

# School inspection report

26 to 28 September 2023

## **Newcastle High School for Girls GDST**

Tankerville Terrace  
Jesmond  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE2 3BA

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. The senior leaders of both the junior and senior schools collaborate with the local governing board and the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) to fulfil the school's aims. They create a strong learning culture based on evaluation, review and on-going quality assurance procedures. Teachers prioritise extremely positive relationships, and pupil interactions reflect the collaboration and co-operation that exists across all age groups.
2. Leaders and teachers actively promote pupils' wellbeing across all year groups. The inclusive and respectful ethos promoted by leaders enables pupils to recognise and develop their understanding of differences in others within the school's multicultural and multi-faith community, both within and outside their friendship groups. Pupils of all ages are tolerant, caring and sensitive towards those from different backgrounds and traditions and feel valued as individuals.
3. Recent changes in management across the school have resulted in changes to teaching and assessment policy, for example the introduction by leaders of assessment tracking systems to better inform planning. However, these initiatives are not yet sufficiently embedded across the school to evaluate their impact on pupils' development and progress.
4. Pastoral leaders actively promote pupil wellbeing within the school, developing a caring and nurturing environment, where kindness and mutual support are evident between pupils of all ages. Pupils comment that they are happy at school and feel safe in the school environment.
5. Examination results show that most pupils make good progress after joining the school. Support is provided to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but this provision is not consistent in the senior school. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also receive additional support in their spoken and written English and other curriculum areas as required.
6. Teachers plan lessons well and assess pupils' progress effectively in both class work and homework. Leaders ensure that pupils' self-assessment skills facilitate their learning. Leaders also ensure that pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons throughout the junior and senior schools is highly effective, and contributes to the progress made by pupils in developing their understanding and skills.
7. Leaders ensure that the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is appropriate and effective in both the junior and senior schools. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme promotes diversity and individuality. Pupil focus groups are fostered and listened to by leaders, and sixth form pupils act as role models for the younger pupils. Pupils speak highly of the value of pupil voice. They are proud of the many changes that they influence because senior leaders respond to their opinions.
8. Leaders ensure there are ample opportunities for pupils to contribute to the lives of others. Pupils are keen to help others and make a positive difference in their community. For example, pupils volunteer and raise money for charities, give concerts, and become involved in the local community.

9. Leaders plan carefully so that that pupils are well prepared to progress from each stage of their education. Equal care is given to ensuring that pupils are appropriately prepared for further education or employment.
10. Leaders systematically oversee the assessment of risks. Risk assessments are generally thorough. However, in a few cases risk assessments are not robust and comprehensive.
11. Senior leaders and the GDST work together to ensure that safeguarding is prioritised and effective in both the junior and senior schools.

## 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 needs of pupils with SEND are met consistently
- Ensure that recent initiatives to support and monitor pupil progress are fully implemented
- Ensure that all risk assessments are robust and comprehensive.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Senior leaders promote pupils' education and training and their pastoral care through regular review of the systems they have in place. They are supported in this by the GDST's effective quality assurance processes. As a result, leaders are challenged and supported to promote the school's culture and ethos and inspire the pupils to be ambitious and embrace challenge. Leaders and managers ensure that appropriate policies are in place, and their implementation is monitored by both local governing board members and the GDST. Leaders have a systematic approach to staff training.
13. The well-maintained premises create a learning environment for the pupils that complements the strategic focus of all leaders on teaching and learning in both the senior and junior schools. Senior leaders have created an atmosphere that 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. Movement around both school sites is orderly, purposeful and relaxed.
14. Parents are well informed about the school's policies and procedures via comprehensive documentation on the website, and pupil progress is reported on a termly basis. Parents are informed about pupil assessment outcomes and progress towards target grades.
15. Governors, leaders and the GDST ensure a systematic approach to risk assessment. In most cases, risk assessments are thorough, documenting risks and identifying mitigating actions appropriately. However, risk assessments for trips and excursions are on occasion less robust. For example, they are not always reviewed and revised to reflect changes between the initial risk assessment and the beginning of the trip.
16. The school's leadership, management and governance act cohesively to promote the safety of pupils, staff, and visitors in both the junior and senior schools. Leaders have developed close and appropriate links with a range of external agencies and all necessary systems and procedures are in place. The school sites are safe and secure.
17. There is a clear and comprehensive complaints procedure. Scrutiny of logs of complaints indicates that the small number of complaints received are managed appropriately and in a timely manner. All formal complaints are referred to the GDST, who as a matter of course review all complaints.
18. The accessibility plan highlights actions to be taken over a suitable timescale where adjustments need to be made for any pupils with a disability. Existing adjustments include pupil safety alert systems and audio support systems installed to support individual pupils.
19. Governors undertake an annual safeguarding review diligently. A comprehensive system of quality assurance and compliance audits managed by the GDST gives leaders clear direction on any actions necessary to comply with regulatory obligations.

### 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

20. School leaders are dynamic in their leadership of curriculum development and teaching and learning within the school. This enables pupils to learn and make progress. Pupils experience a varied curriculum and programme of activities. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), teachers promote play-based learning that enables children to refine their intellectual and problem-solving skills.
21. Pupils make good progress across all areas of learning. All pupils complete baseline tests and senior staff monitor progress and performance against expected levels and regularly review data. Some intervention strategies are put in place where required. However, teachers do not consistently adapt lesson planning and teaching to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND in the senior school.
22. Senior leaders have introduced individual target-setting initiatives to enable pupils in the junior and senior schools to focus upon key areas for improvement. The school-wide initiatives for pupil support strategies recently introduced by leaders are improving the pupil progress tracking systems. School leaders are working to ensure that these initiatives are fully implemented so that academic leaders and teachers are better informed about pupils' progress.
23. In the early years, children make rapid progress from their starting points, including those pupils with SEND. Leaders ensure that children's progress in the early years is regularly monitored and activities are chosen and designed to meet the individual needs of pupils. Where monitoring identifies that a child is not making progress, teachers provide appropriate support in response. The impact of this is closely scrutinised and adapted as necessary.
24. Most teaching excites and challenges pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and know how to convey it so that pupils are encouraged to learn. As a result, pupils of all ages readily engage and make progress. In most lessons, teachers' planning responds to pupils' needs and pupils respond by participating in activities with enthusiasm. Teachers prepare a range of well-planned resources that enable pupils drawing on them to develop the skills of synthesising information and reaching appropriate conclusions.
25. Pupils develop their skills in speaking, listening, debating, problem solving and project management, both through their participation in lessons, and through various school forums. These include the school councils and the wide range of school clubs on offer. Because of the clear structure and delivery of lessons by teachers, pupils are confident in asking questions and contributing to class discussion, are self-motivated and respond with enthusiasm to opportunities to improve their understanding. Pupils relish the opportunities made available to them through the extensive extra-curricular programme and the inter-school GDST competitions. Many pupils participate in the team sports offered, which encourage their determination to succeed and their enthusiasm for challenge.
26. Lesson activities frequently include the imaginative use of information and communication technology (ICT). This captures pupils' interest and enables real time feedback and support, which in turn supports pupils' highly positive approach to their work. Teaching promotes respect for others and for British democratic institutions and principles.



27. Pupils are confident that school leaders hear their voice and are responsive to their needs. For example, their request for a cookery club resulted in the introduction of a food and nutrition GCSE course. Older pupils are proud of the input they had into the recent re-design of the school uniform and the role the sixth form pupils play in the mindfulness club. Social skill development is promoted by sixth formers trained by teachers to provide a safe space for pupils to take part in a *Pride* club, an anti-racism group and an equality, diversity and inclusion group.
28. Leaders oversee the provision of a diverse range of extra-curricular activities. These include an art anime club, a drama club and currently a German punk rock group. Leaders create opportunities for pupils to go on educational and sporting trips and overseas excursions, which have included Spain, Iceland, New York and South Africa and Singapore. The junior school has its own separate programme of extra-curricular and after-school activities on offer and the GDST holds sports rallies to allow their schools to compete against each other. These activities collectively foster pupils' personal, social, emotional and physical development.
29. Leaders ensure that pupils in Years 3 to 6 take part in regular junior-to-senior school transition days and facilities are shared between the two school sites. This increases pupils' confidence and readiness for the next stage in their education.

### **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. Leaders foster an inclusive and respectful ethos that promotes the emotional wellbeing of pupils as individuals across all age groups. Pupils enthusiastically describe their enjoyment and experiences of school life in both the junior and senior schools.
31. In the EYFS the strong links developed by teachers between themselves, children and parents mean that children's personal successes are celebrated and shared. This promotes children's self-confidence and esteem and their enthusiasm for learning. In the senior school, the social and breakout spaces provided by leaders enable pupils to mix in friendship groups whilst allowing quiet spaces for pupils to recharge and reflect.
32. The physical education opportunities made available by leaders contribute to pupils' positive mental health and wellbeing by enabling them to reduce stress and anxiety levels. Throughout the school, pupils have high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence. This, and their confidence as learners, stem from leaders' embedding of the school's ethos and the varied provision that they promote and oversee for this purpose.
33. Leaders ensure that there is an appropriate and comprehensive PSHE and RSE programme, which supports the school's aims and ethos. This programme, in conjunction with relevant assemblies, reinforces the pastoral support and care that staff provide to pupils, and enables pupils to then suggest and lead further initiatives.
34. With the active support of senior leaders, pupil leaders are a key driving force in initiatives relating to the culture of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the school. This contributes both to pupils being individually 'seen and celebrated', and to the developed culture of mutual respect between pupils.
35. School premises and accommodation are of a high standard, are well maintained and are suitable for the activities that take place within them. A strategic plan managed by the GDST led to the recent provision of new and refurbished teaching and recreation facilities, which pupils value as teaching and recreation spaces that contribute to their wellbeing.
36. Governors prioritise the health and safety needs of the pupils. Leaders and managers take part in regular health and safety meetings. The health and safety officer receives regular training and is supported by the GDST who offer wider support and advice on compliance which encompasses all aspects of health and safety management. Extensive audits conducted both internally and with external agencies support this process.
37. Staff supervise senior and junior school pupils both while inside school premises and when outside on recreational and sport areas. Pupils therefore socialise safely and happily with their peers. Pupils generally observe the rules. When, rarely, there are incidents or accidents in the playground areas, they are dealt with promptly and appropriately. In the EYFS, children are vigilantly supervised whilst they access the learning spaces, including when outdoors.

38. Leaders have set up clear and appropriate procedures to deal with behavioural incidents or bullying. Pupils confidently report any such incidents in various ways, including through the use of teacher contact QR codes and anonymous reporting boxes. As a result, pupils receive appropriate support. Pupils are kind to each other and do not tolerate poor behaviour in each other. They are confident to call out unacceptable behaviour or speech, and staff deal well with issues brought to their attention.
39. First aid arrangements are appropriate and well managed on both school sites, both in terms of accommodation and facilities available and the availability of qualified staff on duty. Suitable arrangements are in place for first aid provision for sports activities and when pupils are away from school on trips. Medical needs are appropriately responded to.

**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

40. Leaders prioritise a respectful and accepting school culture. As a result, pupils' social interactions are positive. Pupils' participation in assemblies, debating and a variety of school forum groups successfully develops their understanding of democratic processes and their respect for others' viewpoints, and helps them to prepare for life in British society. They demonstrate a respectful and thoughtful understanding of other cultures, expressed with maturity and sensitivity.
41. Pupils see themselves as part of a responsible school community in which they willingly engage, showing loyalty to each other and the school. This is because school leaders have successfully created a community culture in which everyone is accepted as an individual and pupils accept difference. Throughout the school, pupils are tolerant and understanding of each other. They understand that living in a democracy means accepting that others may think differently to them.
42. Older pupils are well prepared for life after school through an appropriate careers guidance programme which encompasses a citizenship programme, volunteering and careers information and briefing sessions. The programme enables pupils to prepare themselves for their future lives whilst at the same time contributing to the community beyond the school. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, pupils were challenged to think about their future role in society when considering the purchase of items using fair trade businesses.
43. The ethos promoted by leaders is such that pupils behave well in corridors and classrooms in both the junior and the senior schools. The pupils recognise this and are proud to play their part in it. Most pupils show strong moral understanding, promoting and demonstrating kindness, consideration and respect for others in the way in which they listen and interact with each other in lessons.
44. Leaders ensure that pupil voice is sought and heard. Many pupils in both the junior and senior schools hold positions of responsibility serving on a range of panels. They help to meet the needs of their fellow pupils whilst increasing their own decision-making skills and self-confidence. Pupils take leadership roles which contribute to the collegiality of their respective school sections, for example as class and form representatives, in a sustainability group, as digital leaders, as anti-bullying ambassadors and in prefect and senior pupil forums.
45. Teachers and leaders encourage pupils to contribute positively to the lives of others, both in school and more widely in the local community and wider society. Children in the EYFS participate in charity days and events, for example, for *Children in Need*, and in odd socks day and Remembrance Day. In the junior school pupils have supported *Sunshine Coaches*, participated in fundraising runs to support cancer patients and sung carols in the local community. Senior school pupils have participated in harvest festival collections, non-uniform days, whole school sustainability weeks, and in supporting reading projects in local partnership schools. Pupils' commitment and actions contribute to their well-developed sense of social responsibility and in turn has a positive impact on the school and the local community.

**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

46. Safeguarding and pupil welfare within both the junior and the senior schools are a high priority for governors and leaders. They ensure that staff have an informed and cohesive attitude towards safeguarding. The dedicated and well-trained pastoral team have established a caring and nurturing environment within the school. School staff are well trained and regularly briefed on safeguarding matters. Staff act promptly on safeguarding concerns and leaders make appropriate and timely contact with children's services, the local authority and the police when required.
47. Senior leaders ensure that there is efficient and comprehensive logging of all safeguarding concerns by staff. Leaders also ensure that there is detailed tracking of trends and patterns through the effective use of the school's data system. Serious occurrences are rare and well managed.
48. School leaders and members of the GDST ensure that all staff, including governing board members, receive safeguarding training that is updated at regular intervals. Those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities also receive appropriate training. Staff are knowledgeable in child protection procedures, including those for online safety and the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. They understand how to recognise and report a safeguarding concern and are alert to the need to monitor pupil attendance.
49. Senior management are trained in safer recruitment procedures and appropriate safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and governors. A suitable central register of appointments is accurately maintained. Regular and appropriate checks are carried out of the central register of appointments by both local governors and the GDST.
50. There is a comprehensive annual audit of safeguarding matters conducted at both school and the GDST level, and the local governing board and the GDST work together to ensure that high standards are maintained throughout the schools. Additionally, governors and the GDST members are proactive in the monitoring, support and challenge they provide to senior leaders.

### **The extent to which the school meets standards relating to safeguarding:**

All the relevant Standards are met

## School details

<b>School</b>	Newcastle High School for Girls
<b>Department for Education number</b>	391/6001
<b>Registered charity number</b>	306983
<b>Address</b>	Newcastle High School for Girls Tankerville Terrace Jesmond Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 3BA
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://newcastlehigh.gdst.net">https://newcastlehigh.gdst.net</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	Girls' Day School Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Patricia Alexander
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Amanda Hardie
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18
<b>Number of pupils</b>	670
<b>Number of children in the early years registered setting</b>	57
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 to 7 February 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).

#### **Independent Schools Inspectorate**

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)