

School inspection report

11 to 13 February 2025

Heathside Preparatory School

84A Heath Street

Hampstead

London

NW3 1DN

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.....	5
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	5
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE	7
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	9
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....	10
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	11
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	12
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	13
SAFEGUARDING	14
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	14
SCHOOL DETAILS	15
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	16
INSPECTION DETAILS	17

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders are committed to promoting the school's core values of nature, nurture and knowledge. The realisation of this commitment fosters an inclusive environment. Pupils feel safe, motivated and well-supported in their learning. Leaders' visible presence, engagement with pupils and responsiveness to feedback ensure that strategic decisions prioritise pupils' wellbeing, safety and achievement. Governors provide effective oversight. This ensures robust safeguarding procedures and compliance with statutory requirements, including the Equality Act 2010. The Standards are met consistently.
2. Leaders have recently introduced a revised skills-based curriculum to develop pupils' application of real-life skills, such as problem-solving, teamwork, communication and critical thinking. The curriculum outlines progression in each subject area. The model is designed to continue to improve consistency and quality across subjects and clarity of pupils' progression in both knowledge and skills. Teaching is typically well structured, with purposeful activities that engage pupils and support their learning. However, in some subjects, pupils do not always build on prior learning effectively across different year groups. Where this happens, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. A broad range of extra-curricular opportunities, including sports, creative arts and leadership initiatives, enrich pupils' experiences. The activities contribute well to pupils' personal development, teamwork skills and resilience.
3. The school's nurturing ethos fosters a deep sense of community, inclusion and respect. Activities, such as peer mentoring, philosophy discussions and raising awareness of each other's feelings through emotional literacy learning, promote self-reflection and positive relationships. Outdoor learning, including regular use of local park areas for exploration and problem-solving, enhances pupils' creativity, collaboration and independence. Behaviour management strategies are generally effective. Most pupils are courteous and respectful. However, inconsistencies in the application of the school's behaviour policies mean that leaders' high expectations are not upheld across all parts of the setting.
4. Pupils are encouraged to develop leadership skills and to contribute to their community through initiatives such as school elections, charity projects and community outreach programmes. Financial education is integrated into learning. This helps pupils to understand budgeting, enterprise and the value of money through practical experiences. Teachers' feedback helps pupils to take ownership of their learning. As a result, pupils know how to improve their work. They seek further guidance from their teachers when they need extra help. Support for pupils' next steps in education and real-life learning experiences ensure that they are well prepared for future challenges. This means that they are confident and ready to move on to the next stage of their education.
5. Safeguarding is central to the school's supportive culture. Clear reporting procedures, well-trained staff and effective risk management ensure that pupils' welfare remains a top priority. Governors play an active role in safeguarding oversight. They review policies, staff training and safeguarding procedures to secure ongoing compliance with statutory guidance. Leaders work closely with external agencies, including local safeguarding partners and specialists offering support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This support network ensures that timely advice is provided when concerns arise. Safer recruitment procedures are robust. All pre-employment checks are completed in line with Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) guidance. Filtering and monitoring systems are in place to protect pupils from online harm. Online safety is

embedded within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and computing curriculum. This equips pupils with the knowledge and skills to stay safe.

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 all staff implement the school's behaviour policy effectively so that pupils are routinely supported to behave well, in line with leaders' intentions, across the school
- through systematic monitoring, check that all staff deliver learning that builds on the content previously taught, so that pupils extend their knowledge and skills logically, consistently and securely in all year groups.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders ensure that the school's values are embedded in daily practice. This creates a calm, nurturing and inclusive environment where pupils feel safe, valued and motivated to learn. The presence of leaders across the school includes regular contact with pupils. They have a deep understanding of pupils' academic and pastoral needs. Positive relationships are secured in a collaborative and responsive culture. Leaders' decisions prioritise pupils' wellbeing, safety and progress.
7. Following the recent transition to a primary model, leaders have prioritised refinements to policies, curriculum and behaviour management to meet pupils' evolving needs. Regular checks on the quality of learning include lesson visits and stakeholder consultations. The views of staff and pupils are considered. This ensures that teaching, learning and resource allocation are evaluated and refined. However, some key improvement initiatives remain in the early stages of implementation. In a few cases they are inconsistently applied. This means that pupils' progression through the curriculum is more secure in Years 1 and 2 than it sometimes is in older year groups.
8. Governors provide effective oversight of the school's offer. They work closely with leaders to address strategic priorities such as curriculum development and inconsistencies in the management of pupils' behaviour. They gather information from multiple sources, including regular meetings, lesson visits and discussions with pupils, to monitor the implementation of improvement actions. Relevant information is shared at board level. Governors' recent focus on curriculum refinement has led to more structured subject planning. Monitoring of the consistent implementation of leaders' intentions is still a work in progress.
9. Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of their statutory responsibilities. This ensures compliance with the Standards and safeguarding legislation. Policies are routinely reviewed and applied effectively. Leaders maintain a clear focus on pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing. Risk management is comprehensive. Systematic risk assessments cover premises, educational visits and online safety, as well as individuals' mental health needs. Leaders identify potential risks and implement appropriate control measures.
10. The school's culture of inclusion is well promoted and is embedded in the school's ethos. Leaders ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The accessibility plan is reviewed appropriately every three years. Adaptations are made to the curriculum, resources and premises to support access needs as required. Pupils who have SEND receive tailored support. This is effective in ensuring that they make the progress they should. The school works closely with the local authority and external agencies to provide additional support for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans. Timely annual reviews are completed. Any necessary adaptations are made so that these pupils can access the curriculum. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) get the language support they require to achieve well.
11. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing. Initiatives such as 'mental health week' and 'anti-bullying week' help to promote resilience and respect. Pupils are supported to develop their awareness of self and understanding of the feelings of others. However, the school's behaviour policy is inconsistently implemented. Consequently, some pupils do not behave as well as they should. Pupils' learning in philosophy and peer-mentoring initiatives support the development of their critical thinking, conflict resolution and self-reflection.

12. Parents receive regular reports on pupils' progress and invitations to parents' evenings. They appreciate the improved consistency in communication from the school. Leaders continue to explore ways to strengthen home-school partnerships. The complaints policy is accessible, compliant and effectively implemented. Detailed records of concerns and resolutions reflect a responsive approach to feedback.
13. Leaders prioritise professional development for staff. Regular training supports ongoing improvements to teaching and learning. Training opportunities are embedded in the weekly staff development schedule. Staff appraisals focus on improving teaching quality and consistency. Staff are accountable and supported to continue to develop their practice. Recent behaviour-management training is reflected in some early indications of improvements in the consistency of the promotion of positive behaviour in the classroom.
14. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. This is enhanced by specialist teaching in subjects such as French, music, art and science. Pupils learn to apply real-life skills such as problem solving, creative thinking, teamwork and communication skills. Programmes are designed to build on pupils' prior learning and to build confidence. The curriculum is well delivered in Years 1 and 2. However, it is not implemented as consistently effectively in some older year groups.
15. Arrangements for checking pupils' learning in core subjects have been strengthened. The changes allow for more accurate identification of gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders are focused on continuing to improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that all pupils receive the support they need to achieve well. However, monitoring procedures are not yet effective in securing consistent implementation of their expectations.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The school provides a balanced curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge and skills across a broad range of subjects. In the early years, the curriculum promotes children's secure progress across the expected areas of learning. A spacious, well-organised early years environment with age-appropriate resources, for example, supports children's independent exploration. Staff provide regular outdoor sessions that develop children's physical skills such as climbing and balancing. Through responsive planning and high-quality interactions with adults, children make good progress. Close collaboration with parents and external professionals, including speech and occupational therapists, ensures that specific needs are met promptly.
18. As pupils move into primary classes, the newly introduced curriculum supports pupils' progression across subjects. Teachers focus on practical, age-appropriate tasks, encouraging pupils to apply their knowledge and skills confidently. Pupils respond well to these opportunities. They are enthusiastic as they show perseverance in both collaborative tasks and independent work. Outdoor education sessions build further on pupils' problem-solving skills, creativity and independence.
19. In most lessons, learning is purposeful. Pupils typically have positive attitudes to their learning. Most pupils remain on task and use teachers' guidance effectively to improve their work. In a small number of lessons, teaching does not build well enough on what pupils already know. Where this happens, some pupils lose focus and occasionally this slows progress for others.
20. Typically, teaching reflects pupils' ages, abilities and individual needs. In most lessons, well-structured activities promote pupils' interaction and interest. In Years 1 and 2, children enjoy learning the sounds that letters make as they develop their early reading skills. In early mathematics, they build their confidence to solve number problems. In most lessons, targeted questioning helps pupils to think critically and to consolidate their understanding.
21. Provision for pupils who have SEND is carefully coordinated. Individual education plans (IEPs) and classroom adaptations such as scaffolded activities and one-to-one support ensure that pupils make secure progress. Visual aids and small-group tasks further support pupils. Pupils who speak EAL benefit from structured language-development programmes and paired learning opportunities. As a result, they build confidence in English speaking and writing.
22. Formal assessment systems are in place in core subjects and informally across other subject areas. Teachers check pupils' learning through observations in lessons, questioning, class discussions, small-group work, peer and self-assessment techniques. Leaders analyse and discuss pupils' progress regularly. They meet with teachers to address any emerging gaps in pupils' knowledge or skills. In most cases, these gaps are addressed effectively to meet pupils' different needs.
23. Pupils' broader development is well supported by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including cheerleading, cooking, music ensembles and outdoor education. These sessions encourage pupils' teamwork, physical wellbeing and creativity. The music department, led by enthusiastic specialists, has successfully inspired many pupils to explore playing instruments, contributing to a vibrant culture of performance. Staff promote British values through initiatives such as off-timetable religious education days. These explore different faiths and beliefs, encourage pupils' open discussion and develop their mutual understanding of other cultures. Classroom routines reinforce the importance of respectful behaviour. A range of collaborative projects and pupil-led debates

foster a sense of shared responsibility and democratic decision-making, for example the pupil-led charity committee which sees pupils selecting local charities to support and organising initiatives for fundraising events, such as carol singing for the Royal Free Hospital.

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

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. Leaders foster an inclusive culture where the values of nature, nurture and knowledge are embedded across aspects of school life. They promote a calm, respectful and reflective community that prioritises pupils' wellbeing. Initiatives, such as Year 6 pupils supporting younger children at the start of the school day, have strengthened the sense of community across age groups. This contributes to positive relationships and boosts confidence for older pupils. The school's nurturing ethos has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing.
26. The PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums are well structured. Pupils are supported to explore topics such as resilience, healthy relationships and respect for others. Discussions in these sessions promote pupils' emotional development. Recently introduced philosophy lessons encourage pupils to express their views and to resolve disagreements constructively. Leaders also adapt the curriculum in response to emerging needs. They use information from pastoral logs to identify trends and to implement targeted support for pupils where required.
27. In the early years, children engage in a broad range of carefully planned activities that promote personal, physical and emotional development. Outdoor learning sessions foster independence, problem-solving and creativity. Opportunities for physical development, such as ball skills and threading, build coordination and strength, as well as forming an essential foundation for early writing. Staff create a warm and supportive environment. Consequently, children grow in confidence and self-awareness.
28. Across Years 1 to 6, leaders ensure that behaviour expectations are clear. However, these are not yet consistently reinforced by staff. Where behaviour is well managed, classrooms are calm and purposeful, with established routines that help pupils to focus. Teachers maintain warm, respectful relationships with pupils, addressing minor disruptions swiftly and calmly. Collaborative work encourages effective peer relationships and self-regulation. Movement breaks and reflective time are used well to help pupils who need extra support in managing their behaviour.
29. Behaviour incidents are recorded appropriately. Records track incidents, including details of the context, staff actions and follow-up measures. Bullying cases are rare. Records show that any incidents are appropriately managed, with clear links to safeguarding where necessary. Supervision is well organised. Arrangements include the effective management of transition between activities and playground 'hotspots' to ensure pupil safety.
30. Physical education (PE) is delivered through creative use of the school's grounds and local spaces, including the nearby heath and swimming facilities. Pupils develop physical strength and resilience through structured activities. Recent improvements to swimming provision are well received. Clubs, such as Brazilian jiu-jitsu, provide additional opportunities for skills building, teamwork and self-discipline. Although on-site sports facilities are limited, leaders continue to explore ways to expand physical activity options for all age groups.
31. Health and safety arrangements are well maintained. Fire drills are practised termly, and appropriate risk assessments are in place for school activities. First-aid provision is comprehensive, with an appropriate number of staff trained in paediatric first aid for the early years. Attendance

registers are monitored closely. Admission procedures comply with statutory guidance. The school notifies the local authority of pupils who join or leave at non-standard transition points.

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

32. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

33. Leaders ensure pupils develop economic understanding through real-world experiences. In the early years, children engage in role-play using realistic play money and visit local shops with shopping lists. These activities help them to understand transactions, spending and counting, as they build confidence in using money in practical situations. Experiences such as visiting a vegetable shop to consider seasonal choices support pupils in developing early economic awareness and applying mathematical skills in meaningful contexts.
34. Older pupils take part in initiatives to develop financial planning and entrepreneurial thinking. The school's 'young leaders award' enables them to manage a budget and to design fundraising strategies, while applying problem-solving skills. Year 6 pupils further develop these skills during their residential French trip where they plan meals and purchase ingredients on a budget. Pupils gain confidence in handling money and appreciate the importance of financial decision-making. They enjoy fundraising and charitable initiatives, including selecting charities and organising events such as carol singing for the Royal Free Hospital. These experiences help pupils to extend their understanding of financial responsibility and the impact of their contributions to wider society.
35. The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities that support pupils' personal development and leadership skills. Pupils take on roles such as house captains, head boy and girl, eco representatives and games leaders. In some cases, the application process includes interviews with the headteacher. Younger pupils are encouraged to take on leadership responsibilities in drama productions, classroom monitoring roles and assemblies. Pupils take pride in their positions, recognising the value of teamwork and accountability.
36. Pupils play an active role in democratic decision-making. They create manifestos and take part in school-wide elections for school council representatives and charity leaders. Staff ensure that pupils understand the importance of their votes, reinforcing the significance of democratic principles. Pupils also decide on the school's chosen charities, currently Heath Hands and the Royal Free Hospital. They organise fundraising events and outreach projects, fostering social responsibility and an awareness of community engagement.
37. A variety of extra-curricular clubs including robotics, music technology, cookery and dance allow pupils to develop new skills and broaden their interests. Pupils enjoy these opportunities. They speak positively about how they enhance their learning. The school's inclusive approach ensures that pupils with a range of abilities access activities that promote personal development and confidence.
38. Pupils develop an understanding of civil and criminal law through a well-planned curriculum. History lessons, debating clubs and PSHE discussions encourage them to explore legal and ethical issues such as children's rights and the role of democracy. Teachers ensure that political discussions remain balanced and impartial. Pupils consider multiple viewpoints and develop critical-thinking skills. They learn about British democracy alongside global perspectives, reinforcing their awareness of different legal systems and responsibilities within society.
39. Democracy is reinforced through pupil elections and charity initiatives. Pupils discuss school policies and contribute to decisions about reward and sanction systems. They recognise the importance of

fairness in decision-making. Their increasing awareness of civic responsibility is reflected in their role in shaping their school community.

40. Cultural days support pupils' awareness of diversity and the rule of law alongside the PSHE programme. Pupils explore different faiths and belief systems, fostering respect and tolerance. Opportunities for discussion encourage pupils to reflect on fairness and justice, while preparing them for life in British society. Pupils develop an understanding of moral responsibility and show awareness of right and wrong in different contexts.

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

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

Safeguarding

42. Safeguarding is central to the school's ethos. Robust policies, continuous training and vigilant staff ensure that the welfare of pupils remains a top priority. Clear reporting procedures, comprehensive staff induction and regular updates, including for peripatetic and temporary staff members, reinforce this culture. Those with overall responsibility for safeguarding provide responsive support. They make sure that concerns are recorded, monitored and actioned through a secure online platform. Leaders maintain a detailed overview of pupils' needs. This ensures that staff know how to support pupils effectively.
43. Governors work closely with the safeguarding team. They take account of regular updates on safeguarding matters to monitor incidents, low-level concerns and patterns of behaviour. Their safeguarding reviews and policy updates ensure compliance with Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) and other statutory requirements. Leaders prioritise regular safeguarding training. Weekly and termly training sessions are supplemented with external courses. Consequently, staff are knowledgeable and confident to manage concerns.
44. Leaders follow rigorous safer recruitment procedures. They ensure that all pre-employment checks are completed before staff begin work at the school. The single central record (SCR) of appointments is meticulously maintained and regularly reviewed by senior leaders and governors to ensure compliance. Additional measures, such as online profile screening and thorough reference verification, further strengthen the recruitment process.
45. Leaders have implemented clear and efficient systems for identifying and managing safeguarding concerns. The use of a secure online platform allows for comprehensive tracking of any changes in behaviour patterns, enabling early action when needed. Staff are vigilant to local and contextual risks. Regular monitoring and multi-agency involvement ensures pupils receive appropriate support. The school's reporting framework provides clarity on escalation processes. These are overseen by senior leaders and governors to ensure consistency and accountability.
46. Communication with external agencies, such as the local authority designated officer (LADO), safeguarding partners and children's services, is well established. Referrals are timely. Leaders seek external advice and support when necessary. Regular meetings with safeguarding partners ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families receive the help they need. Robust internal tracking systems provide leaders with an overview of safeguarding across the school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Heathside Preparatory School
Department for Education number	202/6360
Address	84A Heath Street Hampstead London NW3 1DN
Phone number	020 3058 4011
Email address	info@heathsideschoolhampstead.com
Website	www. heathsideschoolhampstead.com
Proprietor	Hampstead Schools Ltd
Chair	Mr Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Mrs Sara Williams-Ryan
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	107
Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection with ISI

Information about the school

48. Founded in 1986, Heathside Preparatory School is an independent co-educational day school. It is housed in two buildings in a residential area of Hampstead, close to the Heath. The school has been part of the Dukes Education family since 2019. Heathside School comprises the early years for children from 2 to 5 years and Prep for pupils from 5 to 11 years.
49. There are 24 children in the early years comprising three classes.
50. The school has identified 28 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
51. The school has identified English as an additional language (EAL) for 28 pupils.
52. The school states that its aims are rooted in the values of knowledge, nature and nurture so that they cultivate confident, thoughtful and caring individuals who embrace a well-rounded understanding of the world and have a strong sense of respect for themselves and others.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

11 to 13 February 2025

53. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

54. 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.

55. 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

For more information, please visit isi.net