

School inspection report

8 to 10 October 2024

Harrogate Ladies' College

Clarence Drive
Harrogate
North Yorkshire
HG1 2QG

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. The school's governance structure ensures effective oversight, with governors providing support and challenge to senior leaders. Sub-committees of governors and senior leaders meet regularly and these in turn report to the main board. Senior leaders annually review and update policies to ensure they are up to date, and changes are implemented effectively.
2. The school develops annual plans through self-evaluation and consultation with pupils, parents and staff. Governors actively ensure that risks are managed and leaders collaborate with external agencies to support safeguarding. Pupil feedback is valued, leading to changes such as a revised sixth form dress code.
3. A suitable complaints policy is in place and is effectively implemented. Some policies on the website, at the start of the inspection, were not current but this was resolved before the end of the inspection.
4. The curriculum is well planned and effectively delivered. It is supported by thorough schemes of work and frequent audits based on teachers' and pupils' views which leaders use to adapt the curriculum. Children in the early years learn through tailored activities which are selected to meet pupils' needs and help to ensure good progress.
5. A suitable assessment framework is in place that allows leaders to monitor the progress of pupils and helps pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Leaders have made adjustments to this framework but are yet to fully evaluate the extent to which this helps to improve the progress of pupils. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and adapt lessons to engage pupils at all levels. Recent initiatives have improved pupils' understanding of the feedback received by initiating discussions between teachers and pupils.
6. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive targeted support in lessons and through access to pre-learning materials. Reports are translated by guardians or agents for parents, helping to ensure that communication is clear.
7. The needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified promptly. They have individualised support plans and receive appropriate support in lessons.
8. The school offers a rich extra-curricular programme, from astronomy and business clubs to pupil-led activities such as dance. Sporting opportunities cater to all abilities, with options included that reflect the interests of international boarders. Boarding routines help support academic progress, and appropriate unstructured time is available for relaxation and recreation. In the early years, learning activities foster fine and gross motor skills and language development, helping to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage.
9. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum, including relationships and sex education (RSE), is well implemented, revisiting topics at appropriate stages. Pupils engage in discussion-based learning which helps to support active participation. Behaviour is characterised by warmth, kindness and respect, and bullying is effectively managed.
10. Boarding houses provide a welcoming, homely atmosphere that supports wellbeing. Activities like 'Wellness Wednesdays' and mindfulness sessions help to enhance mental health, while boarders

enjoy shared activities and have access to the wellbeing centre and a mental health lead. Comfortable accommodation, supportive staff, thorough risk management, and a carefully managed prefect system help to ensure that pupils are well supported.

11. The curriculum helps to promote pupils' understanding of British society and the wider world, in line with the aims of the school. Pupils feel safe expressing their identity, while lessons help to foster respect, inclusivity, and understanding of different backgrounds and beliefs. Leaders monitor the curriculum to ensure that it supports British values.
12. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Staff receive comprehensive safeguarding training, including from external agencies. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) provides regular training updates to staff and checks their understanding. Boarding staff are well trained to help and support pupils. Safeguarding incidents are reported promptly as required and records are appropriately detailed and securely stored. Safer recruitment practices are followed carefully, with appropriate pre-employment checks recorded on the single central record.

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 monitoring of policies uploaded to the school website is thorough so that correct and up-to-date information is always available
- monitor and evaluate the actions taken to strengthen teaching and learning to ensure they are effective and consistently applied across the school so that pupils make good progress and achieve well.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

13. Governors have a broad set of skills, and governance arrangements enable them to provide support and challenge to senior leaders. Various sub-committees, consisting of governors and senior leaders, cover operational areas of the school and meet regularly. Occasionally, middle leaders are invited to attend to present to these committees which enables governors to have greater in-depth oversight of the school. Sub-committees then report on their activity to the main board.
14. Senior leaders discuss any changes to statutory requirements and make changes to policies and procedures as necessary. They then check that any changes have been implemented correctly.
15. Development plans are created after careful self-evaluation of the previous year's targets and following consultation with pupils, staff and parents and include consideration of possible unintended consequences. Relevant staff understand these plans and know the part they play in reaching the collective targets.
16. Governors support senior safeguarding leaders in reviewing the implementation of any changes made to policy and procedure. Liaison with external agencies is effective and multi-agency guidance is carefully followed to ensure pupils are supported.
17. Governors manage risk effectively. They have oversight of risk assessments and discuss operational and strategic risks with senior leaders and together they make changes to procedures where appropriate. Any changes are reviewed to ensure that the implementation has led to a safer outcome.
18. Senior leaders model the aims of the school effectively and ensure that pupils understand them. Staff are proactive in listening to pupils' views and pupils know that their opinions matter. Pupils understand that some of their requests are not immediately possible but also acknowledge changes implemented following their input. For example, sixth-form pupils successfully made a case to be allowed to wear their hair untied.
19. The complaints policy is in line with requirements and parental complaints are managed effectively. Records of complaints are suitably detailed and allow any patterns to be identified.
20. A suitable accessibility plan is in place which meets the requirements of the Equalities Acts (2010). A comprehensive schedule of written reports and parent-teacher meetings are in place to keep parents informed of their child's progress and achievement. The school website provides all the necessary policies and information for parents and prospective parents. There is additional information for prospective boarders. However, at the start of the inspection an information technology fault meant that the most up-to-date copies of policies were not available on the website. The school rectified this issue before the end of the inspection. The relevant local authority is provided with suitable information in relation to pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, including a statement detailing how the funds received are allocated.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. The curriculum, containing all the required elements, is well planned and effectively delivered, with appropriate and comprehensive schemes of work in place. Leaders have clear oversight of both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. They regularly audit the curriculum using feedback from teachers and pupils and make changes when needed. For example, pupils asked for an additional PSHE lesson each week and leaders facilitated this change.
23. Children in the early years make good progress. An annual assessment identifies children's development needs, and activities throughout the year are adapted to facilitate their learning. Teachers meet regularly to discuss the progress of children and learning activities are adjusted accordingly.
24. An appropriate framework is in place that allows pupils' work to be assessed effectively and suitable support to be put in place where required. The impact of changes to this framework have not yet been fully assessed in terms of the consistency of its application across all subjects.
25. Teachers employ a variety of approaches in lessons, demonstrating good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects as well as an understanding of the needs of their pupils at all ages and levels. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on forces and equilibrium, teacher knowledge and lucid explanation and a brief video giving historical context enabled pupils to engage effectively and facilitate their understanding.
26. Leaders' recent work on pupils' responses to teachers' feedback helps to support pupils' progress and enables pupils to think about their own learning. Targets for improvement are clear to pupils and their progress in assessments is visible. This practice is widespread and helps to ensure that pupils make good progress. Boarding routines support academic progress, with time for completion of homework on Saturday mornings as well as in their own time. Boarders are well supported in their learning.
27. Pupils display notable interest and self-motivation, a willingness to apply effort, and to act and think for themselves and teachers have high expectations of their engagement in lessons. For example, pupils in Year 5 were enthusiastic in describing their many scientific experiments, such as investigating the effect on the speed of a car going down ramps made of different kinds of materials.
28. Pupils who speak EAL receive well-resourced, specialist and in-class support. This includes a thorough approach to assessment before joining, using standardised assessments and interviews and the production of detailed, individual support plans for pupils. The provision is carefully considered and delivered. For example, pupils are provided with pre-learning materials so that they can become familiar with the vocabulary before lessons. Initiatives such as EAL pupil subject ambassadors help to support pupils in particular subjects. This support helps pupils who speak EAL to make good progress. Progress reports for international boarders are translated for parents by guardians or agents.
29. Pupils are screened at various stages in order to identify any SEND needs. The school collaborates with external agencies and the leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND develop learning support plans (LSPs) to meet their needs. Pupils who have SEND benefit from high levels of classroom support from trained teaching assistants and, where required, individual support is given

by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). The school makes reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of pupils who have SEND to help them access all areas of the curriculum.

30. The school provides an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities which include some which augment the academic curriculum such as astronomy club and a business breakfast club to review current affairs. Support is provided for pupils to start their own clubs, such as a recent pupil-led dance group and pupils are encouraged to offer feedback on the activities offered. Sporting provision covers all abilities, from beginners to elite athletes, and facilitates the introduction of new sports more popular in the home countries of international boarders. Pupils value the wide range of activities and boarders have sufficient opportunities for relaxation and unstructured time.
31. In the early years, leaders provide a curriculum which supports the development of fine and gross motor skills through activities such as drawing and yoga as well as developing language to enable pupils to communicate effectively and transition with ease to the next stage of their curriculum. Children's social and personal skills are enhanced by engaging in peer-to-peer activities such as sharing resources and outdoor team games.

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

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

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

33. Leaders have introduced and embedded the 'I am me' approach which celebrates inclusivity, encouraging pupils to believe in themselves. There are both school and boarding house inclusion prefects. Clubs such as 'SAGA' (sexuality and gender alliance) are led by pupils and supported by senior leaders who discuss boundaries and age-appropriate topics with the pupils.
34. Pupils are able to exercise choice regarding the types of physical educational activities in which they wish to participate. A wide range of activities is available which help pupils develop self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-confidence. For example, various choirs, business entrepreneurial clubs and creative writing.
35. A comprehensive PSHE curriculum is effectively implemented. Schemes of work and the use of suitable learning resources support pupils' learning. RSE is incorporated within the PSHE curriculum and topics are revisited at a higher level or by considering more detail. Pupils deepen their understanding of themes in RSE by detailed and supportive discussions.
36. Behaviour is positive and characterised by warmth, kindness and respect, starting in the early years where children learn to recognise right from wrong. Pupils develop close and supportive relationships with each other. They value the care and consideration teachers routinely provide and believe that staff are committed to their best interests. Behavioural expectations are clear and pupils know they can voice an opinion which will be heard. Positive teacher-pupil relationships also result in high levels of pupil interest and motivation both in the classroom and during extra-curricular activities.
37. Bullying is dealt with effectively and staff understand that bullying can be subtle and hidden. Pupils are confident in the sensitive way in which teachers address matters and know that they will be listened to, treated fairly and supported. School leaders effectively record and analyse incidents to identify any trends for further action.
38. There is a positive, warm and friendly atmosphere in boarding houses that supports pupils. Boarders enjoy each other's company and readily collaborate, whether by putting on musical entertainment or preparing snacks together. Pupils who are new to boarding have an effective induction and they quickly establish close bonds with existing boarders, through engagement in trips and joint activities. Boarding accommodation is high quality, comfortable and homely and pupils' belongings are secure.
39. Well-trained boarding leaders understand how to actively promote and support the wellbeing of boarders and provide activities such as 'Wellness Wednesdays', inter-year discussions and mindfulness. Quiet rooms are available to boarders for private calls to family members and time zones are considered by boarding leaders when a pupil wishes to speak with parents. Boarders are able to turn to a range of people including an independent listener who is well known to pupils as well as pupil wellness 'champions'. Boarders also have easy access to the wellbeing centre where healthcare professionals have specific training in supporting pupils who are away from their families.
40. The school premises including accommodation in boarding houses are carefully managed. Maintenance is of a high standard and records of checks are thorough. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and changes made when required. Boarders can use kitchens within the boarding

houses, under guidance, to make snacks and light meals which supplements the nutritious diet which all pupils receive at the school.

41. The wellness centre provides good support for pupils who feel unwell. It is staffed by experienced healthcare professionals with a wide range of medical skills. Medicines are securely stored and information about pupils' healthcare is shared appropriately with boarding staff. In addition, pupils can visit a designated mental health lead who can provide additional specialist support to pupils.
42. Pupils are appropriately supervised, including at those times when there are no formal activities. Senior leaders are deployed on a rota throughout the day and night to be available for additional support. Prefects are suitably trained, and their duties and responsibilities are appropriate and understood by pupils.
43. The school's admissions and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with statutory guidance and the local education authority is informed promptly of any pupils joining or leaving the school, including those at nonstandard transition points.
44. Children in the early years participate in a range of carefully chosen recreation activities both indoors and outdoors, including yoga and swimming, which are adapted to their needs and help to develop their physical and social skills.

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

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

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

46. The curriculum enables pupils to learn about British society and the wider world. The school's aims of inspiring and nurturing pupils are reflected in both schemes of work and lessons. Pupils feel safe to express who they are, in line with the school's 'I am me' approach. Regular lesson observations and clear guidance in schemes of work help to ensure that the school's curriculum and teaching supports fundamental British values.
47. Respect for all is encouraged through chapel services and assemblies at which pupils present topical matters that are personal to themselves. This has included presentations on different faiths and mental health awareness. The school's Christian foundation remains important and there is a focus on inclusivity and a respect for different cultures and religions. Prayer spaces are available for pupils of all beliefs. Religious festivals, such as Diwali and Eid, are celebrated with active pupil involvement. They lead assemblies, create wall displays and discuss the importance of these festivals in lessons. The curriculum is annually reviewed to reflect the nationalities of the pupils. For example, in English, the chosen texts for Years 7 to 9 have been updated so that every pupil can see themselves in a story.
48. Leaders ensure that there are many opportunities for pupils to learn about respect and understanding for all both in the PSHE curriculum and in extra-curricular activities such as the annual diversity fair.
49. Pupils understand their role in society and are keen to demonstrate it with local charity work initiatives. Pupils use democratic systems to vote on which charity to support and each year they are actively involved in raising funds. Pupils are also active in the long-term support of a local charity which diverts still-fresh food from landfill and makes it into meals for the homeless. Older pupils can volunteer, whether as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award system or as a recreational activity, and take pleasure in giving back to society.
50. Careers education and guidance starts in the early years where pupils are taught about 'people who help us' and continues in Years 1 to 6 through a variety of activities. Senior pupils receive impartial advice through a wide range of opportunities. The 'Be Inspired Programme' brings in guests and alumnae to share their journey from school to their current role, alongside the Careers Fair, and opportunities for work experience. All pupils in Years 7 and 11 participate in one-to-one meetings where pupils can access information about GCSEs, A Levels, apprenticeships, degrees and other career pathways to make informed and appropriate choices.
51. Social development in the early years is aided by a thoughtful use of games and activities, whether it be taking turns, sharing fairly, engaging in a story or actively learning about seasonal changes. Being aware of the world around them starts in Year 1 where they participate in activities such as hammering and drilling and learn how to keep safe near the campfire.
52. Leaders ensure that teachers do not offer partisan views. For example, international conflicts and general elections were discussed and staff were reminded of the need to remain neutral.

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

53. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

54. All staff, including those involved in boarding, receive appropriate safeguarding training for their roles. They feel very well supported by the safeguarding team and are confident they are given the information they need to keep pupils safe. The DSL provides frequent updates and checks to ensure that staff have understood their responsibilities. Boarding staff receive additional safeguarding training in order that they can help those boarders who need support.
55. Staff are trained how to report any safeguarding incidents and do so promptly. Records are detailed, well maintained and securely held. Information is shared appropriately, and help is given to protect and support pupils with any safeguarding concerns. The DSL looks for any patterns of events to identify if further action is required. Liaison with external agencies such as children's services is effective.
56. The safeguarding governor is well trained and knowledgeable about current practice in safeguarding. There are regular meetings between a sub-committee of governors and the school safeguarding team and a report is then given to the full board of governors.
57. There is a strong peer support programme and pupils are clear about the need to report any concerns they might have for others. Pupils know they have adults they can trust if they need to talk about an issue that is worrying them and they are confident that they will be helped and supported.
58. Pupils are taught about the risks associated with the internet and how to stay safe online through computing and PSHE lessons. Suitable monitoring and filtering systems are in place on the school's internet.
59. A robust system is in place for staff recruitment. Those staff involved receive regular update training and appropriate checks are made before employees and volunteers start work in the school. These checks are accurately recorded on the school's single central record which the safeguarding governor reviews at regular intervals.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

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| School | Harrogate Ladies' College |
| Department for Education number | 815/6012 |
| Registered charity number | 529579 |
| Address | Harrogate Ladies' College Clarence Drive Harrogate North Yorkshire HG1 2QG |
| Phone number | 01423 504543 |
| Email address | enquire@hlc.org.uk |
| Website | hlc.org.uk |
| Proprietor | Governing Body of Harrogate Ladies' College |
| Chair | Dame Francine Holroyd |
| Headteacher | Mrs Sylvia Brett |
| Age range | 2 - 18 |
| Number of pupils | 494 |
| Number of boarding pupils | 103 |
| Date of previous inspection | 15 to 17 September 2021 |

Information about the school

61. Harrogate Ladies' College is an independent day and boarding school for pupils aged from two to eighteen years. Originally founded in 1893, it has occupied its present site in Harrogate since 1904. It comprises: a senior school, College, for female pupils only, aged eleven to eighteen; a co-educational prep school, Highfield, for pupils aged from 4 to 11 years, incorporating an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); and Highfield Pre-School, for children aged from 2 to 4 years. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors.
62. The school has four boarding houses. Three are mixed-age houses for pupils aged ten to seventeen and one house for sixth form pupils.
63. There are 67 children in the early years, comprising two Pre-School and two Reception classes.
64. The school has identified 81 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. English is an additional language for 87 pupils.
66. The school states its aims are to develop a deep passion for learning and a love of life in its pupils.
67. The school's vision is to give its pupils the freedom and the confidence to be who they are; to embrace new challenges and try new things; to discover their individual talents; to respect themselves and others; and to understand the wider world in which they live.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

8 – 10 October 2024

68. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

69. 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
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

70. 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