

School inspection report

25 to 27 March 2025

Palmers Green High School

104 Hoppers Road

London

N21 3LJ

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. Governors maintain effective oversight of the work of school leaders. They monitor the school's operations through formal meetings at which they receive full written reports. They supplement these with frequent visits which include meetings with pupils and staff.
2. Leaders promote pupils' wellbeing. Children in the early years make good progress across their prime and specific areas of learning. Older pupils study a range of subjects which address all required aspects and achieve highly in their GCSE examinations.
3. The curriculum places a particular emphasis on developing pupils' ability to question, discuss and debate. Lesson plans provide opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas with their teacher and their peers. Teachers encourage pupils to play an active role in class. Pupils express their ideas and thoughts eloquently and with confidence.
4. Teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge to plan lessons which are well matched to their ages and aptitudes. Teachers ensure that pupils are given sufficient challenge to help them make good progress.
5. Any pupil who requires additional support receives effective support through after school surgeries and individual sessions. Leaders with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have a deep knowledge of how to support these pupils. They use this knowledge to draw up effective support plans. A comprehensive training programme ensures that teachers deliver this support effectively. All aspects of this provision are regularly monitored and reviewed and teachers offered additional training as needed. Pupils who have SEND typically make rapid progress and develop high levels of self-esteem. This is a significant strength of the school.
6. The early years setting is a nurturing and supportive environment which promotes the children's progress and wellbeing. Staff understand the needs of the children and provide a range of activities which cover all the prime and specific areas of learning. By working closely with the teachers for Year 1, staff ensure that children are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
7. Leaders have created a calm and nurturing environment within the school. Teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils and consequently they behave well. Pupils understand the importance of empathy, and this means that they behave well towards one another. Where any instances of unkindness or bullying occur, the school responds appropriately and supports the pupils involved.
8. Leaders have developed a programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, which successfully teaches pupils how to establish and build positive relationships. Pupils learn to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Pupils learn the basic principles of managing money and budgeting. However, older pupils do not develop a more sophisticated understanding of how to manage their finances in their future lives.
9. A range of assemblies and activities in class enables pupils to develop understanding and respect for other cultures. They learn about the functioning of a democracy.
10. Leaders have embedded a robust approach to safeguarding in the school. A positive culture means that pupils share any concerns they have with staff, who are trained to respond appropriately.

Systematic recruitment checks ensure that only suitable adults are employed by the school. At the time of inspection, a small number of checks had been undertaken correctly but not been accurately recorded on the single central record. This was remedied on inspection.

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:

- strengthen pupils' economic education so that older pupils gain a greater understanding of financial matters
- ensure that all required recruitment information held in staff files is promptly recorded in the single central record.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and fulfil them effectively. They have developed a comprehensive set of policies covering the different aspects of school life. These are well understood and consistently implemented by staff and effectively promote the wellbeing of pupils.
12. Governors maintain close oversight of the operations of the school. They scrutinise reports on all aspects of the school's operations in regular committee meetings. This oversight is strengthened by regular visits to the school to speak to staff and pupils. Governors with responsibility for safeguarding meet regularly with school leaders to review records and ensure that leaders are fulfilling their roles effectively.
13. Leaders undertake effective self-evaluation and regularly review all areas of the school's operations. They have planned and implemented highly effective strategies to support pupils who have SEND. They involve pupils in this process. This ensures that the views of pupils are integrated into decision-making, for instance on recent changes to the catering provision.
14. Leaders have a clear understanding of the potential risks to pupils' safety and wellbeing. They take effective action to mitigate these risks. Regular staff training ensures that staff develop and implement suitable risk assessments. Governors monitor risk mitigation through termly meetings which include scrutiny of the central risk register.
15. A comprehensive accessibility plan details a range of support to help pupils access all parts of school life. Pupils' physical and learning needs are considered and adjustments put in place to promote their progress and wellbeing. Extensive training is provided for staff who are knowledgeable and adjust their activities effectively. Leaders actively monitor this support through observations and discussions with pupils, ensuring their effectiveness. The school meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
16. Leaders in the early years have a deep understanding of the needs of the children in Reception. They combine high expectations for pupils with a nurturing and caring approach. Staff are supported through regular supervision meetings. Effective systems are in place to enable children's academic progress whilst promoting their wellbeing.
17. Leaders have developed positive relationships with local partners to support pupils' wellbeing. They liaise effectively with local agencies such as safeguarding partners and health professionals. They provide suitable information to the local authority including the required information for the annual review of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
18. All the required information is made available to parents. The school website provides a range of useful information such as school policies and details of school events. The school updates parents regularly on the progress of pupils throughout the year.
19. Leaders respond promptly to any concerns raised by parents. Detailed logs of concerns are kept and reviewed regularly by governors and school leaders. Any patterns are identified and action taken in response. Formal complaints are recorded, and the school follows the timescales in its published policy.

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

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum which enables pupils to make good progress. Children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 study a creative curriculum which gives them a wide range of skills they can practise inside and outside of school. The curriculum for Reception children covers all of the prime and specific areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Older pupils study a wide range of subjects to GCSE.
22. Leaders have made developing linguistic and communication skills a priority across the curriculum. Teachers in Reception encourage the children to talk with purpose and pupils learn to articulate themselves confidently and clearly. Teachers of older pupils encourage debate and discussion in class. Pupils are able to explain complex ideas to adults and their peers.
23. Throughout the school pupils gain high levels of mathematical and scientific skills. Teachers have high expectations and are always looking for opportunities to expand their understanding, for instance by ensuring that all assessments include extension activities. Experimental work is integrated into science lessons throughout the school, and pupils develop the ability to hypothesise and test their predictions. Teachers provide clear explanations which enable pupils to understand complex concepts and apply these to new scenarios.
24. Teachers know the pupils well and use this knowledge to plan lessons which are well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers have deep subject knowledge and specialist teachers work with all year groups. Children in Reception receive specialist music teaching and pupils in the junior school spend time in the design technology workshop. Pupils gain the aesthetic and technical skills to express themselves creatively.
25. Teachers have high levels of aspiration for their pupils and personalise the tasks they set for pupils to challenge them, for instance by giving younger pupils access to GCSE-level questions. Where pupils may find work challenging, teachers provide additional support in a range of after-school surgeries. Older pupils are supported effectively in preparing for public examinations and achieve above national averages at GCSE.
26. Teachers have a deep understanding of the needs of pupils who have SEND. They use this knowledge to identify pupils who need extra support through screening tests and classroom observations. Detailed guidance and additional training enable teachers to adapt their teaching highly successfully. Teachers have high aspirations for these pupils and support them in achieving their goals, for instance by re-writing texts in drama or adapting extension material so it is accessible to all. Pupils who have SEND typically make rapid progress and gain a high level of knowledge and skills.
27. Teachers provide effective support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. They adapt their teaching in class and provide additional one-to-one support so that these pupils develop their subject-specific vocabulary and make good progress in their understanding and fluency.
28. Teachers regularly assess pupils on their progress and use this information to offer them effective feedback and guidance. Leaders use the results of these assessments to identify pupils who are falling behind expectations and offer them additional support. Teachers monitor the progress of children in the early years through classroom observations. Parents are provided with regular updates on pupils' academic work.

29. Teachers in the early years manage activities flexibly to encourage children's engagement and progress. Children develop their reading and speaking skills through learning about the sounds which make up words. Teachers encourage and support the children to initiate their own activities and guide their learning in response. Children develop their social and physical skills through carefully planned play in the outdoor area. Children in the setting typically meet the early learning goals by the end of their time in Reception.
30. Teachers encourage pupils to explore their interests and develop their intellectual and physical skills in a range of clubs and societies. For instance, older pupils explore philosophical ideas in debating society or learn to write computer programs. Pupils of all ages develop their performance skills in a range of artistic, musical and dramatic opportunities including pottery, dance and various instrumental groups.

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

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

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

32. Leaders have established a culture of calmness and mutual respect throughout the school. Staff have high expectations and ensure that pupils consider others as they go about their daily activities. As a result of the family atmosphere within the school, pupils of all ages mix well and support each other.
33. Pupils learn to respect those from all backgrounds in PSHE lessons, assemblies and in their interactions with staff. Staff have high levels of understanding of neurodiversity and help pupils to understand and respect those with different needs. This means that pupils learn to work together in diverse groups. This helps pupils, including those who have SEND, develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence.
34. A clear behaviour policy is well understood by staff and pupils. Staff in the early years give children a range of activities with clear boundaries that fosters a happy and engaged environment. Older pupils understand the importance of being kind in their interactions and completing their work in line with expectations. Where any rare instances of bullying occur, leaders respond quickly and sensitively to prevent its recurrence and support pupils in repairing their relationships.
35. In assemblies and form time, pupils reflect on types of behaviour and develop a tangible moral sense. Pupils understand the importance of being role models to those around them. Assemblies and services in the local church give pupils time for spiritual reflection and an appreciation of different faiths.
36. Leaders have used their knowledge of the pupils to develop a curriculum for PSHE education which is aligned with the pupils' needs. Pupils learn about how to keep healthy at all ages. For instance, Year 1 pupils learn not to spend too long in the sun, and older pupils learn about the risks of gambling and alcohol. Teachers monitor pupils' understanding of these topics and adapt the curriculum in response. Pupils learn about positive relationships, and older pupils learn how to establish healthy intimate relationships.
37. A well-planned curriculum for physical education (PE) cultivates the pupils' physical skills and confidence. Children in Reception develop physical resilience in the outdoor area. The PE curriculum in the junior school develops pupils' core physical skills from jumps and carrying for young pupils to bat and ball sports. Older pupils learn a range of sports which are supplemented by gym and dance classes.
38. Leaders have embedded a robust health and safety culture in the school. Staff understand the importance of reporting any concerns promptly and these are dealt with in a timely manner. A detailed system of logs and records ensures that all essential equipment is well maintained, including fire alarms and extinguishers. Governors maintain effective oversight by attending termly health and safety meetings and scrutinising records.
39. Staff maintain appropriate supervision of pupils around the site. Children in the early years are always accompanied by sufficient staff, including a paediatric first aider. Other pupils know where to go should they need help, and sufficient staff are available. Appropriate facilities are available for

trained staff to administer any necessary first aid. Medical staff keep detailed records of any injuries and these are reviewed regularly to identify and respond to any patterns.

40. Leaders have put in place robust systems for monitoring pupils' attendance. Staff take accurate registers twice per day and any absences are followed up promptly by the school office. The local authority is notified of any leavers or joiners at non-standard admission times, and long-term absences.

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

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

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

42. Leaders have created a culture of inclusion and respect throughout the school. This is based on a theme of developing empathy which is integrated into assemblies, PSHE lessons and form time. Pupils consider what it may be like to have particular disadvantages, for instance by having a disability or being a refugee. By considering the experience of others, pupils develop tolerance and a mature understanding of the importance of respectful behaviour.
43. Pupils learn about a range of different cultures in assemblies and lessons. Teachers look for opportunities to involve pupils in discussions about different cultures, for instance when learning about capital cities in geography lessons. Assemblies include reflections on a range of religious festivals including Christmas, Holi and Ramadan. Pupils gain a high level of understanding and respect for different cultures.
44. Pupils study a range of systems of government, and the civic institutions and services in England in PSHE lessons. They understand the impact of different voting systems on democratic processes and have well-informed discussions, for instance on the arguments around compulsory voting. These lessons develop a respect for democracy and prepare the pupils to play an active role in their community once they leave school.
45. Teachers throughout the school prepare pupils effectively for the next stages in their education. Leaders in the early years ensure effective partnerships between Reception and Year 1 teachers. Children in Reception are gradually introduced to the skills and behavioural expectations they will need to enter Year 1. The curriculum in Year 6 prepares pupils well for their transition to Year 7. Teachers in the senior school introduce pupils to greater degrees of independence so that they are well prepared for study at A Level.
46. A programme of economic education is provided to pupils throughout the school. Younger pupils learn to be 'money conscious' and older pupils learn the basics of budgeting and bank accounts. Pupils gain practical experience in managing money through organising a range of charity events and collections. Although they have a sound understanding of money management, the curriculum gives pupils a limited understanding of more advanced financial matters.
47. A comprehensive programme of careers education supports pupils in planning for their futures. Younger pupils receive clear guidance on making their GCSE choices. The 'job of the week' programme introduces pupils to a range of career options, and this is supported by further information in lessons. Individual guidance sessions help older pupils to make informed choices about their next steps after GCSEs.
48. Leaders instil a high level of social responsibility in the pupils. Pupils in the junior school organise fundraising activities for local and national charities. Older pupils organise events, for instance working with the local hospice to sell items collected from the school community. Individual volunteering is valued and supported by staff and older pupils support their younger peers and volunteer for projects such as the community kitchen.

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

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

50. Leaders have created a robust safeguarding culture within the school. They use their knowledge of the national and local safeguarding risks to develop procedures which are appropriate to their pupils and are in line with current statutory guidance. These procedures take into account the risks of child-on-child abuse and extremism.
51. Governors maintain close oversight of safeguarding procedures through a range of formal and informal meetings, supplemented by regular written reports. The designated safeguarding governor visits the school regularly to meet with leaders, pupils and other staff, and scrutinise safeguarding records.
52. Leaders ensure that all necessary safer recruitment checks are complete before adults begin working at the school and record these checks in staff files. At the time of inspection, a small number of checks had not been transferred from staff files to the single central record. This was remedied on inspection.
53. All staff receive regular training in safeguarding through a termly briefing and regular updates and quizzes on particular topics of relevance. Staff are confident in what action to take if they have a concern about a pupil or another adult. They make effective use of the reporting systems to pass on any safeguarding concerns which may arise.
54. Where concerns are raised about pupils, the safeguarding team respond promptly and take appropriate action. Where necessary, the safeguarding team liaise with a range of safeguarding partners such as the local authority and mental health professionals. Leaders are alert to the potential vulnerabilities of different groups of pupils, including those who have SEND.
55. Any concerns and subsequent actions are recorded in detailed logs. Leaders analyse these logs to identify any trends and respond effectively, for instance by adapting the PSHE programme.
56. Pupils of all ages are taught to stay safe, including online. Pupils understand that they can raise a concern with any adult. This open culture means that pupils report any concerns they may have either in person or through systems such as the 'worry box' for younger pupils. Appropriate filtering and monitoring of pupils' internet use is in place.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

57. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Palmers Green High School
Department for Education number	308/6001
Registered charity number	312629
Address	Palmers Green High School 104 Hoppers Road London N21 3LJ
Phone number	020 8886 1135
Email address	office@pghs.co.uk
Website	www.pghs.co.uk
Proprietor	Palmers Green High School Limited
Chair	Mrs Melanie Curtis
Headteacher	Ms Sarah Proudlove
Age range	4 to 16
Number of pupils	208
Date of previous inspection	19 to 21 January 2022

Information about the school

58. Palmers Green High School (PGHS) is a selective independent school for female pupils aged 4 to 16 years located in Winchmore Hill in North London. The school is organised into three departments: the senior school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, the junior school for pupils aged 7 to 11 and the prep school for pupils aged 4 to 7 years. The school is a charitable company administered by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has joined the school.
59. There are 16 children in the early years, comprising one Reception class.
60. The school has identified 73 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. The school has identified English as an additional language for five pupils.
62. The school states its aims are to foster the individual development of each pupil. It aims to enable them to strive for academic excellence while equipping them with the skills required to embrace opportunities and take an active role in the 21st century. It seeks to provide a nurturing environment which develops pupils' emotional wellbeing and personal development, enabling them to become confident, independent and resilient young people. It also aims to instil a lifelong love of learning.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

25 to 27 March 2025

63. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

65. 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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For more information, please visit isi.net