

School inspection report

7 to 9 October 2025

Durston House School

12–14 Castlebar Road

Ealing

London

W5 2DR

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 effective oversight of all areas of school life, including safeguarding. This is achieved through focused discussions at both committee and full board level in which they both support and challenge the work of school leaders.
2. Leaders' expertise on pastoral matters is effectively coupled with knowledge gained from external sources to support pupil wellbeing. As a result, pupils are well cared for and show maturity within their friendships and social interactions.
3. Leaders draw up suitable policies to promote pupils' physical wellbeing. However, there are some inconsistencies in how leaders mitigate risk in some subjects.
4. Leaders understand the importance of decision-making around key matters, such as the development of a positive behaviour strategy. This impacts positively on pupils' behaviour across the school, although it is not yet fully embedded in classroom practice.
5. Leaders have not always ensured that the latest statutory content is included in the attendance policy, nor that the number of complaints received during the preceding school year is made available to parents. These matters were addressed during the inspection.
6. Leaders successfully implement a well-sequenced curriculum, which enables pupils to extend their knowledge and skills year by year. The curriculum is supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities which further broaden pupils' experiences.
7. Pupil success is rooted in the firm foundations established within the early years. Staff provide a well-structured learning environment which impacts positively on childhood development.
8. Pupils' personal development is promoted throughout the school by the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme, which ensures that they are well prepared for life in Britain.
9. Leaders provide pupils with numerous opportunities to develop self-confidence, independence and responsibility. Enrichment activities, such as the whole-school 'Lit Fest', debating and public speaking, help pupils to acquire mature communication skills.
10. Those with safeguarding leadership responsibilities are suitably trained and fulfil their roles appropriately. They liaise effectively with safeguarding partners. Staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities, including contextual matters.
11. Leaders implement thorough safer recruitment practices. They undertake the required checks before a person commences work at the school. Associated records are meticulously kept in individual staff files and on a single central record of appointments.

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:

- improve oversight of risk assessments so that risks are identified and managed in all lessons and the wellbeing of the pupils is consistently promoted
- ensure teachers implement effective strategies to respond to low-level inappropriate classroom behaviours so that pupils can make consistent progress in lessons
- ensure that the number of formal complaints received by the school is made available to parents so that they have a full picture of the school
- ensure that the attendance policy contains the correct information so that it reflects statutory guidance and the school's procedures.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. Leaders' self-evaluation processes are effective, enabling them to critically assess their practices and identify both successes and areas that require further development. They recognise the significance of effective change management. Leaders remain attuned to factors influencing change, such as the transition to co-education within the school. They effectively consider both the intended and unintended consequences of their decisions to promote pupil wellbeing.
13. Leaders draw up suitable procedures to promote pupils' wellbeing which pay due regard to current statutory guidance. Staff understand their responsibilities and implement policies effectively.
14. Governors ensure that leaders are suitably skilled and knowledgeable to fulfil their roles effectively. They maintain effective oversight of both policy development and associated implementation through focused discussions at both committee and full board level, complemented by regular meetings with staff and pupils.
15. Since the previous inspection leaders have prioritised the cultivation of a positive behaviour culture throughout the school. Initiatives include amplifying pupil voice and reviewing rewards and sanctions to ensure they are effective. Teachers have implemented strategies to promote constructive classroom behaviour, although some inconsistencies remain in this area.
16. Leaders draw up suitable risk assessments for the premises and for pupil activities, such as educational trips, visits and movement around the school's locality. However, procedures for identifying and mitigating potential risks are not sufficiently rigorous in certain areas.
17. Leaders actively seek ways to build productive connections with external organisations. They liaise effectively with safeguarding partners as well as with organisations that enhance different aspects of pupil life, particularly around their personal development and pastoral needs. For instance, working with the African Caribbean Education Network has helped leaders gain deeper insight and understanding of how they can educate and support pupils who may be exposed to racist cultures.
18. In the early years, leaders maintain effective and well-established systems for monitoring the effectiveness of provision and for staff supervision. They are diligent in ensuring that staffing levels are appropriate. Leaders ensure that policies and procedures in the early years are fully implemented in line with the most recent updates to statutory requirements.
19. There is a suitable complaints procedure in place which is followed appropriately. Leaders track such concerns to identify any themes or trends and take appropriate action in response.
20. Leaders make the required information about the school available to parents. This is mostly through the detailed school website, where parents can readily access information such as key policies and procedures, and which now includes the number of formal complaints received during the preceding school year.
21. Leaders foster strong relationships with pupils by recognising individual needs and differences. They promote values that instil qualities of respect, understanding and consideration in pupils, both through the curriculum and through pupils' own behaviours. Leaders make sporting activities in physical education accessible to all pupils, regardless of gender, fostering a cohesive community where equality is actively promoted. They also implement an effective accessibility plan, which

includes elements such as access to the curriculum and consideration of adaptations to the school site where necessary. Through such mechanisms leaders ensure that they fulfil their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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

22. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

23. The curriculum ensures effective coverage of all learning areas for pupils of all ages. Leaders maintain a suitable balance of preparing pupils for their chosen senior schools while providing opportunities to engage in many different areas of learning. Subjects such as art, music, sports and humanities are integrated into the curriculum throughout the school. This enables pupils to acquire a wide range of skills and knowledge and to make good progress in preparation for the next stages of their education. Pupils achieve well and are successful in gaining places at selective senior schools.
24. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities which support pupils' physical, intellectual and creative development. The activity programme includes elements such as the philosophy club, art portfolios and computing. Knowledgeable practitioners lead well-planned sessions which allow pupils to broaden their experiences and strengthen their knowledge base.
25. Subject leaders monitor the effective implementation of appropriate plans, schemes of work and programmes of activities which build in difficulty over time. Key topics are visited on an annual basis, which enables pupils to build on previous learning and extend their skills and knowledge. This approach supports the good progress that pupils make across all areas of learning.
26. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, which they use to model key concepts, explain subject-specific terminology and correct misconceptions. They use a variety of teaching strategies to encourage pupils to question, discuss and justify their ideas in a variety of learning environments. Teachers manage time well in lessons, understanding how best to maximise the learning opportunities for their pupils. Pupils make good progress within lessons, which include using talking partners, group work, close textual analysis and independent learning. Teachers provide clear feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work. In some lessons teachers do not manage pupil behaviour effectively enough, which means that low-level disruption impacts negatively on the learning opportunities. As a result, the progress that pupils make in these lessons is more limited.
27. Leaders have effective oversight of the collation and use of assessment data for learning and skills development. The data and information gathered is closely analysed by senior managers at all levels. Individual targets are then identified, so that the ongoing learning provision for the pupils is adjusted accordingly to meet their specific needs, thus supporting their progress.
28. Teachers in the early years use assessments and observations effectively to identify each child's needs. They plan activities that allow children to make progress from different starting points within each session, such as when developing their individual understanding of numbers ranging from 10 to 50. This means that all children can develop their skills and understanding well. Language and communication development is a key feature in the early years, with a focus on the development of phonics and emerging writing skills. Children demonstrate fine motor control as they write their names, phrases and sentences, depending on their specific stages of development. Staff encourage children to pursue their own interests and develop their communication skills in dedicated indoor areas and outside play spaces, making effective use of resources such as a doll's house and role-play areas.

29. Pupils are well motivated and eager to progress in lessons. Teachers make effective use of rewards and incentives which focus on specific skills and attributes to engage and motivate pupils. As a result, pupils display resilience in their learning and a readiness to learn from their mistakes.
30. Leaders implement effective systems to ensure that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are met. They use their specialist knowledge to provide effective and clear direction to staff so that provision for pupils who have SEND is embedded into whole-school teaching practices. Pupils make good progress as a result of early identification of their needs and personalised support. Teachers make effective use of strategies such as scaffolded resources, vocabulary diaries and targeted literacy programmes to promote pupils' progress.
31. Teachers adapt their strategies and resources to support the different levels of proficiency of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). In the early years, colourful semantics and role-play areas are used to support language development. Older pupils develop their English language skills well through accessible and engaging activities. Teachers make effective use of word cards, touch typing, and games to support pupils' language acquisition and progress across the curriculum.

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. The physical education (PE) curriculum provides pupils with regular opportunities to develop their physical skills and experience success in fixtures and internal competitions. Teachers make effective use of a range of venues to support pupils' physical development, including local sports centres, swimming pool and games pitches. Leaders plan the curriculum so that pupils can make cross-curricular links between PE, PSHE and science to reinforce the connection between physical activity and health and wellbeing.
34. Leaders maintain a clear and comprehensive framework for PSHE which is taught in well-planned, dedicated lessons and supported by themed assemblies. Topics such as mental wellbeing are taught explicitly, providing pupils with both knowledge and a depth of understanding around the importance of healthy minds. Leaders support pupils in understanding how mental health matters affect everyone through engaging in national mental health awareness days. Pupils are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle through the provision of healthy options at lunchtimes and encouragement to drink water throughout the day. Teachers set a positive example to pupils through the consistent emphasis on kindness, equality and diversity within personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, assemblies and cultural celebrations.
35. Leaders provide a relationships and sex education (RSE) programme that helps pupils acquire a secure understanding of safeguarding, wellbeing and health education. Pupils of all ages develop a secure understanding of what constitutes a healthy relationship. Senior pupils receive sex education at an age-appropriate level. Information about the curriculum and how it is delivered is made available on the school website and parents are consulted when required.
36. Pupils develop their spiritual understanding through visits to religious sites, assemblies and events such as carol services and harvest festivals. As a result, they gain an appreciation of how religion can form an important element within people's sense of self. Pupils develop an awareness of aesthetic qualities that make them feel uplifted within music, art and drama activities.
37. A calm and harmonious atmosphere characterises the early years, where staff encourage children to collaborate and support one another, with particular emphasis on respect and how to build positive friendships. In a well-resourced learning environment, staff provide opportunities for children to make independent choices, demonstrating autonomy in their learning as well as responsibility, self-regulation and leadership skills. Staff teach the youngest children the importance of washing their hands before they eat. Suitable arrangements are in place to provide children with a safe eating environment.
38. Leaders have a secure understanding of their responsibilities relating to relevant health and safety laws. This is demonstrated in the effective systems and policies in place to provide a safe school environment that supports pupil wellbeing. School premises are maintained appropriately. Leaders draw up suitable systems to ensure first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by appropriately qualified staff. Staff keep thorough records and have a secure understanding of individual pupils' needs.
39. Pupils are appropriately supervised during the school day through the effective deployment of staff. Particular attention is given to supervisory arrangements when pupils move between the main

school buildings and the nearby sports and playing fields. During break and lunchtimes there are always staff members nearby should pupils require any help or support.

40. Leaders have developed behavioural and anti-bullying strategies that focus on pupils' understanding of the need to make wise choices. This approach is implemented effectively by staff, who teach pupils the difference between right and wrong from an early age. Initiatives such as anti-bullying weeks further support pupils' understanding of the importance of treating everyone with due kindness and respect. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy which is implemented effectively, including a clear, collectively agreed definition of bullying. The school responds effectively to allegations of bullying with an approach that is adapted appropriately to the age of the pupils. Leaders demonstrate sophisticated knowledge of the challenges of actively preventing and minimising bullying and supporting pupils to overcome its impact.
41. Leaders instigate a range of structures and systems to support pupils in building confidence. Pupils demonstrate their communication skills and grow in self-esteem through activities such as show and tell in the early years, school concerts, productions and performances. Activities such as drama, music, debating and sports fixtures provide further opportunities for self-expression. Leaders actively promote participation, and every role and achievement is celebrated, giving pupils a sense of pride and value. Collaborative learning strategies, such as peer review in art and group discussion in English, help pupils to engage constructively with one another, developing their ability to give and receive feedback respectfully and increase their self-knowledge.
42. Leaders maintain accurate records of attendance and admissions. Attendance data is appropriately analysed to identify rates and trends, and any unexplained absences are followed up promptly. At the start of the inspection the attendance policy did not fully reflect current statutory guidance or the school's procedures. This was updated during the visit. The local authority is informed should a pupil leave or join the school at non-standard transition points.

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

43. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

44. Leaders successfully incorporate the school's aims and ethos into their work. They place an emphasis on ensuring pupils feel safe, happy and able to thrive. The child-centred and collaborative culture reflects a commitment to listening to pupils and prioritising their individual needs. As a result, pupils develop socially, understanding the importance of their role in contributing to society.
45. Leaders foster pupils' economic understanding through both targeted learning experiences and key school events. In the early years, children enhance their awareness by engaging with play money and acquiring an early knowledge of coin and note values. Older pupils develop their financial literacy through the PSHE curriculum, exploring subjects such as mini stocks and shares and compound interest. Pupils in Year 8 participate in an enterprise-focused monetary project to deepen their financial knowledge. The oldest pupils refine their economic skills through a business-oriented component within science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) week.
46. Throughout the curriculum, leaders consistently promote mutual respect, with particular emphasis on people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010. Initiatives addressing topics such as racism and gender equality enhance pupils' understanding of fairness and equity within both the school setting and the broader community. For example, in history lessons, attention is given to prominent female figures such as Florence Nightingale as well as notable scientists including Jane Goodall and Ada Lovelace. The library collection has been expanded to more fully represent the diversity of contemporary British society, offering pupils literature that presents multiple perspectives and challenges stereotypes.
47. Leaders support pupils' cultural understanding by teaching them about a range of different religions and festivals. Celebrating the range of family backgrounds within the school community enables pupils to broaden their understanding and knowledge. National day celebrations, visiting speakers and parental input all support pupil development in this area.
48. Leaders promote British values throughout school life, providing pupils with a comprehensive understanding of concepts such as democracy, tolerance and respect. Pupils learn about government functions and processes in PSHE lessons. They gain an enhanced appreciation of democratic procedures through the pupil council, which consists of elected representatives and is governed by its own constitution. Teachers plan lessons which help pupils to gain insight into human rights and the English constitution. These include studies on topics such as King John and the Magna Carta, as well as examining the societal impact of influential leaders such as Martin Luther King.
49. Pupils' understanding of right and wrong is fostered through their involvement in the creation of the school's behaviour code. Staff provide opportunities for pupils to deepen their grasp of moral concepts by discussing topics such as whether adoption should be considered before IVF. These conversations show pupils that there are always different perspectives, allowing them to make informed choices for themselves.
50. Children in the early years are adept when deciding the right course of action to follow to build positive relationships within a socially cohesive setting. Children in Reception develop their understanding of fundamental British values by learning about respect and tolerance. They actively support others through charity work. Leaders focus on topics such as 'People who help us', to

strengthen children's understanding of key workers and how their roles are important in maintaining a society where people are valued.

51. Pupils demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of their responsibilities within the local community and the positive impact they can have. A structured system of pupil responsibilities provides opportunities for pupils to contribute positively to school life, such as older pupils supporting younger pupils at breaktimes and heads of houses leading sports and music competitions. Pupils develop effective leadership skills as a result. Initiatives addressing sustainability and climate change lead to activities such as food recycling, collaborative tree planting with the local council, and engaging with ecological issues through participation in the gardening club. Pupils actively support their locality by organising litter collection events, volunteering at a food bank and raising funds for local, national and international charitable organisations.
52. Leaders enable pupils to develop an understanding of English institutions, such as charities and emergency services through an array of trips, visits and visiting speakers. Pupils' involvement in workshops around topics such as drug misuse and the importance of travel rules and associated etiquette helps them to prepare for life in British society. Older pupils receive targeted support in preparation for moving on to their senior schools, and they receive suitable careers advice. This includes developing skills to support their future roles in the workplace such as team building and self-organisational techniques. Pupils in the pre-prep develop their understanding of potential careers through visits by people such as dentists.

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. Leaders foster a positive safeguarding culture through comprehensive training provided to all staff, including those with designated safeguarding roles. The training covers current statutory guidance and emphasises the shared responsibility for safeguarding, delivered via both in-person sessions and online modules. As a result of these initiatives and regular communications from school leaders, staff are well informed about their safeguarding duties.
55. Staff recognise the importance of adhering to the code of conduct and understand that any concerns regarding colleagues should be reported to the headteacher under the school's low-level concerns procedures. Any reported concerns are handled promptly and appropriately.
56. Safeguarding leads maintain thorough records of all safeguarding concerns and communicate efficiently with their safeguarding partners, such as local children's services and the police, when necessary. Referrals to local authority leads are also made promptly.
57. Leaders have established comprehensive measures to monitor and filter internet content, effectively minimising potential risks to pupils. Detailed usage reports are routinely generated and systematically reviewed by designated school leaders as well as members of the governing body.
58. Pupils understand the importance of staying safe, including when working online in response to the guidance they receive in PSHE and computing lessons. They readily report any concerns or worries that they might have to trusted adults, knowing that matters will be taken seriously and acted upon in a timely manner.
59. Leaders implement rigorous safer recruitment procedures, ensuring the completion of all necessary checks prior to a person's employment at the school. Comprehensive records are maintained for all staff appointments including on the single central record of appointments. Supporting documentation within associated staff files meets all requirements of the recruitment process. Designated safeguarding leads and governors routinely review and verify the school's recruitment practices.
60. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school's safeguarding procedures through collaboration with leaders and systematic evaluations of existing arrangements. They gain insight into the school's safeguarding culture through regular discussions with pupils, staff and leaders.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Durston House School
Department for Education number	307/6000
Registered charity number	294670
Address	Durston House School 12–14 Castlebar Road Ealing London W5 2DR
Phone number	020 8991 6530
Email address	info@durstonhouse.org
Website	www.durstonhouse.org
Proprietor	Durston House Educational Trust Ltd
Co-chairs	Ms Ann Collier Mr Lester Mak
Headteacher	Mr Giles Entwisle
Age range	3 to 13
Number of pupils	312
Date of previous inspection	7 November 2023

Information about the school

62. Durston House School is a co-educational day school located in Ealing, West London. There are three sections in the school: the pre-prep for pupils from pre-school to Year 2; the junior school for pupils in Years 3 and 4; and the middle and upper school for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and Years 7 and 8 respectively. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a governing body. Since the previous inspection the school has become co-educational.
63. There are 61 children in the early years, accommodated in one Nursery class and two Reception classes.
64. The school has identified 26 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).
65. The school has identified English as an additional language for a small number of pupils.
66. The school states its aims are to give each pupil a balanced education, helping them to attain excellence in academic, creative and physical pursuits, whilst guiding their social, moral and spiritual development.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

7 to 9 October 2025

67. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. 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 co-chair and another governor
- 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.

69. 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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