

School inspection report

3 to 5 December 2024

Sheffield High School for Girls GDST

10 Rutland Park
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S10 2PE

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 school's aim of producing pupils who have a love of learning, curiosity and the confidence to explore, question and challenge is well understood by staff, pupils and parents. The highly effective processes and practice of leaders, governors and the proprietors ensure that this aim is realised.
2. Pupils of all ages display positivity, kindness, courage and pride in themselves as they prepare to take their place and make a difference in an ever-changing world.
3. Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school, as embodied in the effective and well-established 'Girls of Steel' programme. This initiative supports pupils' development into confident and mature female role models. The breadth of pupils' leadership roles link to the school's community partnership programme. In this, pupils play their part in delivering many aspects of extra-curricular activities to partnership schools. The successful growth of pupils' self-esteem, self-reliance, self-knowledge and leadership potential from Year 2 to Year 13 is a significant strength of the curriculum and the extracurricular activity programme.
4. In the early years, children's wellbeing is effectively promoted. The curriculum allows children to develop personally, socially and emotionally as they build their communication, language, literacy and mathematics knowledge and skills. The setting provides appropriate opportunities for role play and children's physical development. Children also benefit from the use of specialist language teaching and access to personal electronic devices for digital learning.
5. Knowledgeable and committed leaders, including governors and proprietors, maintain a rigorous overview of all aspects of the school's work. They manage risk and monitor academic performance and pastoral welfare through a comprehensive programme of observation, support and reflection. Their improvement actions make a positive difference to the quality of academic provision and to pupils' personal development. The school's enrichment programme, which includes, for example, peer educators and documentary filmmaking, adds to the breadth of the offer, while challenging pupils of all ages and abilities to achieve highly.
6. School facilities provide a wide range of recreational activities. Pupils value these and access them under the safe supervision of staff. The opportunities provide a welcome balance to academic studies.
7. A robust assessment system ensures that pupils' progress is monitored effectively. Teachers identify any gaps in pupils' learning, implementing appropriate support when necessary. This support is underpinned by an extensive subject clinic programme, often staffed by senior school subject prefects. Pupils make good academic progress because staff know them well. They are empowered by their teachers to take risks in line with the school's culture of learning from mistakes when they occur.
8. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported. Leaders ensure that staff are trained to meet pupils' needs. This specialised training deepens staff's awareness of pupils' requirements and how to adapt learning to meet them.
9. Leaders and governors ensure that pupils' wellbeing is secure. Highly effective procedures and support systems include appropriate monitoring of pupils' mental health. A nurturing and caring

staff team oversees follow-up support. Pupils know the wide range of staff they can approach if they are anxious. They are confident that they will get help if concerns arise. Pupils recognise the potential stresses of examination preparation. They welcome the additional guidance and reassurance that the school provides at this time. However, a few pupils find it difficult to balance the pressures of academic studies and engagement in wider school life.

10. The diverse nature of pupils' backgrounds enables them to develop greater social awareness and an understanding of the differences between people of all faiths, cultures and traditions. Opportunities for pupils to contribute to the community are extensive. They welcome the chance to help others.
11. Leaders have developed a whole school programme that offers information about possible future pathways through dedicated lessons, talks and activities. The programme encompasses areas of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and careers. Pupils develop a range of skills and interests beyond their academic studies. The 'Forging Futures' programme prepare sixth form pupils well for life after school.
12. Leaders and governors are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. They ensure that effective arrangements are implemented to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils across the school. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they are trusted to be themselves. They understand that they need to be safeguarded and trust in the effective systems in place to keep them 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 pupils' emotional wellbeing is systematically monitored and promoted so that all pupils are consistently well equipped to maintain a balanced perspective in managing the combined demands of academic and extracurricular life.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors and proprietors take an objective view in supporting the school and the headteacher by providing challenge and support in equal measures. Leaders consistently demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills in their effective approach to leading and monitoring the implementation of the school's policies. In doing so, they fulfil their responsibilities in ensuring that the Standards are met consistently.
14. Leaders and governors adopt a thoughtful and systematic approach to highlighting and mitigating risk. Relevant training ensures that they identify any potential hazards, review them regularly and ensure that suitable control measures are in place. Other staff who need to undertake risk assessments, for example for educational visits off-site, receive suitable training. When relevant, leaders involve pupils in this process. This increases pupils' understanding of the need for assessing risk and of the measures taken to keep them safe.
15. Leaders, governors and proprietors have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to promote pupils' wellbeing effectively.
16. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas in a safe and supportive learning environment. Leaders ensure that staff are trained to teach their subjects well. They articulate a clear vision of the high-quality teaching and learning required in the school. This vision is effectively communicated to and implemented by teaching staff.
17. In the early years, established, effective and caring routines and activities promote children's wellbeing, independence and social development. This ensures that all pupils below school age make the progress that they should. Leaders assess children's needs and areas for development, to plan to meet them, before they start in the Reception class.
18. All health and safety laws, including the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, are complied with and the standards relating to safe evacuation are met. Medical facilities are appropriate to needs. First aid is administered in a timely and competent manner.
19. A comprehensive accessibility plan ensures equal access to the school site and to the curriculum. Leaders, governors and proprietors regularly review this to ensure that it continues to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
20. Leaders maintain a readily accessible website. This provides details of pupils' academic performance in the previous school year and key information for parents of current and prospective pupils. Complaints are rare. When they do occur, leaders implement the school's complaints policy promptly and effectively. They maintain a detailed log of any complaints and follow-up actions.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders' effective monitoring of curriculum delivery supports the high-quality teaching in place throughout the school. Consequently, pupils experience a positive learning environment across all areas of learning, including in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, aesthetic and creative subjects.
23. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is inclusive. This allows pupils, including those pupils who have SEND or those who speak EAL, to make good progress and reach their potential. Early identification, appropriate support, individualised strategies and carefully monitored targets ensure that all pupils achieve well. Pupils who have SEND are well catered for. The support of outside agencies is used effectively to ensure that the specific needs of these pupils are met.
24. Well-qualified teachers deliver vibrant and interesting lessons that are well structured and appropriately challenging. They use a wide variety of teaching techniques and resources. This allows most pupils to foster a deep understanding of the subject matter taught. Pupils achieve well, including in GCSE and A-level examinations.
25. Pupils draw on their previous learning to inform new ideas and to make connections with current subject content. This enhances their understanding and helps them to apply their knowledge and skills to different situations. Pupils take account of teachers' feedback to refine their work. They are confident in their abilities and know what they need to do to continue to improve.
26. Teachers use extensive questioning effectively in lessons. This prompts pupils to think critically and to respond thoughtfully. Pupils' articulate responses reflect the deepening of their knowledge and understanding. The relationships between staff and pupils are strong and productive. Teachers' high expectations contribute well to pupils' achievement over time.
27. Opportunities for debate and discussion are key features of many lessons. Pupils listen well to each other and show respect through attentive body language. They debate ideas from both sides of an argument, presenting clear and balanced viewpoints. This fosters a collaborative environment where everyone's views are valued and understood.
28. Regular checks on pupils' learning play an important part in curriculum development and design. Teachers monitor pupils' ongoing progress in lessons and through formal assessments. Parents receive regular updates and reports about their child's achievements. Pupils engage positively in self-reflection. They have a keen awareness of their own abilities and offer constructive criticism to each other. Thoughtful peer assessment is encouraged.
29. In the infant and junior schools, pupils confidently use their 'proud journals' to reflect on their achievements. This is consistent with the school's aim to foster self-expression, pride and personal growth. The curriculum includes topic work that links across subjects. Pupils speak confidently about their enjoyment of their topic work and the positive effect it has on their learning. Highly effective curriculum delivery, including adaptive teaching methods and creative resourcing, allows pupils of all ages to make good progress. Pupils demonstrate high levels of independence and self-regulation. They are well focused and motivated to learn.
30. In the early years, children develop communication and reasoning skills through structured opportunities to talk about their learning. These are well supported by teacher-led reflective

discussions. Teachers use interactive methods to promote early collaboration and curiosity. This supports children to achieve key developmental milestones. Staff nurture a safe, inclusive environment where children feel confident to express themselves and explore new ideas.

31. Pupils participate regularly in a wide variety of enrichment opportunities. They enjoy, for example, recreational, social and creative activities, as well as team sports. The activities allow them to explore different interests and to discover their passion for physical activity, while developing valuable skills in teamwork, resilience and personal fitness.

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

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

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

33. The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies are well understood by pupils. Leaders implement these policies effectively. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare. Pupils are confident that the school deals effectively and robustly with any cases arising. Appropriate actions are taken to ensure pupils' safety and wellbeing. Pupils are encouraged and supported to take part in restorative conversations as part of the school's approach to tackle bullying if it occurs. Their positive behaviour and attitudes are consistently evident beyond the classroom.
34. The school maintains detailed records of any concerns about pupils' behaviour. Highly efficient use of the information recorded means that trends are analysed, with appropriate follow-up action taken. This prevents further occurrence and helps to ensure pupils' overall wellbeing and safety.
35. Pupils reflect on their approach to challenges with good humour. This creates a relaxed and open environment that encourages them to view setbacks with a positive perspective and as an opportunity to develop their resilience and wider learning. Most pupils understand the need for a clear work-life balance. However, a few pupils find it harder than others to achieve this balance in preparing for public examinations.
36. Pupils throughout the school, including children in the early years, know that they can speak to any teacher if they have a concern. The effective social and emotional curriculum in place allows pupils to share how they are feeling at any point in the day. Any issues arising are followed up promptly and sensitively by teachers.
37. Leaders cultivate an atmosphere where equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are celebrated and supported through a wide range of resources and age-appropriate initiatives. These include EDI awareness days and assemblies. Pupils play a significant leadership role in the creation and delivery of many of these initiatives. They are taught appropriately about the ways in which people can be different from each other, such as through differences in race, religion or gender.
38. Leaders reinforce a culture of tolerance, a celebration of diversity and spirituality, and an understanding of the importance of mutual respect through their academic, PSHE and RSE curriculums. This runs through from the youngest children to the oldest year groups. The curriculum is well taught. It is evaluated regularly to ensure that the content is relevant and up to date. Senior school pupils complete training in various aspects of the RSE curriculum, such as period positivity, which they then teach to younger pupils. In doing so, they develop their own confidence and self-esteem further.
39. The successful and extensive leadership programme allows pupils of all ages to develop their self-awareness. Responsibilities include, for example, pupil roles as prefects, form and sports captains, and eco and student council representatives. In undertaking these responsibilities, pupils make valued and significant contributions to the sense of community that pervades the school from Reception to Year 13.
40. The school provides a comprehensive programme of social, intellectual and physical co-curricular activities. Pupils readily engage in these sessions, which are overseen by experienced and enthusiastic staff. Pupils of all ages often lead the activities.

41. The robust and diligent oversight of all aspects of health and safety ensures that the school site and its buildings are well maintained and fit for purpose. Pupils welcome the effective first aid and medical provision. They know what to do if the fire alarms are activated. Leaders ensure that there is appropriate staff supervision of all pupils throughout the school day, including for children in the early years. Consequently, a calm environment is created in which pupils feel safe, secure and able to thrive.
42. The admission and attendance registers are well maintained. Use of the correct attendance coding ensures that records are accurate. The information is appropriately used to check that pupils are safe. Absences are followed up and investigated. Leaders inform the local authority of any pupils leaving or joining the school at non-standard times of transition.

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

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

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

44. Leaders provide pupils of all ages with significant opportunities for them to grow as future leaders. They empower pupils to become confident, empathetic and resilient role models who make a difference to their school and to the local community. They are fully prepared for adult life in British society.
45. Many pupils make a significant contribution to the local community through volunteering in the 'SHINE' school partnership programme. Pupils engage collaboratively with staff and pupils from partnership schools in the city. They lead, for example, the delivery of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) workshops, robotics workshops and a programme of recreational activities. Pupils gain a sense of self-worth and self-confidence as they develop social skills, as well as leadership skills of commitment, co-operation and mindfulness.
46. Pupils have a deep moral awareness of fairness and social inequality. Throughout the school they support and lead a wide range of charitable activities. They raise money, for example, for local care homes, hospices, foodbanks and national charities.
47. Pupils explore and develop their understanding of fundamental British values through the taught curriculum and the 'super-curriculum'. For example, mock trials give experience of the legal system. Mock elections increase pupils' awareness and understanding of democracy. Many of these activities are initiated, planned and led by senior pupils. They reinforce pupils' understanding of right and wrong and the need to accept responsibility when required.
48. Leaders have introduced an extensive 'Forging Futures' careers programme for sixth form pupils. This provides informed and impartial advice for subject choices and career pathways. Sixth-form pupils access independent careers advice. They are encouraged to be open-minded in their choices as they learn about a variety of possible careers, university courses and apprenticeships.
49. Leaders have created a bespoke life skills programme for all year groups. This prepares pupils with relevant knowledge and skills for life after school. The programme includes a broad spectrum of activities ranging from cooking, citizenship, information about sexual health and relationships education to aspects of finance, such as budgeting, mortgage calculations, credit cards and pensions. This contributes well to the development of pupils' economic and social wellbeing.
50. In PSHE and RSE lessons, teachers build pupils' understanding of the content of, and the rationale for, British laws, as well as their basis in Judaism and Christianity. Pupils are well informed about the principles underpinning these laws.
51. In the infant and junior schools, PHSE activities such as the 'theme of the week' project and collaborative design challenges develop pupils' key personal attributes of teamwork, mutual respect and effective communication. Societal and financial awareness are incorporated into the curriculum. For example, pupils are challenged to work out the best way to spend £5 on supplies for a foodbank.
52. Through guided discussions and interactive activities, early years teachers foster children's curiosity and critical thinking. The reflective culture that is promoted supports children's personal and academic growth from the outset.

53. Pupils understand the need to celebrate and respect cultural and societal differences. This understanding is supported through pupils' leadership of the work of school ambassadors and EDI representatives. Leaders empower pupils to be responsible and mindful of how they can influence changes within their school. For example, the redesign of the school uniform and the addition of playground shelters reflect the school council's feedback. Leaders support a nurturing environment where pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their surroundings, contribute to sustainability and express their creativity, while promoting an inclusive and considerate community.

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

54. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

55. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. Ensuring that this is the case is a high priority for leaders, governors and proprietors. Concerns are dealt with sensitively and in line with requirements. Leaders ensure that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and know how to escalate concerns when required. Staff are aware of the systems to be used in school. Any concern is quickly and comprehensively reported. Follow-up actions are taken in a highly effective and timely fashion. Safeguarding records are thorough, detailed and meticulously kept. Governors and proprietors maintain effective oversight, with regular annual audits of all safeguarding protocols.
56. Pupils feel safe, secure and happy on the school site. They are able to readily identify an appropriate, trusted adult that they would confide in if they were worried. Pupils are confident to raise any safeguarding concerns. They know that they will be listened to and that their concerns will be appropriately and swiftly dealt with.
57. Staff are knowledgeable and well trained in safeguarding procedures. Training is updated regularly. Staff are well supported by leaders. They are confident that if any low-level concerns are raised about conduct, they will be acted on appropriately and sensitively.
58. Leaders consult with the local safeguarding partnership and other relevant external agencies. They make appropriate referrals when required so that support for pupils is swiftly put in place when necessary.
59. Leaders are fully aware of the contextual risks and challenges facing pupils beyond the school and within the local community, including the risks relating to radicalisation. This knowledge is used to inform school protocols, to develop staff training and to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure in their school environment.
60. Leaders have implemented an effective online filtering system in school which promotes a safe and responsible digital learning environment. Pupils are regularly taught how to stay safe online through, for example, PSHE lessons and assemblies. Measures to raise awareness of and to enhance pupils' personal safety include the teaching of basic first aid skills in PSHE lessons.
61. Leaders implement comprehensive lockdown procedures, ensuring clear communication, regular drills, and well-defined protocols that prioritise the safety and security of all pupils and staff in emergency situations.
62. The robust recruitment procedures carried out by leaders ensure that pupils are safeguarded and protected. Leaders, governors and proprietors regularly check these procedures and the school's single central record of pre-appointment safeguarding checks. This ensures that the Standards are met consistently and that pupils are taught in a safe and secure setting.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

63. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Sheffield High School for Girls GDST
Department for Education number	373/6021
Registered charity number	306983
Address	Sheffield High School for Girls GDST 10 Rutland Park Sheffield South Yorkshire S10 2PE
Phone number	01142 660324
Email address	enquiries@she.gdst.net
Website	www.sheffieldhighschool.org.uk
Proprietor	The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST)
Chair	Mrs Kathryn Boulton-Pratt
Headteacher	Mrs Nina Gunson
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	712
Date of previous inspection	30 June 2023

Information about the school

64. Sheffield High School for Girls is an independent day school for female pupils located in the Broomhill area of Sheffield. It is one of a group of schools administered by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) and is overseen by trustees and executive officers of GDST, assisted by a local governing body. The school consists of four sections: infants, for pupils aged 4 to 7 years; juniors, for pupils aged 7 to 11; seniors, for pupils aged 11 to 16; and sixth form, for those aged 16 to 18. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors and a new junior and infant school headteacher were appointed in September 2024.
65. There are 15 children in the early years Reception class.
66. The school has identified 141 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). At the time of the inspection, no pupils in the school had an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
67. English is spoken as an additional language (EAL) by 116 pupils.
68. The school states that its aim is to nurture a love of learning and curiosity, encouraging its pupils to explore, question and challenge. It seeks to enable pupils to develop confidence and pride in themselves as they prepare to take their place and make a difference in an ever-changing world. The school has three core values: positivity, kindness and courage.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

3 to 5 December 2024

69. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

70. 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.

71. 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**.

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