

School inspection report

14 November 2023 to 16 November 2023

Norwich School

The Close
Norwich
NR1 4DD

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

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and staff are ambitious for their pupils and prioritise their needs when planning effective provision. School leaders at all levels have a deep understanding of the knowledge and skills needed to run a school. Leaders understand what is working well in the quality of teaching and take action to ensure further improvements are made to enable pupils to fulfil their academic potential.
2. Leaders promote equality and diversity effectively. Consequently, all groups of pupils are integrated well into lesson and co-curricular activities. Leaders' view of the school's performance is accurate. In addition to academic achievement, leaders ensure vibrant provision in the arts and sport. This contributes to pupils' acquisition of important life skills such as working as a team and developing leadership skills.
3. Teachers establish clear routines which enable lessons to run smoothly. The atmosphere in classrooms is supportive and cooperative. As a result, pupils quickly settle to tasks. They are well motivated, enjoying practical activities and working well together during group tasks. Pupils are interested in the subject matter and are proud of their work. Teachers use a range of appropriate ways to feedback to pupils; however, this is communicated more effectively in some subjects than others.
4. Leaders have a detailed system for tracking pupils' behaviour. Staff are well supported in maintaining a consistent approach to promoting good behaviour. Pupils respond positively to staff expectations and maintain a high standard of conduct.
5. Community service is well established in the school, from pupil-led fundraising in the lower school through to compulsory community service in sixth form. Pupils are keen to make a positive contribution to life at school and willingly take part in music and arts-related activities.
6. Pupils are respectful of one another and accept each other's differences. They can discuss and debate complex issues well and feel safe and happy in school. Staff deal with any problems that do arise quickly and effectively.

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

- Ensure leaders' quality assurance of teaching and learning promotes clearly articulated expectations in all curriculum areas.
- Ensure pupils understand their next steps in learning by improving communication of feedback and progress.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders proactively monitor and evaluate the school's provision and have established a culture of high aspirations. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively and have a determination to succeed. Senior leaders in both lower and senior schools have created effective systems to support both pupils' academic learning and personal development. Leaders are ambitious for their pupils and prioritise their needs.
8. Proprietors play a key role in school success. They support leaders and staff very well and are also rigorous in challenging the reports brought to them. Their strategy balances academic attainment, community cohesion and a culture of leadership and service in line with the school's aims and ethos across both the lower and senior school.
9. The educational vision of leadership is embedded in the positive everyday experience of pupils in the school. This is also observed in the commitment that teachers and other staff bring to their work. Leaders are also continually reflective, and accurate self-evaluation enables them to develop the institution further as the world evolves.
10. Leaders strive to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve and make good progress. In some lessons, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to consistently fulfil their academic potential. Leaders take appropriate action to address this. For example, leaders provide effective support and training for recently appointed teachers and those new to the profession.
11. Leaders are committed to the development of the whole child, incorporating a rigorous academic education alongside a wide range of co-curricular activities. Leaders actively consider the impact of their decision-making on pupils' wellbeing and offer a range of opportunities for pupils to give feedback about school provision and to make recommendations for improvement.
12. Leaders provide parents and staff with the required information. Policies and processes are implemented consistently and effectively throughout the lower and senior schools. Any concerns from parents and the local community are managed well and appropriate action taken, following the school policy and its published timescales.
13. Leaders and staff prioritise the safety and wellbeing of pupils at all times and manage risk effectively. Risk assessments for all areas of the school including the cathedral site, which is open to tourists, are regularly reviewed and appropriate action taken to mitigate risks where necessary.
14. Leaders ensure that the school meets its requirements under the Equality Act and does not discriminate against pupils. Leaders effectively promote principles of equality and respect by regularly reviewing its provision and making ongoing adjustments where required. For example, leaders are committed to improving accessibility for the school community through the provision of additional handrails, ramps and increased signage. Leaders of safeguarding and special educational needs make appropriate links with other agencies including the local authority when needed.

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

15. The broad curriculum across the school, including in the early years, allows pupils to develop a wide range of skills and interests both in and outside of the classroom.
16. Leaders have created a school culture where there is a calm, yet purposeful approach to learning. This is evident in the positive working relationship between adults and pupils in and outside of the classroom. Pupils of all abilities feel well supported by their teachers. In both the lower school and the senior school, pupils consistently demonstrate high levels of articulacy and clarity of expression. They listen to one another and are confident to offer their opinions and views. As a result, pupils acquire knowledge and skills effectively, enabling them to make good progress from their starting points.
17. High-quality teaching enables pupils to attain high grades and to make good progress at GCSE and A level that is well above the national average.
18. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified by an effective referral process. Teachers take account of the information in pupils' individual support plans so that pupils' needs are met and gaps in learning are closed, enabling pupils who have SEND to make good progress. Pupils who have SEND feel well supported and included in lessons.
19. Staff use an appropriate assessment framework in the lower school to assess children's work, including the use of the early years foundation stage framework. Leaders in the senior school use a range of appropriate subject related assessment procedures. However, feedback to pupils enabling them to understand their next steps in learning is more effective in some subjects than others. Leaders recognise that some parents of younger children would like more regular feedback on their child's progress and attainment, and leaders plan to conduct a review of the system of reporting to parents.
20. Pupils develop their academic, artistic, sporting and thinking skills through the extensive co-curricular programme. Pupils' participation rates are typically high. For example, most pupils in year 9 achieve the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE). Older pupils successfully complete school-based independent projects arising from their work in academic societies and creative subjects which include a wide range of genres of music. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to work collaboratively with others from different classes and year groups. Pupils regularly reflect on their learning and development of their skills and attributes across the whole co-curricular programme.

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

21. Pupils are kind, thoughtful and respectful throughout the school. During break and lunch times pupils enjoy a wide range of playtime games and outdoor learning. These sessions are well supervised by staff.
22. Leaders at all levels promote good behaviour through the use of effective behaviour management strategies. Pupils respond well to staff expectations, maintaining a high standard of conduct. Pupils move around the school with care for each other and their environment. Staff effectively implement the school anti-bullying strategy. Leaders maintain a detailed system for tracking pupil behaviour and take proportionate and timely action when behaviour incidents occur.
23. Pupil Personal Development (PPD) lessons are well planned and support pupils to consider sensitive issues. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons help pupils to understand the importance of physical and emotional wellbeing and how this contributes to pupils' academic success. Pupils appreciate the genuine interest that teachers take in all aspects of their achievement and welfare. As a result, pupils have confidence that staff address issues regarding safety or wellbeing thoroughly.
24. Pupil participation levels are high in a coordinated games programme of both competitive and curricular sport. Pupils are positive about the opportunities on offer and recognise how regular exercise can impact positively on their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Sports scholars value and appreciate the role that the training and nutrition programme plays in helping them to develop as athletes and in improving their self-esteem.
25. Leaders implement effective systems of monitoring attendance and admissions. Any gaps in attendance are followed up appropriately and swiftly according to school policy and in line with statutory guidance.
26. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are positive. This encourages pupils to be self-confident and to take risks to develop their learning in drama, dance and other creative subjects. The curriculum for relationships and sex education (RSE) is effective and tailored in an age-appropriate way, encouraging respect for all groups of people regardless of differences. Pupils are appropriately supported by the medical team at the wellbeing centre, which is at the heart of the school and valued by the whole school community. Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is effectively developed through the faith ethos of the school and reflective assemblies.
27. The school's premises and accommodation are well appointed and resourced. The premises are maintained to a high standard, enabling pupils to benefit from high-quality facilities. Leaders keep detailed maintenance logs and adopt a diligent and proactive approach to facility management and health and safety in the school.

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

28. Leaders and staff at the lower school successfully promote pupils' contributions to society through the well-planned curriculum and the provision of a range of activities in the school and wider community. Pupils initiate and participate in many charitable events, including the school charity Christmas fair. The pupil-elected school council includes representatives from all lower school year groups and is effective in taking on board pupil ideas for school improvement and putting these into action. As a result, pupils see themselves as part of the community and are keen to be involved.
29. Community service is an important part of the older pupils' experience, supporting the school's vision by championing empathy and supporting others. Community engagement includes academic mentoring, visiting care homes, and charity work. Younger senior school pupils engage in activities with local groups that help to improve services for children and adults with a disability as well as Norfolk youth summit programmes. Wider links are formed in the community and with partner state schools. This provision enables pupils in the senior school to be aware of their social responsibilities and to maintain a close engagement with the local community.
30. Pupils throughout the school are confident and self-aware. They are proud of their school, keen to make a positive contribution to school life and speak eagerly of their ambitions for the future. The lower and senior school curriculum and assemblies support pupils to develop an understanding of different faiths and cultures.
31. Pupils respond well to the high quality and informative displays across the school which promote fundamental British values. Teachers model the values that they expect and pupils speak in detail and with passion about a range of topics related to life in modern Britain. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and listen to one another respectfully, confidently offering their own views and opinions.
32. From a young age and throughout the school pupils understand right from wrong and readily take responsibility during lesson and break times for their own behaviour. Leaders actively promote respect for the law and institutions, other cultures and democracy. School prefects oversee the implementation of a council for each senior school year group which promotes democratic values and actively involves pupils in decision-making processes. This council system is instrumental in bringing about tangible changes within the school environment, such as modifications to the kit and uniform policies based on pupil suggestions.
33. Pupils explore a wide range of options when planning their futures. Leaders promote maximum engagement from pupils across the school via a series of well-planned events including a careers breakfast with talks on cybersecurity, law, architecture and engineering, the annual careers networking event and talks for sixth formers on life beyond school. Pupils are also supported in their decision-making by meetings with senior staff and the head of careers when deciding on post-16 options and through the use of universal destination websites. Pupils go on to study a wide range of courses at UK universities and abroad.

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

34. Proprietors and leaders are rigorous in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, for example, in the effective monitoring of the suitability of adults to work at the school. Proprietors undertake an effective annual audit of safeguarding practice across the school in order to quality assure safeguarding provision. Parents, pupils and staff regard the school as a safe environment.
35. There is a well-established culture of safeguarding. Staff know what to do and who to go to if they have concerns. Safeguarding leaders are well trained and take appropriate action in a timely manner when the need arises. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and they receive up-to-date training in the latest government guidance. As a result, staff are confident to deal with any concerns raised.
36. Leaders ensure that appropriate systems are in place to promote pupil safety.
37. For example, staff implement an effective password system when releasing children to nominated adults. Safeguarding leaders maintain appropriate records of the school's contact with parents and other agencies regarding safeguarding. Leaders regularly check that the school's monitoring and filtering of internet usage is effective.
38. Pupils know how to stay safe online because online safety guidance and teaching result in pupils developing a strong understanding of the importance of careful internet use. In the senior school pupils know how to access an effective anonymised communication programme to alert the school's designated safeguarding leads to any concerns.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Norwich School
Department for Education number	926/6124
Registered charity number	311280
Address	Norwich School, 71a The Close Norwich NR1 4DD
Website	norwich-school.org.uk
Proprietor	Norwich School
Chair	Mr Patrick Smith
Headteacher	Mr Steffan Griffiths
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	1194
Date of previous inspection	20 October 2022

Information about the school

39. Norwich School is a co-educational day school located in the centre of Norwich. The school consists of a lower school and a senior school which includes a sixth form. The school is an educational charity whose council of management has overall responsibility for governance.
40. Early years is located in the lower school.
41. The school has identified 125 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan.
42. English is an additional language for 32 pupils.
43. The school states that its aims are:
- inspiring young people to develop their curiosity in intellectual, creative and practical spheres, thereby establishing capacity for pupils to become reflective thinkers who are capable of handling complex concepts and articulate expression in varied media
 - enabling every pupil to fulfil their unique potential by establishing a platform of rich and varied educational opportunity
 - creating for all pupils' opportunities in leadership and service which will empower them to be ambitious forces for good in communities throughout their lives.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 14 to 16 November 2023

44. A team of nine inspectors visited the school for two and half days.
45. Inspection activities included:
- observed lessons
 - discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work
 - discussions with members of staff, the chair and vice-chair of proprietors
 - observation of extra-curricular activities, assemblies and tutor group meetings
 - examination of curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.
46. 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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