

School inspection report

8 to 10 October 2024

Francis Holland School

39 Graham Terrace

Sloane Square

London

SW1W 8JF

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 at all levels prioritise pupils' wellbeing. They have created a positive culture in which pupils feel safe and can thrive. The governing body works closely with senior leaders and other staff in the school to help ensure that standards are consistently met.
2. Leaders have developed clear and ambitious strategic plans. These are built on the trust's pillars of shared purpose – excellence, character, creativity, sustainability and community. Plans include well-defined progress markers so leaders can check that their actions have the desired impact.
3. Leaders are self-evaluative and regularly seek the views of the whole school community when making plans and setting priorities. Pupils have input into these processes and feel their voice is heard. All complaints are carefully analysed to help the school better meet pupils' and parents' needs.
4. The school offers a broad, engaging and forward-looking curriculum. Teachers typically have secure subject knowledge and high expectations, which focus on encouraging pupils' intellectual curiosity and deep learning. The school identifies and addresses pupils' needs, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Generally, pupils are well motivated, make strong progress and achieve highly in public examinations. They work well both on their own and together. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9, a few pupils are not sufficiently engaged in their learning and do not make the progress they should.
5. The school provides specific support for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) if their acquisition of English is at the early stages. This enables these pupils to develop their skills quickly and learn successfully.
6. Governors and senior leaders maintain oversight of the safety of the school's buildings and facilities. They act quickly to mitigate risk. School accommodation is well resourced to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. The relocation of the junior school has enabled the development of key areas, providing open space for pupils to socialise and work together on joint projects. The sixth-form centre provides an exceptional environment for learning and social activities. Lessons take place in high-quality furnished rooms, ideally suited to small group learning. Pupils appreciate the quality of the spaces in which they learn.
7. The school has a comprehensive wellbeing programme that supports pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. The programme is adapted to meet the specific needs of individual pupils. Pupils' self-awareness develops quickly, and they learn to show respect for each other and other cultures. This prepares them well for life beyond school.
8. The school fosters a culture of mutual respect and encourages pupils to be active citizens. Pupils are well prepared for life in British society through the relevant curriculum and wide-ranging co-curricular activities. The school provides a diverse careers programme so that pupils can make informed choices about their next steps. Leaders encourage pupils to take part in a wide variety of volunteer and charitable work. Pupils understand their responsibility to take a lead and play their part in the smooth running of the school.
9. The school has a strong safeguarding culture, with robust policies and procedures in place. Pupils feel heard and supported. Leaders have developed particularly effective measures and systems to

protect pupils online. The school has a strong partnership with the local authority to share information and keep pupils safe. Leaders provide extensive training for staff so they understand their responsibilities.

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:

- make sure that teaching in Years 7 to 9 is consistently effective in enabling all pupils to deepen their learning and develop their progress in all lessons.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Pupils' wellbeing is central to the school's ethos and practice. It is at the forefront of leaders' planning and decision making. This is reflected in the warm and caring interactions between pupils and staff, and between pupils themselves.
11. A positive safeguarding culture exists, underpinned by thorough staff training, appropriate risk assessment and robust policies which are rigorously applied. Leaders are ambitious for pupils' outcomes. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Senior leaders work closely together to develop long-term plans that promote the school's core values.
12. Governors have a diverse range of skills and expertise appropriate to their roles. They use a range of activities to support and challenge leaders and managers, including policy review and regular meetings, both formal and informal. The Trust and governors use and compare a range of school data to gauge the impact of leaders' actions.
13. Leaders assess pupils' wellbeing through a wide range of activities, including pupil surveys. Leaders use the results to inform the school's next steps. For example, leaders understand the challenges faced by some pupils in managing their friendships and have put in place different ways to help these pupils make and sustain positive relationships with their peers.
14. All staff access induction and appraisal programmes, alongside ongoing training and support. This helps teachers to develop and improve their practice. For example, teachers are trained how to use specific teaching strategies to support pupils who have specific additional needs.
15. The school fulfils its duties in relation to the Equality Act 2010. The school's accessibility plan sets out adjustments to the facilities and curriculum to make access possible for all. The plan is reviewed annually to check that it is still relevant. Leaders make sure that pupils who have mobility difficulties can access the full curriculum through, for example, timetable adjustments. The school notifies the local authority promptly of any leavers and joiners to the school at non-standard transition points.
16. All required information is made available to parents. Leaders handle any complaints effectively. This includes complaints resolved at the informal stage. Leaders listen to concerns and reflect on these to capture any points for development. Leaders maintain meticulous records and acknowledge the lessons learned by the school. Leaders respond to complaints within the timescales outlined in policies.

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

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

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders have designed a school curriculum that includes a broad range of subjects and experiences. Leaders encourage pupils to take a degree of control for their own curriculum within subjects. In science, for example, teachers let pupils choose their own project questions, such as 'which food tastes the best in space?' Pupils enjoy learning and want to do their best. Teachers encourage pupils' enthusiasms to extend their work beyond the core curriculum. Pupils take part in projects such as working with a charitable organisation to raise awareness about climate change through art.
19. Lessons are generally well planned. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use appropriate teaching approaches that enable pupils to learn. Across the school, many pupils progress beyond national curriculum expectations. Pupils typically listen attentively, respond quickly to their teachers and can explain what they have learned. Pupils build strong linguistic skills, and their written work shows a high degree of accuracy and care. Most pupils work hard and are keen to increase their knowledge and understanding. Pupils are motivated and work successfully on their own and with others.
20. Teachers use a variety of resources to teach the key subject knowledge they want pupils to learn. Pupils work confidently through a variety of different tasks and quickly develop new skills. In sixth-form lessons, pupils are encouraged to apply what they know to increasingly complex tasks. The history lecture series and sixth-form speaker programmes add to pupils' learning. Pupils contribute their ideas for the topics to be discussed and presented. This motivates pupils and they achieve well. In the younger years, the quality of teaching is mixed. The best teaching actively engages all pupils and they learn successfully. However, in some lessons, opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding are missed, and those pupils do not make sufficient progress.
21. Leaders have a thorough understanding of pupils' different needs and abilities. Leaders quickly identify pupils who have SEND and teachers use bespoke teaching strategies to meet pupils' individual needs, such as providing different equipment and the use of careful seating plans to encourage peer support. Leaders carefully track pupils' progress, including those who have SEND and those pupils relatively new to the school. Pupils' positive GCSE and A-level results in all these pupil groups reflect their rapid progress from their different starting points.
22. Leaders encourage pupils to reflect on how to improve their work. Pupils respond to teachers' marking and feedback, and evaluate their own progress. Pupils think carefully about the advice they receive and the steps they need to take to meet their targets. Pupils consider their learning through Girls Reflect on Work (GROW) time and through reflective journals used during wellbeing lessons as part of their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. Leaders regularly gather data on pupils' academic performance, and employ systems to monitor and intervene. Middle leaders use this data to inform teaching and learning plans. Pupils are involved in discussions about their progress and are happy and secure in their learning. Parents are kept fully informed about their child's progress through regular reports.
23. Leaders provide a wide range of co-curricular activities and academic support before, during and after school. Sports clubs are open to all, even if not all attendees make the school teams. Teachers lead activities such as the curiosity club and the enrichment programme, which provide thought-provoking activities to stretch and challenge pupils. Leaders check the levels of pupil participation to make sure all pupils benefit. Pupils develop skills and expertise across a range of sporting, artistic

and academic activities. Pupils enjoy the many group and team activities, which prepare them well for their future lives.

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

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. The wellbeing PSHE programme includes a broad range of content to develop pupils' personal and social skills. Through the relationships and sex education (RSE) programme, pupils explore and learn about important topics in an age-appropriate way. Pupils' learning is enhanced with input from class tutors, specialists and external speakers. Pupils are respectful and confident; their mental health and emotional wellbeing is well-supported. Leaders provide additional pastoral support for those pupils who need it. Pupils ask insightful questions, listen respectfully to each other's responses and speak articulately because teachers create a calm and informal environment where all views and opinions are valued.
26. Assemblies and church services provide pupils with opportunities for quiet reflection and deeper understanding. Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding and respect for other cultures is broadened through a variety of religious faith societies in school. Pupils learn about other perspectives and further their knowledge of their own faiths.
27. Leaders create classroom environments in which pupils are able to express themselves. Leaders and teachers have successfully established a culture in which pupils take pride in their achievements. Teachers include regular reflection sessions during class time for pupils to review their assessed work and plan how to achieve their next steps.
28. Pupils have regular opportunities and options for physical education. Good use is made of facilities both in school and beyond, within and outside the school day. Leaders provide a good variety of games and sports and the offer is extended beyond the school day.
29. Pupils understand that unkindness and bullying are not acceptable. This results in a very caring and mutually respectful school community. Through the school's 'big sister' programme, older pupils support those who are younger, providing them with help and encouragement when needed. Leaders have introduced changes to the behaviour policy and pupils recognise the school's fair and consistent approach. Leaders and staff deal promptly and effectively with any behaviour issues. Pupils know and can articulate the behaviour rules in the school. They are kind in their daily endeavours and demonstrate the school's values.
30. Leaders put the wellbeing of pupils to the fore when they consider the suitability of the school's accommodation. For example, the Cornerstone space has been developed as a result of the relocation of the junior school. The recently refurbished sixth-form centre supports pupils in all aspects of their learning. The medical centre has appropriate facilities to care for pupils who are injured or unwell. Medicines are stored securely. Records are thorough and appropriate communication ensures that pupils' medical needs are met.
31. The school is a suitably safe environment for pupils. Systems for health and safety, risk assessment and regulatory testing are robust and detailed. These are overseen by experienced staff with the relevant knowledge and skills. Fire drills are regular, with systematic monitoring and review after each drill. Regular fire training for all staff ensures they are confident and knowledgeable regarding what to do should a fire occur.

32. Pupils are well supervised including during break times and lunch times. Staff ensure the start and end of the school day are calm and orderly. Leaders respond quickly to any concerning events that happen in the local community which need to be brought to staff and pupils' attention. This supports pupils to know how to keep themselves safe in different situations.
33. The admission register is completed meticulously and correctly maintained. Likewise, the attendance registers are completed according to statutory guidance. Leaders monitor the attendance registers daily and follow up any absence concerns.
34. Pupils undertake various leadership opportunities, such as ambassador roles. These experiences allow pupils to take responsibility for different aspects of school life and to lead those younger than themselves. Pupils enjoy these opportunities that develop their self-esteem alongside their personal and social skills.

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

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

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

36. The school's curriculum, its wellbeing PSHE programme and assemblies enable pupils to build a good understanding of British values. Pupils try to live out these values, both in school and through their involvement with local and global communities.
37. The wellbeing PSHE programme promotes mutual respect within and beyond the school community. Through a wide variety of activities, including extensive use of visiting speakers, pupils learn to listen attentively to others and appreciate difference. Pupils are eager to support and encourage each other.
38. Leaders provide a wide variety of groups and societies in school and insist that all pupils are actively involved. Pupils develop their moral understanding and are keen to make a difference to school life and the wider world. Pupils recognise the social and human impact of their choices, from owning a mobile phone to engaging in charitable work. Pupils articulate the importance of 'giving back' to society and show sensitivity towards key societal issues. For example, in geography, Year 13 pupils reflect on how people can be manipulated and used for the financial gain of others when circumstances beyond their control encourage migration.
39. Leaders have developed a full and engaging careers programme. Year 7 pupils discuss 'dream jobs' and Year 13 pupils receive guidance on university applications, apprenticeships and gap years, including international options. The careers programme is enhanced through workshops, work experience opportunities, careers fairs, competitions and preparation for more competitive courses. The weekly 'futures newsletter' highlights the stories of former pupils and supports pupils' wider understanding and awareness of different career options.
40. Leaders' aim to develop pupils' selflessness. They organise a wide range of volunteering and charitable fundraising events for pupils to participate in. Pupils have significant involvement in, and often lead, different enterprises, for example, reading poetry at care homes, engaging with local primary schools, helping at a refugee centre and local food banks, and maintaining close links with a school in Tanzania. Pupils learn the value of service and grow in their personal development through active engagement with these initiatives.
41. Leaders encourage pupils to 'disagree well.' Pupils learn to value each other's viewpoints, even when they disagree, which they do politely and constructively. This approach allows pupils to engage thoughtfully with opposing ideas. Discussions of theories and social issues like climate change, urban regeneration and global matters further enhance their awareness. Geography coursework projects cover topics such as coastal erosion and infrastructure development.
42. Pupils have access to economic education through the curriculum and entrepreneurial initiatives. In economics, Year 13 pupils learn about mergers and confidently discuss the moral, economic and social issues surrounding asymmetric markets in relation to non-essential dental work. In politics, sixth-form pupils frequently discuss topics like voting rights, freedom of speech and religious freedom. Pupils develop well-informed views on democracy, and these are reinforced by events such as the mock election held before the recent general election. Pupils are given balanced presentations on the UK voting system, government formation and opposing political views.

43. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

44. A deeply embedded safeguarding culture is evident in all aspects of school life. Robust policies and thorough risk assessments are followed carefully. Pupils feel safe and supported, both at school and in their journeys to and from school. They know how to report concerns and always have a trusted adult with whom they can talk.
45. Safeguarding training for all staff and governors is extensive and ensures that everyone understands their responsibilities. Staff know how to report concerns, about both pupils and staff. The safety and happiness of every pupil is at the forefront of everyone's minds.
46. Pupils are taught about online safety and the careful use of social media. Arrangements for filtering and monitoring pupils' online activity during the school day are thorough.
47. Leaders have a clear understanding of child-on-child abuse and use detailed and accurate logs to analyse and identify trends in pupils' behaviour. The school has effective procedures for addressing low-level concerns and reporting incidents.
48. The school maintains regular communication with the local authority. This supports leaders to have an up-to-date understanding of local and contextual safeguarding risks. Leaders know when and how they should act. They access the necessary support for pupils when needed. Timely referrals are made to external agencies as required.
49. Recruitment processes are thorough and include online checks for prospective staff. Governors regularly scrutinise the school's register of appointments to make sure this is maintained appropriately. Governors and leaders have a clear understanding of safer recruitment procedures and make sure these are followed consistently.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

50. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Francis Holland School, Sloane Square
Department for Education number	213/6046
Registered charity number	312745
Address	Francis Holland School 39 Graham Terrace Sloane Square London SW1W 8JF
Phone number	02077 302971
Email address	office@fhs-sw1.org.uk
Website	www.fhs-sw1.org.uk
Proprietor	Francis Holland Schools Trust
Chair	Mr Patrick Sherrington
Headteacher	Mrs Alexandra Haydon
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	608
Date of previous inspection	4 October 2022

Information about the school

51. Francis Holland school is an independent day school for girls in central London. Pupils are aged between 11 and 18 years. The school was founded in 1881. The school is a registered charity overseen by a council of governors who are trustees of the charity and the school's proprietorial body. The headteacher has been in post since January 2024.
52. The school has identified 145 pupils who have SEND. At the time of the inspection, no pupils in the school had an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
53. English is an additional language for 257 pupils.
54. The school states its aims are to create an inspiring education in a community which empowers girls to become the leaders, thinkers, innovators, designers, entrepreneurs and game-changers of tomorrow. The school states it achieves this by fostering a love of learning and enquiry; the curiosity to discover and uncover; a sense of fun and creativity; the ability to innovate and collaborate; skills of research and craftsmanship; the confidence to be effective communicators; an understanding of diversity and difference; the desire to serve and support others; the courage to strive, to fail, to persevere and to succeed.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

8 to 10 October 2024

55. A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

56. 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.

57. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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