

School inspection report

5 to 7 November 2024

Sutton High School GDST

55 Cheam Road

Sutton

Surrey

SM1 2AX

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

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders are vigilant in promoting pupils' wellbeing. The proprietor, governing body and staff share in a commitment to provide a school environment that supports the school's aims to foster courage, truth and joy.
2. Leaders provide an effective and appropriate curriculum which is planned and reviewed carefully to meet the needs of the diverse school community. Pupils make good progress at the school and are prepared well for their future lives. Leaders are quick to introduce additional strategies when pupils require further support.
3. Leaders monitor and analyse assessment data thoroughly and with precision to inform teachers so that they respond to the specific needs of pupils and groups very swiftly and highly effectively. Leaders promptly adapt and revise both the curriculum and timetable in response to their analysis of data so that pupils' needs and aspirations are consistently met extremely well. The school's highly effective use of and response to data is a significant strength of the school.
4. In the early years, leaders create a supportive and nurturing environment which enables children to engage confidently with both structured and independent activities and learn well.
5. Leaders communicate effectively with parents, including when any concerns are raised. Detailed information is available to parents on the school's website. However, some required information was not visible at the start of the inspection. This oversight was swiftly rectified during the inspection.
6. Pupils' behaviour across all parts of the school is appropriate and incidents of bullying are rare. This is because positive behaviour is regularly reinforced in assemblies, lessons and through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. Form teachers provide effective coaching to pupils in how to behave appropriately and support their own emotional wellbeing.
7. Robust health and safety measures are practised across all parts of the school. Risk assessments are thorough and seek to minimise and mitigate risk in school and on trips locally and further afield. All staff receive training in fire safety every year. As a result, pupils learn in a secure environment.
8. Leaders provide pupils in the senior school with balanced guidance and helpful advice regarding future careers. Pupils and their parents are suitably and impartially advised about a wide range of career options.
9. Pupils learn about cultural diversity effectively through exploring issues of equality and inclusion, debates and assemblies on these themes and effective use of carefully chosen resources. As a result, the school community is inclusive and respectful. The equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committee holds a prominent position within the school, which contributes to the school's supportive and kind ethos.
10. The safeguarding team work closely with all staff to maintain a robust and thorough safeguarding culture. Staff understand safeguarding procedures and know how to respond to any safeguarding concerns that are raised. Leaders maintain effective and constructive links with local safeguarding partners.

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 required information is consistently available to parents.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Effective oversight from the proprietor and advisory board informs, challenges and supports school leaders so that the Standards are met. Leaders ensure that the educational and pastoral provision aligns with the aims of the school. Pupils' wellbeing is nurtured and supported well by all who work at the school. Leaders ensure that pupils learn in a stimulating and fair environment.
12. Leaders have appropriate skills and knowledge which they use to effectively promote pupils' educational and pastoral wellbeing. Staff receive regular training to ensure that school policies and procedures are understood and carefully followed. For example, the systematic and embedded use of data across all parts of the school means that pupils' academic and pastoral needs are quickly recognised and supported. Leaders are reflective and regularly review school performance to explore what actions can be taken to further improve the provision available to pupils. For example, additional classroom and recreational facilities for those in the sixth form have recently been provided to enhance their academic experience and pastoral support.
13. Leaders in the early years provide their staff with appropriate and helpful support to enable their professional practice to develop. As a result, children in the early years receive suitable and effective provision and are prepared well for Year 1.
14. Leaders have established thorough processes and procedures regarding the management and mitigation of risk. Governor and proprietorial oversight ensure that leaders understand their responsibilities to provide pupils with suitable and secure premises and provision. Staff are trained every year to recognise and appropriately report any issues relating to health and safety and risk. Leaders respond quickly and take effective action when concerns are raised. Risk assessments are carefully written by staff. They identify potential risks sensibly and put forward appropriate control measures to mitigate these. Risk assessments are thoroughly reviewed by the health and safety committee to ensure their continued suitability. As a result, the management of risk is effective.
15. Leaders quickly respond to informal complaints, and as a result formal complaints are rare. Whenever complaints reach the formal stage, they are investigated efficiently and within the published timescales. Subsequent decisions, actions and resolutions are appropriately recorded.
16. The school communicates clearly with parents regarding school provision. Most required provision of information is available to parents via the school's website. However, at the start of the inspection, some previous inspection reports were not readily available to parents. Leaders swiftly rectified this oversight during the inspection.
17. Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. A suitable accessibility plan is implemented to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Leaders adapt pupils' timetables and other provision appropriately to support pupils who have a disability so that they can access the curriculum. Leaders provide the local authority with all required information relating to pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
18. The safeguarding team carry out their responsibilities methodically and effectively. They establish and maintain constructive and appropriate links with other agencies. For example, leaders with safeguarding responsibilities regularly attend local safeguarding network meetings and access the local authority's training materials, such as training on online safety. Safeguarding leaders seek and

respond to advice which informs and supports the school's thorough work in supporting and safeguarding pupils.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The wide-ranging curriculum includes all the required areas of learning. The delivery of the curriculum is carefully monitored through meetings between subject leaders, pupil interviews, surveys, work scrutiny and learning walks. Leaders revise and adapt schemes of work to reflect the current needs of the pupils, and as a result pupils exceed national curriculum age-related expectations. Leaders listen carefully to pupils' views when reviewing the curriculum. For example, dance and psychology were added as GCSE subject choices in response to pupils' feedback.
21. Teaching makes effective use of a range of methods employed to best meet pupils' needs and build on their prior understanding. Teachers utilise their good subject knowledge effectively to inform their clear explanations, and use questioning to check pupils' understanding and prompt careful thinking. As a result, pupils apply consistent effort and motivation to their academic studies, and in doing so they develop their knowledge and understanding well and make good progress. Pupils typically achieve well in GCSE and A-level examinations and secure places at their chosen colleges and universities.
22. Leaders use data and assessment in a sophisticated, dynamic and highly effective manner throughout the school. They evaluate baseline data and ongoing assessment thoroughly to inform staff how best to respond to the needs of individual pupils and groups. The review of data leads to swift and supportive actions that enhance pupils' learning very well, including targeted and individual support and challenge to improve pupils' outcomes. When data identifies that pupils do not make expected or good progress, leaders quickly implement helpful and focused strategies that support further improvement. Staff communicate with pupils very clearly about their achievement and what they need to focus on to make further progress.
23. Leaders provide effective support for pupils who have SEND and ensure the curriculum does not discriminate against them or any other groups or pupils. Senior leaders meet every week to discuss provision for pupils who have SEND and review their learning programmes. Leaders meet with pupils who have SEND to revise their learning plans and effectively respond to their ongoing needs such as when providing texts in a shortened format or teaching digital skills so that they learn how to easily organise and access their study notes electronically.
24. When required, leaders provide thorough support for pupils who speak EAL. Senior staff meet with pupils who speak EAL before they join the school to understand how to most effectively support their individual language needs. Senior pupils who speak EAL help pupils in the prep school who speak EAL to positively support their transition into Year 7. Leaders use assessment data carefully and adjust the curriculum when necessary, such as revising Year 5 English and mathematics curriculums to support pupils who speak EAL. As a result of these measures, pupils who speak EAL make good progress at the school.
25. In the early years, staff model language and provide structured lessons to promote communication and language development. Communication skills are taught through daily activities where staff introduce new vocabulary and encourage children to engage verbally with each other. Children gain confidence and curiosity in their learning whilst developing effective language skills.
26. Parents regularly receive focused information about their child's progress, for example through online journals, regular parents' meetings and written reports. Information about senior pupils'

achievement is frequently sent to parents through a digital platform. As a result of these measures, parents are kept well informed about the academic progress their child is making.

27. Pupils are provided with a broad range of recreational activities that help them increase their understanding and develop skills in the areas in which they engage. For example, engagement with the prep orchestra helps pupils to improve their intonation, while extra-curricular scientific activities enable pupils to develop and practise their research and communication skills, for example through a scientific publication produced by senior pupils.

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

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

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

29. Well-established pastoral systems mean that pupils are quickly supported when needed. Pupils receive effective emotional support from a range of measures, including teaching staff who are trained in mental health first aid, school counsellors, the wellbeing centre and the school's pastoral dog. As a result, pupils learn in a nurturing environment.
30. Leaders provide support and effective opportunities for pupils to develop confidence and self-esteem. For example, In the early years, the 'working wall' is used to demonstrate the value of children's achievements. Sixth-form pupils attend university events to work with undergraduates on entrepreneurial projects so that they are confident and well prepared for university life. The PSHE programme teaches pupils about appropriate topics such as health, wellbeing and equality. Pupils learn how their bodies will develop and effectively explore the emotional responses they may experience as a result. The PSHE curriculum also teaches mindfulness so that pupils understand how to regulate their emotional responses individually and towards others. Senior pupils explore the Equality Act 2010 and the relevance and importance of this to their school and to wider society.
31. The relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum contains appropriate content in line with current statutory guidance. Pupils learn about themes such as coercion and consent, and their understanding is assessed through questionnaires which inform teachers' planning for the following term. Parents and pupils are consulted about the RSE curriculum and invited to discuss any perspectives they might have. For example, following consultations with pupils, the RSE curriculum was revised to include a topic on skin care.
32. Pupils develop a sense of spirituality through the study of world religions, trips to local mosques and synagogues, and in music, such as when sixth-form pupils compose choral pieces in response to 'The Lord's Prayer'. Leaders encourage and provide pupils with time to be reflective.
33. The physical education (PE) programme develops specific sports-related skills. For example, in swimming, pupils receive focused feedback to help them develop their front crawl technique whilst, in hockey, pupils are taught strategic approaches to attacking and defending short corners. Children in early years develop balance and co-ordination through activities such as riding tricycles. Pupils develop individual and team skills effectively and learn how exercise can support physical health and emotional wellbeing.
34. Effective behaviour management and clear expectations ensure that pupils' behaviour reflects the school's values of respect, kindness and inclusivity. Positive behaviour is reinforced by a clear policy, a well-understood pupil code of conduct and a range of measures that include 'be kind' badges and the awarding of house points. If pupils deviate from the expected high standard of behaviour, senior leaders quickly explore any consequences directly with the pupil concerned. This means pupils learn how their behaviour might affect others. The PSHE curriculum, assemblies and an anti-bullying week inform pupils about the harmful consequences of bullying. As a result, incidents of bullying are rare. When any bullying occurs, leaders respond immediately and appropriately. Leaders maintain appropriate behaviour and bullying records.
35. Leaders ensure that admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Attendance data is regularly reviewed by senior staff, and trends are closely monitored to identify any

concerning patterns. If downward trends are noted, effective measures are quickly taken to improve pupils' attendance. The school notifies the local authority when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.

36. Pupils are supervised well at breaktimes and at lunch so that they play, eat and relax in an orderly manner. Staff are deployed effectively to supervise across the school. In the early years, appropriate staffing ratios are maintained.
37. Leaders ensure the school premises is suitable and maintained effectively. Health and safety procedures are rigorously applied throughout the school, for example in weekly meetings when leaders check that any issues previously raised have been suitably resolved. All staff receive health and safety training every year including how to report health and safety concerns. They also receive training in fire safety, first aid and mitigating risk. Proprietorial and governor oversight of health and safety issues is regular and systematic.
38. First aid facilities and procedures are appropriate and well managed. For example, at least one member of staff holding a first aid certificate always accompanies off-site excursions. Those who work in the early years are suitably trained in paediatric first aid.

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

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

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

40. The well-planned curriculum enables pupils to learn about the importance of mutual respect and develop their understanding and respect for cultural diversity and people's individuality. For example, in geography, pupils learn about the ethical issues relating to the experience of Aboriginal families when their children were taken away, whilst in religious studies, pupils consider how a school could be organised based upon the principles of different world religions. Those in Year 7 are taught how to use British sign language during their 'kaleidoscope' enrichment programme to help develop their awareness of disability. Pupils learn about neurodiversity and the importance of valuing and respecting people's rights, personal identity and freedom of expression. The curriculum supports British values, including by making use of resources that explore and promote themes such as those of liberty, respect and tolerance.
41. Pupils develop their financial understanding and skills through the curriculum. Children in Nursery engage in role play when they sell and purchase items whilst pupils in the prep school are challenged to grow £5 through business enterprises. Pupils in Year 9 explore budget control and learn that solvency often depends on making sensible lifestyle choices. Sixth-form pupils plan small businesses, write business plans and learn how to operate profitably.
42. Pupils receive suitable and impartial guidance about a wide range of career and educational opportunities available to them. Year 7 pupils prepare questions before interviewing teachers about the career choices they have chosen, and the school hosts a careers fair every year where pupils are informed about potential career options. Pupils in Year 10 visit a university and learn to write a curriculum vitae whilst pupils in the sixth form are encouraged to consider and advised how to prepare for a suitable range of options including universities, art conservatoires and degree apprenticeships.
43. Leaders provide effective opportunities for pupils to serve others and to learn skills that prepare them to make meaningful contributions to British and global society. Pupil leaders in the prep school represent their class on the school council. Older pupils are elected as school captains and are encouraged to support those who are younger through the 'big sister, little sister' programme. For example, senior pupils offer homework support to younger pupils. In providing service to others, pupils develop their sense of social responsibility. Pupils serve on the 'equality, diversity and inclusion' (EDI) committee and have requested and introduced a multi-faith prayer room, which is widely shared by pupils celebrating different religions.
44. Leaders support children in the early years to develop social confidence through a range of appropriate activities such as working collaboratively during scientific investigations and helping each other to build models. Children learn from their teachers who model friendly behaviour that demonstrates teamwork, respect and responsibility. They effectively learn how to engage with others politely, and share play and resources together.
45. Pupils learn the value of making positive contributions and serving others beyond the school, for example when they work with the local authority on litter-picking projects and serve as lifeguards at a pentathlon disability swimming challenge. Senior pupils participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE), during which they provide service to others such as working with a local charity to support homeless people.

46. The curriculum effectively teaches pupils about institutions and services. A visit to the London Transport Museum supports pupils' learning about the work of nurses and paramedics and the police. Members of Parliament visit the school to discuss the democratic process and the role of government. Pupils enacted a mock election during the previous general election and learnt about the democratic American presidential election process in PSHE lessons. Senior leaders work carefully with staff and visiting speakers to ensure that any discussions or presentations that have potentially political content are balanced and impartial. As a result of these measures, pupils acquire an understanding of democracy and learn to respect and appreciate the importance of public services and institutions.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

48. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect the requirements of current statutory guidance. The proprietor commissions an annual safeguarding audit which is undertaken by an external agency. Leaders quickly implement actions following any recommendations made through the audit so that safeguarding procedures remain up to date and effective.
49. Leaders provide staff with comprehensive safeguarding training, commencing at induction, including training on 'Prevent' duty and child-on-child abuse. All staff are regularly provided with updated safeguarding training. Staff understand how to respond to any safeguarding concerns raised by pupils and the process to follow should any allegation or low-level concern about those working in the school arise. Staff understand their collective responsibility towards maintaining a robust and thorough safeguarding culture.
50. A suitable single central record of appointments (SCR) is maintained for all those who work at the school. All required safer recruitment checks are carefully carried out. Those involved in appointing new staff receive appropriate training in safer recruitment. Senior school leaders and the proprietor undertake regular and effective oversight of the SCR.
51. Senior leaders, from across the school, including from the early years, form the school's safeguarding team. They meet regularly to share effective practice and to discuss how to maintain appropriate support for pupils throughout the school.
52. Safeguarding leaders receive appropriate training which ensures that they have the knowledge to fulfil their roles. Leaders regularly participate in further safeguarding training delivered by the local authority, which increases their safeguarding expertise and knowledge. Safeguarding records are clear, detailed and appropriately recorded. Leaders respond quickly and appropriately whenever safeguarding concerns are reported, including by liaising with and, when appropriate, referring concerns to relevant external safeguarding partners.
53. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online through appropriate lessons in PSHE and computing. Leaders implement an effective monitoring and filtering system which directly alerts senior staff. Any alerts received are quickly investigated and a suitable record is maintained showing actions taken. As a result, pupils are suitably protected from harmful and inappropriate online content.
54. Leaders have developed clear systems that enable pupils to share any worries they may have. These include worry boxes, wellbeing passes, visiting experienced staff in the wellbeing centre and sending an email alert. When concerns are raised by pupils, staff respond sympathetically, quickly and appropriately. Such measures enable pupils to feel safe when at school.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

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| School | Sutton High School GDST |
| Department for Education number | 319/6069 |
| Registered charity number | 1026057 |
| Address | Sutton High School GDST 55 Cheam Road Sutton Surrey SM1 2AX |
| Phone number | 020 8642 0594 |
| Email address | office@sut.gdst.net |
| Website | http://www.suttonhigh.gdst.net |
| Proprietor | Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) |
| Chair | Dr Colin Laverick |
| Headteacher | Mrs Beth Dawson |
| Age range | 3 to 18 |
| Number of pupils | 917 |
| Date of previous inspection | 30 September 2022 |

Information about the school

56. Sutton High School GDST is an independent day school for female pupils. It was founded in 1884. The school is divided into four sections: nursery, prep, senior and sixth form. The school is a member of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). The council of the GDST retain overall responsibility for the school whilst additional expertise and guidance is provided by an advisory board of governors. Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded and added new teaching and pastoral facilities.
57. There are 20 children in Nursery arranged into one or two classes based on session numbers, and there are 19 children in Reception arranged into one class.
58. The school has identified 173 pupils as having SEND. Six pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
59. English is an additional language for 165 pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to provide an educational programme that fosters courage, truth and joy. It endeavours to empower its female pupils to embrace challenge and to promote a sense of belonging. The school aims for its pupils to acquire a love of learning.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 November 2024

61. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. 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 proprietor and a governor
- 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.

63. 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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