

School inspection report

19 to 21 March 2024

Nottingham Girls' High School GDST

9 Arboretum Street

Nottingham

NG1 4JB

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Pupils' wellbeing is a high priority for all leaders, governors and proprietors, especially in terms of meeting the school's stated aim to empower female pupils through education. Leaders successfully create an inclusive environment so that pupils have the opportunity to flourish and succeed in all aspects of school life. Leaders provide an education which challenges and inspires pupils of all ages, and instils in them the freedom and confidence to speak up, act independently and embrace the opportunities that spark their curiosity.
2. School leaders, governors and proprietors work collaboratively in the production of a comprehensive working self-assessment that addresses all areas of risk and management throughout the school. Staff recognise and understand the relevance and importance of this document in terms of pupil welfare and contribute to its annual review.
3. Pupils make good progress in all areas of the curriculum because of effective teaching and learning. Lessons are well planned, delivered at an engaging pace and utilise a wide range of resources and teaching activities which recognise individual needs, ensuring that pupils learn well. The support offered to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) includes a one-page profile for use by staff. This is effective in supporting their planning. Teaching provides pupils with higher prior attainment with activities matched to their needs, enabling them to make good progress.
4. Pupils recognise the commitment modelled by leaders and staff. This encourages and empowers both their self-belief and their individuality. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are overwhelmingly respectful, focused and constructive in lessons. Pupils engage readily with a full range of activities, showing a clear culture of mutual support and proactivity. Pupils are willing to take responsibility for themselves and support others. Pupils' positive behavioural attitudes consistently extend beyond the classroom.
5. Pupils' respect for themselves and others in their community is mature and well developed. Pupils show tolerance and their attitudes to diversity and inclusion are highly positive. Leaders actively encourage pupils to express their views and identities in a number of areas which are important to the school community. This enables the pupils to develop their own individuality, self-confidence and feel empowered to 'speak up-speak out'.
6. Pupils of all ages speak positively about some elements of provision for relationships and sex education (RSE) and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. However, the quality of the teaching in this area of the curriculum is variable and the delivery of the programme not consistently effective.
7. Staff in the early years support children in their understanding of the world around them through the well-maintained outdoor classroom which encourages them to develop a sense of awe and wonder. Children in the early years are enthusiastic and independent learners, gaining a secure foundation in their ability to recognise and manipulate the spoken parts of sentences and words. Reception children achieve well. They display a clear understanding of technical language such as 'trigraph' and 'digraph' to sound out words.
8. Pupils recognise their responsibilities within the school and to the wider local community. They express this awareness most effectively through whole-school charity and outreach work, such as,

raising money to support a local community café, collecting items for local foodbanks, Year 12 partnership work with local general practice volunteering services, as well as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) partnerships with local primary and secondary schools.

9. The safeguarding arrangements for pupils are effective in all aspects of school life, from safer recruitment through to everyday understanding and practice. The safeguarding team has secure and positive relationships with relevant external agencies as required. These links are well established and enable professional extended support to be readily accessed. Pupils feel safe and secure in all areas of the school.

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 teaching of PHSE and RSE in the senior school is as effective as that in other parts of the school, so that senior pupils feel it is relevant to their needs.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders carefully evaluate and reflect on how the curriculum can be adapted in order that the educational experience and academic outcomes for pupils can be enhanced. Staff are well trained and qualified, and dedicated to providing pupils with the opportunities to succeed both within and beyond the academic curriculum. All staff value the professional trust and autonomy they receive from leaders in their areas of expertise.
11. Effective use of data enables leaders to evaluate pupils' progress and attainment and implement well planned strategies, such as adapting the teachers' language and vocabulary. The increasingly challenging activities improve both academic outcomes and the personal development of all pupils. Robust quality assurance at all levels of leadership cultivates professional accountability in departments, ensuring that staff seek opportunities to improve teaching and learning, as well as focus on the personal development of every pupil.
12. Leaders create an open community built on mutual respect in which pupils can share their opinions with school leaders and feel that they are listened to. Decisions are reviewed in response to pupils' views. Leaders listen to the views of the school council, known as the 'pupil executive' and empower its members to implement the decisions they have made.
13. A wide range of high quality curricular and co-curricular opportunities is available to all pupils. These support their personal development and allow to gain new skills and interests. Pupils value the varied options available to them.
14. The school meets the requirements of Equality Act 2010 through a detailed accessibility plan. Leaders make reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility when required, with the support of governors and proprietors. Staff have a key role in meeting these needs and co-operate fully in their delivery which ensures that all pupils can access the curriculum.
15. Leaders in the early years provide an appropriate system of transition for new children joining the early years that is based upon the needs of individual children. There is careful planning to provide a smooth transition to the junior and senior schools. Children in the early years benefit from effective teaching, and the warm and supportive learning environment.
16. An appropriate safeguarding policy, tailored to the context of the school, is in place and effectively implemented. Pupils throughout the school feel safe and secure.
17. Effective implementation of the complaints policy by leaders in accordance with the published timelines encourages parental trust in the procedures. Detailed records are maintained, and leaders are reflective about any lessons to be learned.
18. Essential key information is accessible on the school website for current and prospective parents. This includes details of the aims of the school, essential policies and details of academic performance in the previous school year. Local authorities receive an annual report for any pupils with funding provided by them.
19. Leaders maintain links with other external agencies so that required information is shared and support for individual pupils is put in place when required.

20. Leaders ensure that risks are effectively minimised through their implementation of the risk assessment policy. Potential hazards in higher risk areas such as design technology and science are well controlled. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities in terms of risk assessment and mitigation. For example, the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified in risk assessments when planning an external visit, and advice is sought as required.

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

21. Leaders provide clear academic direction, and structure the curriculum effectively. They have developed a flexible sixth-form curriculum with pupils starting by studying four A levels and switching to three before October half term and senior school pupils are allowed to trial their choices of GCSE for a term. Pupils recognise the flexibility and independence this affords them, allowing them to match their choices to their abilities, interests and needs. The curriculum is regularly reviewed. Schemes of work are broadened to recognize the importance of inclusion and diversity to embed British values.
22. Pupils show highly positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to do well. They are confident and well-motivated. Pupils respond enthusiastically because of teaching which provides them with frequent opportunities to explore their own ideas and thinking. They work well co-operatively and are adept at moving between utilising their digital, verbal and written skills. Pupils make good progress in lessons, enabled by high expectations and expertise of the teachers. They demonstrate effective collaborative and co-operative skills, as seen in paired and group work in science and food and nutrition lessons. Year 12 pupils who voluntarily undertake the extended project qualification (EPQ) demonstrate high quality intellectual curiosity in both their verbal and written communication. Pupils are articulate and have mature speaking and listening skills.
23. Regular professional dialogue and the sharing of effective practice amongst teaching staff, coupled with self-reflection and teaching which adapts to pupils' needs, are key components which have a positive impact on pupil progress.
24. Pupils who have SEND are supported with sensitivity. Their needs are met by personalised teaching strategies and effective adjustments which ensure that their learning and progress in class are in line with their peers and often above targets set following earlier assessment. Through the use of the schools' one-page profiles, teachers are effective and mindful in their approach to addressing individual learning needs and this is recognised and valued by pupils.
25. There are comprehensive online assessment and personalised teaching programmes in place to identify and support pupils throughout the school with English as an additional language (EAL), so that they make good progress with their fluency in English.
26. Assessment procedures are thorough, and pupils benefit from regular and detailed feedback from teachers providing helpful comments and targets to keep them informed of their progress. This feedback enables pupils to plan their individual next steps for learning. Communication with parents over pupils' progress is frequent and the school implements a wide range of strategies to support, extend and challenge pupils wherever necessary.
27. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and grounded in mutual respect. Trust is evident between adults and pupils, with the atmosphere in lessons being informal, calm and accessible for all pupils.
28. Pupils in the junior school benefit from a curriculum which is underpinned by their 'RECIPE for success' (resilience, empathy, creativity, initiative, positivity and excellence). Digital literacy is a key component to pupils' success in the junior school, supporting pupils' independent learning and developing enthusiastic learners.

29. Resources and displays in the early years support pupils understanding of the world around them. Children develop knowledge and understanding of lifecycles in their studies of caterpillars and the consequent transformation into butterflies. Children learn in a calm and inclusive environment where mutual respect and co-operation is encouraged. For example, at the start of the day they chose what area of learning they want to attend, and when places in the role play area had been filled, the remaining children willingly chose other areas of learning. Children in the Nursery are confident and engage enthusiastically, such as when investigating items in a teacher led session on weighing, identifying that the scales will be higher if the item is lighter than the other item on the scale.
30. Pupils of all ages participate in an extensive programme of clubs and activities at lunchtime across musical, sporting, recreational, creative and intellectual aspects. These enrich their educational experience, supporting their social awareness, wellbeing and personal development.

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

31. Effective implementation of the school's behaviour policy by leaders promotes positive behavioural attitudes in pupils. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of this policy. Leaders address any issues promptly and appropriately and pupils are confident in their teachers' ability to quickly resolve any problems. This is reflected in the detailed logging of incidents and any follow up actions. Pupils understand the importance leaders place on good behaviour.
32. Pupils value the positive relationships they develop throughout their time in school and appreciate the balance of school support and encouragement to resolve friendship differences themselves. They understand the principles that support the school's anti-bullying strategy and recognise the school's implementation of it helps to keep them keep safe and develop their awareness.
33. Leaders actively educate pupils about the value of a diverse multi-faith community. Pupils enjoy opportunities to explore this aspect of school life further in lessons and assemblies. The library and the wellbeing areas provide spaces for pupils of all ages to find time for quiet or spiritual reflection. There is an allocated reflection space, which provides opportunities for formal prayers for groups of pupils. Pupils recognise and respect the value of faith, and are appreciative of the way that the school's wellbeing initiatives support this.
34. Pupils recognise and value opportunities to develop their self-esteem, self-knowledge, responsibility and resilience through accepting leadership roles in the extensive co-curricular programme and wider school life. For example, older pupils act as role models for younger peers, as seen in the Year 7 mental health ambassador training led by Year 12 pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils in the junior school to take positions of responsibility such as members of the assembly team, tots, diversity and physical education ambassadors, library monitors and house captains. Pupils of all ages commented on the positive impact that these roles have on their self-confidence.
35. There is a co-ordinated approach to the RSE and PSHE programmes across the school. The programmes are graduated according to year group. In the junior school, PSHE is delivered by class teachers. The teaching of RSE and PSHE in the senior school is delivered by non-specialist teachers, with lessons planned by the PSHE co-ordinators. This leads to some variability in the quality of lessons delivered which sometimes adversely impacts pupils' engagement and learning. There is limited tracking and assessment of the RSE and PHSE outcomes to help leaders gauge pupil engagement and progress in this area of the curriculum.
36. The school site is well maintained, and leaders effectively manage the site security of a city centre location. Health and safety policies and procedures are rigorously implemented. Fire standards are consistently met and supported by stringent external and internal audits. Medical provision and first aid facilities are suitable, procedures are robust and follow up action is prompt and consistently thorough.
37. Staff supervision around the school site is comprehensive and contributes to pupils feeling safe and secure during the school day. Supervision ratios in the early years ensure that sufficient staff are available to support children's needs.

38. Staff in the early years support children's emotional wellbeing. When children note how they are feeling at the start of the day on the 'feelings monster' board, teachers sensitively discuss their choices and emotions with them, supporting in learning to manage these.
39. Procedures for monitoring attendance and admissions are secure and registers are maintained appropriately. Any daily absences are quickly followed up as are the destinations of pupils who leave the school. This information is recorded and sent to the appropriate local authority.

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' sensitive consideration of the needs of the multi-cultural pupil body contribute towards the values of inclusion, tolerance and respect consistently shown by the pupils throughout all age ranges in the school. Through PSHE lessons and assemblies pupils develop mindfulness and an acceptance of the differences between individuals. Leaders and governors have introduced a whole school curricular and co-curricular diversity mapping document that is used across all departments. This is used effectively to plan lessons so that they further enhance pupils' awareness and understanding of non-discriminatory behaviour.
41. Pupils are proud of the inclusive environment in the school and express appreciation for the opportunities to influence school culture in a positive way and to share their ideas with leaders who have made many improvements based on their feedback. Pupils cite positive changes made to the curriculum, displays, library texts and use of pupil and staff language.
42. As a result of the effective careers guidance, pupils readily engage with external speakers, the individualised support offered, the detailed, well-resourced careers programme and the whole-school careers fair as part of national careers week. The careers advice provided helps pupils plan their future steps, whether to be at university, in an apprenticeship or work based. Pupils are well prepared for life in society beyond school.
43. Leaders encourage pupils to consider and debate often difficult, controversial moral and ethical aspects in society, especially those affecting women. For example, in a Spanish lesson, older pupils discussed maturely and sensitively the issues of male toxicity described in the text *Les Hombres de La Manada*. In a geography lesson, Year 12 pupils evaluated the growth of extremist groups in the country, and particularly the use of social media in radicalisation. Links between national events and local tensions are made and discussed maturely. British values are considered carefully by the pupils in the context of such topics. As a result, pupils develop their understanding of right and wrong and are actively encouraged to navigate difficult societal choices through their friendships and their studies.
44. Pupils show awareness of political impact and societal differences in different countries. For example, in an English lesson, pupils in Year 10 expressed considerable depth of understanding and empathy when studying poetry from the war in Vietnam. In a Year 13 English lesson, pupils analysed an unseen text through the lens of social and political protest and through discussion, developing their political responses in a sophisticated and balanced manner.
45. Opportunities to consider economic perspectives are embedded throughout the school. For example, in economics, older pupils discuss the role of socialist ideologies and government economic intervention to reduce poverty. Sixth form pupils' economic understanding is developed in the personal and financial elements of their PSHE provision that includes information on mortgages and how to budget for and stay safe when planning solo overseas trips. In computing lessons, pupils are taught about the potential dangers linked to internet banking. Opportunities are provided for pupils to demonstrate business and entrepreneurial skills. For example, loans are given to pupils to invest in pop up shops as part of charity fund raising.

46. Leaders in the junior school ensure pupils have an understanding of their diverse community, ensuring that all cultures and backgrounds are celebrated. For example, pupils have been actively involved in the call for the decolonisation of texts and in a Year 5 history lesson, pupils used texts to understand what the Second World War was like through the eyes of German children.
47. The junior school's involvement with an external teaching programme of life skills supports pupils' understanding of the wider world they live in. Pupils display high levels of empathy of how to be a good citizen, as seen in a Year 1 PSHE lesson where pupils discussed how to treat each other and how this can impact on others. When pupils suggested giving a cuddle to make someone feel better, other pupils commented on the need to ask before doing so, to make sure they are happy receiving one, following up on a prior lesson based on consent.

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

48. The safeguarding policy, provision and procedures in place are rigorous and effective. Leaders, including governors have created a culture of openness throughout the school which ensures all staff recognise their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. The effective consideration of risk factors potentially linked to safeguarding ensure that leaders respond swiftly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns. The proprietor maintains an effective oversight.
49. All staff and governors are trained in safeguarding, including about their responsibilities to prevent extremism. This training is regularly refreshed through annual training at the start of the academic year and through topical updates in weekly briefings.
50. Any incidents of child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and racial issues that occur are appropriately responded to. Careful monitoring of safeguarding logs enables comprehensive tracking of trends and patterns. Leaders have developed effective links with external agencies through clear investment of time and energy and referrals are made promptly when required.
51. Pupils know where to go to seek help and support, can identify an appropriate adult to speak to, with access being anonymous if necessary, and believe they are listened to if they have a concern.
52. Pupils of all ages display relevant knowledge of, how to stay safe online, the use of secure websites, the challenges and benefits of AI and how to maintain a safe digital identity. The school has appropriate systems in place to filter digital material and monitor the use of personal devices to support pupils' safety when online.
53. Staff and children throughout the early years setting know who the early years designated safeguarding lead is. Younger pupils in the junior school could readily identify organisations to help them if required and knew how to contact emergency services.
54. Leaders, local governors and proprietors ensure that all pre-employment checks are rigorously carried out and recorded clearly on the central record so that all staff appointments meet the appropriate requirements.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

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| School | Nottingham Girls' High School GDST |
| Department for Education number | 892/6009 |
| Registered charity number | 306983 |
| Address | Nottingham Girls' High School GDST 9 Arboretum Street Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG1 4JB |
| Phone number | 0115 941 7663 |
| Email address | enquiries@not.gdst.net |
| Website | nottinghamgirlshigh.gdst.net |
| Proprietor | Girls Day School Trust |
| Chair | Professor Emma Wilson |
| Headteacher | Mrs Julie Keller |
| Age range | 3 to 19 |
| Number of pupils | 672 |
| Date of previous inspection | 18 November 2022 |

Information about the school

55. Nottingham Girls' High School GDST is an independent day school situated in Nottingham. It is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils. The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) is the legal proprietor of the school, supported by a local advisory governing body. The school is divided into two sections: the infant and junior school, for pupils aged between 3 and 11 years, and the senior school, which includes a sixth form, for pupils aged between 11 and 19 years. Since the previous inspection, a new sports complex has been developed on the school site.
56. There are 23 children in the early years comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
57. The school has identified 117 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
58. English is an additional language for 34 pupils.
59. The school states its aims are to empower girls for extraordinary lives, providing the progressive, creative and different style of education that girls need to excel in the twenty first century. It seeks to create an inclusive environment where every member of the school community can flourish.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

19 to 21 March 2024

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

61. 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 head, 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

62. 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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