

School inspection report

16 to 18 April 2024

Manchester High School for Girls

Grangethorpe Road

Manchester

M14 6HS

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 have a thorough oversight of the school. Together with leaders who are visible and welcoming, they have established a well-maintained environment where pupils feel happy, safe and secure. Leaders articulate the values of the school with consistency and curriculum planning is underpinned by an ethos which places value on hard work, resilience and individual responsibility.
2. An enriching curriculum combined with highly effective teaching, generates intellectual interest and ambition amongst pupils who respond well to the high expectations set by their teachers. This results in pupils of all ages being engaged in lessons, learning at pace and achieving well, evidenced by academic outcomes which are well above national attainment levels.
3. There are rigorous processes to evaluate the performance of different groups within the pupil body, including comprehensive academic tracking. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is effective, with regular ongoing screening allowing for early and appropriate identification and high-quality support. Pupils of all abilities work collaboratively and demonstrate generosity and collegiality.
4. Leaders have high aspirations and have firmly established core values that underpin the school. This results in a caring, inclusive and diverse community. Staff are ambitious for the pupils and thread the values of learning, innovation, compassion, wellbeing and individuality through every aspect of school life. This results in empowered and dynamic pupils who flourish and is a significant strength of the school.
5. A comprehensive Well Being programme encourages curiosity and self-exploration and provides opportunities for student leadership. Well Being lessons include an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum which encourages pupils to develop a greater awareness of themselves. The relationship and sex education (RSE) element of the Well Being programme is less well developed. Although adequate, the programme is not as helpful and relevant to pupils as it could be, as time is not always provided for pupils to have the opportunity to build their understanding of sensitive topics.
6. The curriculum supports pupils' overall personal development. Pupils are consistently challenged to demonstrate empathy and kindness and in turn develop a strong individual identity. An extensive external speaker programme delivered as part of 'Insight Into Pankhurst' supports this. Recent talks on fashion design and medicine enabled pupils to engage with topics outside of the curriculum and reinforce the importance of mutual respect.
7. There is an effective culture regarding safeguarding where early sharing of information and reporting is encouraged. Leaders in the early years are highly attuned to the safeguarding requirements of the youngest children and maintain accurate records. Governors ensure that safeguarding is prioritised and the wellbeing of pupils is promoted.
8. The early years is a happy and inclusive learning environment. Adults encourage children to talk about their activities which supports the effective development of their communication skills. Through a programme that has a wellbeing focus, children begin to develop resilience and a sense of right and wrong, which matures into a secure sense of self by the time they reach the senior 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:

- continue to develop their approach to relationship and sex education (RSE) so that the programme is as relevant and helpful to pupils as possible.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The governing body is closely involved in shaping the school's policies and systems. Specific committees provide precise focus on areas such as health, safety and safeguarding. Governors provide systematic support, guidance and effective challenge to leaders. Governors' involvement in the academic development committee supported leaders establishing an 'Aspire Club' to promote these wider opportunities for pupils to improve their spoken language, critical thinking and problem-solving. Governors ensure leaders have the skills, knowledge and understanding to fulfil their responsibilities, ensure that the Standards are consistently met, and the wellbeing of pupils is promoted.
10. Governors and leaders use robust and ongoing analysis of the effectiveness of the school's work to identify priorities for improvement. The views of parents, pupils and staff are central to this analysis. Leaders focus on school development priorities that are closely aligned with their ethos of delivering a high-quality all-around education. For example, recent initiatives include enhancing the learning support department to improve provision for pupils who have SEND, and the opening of a wellbeing hub to provide additional support for individual pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. Pupils value the support provided in the hub and in their learning.
11. Leaders adopt a reflective and proactive approach to highlight and mitigate risk to pupils, staff and visitors. The assiduous maintenance of a comprehensive risk assessment matrix ensures that risks are recognised, assessed and reviewed in a timely fashion, with external agencies employed to support this process, as necessary. Issues are addressed and improvements made in a timely way.
12. Leaders ensure that the school does not discriminate against pupils and meets its requirements under the Equality Act. A suitable plan is in place that promotes principles of equality through policy, planning and class structure, enhancing access to the curriculum and buildings for the varying needs of pupils, staff and visitors. The curriculum, enhanced by the extra-curricular programme, effectively supports pupils' physical health and wellbeing.
13. Leaders have established effective relationships with the wider community. Opportunities are provided to work closely with local schools including from the nearby school for male pupils. A recent joint venture involved pupils in the prep being involved in a combined culture day. Pupils commented how such opportunities enable them to develop self-confidence and feel better prepared for life. Leaders have developed close and appropriate links with a range of external agencies, regularly contacting the local authority for support and advice. This helps leaders keep up to date with best practices regarding pupil safety and promotes pupils' overall wellbeing.
14. Leaders are clear that their integrity depends on everyone working towards the common aims and objectives of the school and adhering to stated policies and procedures. All relevant information is included on the website and staff work cooperatively and in partnership with parents. Reports to parents are informative. The school publishes and implements suitable complaints procedures. In line with this policy, leaders thoroughly investigate any issues that come to light, respond in a timely manner and ensure that lessons are learnt and practices adapted as appropriate.
15. Leaders in the early years actively promote children's wellbeing, ensuring that the school values, such as innovation and compassion, are to the fore. Highly skilled teachers and teaching assistants deliver engaging activities and leaders are diligent in ensuring that children have a range of

opportunities, in well-equipped areas both indoors and outside. As a result, children settle and progress in a secure, and purposeful environment within an atmosphere of happy engagement.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Leaders regularly review the curriculum to ensure there is a diverse offering of subjects and plenty of opportunities for academic enrichment. For example, leaders are developing the curriculum related to artificial intelligence by introducing robotics in the prep department and a wider focus on the implications of artificial intelligence for older pupils. Leaders prioritise the development of essential language, independent and critical thinking skills. Pupils learn a range of languages, including Mandarin, and pupils in Year 9 benefit from taking the 'Higher Project Qualification', encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning and supporting the development of research and academic writing skills.
18. Pupils receive an education that is wide-ranging, appropriately challenging and prepares them effectively for life beyond school. Pupils of all ages and aptitudes make good progress, reflected in their consistently high attainment in external examinations. Pupils' attainment at GCSE and A level, including for those pupils who have SEND and those who speak EAL, is well above national averages.
19. Pupils are engaged in lessons and are confident speakers and listeners. Staff provide pupils with the ability to develop their mathematical skills across the curriculum. In a recent unit of study, younger pupils explored the historical context of the sinking of the Titanic by manipulating data which enabled them to learn more about the social and economic backgrounds of crew and passengers on board the ship.
20. Pupils who speak EAL are identified using distinct categories, ensuring that targeted support can be immediately provided. Intervention, such as having a sixth-form buddy is put in place and the progress made in both spoken and written language and social interaction is usually rapid. On rare occasions, when needed, pupils receive ongoing longer-term support to develop their language and social skills.
21. Teaching is consistently well-planned by knowledgeable teachers. Teachers challenge pupils to be creative thinkers. Pupils in Year 11 history are encouraged to consider counterfactual 'what if' questions related to the end of the Cold War. Children in Reception look at different materials and hypothesise confidently on whether a given object would float or sink.
22. Leaders have reviewed and improved the support available for pupils who have SEND. Staff use a range of information to identify pupils' needs and develop strategies to support pupils' learning and development. They build positive relationships with pupils and their families. They support teachers in providing additional scaffolding to support learning, where needed. Staff are well trained to meet pupils' needs in lessons and during social times. Teachers know their pupils well and adopt a range of effective teaching methods and activities to suit the individual, such as thoughtful questioning. This all contributes to the good progress made by pupils who have SEND.
23. Leaders use assessment information effectively to identify where pupils are faring well and who needs more support. Teachers support pupils to understand how to improve. Pupils are proactive in seeking additional support when they need it and work with high levels of independence as they get older. Teachers provide helpful and precise feedback to pupils about how to improve. For example, younger pupils respond to teacher feedback to improve their work. Pupils find the marking extremely helpful and a key factor in allowing them to make good progress.

24. Leaders facilitate a wide range of co-curricular activities and an extensive enrichment programme which fosters confidence and extends the skills of pupils, for example, cooking, hockey, astronomy and water-polo. The school has achieved local and national honours in some of these. Rich opportunities, such as the popular Model United Nations (MUN) club helps pupils develop leadership skills, teamwork and respect for others' opinions and beliefs. Many clubs have been started at the request of pupils.
25. A well-planned early years curriculum contributes to children's good progress from their starting points and builds a secure foundation for their future. A stimulating learning environment and teachers ensure children are engaged in their learning and develop effective concentration and listening skills. They can spell words, read short sentences and write correctly formed letters with confidence.

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

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

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

27. Leaders promote pupils' mental and emotional health through a Well Being programme, which includes PSHE and effective support from a dedicated team of staff. Starting with the youngest children, pupils learn the importance of respect. Pupils recognise their uniqueness, and their differences, learning to listen and to understand tolerance. Pupils grow in self-knowledge and self-esteem. Staff and pupils role model the school values of compassion and individuality. Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful and highly positive.
28. Pupils access an array of opportunities to develop their spiritual and moral understanding. For example, younger pupils complete a 'Discovery Passport' which provides many opportunities to record moments of awe and wonder. For example, some of the younger pupils experienced the hatching of incubated ducklings, as part of their science curriculum. From Year 7, pupils engage fully in the school's 'Ivy Award' programme and through their time will complete silver and gold challenges, such as working for a charity or becoming a peer mentor. Visits are arranged for parents and alumnae to share aspects of their race and faith, which informs pupils of cultures and religions that may be different to their own. This all helps to build an inclusive community, where differences between people are embraced.
29. Pupils live up to the high expectations that adults have of them. Dedicated tutors are adept at identifying issues and concerns. Pupils are confident in talking to teachers about their worries and concerns. Teachers are positive role models and highlighting good behaviour traits is commonplace as a result. A very small number of pupils require serious interventions for their behaviour and incidents of bullying are rare. Staff use sanctions and restorative practices to help pupils develop their understanding of right and wrong as well as empathy for others.
30. Staff encourage pupils to be active and promote pupils' physical health through a programme of physical education and extensive sporting extra-curricular activities. Leaders place high importance on healthy eating and the pupils benefit from a range of healthy foods available in the day. The promotion of fitness and dance enables pupils to develop physically within a healthy lifestyle.
31. Leaders recognise that RSE is an area that needs to be developed further to ensure that pupils consistently find the learning helpful and relevant. The opportunities for pupils to explore contemporary and sensitive issues in sufficient depth to develop their understanding of these topics are limited. Recent changes have included targeted assemblies, for example about the dangers of drinks being spiked and some Year 13 pupils sitting on a participatory committee to help shape the RSE curriculum. This is having a positive impact and whilst not embedded, pupils can see that the content is starting to be more tailored to meet their needs.
32. Arrangements for first aid are overseen by experienced staff based in a centrally located medical room. Medication is handled carefully and records are well kept. The provision of a counsellor one day a week provides further support and allows pupils to have their mental health cared for as well as their physical health.
33. Governors and leaders take all aspects of health and safety seriously. The estates team maintain the school premises and accommodation to an appropriate standard. Documentation of all relevant

checks is meticulous. The environment provides pleasant areas for pupils to learn and spend their free time, with appropriate levels of supervision.

34. Admissions and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with regulations. Staff successfully promote high attendance, following up on any unexplained absences that may occur. They liaise with appropriate agencies for any wider concerns related to pupils' attendance and admissions.
35. Pupils appreciate the many leadership opportunities, displaying pride in how they enable them to positively influence the development of their school community. The appointment of diversity captains resulted in the creation of a diversity, equity and inclusion charter. Prep pupils have an active input into activities such as the eco-committee which recently organised junk-free January. Senior pupils provide subject-specific mentoring to younger pupils, who value this support.
36. Early years staff provide a rich array of contexts for children to develop their physical and emotional wellbeing. Visits from experts such as dentists to discuss oral hygiene, help children to reflect on personal experiences and build their vocabulary and understanding of the wider world. Children enjoy the golden girl rewards, listen respectfully when they are asked to and relish the chance to develop their leadership skills, such as taking the register where they greet children and staff alike with great courtesy.

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

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

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

38. Leaders do much to celebrate a diverse and inclusive community, with a range of events and initiatives to endorse this and embrace individuality. Pupils are positive about these opportunities, including visits by different faith leaders and a recent 'individuality day'. These provide pupils with high-quality opportunities, in an environment where they feel safe to express themselves as an individual.
39. The curriculum encourages pupils to respect and reflect upon fundamental British values in an age-appropriate manner. Each subject is required to highlight and actively promote areas within the curriculum where such issues are relevant, with pupils then encouraged to explore and debate them. For example, this year's GCSE music compositions required pupils to consider the importance of individual liberty and how gender might influence the interpretation of music, resulting in high-quality insightful work.
40. Leaders have created a strong focus on economic wellbeing which helps ensure that by the time they leave, pupils are financially aware. Younger pupils learn the value of money through resources delivered as part of the Well Being programme. As they get older, pupils are taught about financial management, including through several project-based initiatives, such as the Year 8 Dragons' Den project. Year 12 has had national success in Young Enterprise Awards. The 'Young Traders' programme helps pupils develop their knowledge and experience in trade and finance.
41. Teachers skilfully use opportunities through the curriculum for pupils to question, make connections and reflect upon social and cultural issues. Pupils experience the rites and festivals of other cultures, engendering a sense of tolerance and celebrating the diverse nature of the school community. When reflecting on a 'Back In Time School Day' pupils reflect on the role that women from the past have helped to shape the future.
42. Pupils from an early age can successfully articulate their understanding of the society in which they live, such as those of the rule of law, appreciating the need for a system of rules to be in place that everyone follows. Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong and take responsibility for their behaviour.
43. There is a clear focus on charitable endeavours with leaders instilling a desire for pupils to do good and enrich the communities within which they live. Pupils organise events that promote an understanding of issues such as childhood poverty and the challenges faced by those fleeing persecution. Pupils' views play an important role in terms of determining the choice of charities that the school chooses to support. Pupils work closely with a local primary school, for example, sixth formers provide instrumental lessons to primary-aged pupils, benefitting older and younger pupils.
44. The careers programme supports pupils in choosing their future pathways in education or other careers. A range of activities and talks are well supported by parents and alumnae. This includes hosting a bi-annual 'Futures Fair' in collaboration with local universities and businesses. Pupils in Year 10 actively engage with an online careers questionnaire that suggests possible areas of interest and outlines essential information, such as training requirements and salaries. These types of activities enable pupils to access information and make informed decisions for life beyond school.

45. Children in Reception quickly settle into school. Stimulating activities, including outdoor learning and trips, provide contexts that excite and make them aware of the wider world around them. Visits from their Year 6 school sisters, build their sense of the role models they aim to be.

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

46. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

47. Leaders and governors act cohesively to promote the safety of pupils, staff and visitors throughout the school. The safeguarding team delivers thorough induction training and provides effective regular updates. This ensures that staff are kept up to date with any changes to practice and are clear about their responsibilities. Staff are aware of the different signs of concern and take the required actions in each case.
48. A clear and comprehensive safeguarding policy reflects the most recent legal guidance. Regular governor oversight offers effective challenge and helpful advice for the safeguarding team. Designated safeguarding leaders (DSLs) have devised robust systems to record, monitor and assess safeguarding concerns. Records are detailed and any incidents or concerns are dealt with effectively. Leaders take appropriate and timely action, including when they identify any trends or patterns of concern.
49. There are a variety of methods by which pupils can share any worries in confidence. They are aware there is someone to talk to if they have a problem and are confident that adults will respond appropriately. There is an anonymous system via an online platform in the senior school and the 'thoughts and feelings' boxes in the prep department.
50. Suitable filtering and monitoring systems are in place, which are routinely checked to identify and act on any inappropriate use. Pupils receive guidance in both Well Being and computing lessons on staying safe and understand what they have been taught, including in relation to e-safety. This helps pupils to use technology respectfully and responsibly and protects them, as far as possible, from the dangers of the internet.
51. Leaders engage with the relevant local safeguarding partners, being cognisant of the importance of continually updating their knowledge to enhance pupils' safety. There are suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff and potential misconduct. Leaders work effectively with appropriate external agencies, including the local authority-designated safeguarding officer (LADO). Appropriate procedures are followed and suggestions are actioned promptly.
52. Leaders effectively oversee safer recruitment for staff, volunteers and governors, with all the required checks being undertaken prior to adults working with pupils. An accurate register of appointments is kept. There is robust governor oversight of the process.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Manchester High School for Girls
Department for Education number	352/6030
Registered charity number	1164323
Address	Manchester High School for Girls Grangethorpe Road Manchester M14 6HS
Phone number	0161 2240447
Email address	administration@mhsg.sch.uk
Website	www.manchesterhigh.co.uk
Proprietor	Manchester High School for Girls
Chair	Mrs Laura Earnshaw
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Jeys
Age range	4 to 18
Number of pupils	989
Date of previous inspection	28 to 29 November 2019

Information about the school

54. Manchester High School for Girls is an independent day school. It is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils. The school is a charitable trust and a company limited by guarantee overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, the school appointed a new headteacher in September 2020 and a new head of prep in September 2021.
55. There are 27 children in the early years, comprising two Reception classes.
56. The school has identified 125 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. English is an additional language for 116 pupils.
58. The school states it aims to provide an excellent all-round educational experience, empowering pupils through encouraging each individual to fulfil their potential. It looks to provide opportunities for all to develop their talents and flourish with an increasing sense of responsibility towards others, both whilst at school and beyond. Compassion, innovation, lifelong learning, individuality, and wellbeing are core values.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

16 to 18 April 2024

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

60. 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.

61. 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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