respond with enthusiasm to the

opportunities to improve their understanding'. The imaginative use of ICT in lessons at NHSG contributes further to our pupils' 'highly positive approach to their work'.

I'm so proud that inspectors were able to observe that NHSG pupils 'relish the opportunities' made available through our co-curriculum. I certainly see examples of this every single day in school!

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

NHSG is a school that provides exceptional pastoral care, where every member of the community is valued as an individual and is encouraged to be the best version of herself. As educators of girls, we understand that confidence is a key factor in empowering them to achieve their dreams, and therefore it's a real pleasure to read that inspectors found pupils at all ages to have high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. In the verbal feedback, inspectors added that this was not combined with any sense of arrogance or conceit.

It was also wonderful to see recognition of our embedded focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, where our pupils are individually 'seen and celebrated'.

It's critical within any school environment that standards of behaviour promote a positive learning environment, so it was heartwarming to read in the report that at NHSG 'pupils are kind to each other, do not tolerate poor behaviour and are confident to call out unacceptable behaviour'. It reports here and in section 4 that our staff deal well with issues brought to their attention and that good behaviour was noted in all areas of school. I'm proud that inspectors recognised our community of kindness and the supportive relationships that exist across school.

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


I am passionate about ensuring that NHSG girls know that nothing is off limits for them in terms of their future career choices and that they will go on to make a positive difference to our future society. This was reflected in this section, where there is praise for our respectful and inclusive culture, pupil voice and the way in which the girls are encouraged to contribute positively to the lives of others in school and more widely in the local community and wider society. There is also a focus on the quality of our careers guidance programme, as well as our school's approach to challenging the girls to think about their future role in society.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding and pupil welfare are at the heart of everything we do and the ISI report comments on the strength of the safeguarding procedures we have in school and also states that 'our dedicated and well-trained pastoral team have established a caring and nurturing environment within the school'.

To receive an ISI inspection report of this calibre, within the rigorous new ISI framework, in my view is outstanding. I would like to congratulate our staff, girls, and the wider school community, for everyone has contributed to this outcome. Rest assured that we are far from complacent and will continue to drive progress, through a culture of continuous improvement and reflection, so that our school is blazing a trail in its own right as a beacon of excellence and supporting your daughter to be the very best version of herself.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Hardie'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Mrs A Hardie  
Head