

Focused Educational Quality and Compliance Inspection Reports

NORTHWOOD COLLEGE FOR GIRLS GDST

November 2021



Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

- The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
 - Pupils are excellent communicators and highly articulate. They develop a wide vocabulary, become accomplished readers, and readily apply their skills to all other areas of their learning.
 - Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They take a strong lead in their learning experiences and enjoy working independently and in groups, supporting each other's learning.
 - Pupils develop strong study skills at an early age and use and strengthen them further as they move through the school.
 - Pupils are inquisitive, listen to one another, and share their skills and understanding to further their own and others' learning.
- The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - The pupils' social development is outstanding. They work together confidently and expertly, demonstrating their sense of shared responsibility. Pupils look after each other throughout the school.
 - Pupils embrace difference and show respect and tolerance for all in this diverse community.
 - Pupils develop their self-knowledge and grow in confidence and self-esteem throughout the school. They approach challenges with resilience.
 - Pupils of all ages makes good decisions in order to influence and shape their own future and that of the community.

Recommendation

- In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:
 - Enabling pupils to extend the school's approach to diversity and social issues in order that they may contribute more effectively to the well-being of young people in the wider community.

The quality of the pupil's academic and other achievements

- The quality of the pupils academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Pupils are highly motivated and make rapid progress in lessons. Pupils of all ages, including those with SEND and EAL, make very good progress over time according to data from standardised and school-based assessments. Pupils with identified needs, whether temporary or longer term, make excellent progress as a result of the support of teaching, that is both encouraging and knowledgeable about their needs. Almost all parents and pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching meets their children's needs and enables them to make good progress. Older pupils are aspirational in setting themselves ambitious academic targets, evaluating their progress and working hard to attain the desired results. They live up to the motto, seen in the sixth-form area: *'Don't wish for it, work for it'*.
- Most pupils are successful in attaining ambitious examination results both at A level and GCSE. Almost all sixth-form pupils gain places at their first choice of university or other further education establishment.
- Pupils have extensive knowledge over a wide range of subjects and thirst to learn more, choosing to attend enrichment activities as well as surgeries. They are inquisitive. They listen to one another, express cogent arguments and share their knowledge, skills and understanding to further their own learning and that of others. Junior pupils demonstrate advanced knowledge, skills and understanding developed across the breadth of the curriculum with excellent levels in the core linguistic, mathematical and scientific disciplines. The most able pupils create work of an outstanding standard, particularly in English where the grammatical knowledge, as well as the creative and figurative work, is often of the highest quality. Senior pupils display very high levels of understanding across a variety of areas. They listen and pose pertinent questions effectively using technical terminology. They contribute knowledgeably to discussions in pursuit of a solution or conclusion. An example of this was seen when sixth-form pupils were evaluating Edward IV's rule during the Wars of the Roses. Pupils respond enthusiastically to open-ended questions which challenge their thinking, such as whether marine mammals could adapt to other environments. Many pupils learn to play one or more musical instruments adeptly, making this extra-curricular extension of knowledge and skill very popular. Most pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their lessons are interesting and feedback from their teachers helps them to learn.

- Pupils are excellent communicators and very articulate. They develop a wide vocabulary from a young age, become accomplished readers, speak and write well and readily apply these skills to all other areas of their learning. They are adept in debate and discussion, expressing their opinions and reasoning clearly. They read widely, listen attentively and ask pertinent and perceptive questions. Children in the nursery were comparing the rhyming sounds 'bear, pear, chair' and noticed that the pear was 'bruised' and its skin had begun to 'wrinkle'. Their questions led to further discussions concerning the decay. Whether writing, speaking, reading or listening, junior school pupils demonstrate a confidence in accurately and purposefully communicating to a range of audiences. Young debaters used sophisticated opening phrases when debating 'the validity of international travel for work' or 'the definition of disability'.
- Enabled by supportive teaching, pupils are lively and uninhibited when talking about their work and discussing their ideas. They listen to one another respectfully. Pupils give presentations well to a variety of audiences and understand how to expertly engage their audience. Pupils explain the links between their practical work and research work clearly using higher order technical terminology.
- Pupils develop numeracy skills early and strengthen them throughout the school, being used as a resource whenever required. In the EYFS, children count whenever opportunities arise as part of their play. Younger pupils discussed the difference between the number of coins and their value. Older pupils use their skills adeptly to devise diagrams using co-ordinates. Senior pupils display sophisticated numeracy skills and manage data, draw graphs and synthesise information. Pupils display well developed graphical skills in physics where they plot graphs of radioactive decay, draw lines of best fit and then interpret the results by drawing intercepts.
- Pupils are digitally aware and become fluent in the use of tablet computers as a routine part of their learning. This has been the impact in the school's leadership in providing the hardware, software and training resources in advance of lockdown and ensuring its rapid development as part of the virtual learning platform used for remote learning. Pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) within their learning is outstanding. They use a range of online resources appropriately to assist their learning and develop their skills effectively as they move through the school. Junior pupils create resources for assemblies, class presentations, and musical compositions, alongside everyday word processing. Pupils' organisation skills are good, including maintaining folders online. They move from one ICT platform to another seamlessly, enabling them to showcase their understanding and to share with others.
- Pupils develop outstanding study skills. These are nurtured with the younger pupils and strengthen as pupils move through the school. Pupils build on the ideas and opinion of others in a natural way, consistently demonstrating their ability to try their views out without fear of failure in a variety of situations. Junior school pupils are resilient. They persevere, both independently and collaboratively, to enhance their learning. They reflect critically on their work and establish an intellectual approach in preparation for senior school life.

- Pupils throughout the school are adept at drawing on a wide range of sources to inform their learning. They analyse data and text confidently and at an advanced level for their age, having acquired the skills necessary to do this. They ask searching questions and give perceptive responses. They draw readily on the skills and knowledge of those immediately around them to consolidate their understanding. Pupils say they learn from their peers as well as their teachers. Pupils confidently work on individual projects. They explain process and technical skill while discussing the work they have created to date, and why.
- Pupils analyse performances in peer groups with confidence and a solid understanding of what was required. Younger senior school pupils analysed and hypothesised strongly in their response to *The Tempest* when they considered the possible reasoning behind the casting of actors and design choices made by the director.
- Senior pupils draw on a wide range of sources and techniques as they demonstrate their advanced abilities to pose and test hypotheses, analyse their findings, and synthesise results while researching a diverse range of topics. Sixth-form pupils extend their study skills even further and research and write academic articles in pursuance of EPQ qualifications.
- Pupils achieve outstandingly well in academic and other areas. Junior school pupils have won GDST competitions in mental arithmetic and virtual distance running. Pupils give high quality performances in musical and drama productions, choirs, orchestras, and smaller music groups. Such quality was seen at a rehearsal of the forthcoming musical. Pupils have been very successful in national competitions such as Model UN, and also technology and art competitions, and mathematics and science challenges. Many pupils gain Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme awards, Associated Board music and LAMDA drama qualifications each year. In 2017, Year 12 pupils won an award as *Young Woman of the Future* for their work in charity, advocacy, political and community engagement.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards their learning and are highly motivated to succeed. They take a lead in learning experiences and enjoy working independently and in groups, supporting each other's learning. Nursery and Reception children are active and focused in their learning, becoming more independent as they grow through the school. Junior pupils approach their learning positively, rising to challenges and enjoying their learning opportunities. Senior pupils take initiative in their learning, work collaboratively and actively support one another with thoughtful advice. Many of them appreciate the lunchtime lectures on topics such as 'environmental sustainability' or lead clubs on themes such as 'Discrimination in the Ancient World'.
- Sixth-form pupils are used to working collaboratively and enjoy the interaction with peers when discussing educational topics. They are respectful of others' views and listen well to each other. They take full responsibility for their own progress, working with their teachers and independently in their own time to successfully achieve their goals. The school is achieving its aims in encouraging a lifelong love of learning and pupils who turn challenges into opportunities. The philosophy to aim for excellence, whilst offering all opportunities to every pupil, ensures there is never a limit on the expectations of what each pupil can achieve.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils develop their self-knowledge and grow in confidence and self-esteem throughout the school. They have a strong sense of self-development, contribute actively to discussions and approach challenges and change with resilience. Pupils' self-understanding is exceptional. At all ages they look forward to their next stage and draw upon the experience of older pupils to be an example to those at the very youngest. They self-evaluate and identify how to improve. Beyond the formal taught curriculum, pupils value the opportunity to be involved in public speaking, both as those leading the session and those listening to it. Pupils help each other with kindness and support. Pupils say that 'You can be anything you want, as long as you believe in yourself, and you are dedicated and hardworking. There is always someone there to help you and listen. Be the person others look up to.'
- Junior pupils are confident, evaluate reflectively and understand themselves as learners and as young people. Children in the EYFS sing confidently and enthusiastically as they prepare for their nativity play. Sixth-form pupils demonstrate outstanding self-knowledge and self-esteem and excellent levels of maturity. They understand their own strengths and how they can develop and progress as young adults encouraged by the school's ethos of believing in the individual and encouraging pupils to believe in themselves. Most parents who responded to the questionnaires agreed that the school enabled their child to become confident and independent.
- Pupils of all ages make good decisions in order to influence and shape their own future and that of the community. Children in EYFS make choices and move independently between activities. Pupils develop good decision-making skills, supported by leaders, staff and older pupils as their choices become more significant and complex. Junior pupils explain their choices showing tolerance and respect. Older pupils speak with confidence regarding their decision making and explain why they choose to work in a particular way, and what they hope to achieve. In many lessons pupils worked skilfully as individuals yet discussed their ideas with those around them. They think and act for themselves, make appropriate choices and value the opportunity to aim high. Senior pupils maturely consider the impact of their decision and express the reasons for their choice of path. Sixth-form pupils exhibit responsibility and cognizance when incorporating their intrinsic values and principles into personal and academic decisions. They seek advice, demonstrate empathy and think carefully about the consequences of their decisions. Pupils are reflective and value faith, optimism and kindness. They are aware of the variety of cultures around them and the beauty to be found in people and the natural world. This is evident in their demeanour and the outstanding pupil artwork and displays. They appreciate the value of music, art, theatre, and dance, all helping them to have a deeper understanding of the non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils throughout the school behave well, being considerate and respectful in all situations. They value courtesy and kindness. Pupils understand that rules are there for their safety and the benefit of the community. They greet each other and visitors warmly as they move around school and create a purposeful yet comfortable and friendly atmosphere. Pupils have an outstanding sense of fairness and can distinguish between right and wrong. They challenge misbehaviour and unkindness and show no tolerance of bullying. However, they understand that all can make mistakes, and yet be contrite and rebuild relationships. As a result, rule-breaking is rare and there is a tacit acceptance in the community that results in high levels of behaviour.

- Pupils of all ages show outstanding social development. Their empathy, kindness and consideration pervade the environment. Junior pupils demonstrate a social maturity and understanding. Pupils in Year 3 showed marked perception and empathy when discussing what it must be like to be a refugee. Older pupils support and mentor younger ones, sharing the benefit of their experience if they have suffered discrimination, grief, learning difficulties, been depressed or anxious, or falling out with friends.
- They work intuitively together to solve problems and achieve common goals, viewing teamwork as an opportunity to learn something new. Pupils show high levels of respect towards each other and collaborate well, working together formally and informally to improve understanding and to organise social and fund-raising events and concerts that require commitment and perseverance. Sixth-form pupils show excellent leadership skills and are passionate about the importance of working with other people and being part of a team.
- Pupils understand the impact an individual can have on a community as well as the strength that can be derived from unity. They report that the house system enables them to have a group identity within the school and they enjoy the competition element, participating enthusiastically in house debating, sport, music, drama and general knowledge quizzes. They like the notion of being together and most importantly the united way they can be as one. Pupils support one another and act together for the benefit of all. Sixth formers share their experience to help support younger ones on issues such as staying safe, racial difference, living with neurodiversity, and LGBTQ.
- There are many pupil-led charitable initiatives as well as the well-supported national events like *Children in Need* and *Red Nose Day*. The youngest children participate enthusiastically in the sponsored 'wobble' while junior pupils support 'odd socks' for individualism and charity sales for various national charities. Senior pupils supported an eco-upcycling fashion show and help with reading and sports at a local primary school. Older pupils lead groups which campaign for MIND, or diversity or social issues.
- Pupils show great sensitivity to other individuals and are keen that all pupils, their backgrounds and circumstance are welcomed into the school community. Talented pupils are strongly encouraged to achieve at the highest level by both their peers and staff. Leaders enact their vision to establish a genuine sense of familial community and their approach is supported by the staff and reflected throughout the school.
- Pupils are wholly respectful and tolerant, valuing the diversity within their own community and in society in general. They appreciate the diversity and range of cultures featured and embedded in all areas of school life. This is shown in the displays of work depicting a wide variety of cultures and traditions. Pupils embrace difference and individuality and yet understand that together they are a strong community to which all belong. They welcome and support everyone whatever their culture or background. Pupils celebrate distinct attributes and are stronger because of this. Their typical celebration of culture is illustrated by when junior school pupils were celebrating Navratri and, attracted by the music, older pupils spontaneously joined in the traditional dancing.

- Pupils have a high level of understanding of others' viewpoints and a great wish to be inclusive. They value opportunities to learn about and explore the beliefs which others hold and see as being important. They talk about their work during Black History month and their consideration of high-profile performers from other heritages. Pupils appreciate recent initiatives implemented by leaders to raise the profile of inclusion issues through extensive discussion, focused activities and the appointment of diversity champions. They report that they see their school community as all together one welcoming group despite the clear differences throughout.
- Pupils show an effective understanding of how to stay safe and maintain a healthy lifestyle. They are very digitally aware and know how to stay safe online. They understand the importance of a balanced lifestyle and healthy eating. Mental health issues are discussed, and pupils are aware of these for themselves and those around them. Older pupils are cognizant of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and show mature understanding of the factors contributing to healthy relationships, the importance of consent and strategies for personal safety.
- Pupils demonstrate a full understanding of what it takes to be healthy and say that if they are 'not ok', the support needed is immediately provided by the school. Pupils feel cared for, well-prepared for life, and understand how to keep themselves safe in many difference contexts, both online and offline. Pupils also commented that they can always rely on school to cheer them up, and that the individual is always placed at the centre of need.
- This nurturing community with its open culture of discussing issues at all levels, and the plethora of pupil-led initiatives, enable the pupils to grow into conscientious, ambitious and confident young people well able to take their place in society and potentially be the leaders of tomorrow.

Inspection Evidence

- The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and education resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.