

# School inspection report

23 to 25 September 2025

## **Arnold House School**

1 – 3 Loudoun Road

St. John's Wood

London

NW8 0LH

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. Leaders fulfil the school's aims by providing a supportive and stimulating environment where pupils are valued as individuals, develop academically, socially and culturally and are well prepared for a lifetime of learning. Leaders apply systematic self-evaluation and monitoring to ensure that there are consistency and quality for pupils of all ages. Governors ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met, hold leaders to account and direct resources that invest in supporting pupils' needs. Leaders prioritise pupils' wellbeing, alongside high expectations for academic and personal development. Pupils gain confidence, participate widely in school life and are well prepared for moving onto their next stage in education, including on to senior school at the age of 13.
2. The curriculum is broad, balanced and inclusive and develops pupils' knowledge and skills across academic, creative, physical and technological areas. Teachers use assessment to adapt provision to pupils' needs. Staff identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) early and provide tailored support. When ready, pupils are very well supported to apply their learning in more complex ways and achieve higher standards. Co-curricular opportunities in sport, music, art and trips extend learning and promote resilience.
3. Staff promote pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing effectively through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), pastoral care and a wide programme of sport. Staff teach relationships and sex education (RSE) with sensitivity, adapting content to the needs of different age groups. Structured routines for the youngest children build their confidence and independence. Whole-school initiatives, such as peer mentors, provide further support to pupils' wellbeing. Health and safety, including first aid and medical provision is well organised and fulfils statutory requirements. However, some staff do not apply behaviour expectations consistently, particularly at lesson change and transition times, to ensure that pupils always behave appropriately and are well prepared to start lessons on time.
4. Pupils, including the youngest children, develop social skills, independence and actively take on responsibility. Staff foster co-operation and respect through collaborative learning and encourage service within and beyond the school through leadership roles and charitable initiatives. Careers education and enterprise projects link learning to future pathways. Pupils show courtesy, awareness of diversity and respect for British values. Initiatives such as the 'digital portfolio' and positions of responsibility enable pupils to reflect, collaborate and prepare for senior school.
5. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and leaders apply them consistently. Staff use established systems to record and act on concerns and governors oversee policy and record review. Risk assessments, supervision and safe recruitment contribute to secure environments. A culture of vigilance is evident in daily practice. Pupils are kept safe and know how to report any concerns, if they are worried.

## 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 behaviour expectations are implemented consistently and effectively by staff, particularly during lesson changes and transition times, so that pupils always behave appropriately and are ready to engage in lessons promptly.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders provide purposeful and precise direction to staff, consistently making choices that prioritise pupils' academic preparation and pastoral wellbeing. Since the previous inspection, senior leadership roles have been enhanced, providing more capacity for academic and pastoral oversight. Leaders ensure that pupils experience continuity of care and purposeful learning from Nursery through to Year 8. Senior staff are visible and approachable. Leaders know pupils well and gather views daily at the gate, through forums and peer mentors, and in structured meetings. Pupils, parents and staff are also consulted through reports, surveys and discussions. Leaders use this feedback to bring improvements to provision, for instance recently using feedback to improve catering facilities for pupils.
7. Leaders' evaluation is thorough. For instance, leaders use lesson visits, learning walks, departmental reviews, regular analysis of assessment information and engagement with parents and pupils to inform their planning related to the curriculum. Weekly senior leadership and departmental meetings shape priorities and feed into the school development plan. The staff appraisal process and training, led by the director of staff development, provides coaching, mentoring and training to staff. Leaders ensure that they have a precise understanding about what works well in the school, and where improvements are needed.
8. The school's ethos is visible in daily life. Pupils are encouraged to explore new experiences, participate widely and develop self-confidence. They are supported to mature and flourish, including the youngest children, where knowledgeable leaders provide a curriculum that supports their early learning and development, including in communication and language.
9. Leaders ensure that an appropriate risk assessment policy is in place and implemented effectively. Leaders operate a coherent risk-management cycle that draws on a range of risk management requirements, including those related to premises checks, trip reviews, safeguarding logs and curriculum risk registers. Governors receive a consolidated termly risk report and test control effectiveness through visits and external audits. Collectively, they ensure that risk is appropriately considered and adeptly managed.
10. Leaders prioritise the wellbeing of pupils in the decisions that they take. The school's approaches to wellbeing are thoroughly embedded. For example, pupils benefit from a structured approach to managing their understanding about how to look after their own wellbeing in an age-appropriate way. This approach is delivered through the programme of assemblies, mindfulness and dedicated spaces such as 'zen rooms'. The programme for PSHE and RSE is adapted annually so that it remains relevant to each cohort. Staff respond promptly to friendship issues and model respectful behaviour.
11. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils' wellbeing and safety are well supported. Safeguarding leaders work closely with external agencies, including children's services and mental health and wellbeing teams, to provide timely specialist support for pupils when needed. Attendance is monitored carefully and statutory notifications to the local authority are made when pupils join or leave at non-standard transition points. The school meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010, reviewing its accessibility plan regularly and making adaptations such as installing hearing loops.

12. Governors hold leaders to account. Governors bring professional expertise, monitor health and safety through a committee and commission external audits to assess compliance. They receive detailed reports from leaders and ensure resources are directed towards pupils' needs. Complaints are managed transparently in line with policy, with governors convening panels when required. Governors monitor compliance explicitly against statutory guidance, review regular compliance reports and sample evidence, including that related to recruitment, policies and premises.
13. Information for parents and other relevant external agencies, including statutory documents and inspection reports, is available, often on the school's website. Parents are provided with appropriate information and reports related to their children's progress and achievement. If they were to have any, leaders understand how to fulfil their responsibilities to provide information to the local authority related to any pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, including information related to finance and funding.

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

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

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders ensure that the youngest children benefit from a curriculum that provides a well-planned and well-sequenced age-appropriate programme of activities that support children's early learning and developmental needs. The curriculum in the early years builds on children's knowledge, understanding and skills. Leaders support children's communication and language, with staff modelling rich vocabulary, turn-taking, questioning and sharing ideas confidently. Exploratory play, storytelling and music lessons provide meaningful opportunities for children to practise speaking and listening in purposeful contexts.
16. As pupils get older, the curriculum is planned so that it plans to build wide-ranging knowledge and skills. Leaders invest in specialist teaching, including providing opportunities for pupils to learn a range of languages over time. For instance, younger pupils experience a range of interesting topics with some specialist teaching, for example in French. They have lots of opportunities to build their foundation skills in reading, writing and mathematics across this curriculum. As they get older, pupils experience specialist teaching in specific subject areas, so that they build a richer understanding of the content of the individual curriculum subjects.
17. Leaders promote cross-curricular opportunities which enhance the continuity of provision across year groups. For instance, Year 1 pupils learning English and art through a shared text, or collaborative assemblies between music and drama, support pupils' creativity and confidence across both areas of their learning. These links provide pupils with memorable experiences and strengthen their ability to transfer knowledge and skills between subjects. Leaders also provide opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to apply their learning in more independent ways across cross curricular themes, such as in Years 7 and 8 where pupils study projects which require them to use a range of knowledge and skills from a range of subjects.
18. Teachers are knowledgeable and skilled in the areas that they teach. They are inclusive and responsive to the needs of pupils. They use a range of strategies to identify what pupils know and can do. They provide pupils with a range of high-quality resources to deliver the curriculum. Teachers encourage pupils across subjects, such as history, geography and religious studies (RS), to debate, reason and consider global perspectives. They encourage pupils to be curious and to learn from their mistakes.
19. Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils who have SEND are well identified. They provide specific guidance to teachers about how best to support pupils' needs. Teachers plan carefully so that lessons, including adaptations such as specific activities, seating plans and sensory resources enable pupils who have SEND to access learning fully alongside their peers. When needed, pupils who have SEND access additional support, through small nurture groups for instance. Pupils learn effectively in lessons and over time achieve well.
20. Although no pupils are formally identified as speaking EAL, leaders are knowledgeable about how to identify and support bilingual learners, especially those in the early stages of learning English. Staff are well trained to provide a range of support, including targeted spelling support, vocabulary checks and visual prompts to ensure pupils who need it can acquire necessary linguistic skills and knowledge.

21. Leaders monitor pupil progress systematically, using standardised testing and assessment information to inform planning. Teachers make effective use of this data alongside a range of subject-appropriate assessment techniques to adapt their teaching and track attainment. They provide pupils with effective guidance and feedback, which pupils use effectively to improve their understanding. As they get older, pupils develop high quality dialogue with teachers that supports their progress and self-confidence.
22. Learning is enriched through a wide-ranging programme of trips, clubs and activities which extend pupils' interests and foster new skills. Opportunities include languages, robotics, baking, chess, sport, outdoor learning and creative arts, as well as music ensembles. A high proportion of pupils take part in the wide choice of co-curricular opportunities available. Leaders encourage pupils to contribute their own ideas for new activities, and provision is adapted annually to sustain variety and breadth.

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

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

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

24. Staff deliver a wide programme of physical education (PE) and sport that develops fitness, co-ordination and teamwork. Teachers support pupils effectively and give regular feedback to improve pupils' understanding and skills in games, swimming, athletics and outdoor activities. Leaders extend opportunities by organising clubs such as futsal and cross country. Pupils build resilience through the range of competitive fixtures that they access. Pupils participate safely, including those who are developing early fine and gross motor skills. Pupils also learn about nutrition, oral health and physical activity that promote healthy lifestyles.
25. The youngest children's personal, emotional and physical development is well supported. In specialist PE lessons, children develop and enhance their co-ordination. They also develop confidence and strength through climbing, movement and fine motor play throughout their curriculum in the well-resourced indoor and outdoor environment. Staff successfully encourage children to listen to each other, work together to solve problems and to share in the success of their peers. Consequently, children are kind and caring to each other.
26. The curriculum in PSHE, including statutory coverage of RSE, is well planned to develop as pupils get older, so that pupils from early years through to Year 8 learn about important topics in an age-appropriate way. Teachers deliver this curriculum with sensitivity and adapt to the needs of pupils. For example, younger pupils learn about friendships and recognising feelings, while older pupils explore consent, discrimination and healthy relationships in greater depth. Through RS, assemblies and form discussions, leaders ensure that pupils explore different world religions, family celebrations and the concept of faith. Staff promote respect and empathy by leading discussions about rights and equality that strengthen pupils' moral awareness.
27. Pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing are well supported through assemblies, journaling activities, mindfulness sessions and outdoor learning. Leaders train peer mentors, introduce digital check-ins and have established ambassador roles so that pupils have more ways to report any concerns. Workshops and visiting speakers address topics such as online behaviour and body image. Leaders use assemblies, surveys and workshops to address emerging issues such as sleep and stress, ensuring the programme remains relevant and responsive. Staff training, including that related to mental health, equips adults to identify issues early and provide timely help.
28. Leaders' approaches to behaviour and anti-bullying are well established and understood by staff and pupils. There are appropriate policies that align with relevant statutory guidance. Many pupils are highly positive role models who take on responsibilities, such as organising form time, performances, projects and classroom activities. Teachers recognise citizenship, industry and the school values of 'ready, responsible and respectful' through awards, while leaders promote responsibility through roles such as form captain. Staff maintain positive relationships with pupils that foster respect. However, some staff do not always apply behaviour expectations consistently, especially during changeover and transition times between lessons. This results in some poorer behaviour in corridors, and some pupils take longer to settle and be ready to learn.
29. Staff maintain accurate admissions and attendance registers in line with statutory guidance. They follow up absence promptly. Leaders analyse attendance data to identify emerging patterns and work with families to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders work appropriately with external

agencies, when needed, including the local authority to support pupils and their families where there are ongoing or serious attendance concerns.

30. Leaders embed inclusion across provision. Teachers use PSHE and RSE to help pupils consider people protected under the Equality Act 2010 with respect. There is an appropriate accessibility plan in place and available on the website. Leaders implement this plan effectively to ensure that pupils can access all aspects of their learning effectively. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities.
31. Leaders monitor health and safety procedures carefully and ensure statutory requirements are met, including those related to fire risk. Premises are well maintained. Staff supervise pupils appropriately, including the required supervision levels for the youngest children in the early years. The school day, such as breaktimes, are managed well with a high staff presence supported by trained pupil peer mentors. Procedures for administering first aid and medication are thorough. Staff keep detailed records, communicate clearly with parents and put care plans into practice so that pupils with health needs are well supported.

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

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

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

33. Leaders ensure that the youngest children are taught the importance of co-operation, kindness and responsibility. In the early years, staff model social interaction through routines such as snack time, circle activities and role play, which develop turn-taking, empathy and awareness of rules. Staff use consistent language such as 'kind hands and kind words' to reinforce expectations, and explicit teaching helps younger children know right from wrong from the outset.
34. Pupils learn about the value of public services, such as police and health services. For instance, the youngest children act out community roles through play, supported by staff who model respectful interactions and talk through how everyone contributes to keeping people safe.
35. Citizenship is actively promoted through assemblies, the curriculum and wider school life. Pupils learn about democracy, liberty, respect and tolerance through the PSHE curriculum, the 'votes for schools' programme and form-time debates. RS lessons and philosophy enrichment opportunities encourage pupils to discuss inclusion, discrimination and fairness. Cultural and religious events within school foster appreciation of diversity, including through assemblies and close links with local places of worship. Pupils are respectful and courteous, listen respectfully to one another and debate their different views confidently. They conduct themselves responsibly beyond the school site, including when using public transport.
36. Leaders ensure that pupils develop independence and life skills appropriate to their stage. In the early years, children manage routines such as self-registration, dressing and personal hygiene with growing confidence. The newly introduced 'digital portfolio' enables older pupils to evidence skills such as resilience, collaboration and independence through a digital portfolio, preparing them for senior school and future life. Across the school, pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility and aspire to positions of leadership, developing the maturity needed for the next stage of their education and beyond.
37. Leaders promote a culture of service and responsibility through volunteering and charitable initiatives. Pupils contribute within the school by running clubs, acting as peer mentors and taking part in councils and committees, such as Year 8 pupils who help to deliver a sports programme for younger children. Pupils hold positions such as form captain, vice-captain and eco-council representatives, while others take part in initiatives such as litter picking, building their awareness of their impact on the environment. In the community, pupils partner with local schools, perform at a local hospice and support projects such as foodbank collections and environmental work. Pupils help others and build their own sense of responsibility.
38. Careers education is woven into the curriculum from the early years through to Year 8, supported by the PSHE curriculum, trips, workshops and visiting speakers. Leaders help pupils to understand how subjects link to future pathways and provide opportunities for interview practice and study skills. Leaders review the programme using pupil feedback and ensure that pupils' abilities, interests and aspirations are well planned for so that pupils explore a range of career pathways.
39. Leaders prepare pupils for future economic wellbeing through the curriculum, practical experiences and enterprise opportunities. For example, in PSHE, teachers introduce financial literacy such as simple budgeting and informed spending choices. Older pupils take part in an enterprise challenge

where they design a product or service, plan a basic budget and present a short pitch to a panel of adults. Pupils compile digital portfolios to record and reflect on skills they have learned. Leaders also encourage pupils to enter competitions. These experiences build initiative, critical thinking and problem-solving, preparing pupils to apply knowledge in everyday contexts with growing confidence.

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

**40. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

41. Leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements fulfil the school's statutory obligations and that there is a culture of vigilance to pupils' safeguarding, safety and wellbeing. Policies and protocols take account of relevant guidance. These approaches align with all other aspects of the school's procedures for attendance, behaviour and online safety. Leaders implement safeguarding processes adeptly in all aspects of their work.
42. Recruitment processes are undertaken appropriately, with all required checks completed before adults begin working at the school. Safer recruitment training is undertaken by staff involved in appointments. Governors ensure leaders' approaches to recruitment are compliant through visits and audits. The single central record of recruitment checks is accurate, securely stored and checked regularly.
43. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, including at induction when they first start at the school. Training for all staff is enhanced through regular updates, briefings, and bulletins. Additional training about pupils' safety and wellbeing, such as that related to paediatric first aid qualifications, is in place and training records are well maintained. Through this ongoing training, staff knowledge is kept current.
44. Staff apply safeguarding procedures with confidence, logging concerns swiftly through the school's chosen digital systems, including any low-level concerns. They also use other school systems effectively to support safeguarding, safety and wellbeing. For instance, thorough supervision of pupils throughout the school day, appropriate implementation of risk assessments and the use of the school's digital registration system for attendance are well embedded in staff daily routine.
45. Safeguarding leaders maintain secure records and consult effectively with relevant external agencies, when needed. Weekly meetings with senior leaders and governors provide oversight of cases and timely action is taken when concerns arise.
46. Governors maintain oversight through visits, reviews of documentation and regular audits. They provide quality assurance of safeguarding leaders' work. Information related to safeguarding is shared routinely with the remainder of the governing body. Governors maintain safeguarding training and provide challenge and support for leaders.
47. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including online. They know whom to approach if worried. They access additional support through pastoral systems. Additional support, for example related to mental health, is available, when needed. Appropriate filtering and monitoring systems for the school's online systems and digital devices are in place. Leaders review these and act quickly to address any concerns.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Arnold House School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	213/6034
<b>Registered charity number</b>	312725
<b>Address</b>	Arnold House School 1-3 Loudoun Road St. John's Wood London NW8 0LH
<b>Phone number</b>	020 7266 4840
<b>Email address</b>	office@arnoldhouse.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	www.arnoldhouse.co.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Arnold House School Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Monish Sahni
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Giles Tollit
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 13
<b>Number of pupils</b>	362
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 to 24 November 2022

## Information about the school

49. The school is an independent day school for male pupils aged three to 13. The school is a charitable foundation, whose trustees also provide governance. The school is situated in St John's Wood, London. The school is spread across three sites. There is a pre-prep site for Nursery, Reception and Year 1 located at Marlborough Place. There is a prep site for pupils from Year 2 to Year 8 located at Loudon Road. There is a third site based at Canons Park which is used for academic lessons, drama, PSHE and Forest School as well as 'sports and activities'. A new chair of governors was appointed in June 2025.
50. There are 82 children in the early years comprising four classes, two in Reception for children aged four to five years old, and two in Pre-reception for children aged three to four years old. The school has been granted an exemption from the curriculum requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) since September 2022.
51. The school has identified 79 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
52. The school has identified that no pupils speak English as an additional language.
53. The school aims to provide academic excellence within a culture that nurtures individual achievement. It seeks to enable pupils to become good citizens within a caring Christian ethos that values the broad curriculum. The school aspires for pupils to develop self-confidence and a love of learning, to reach their full potential in preparation for a successful progression to their chosen senior school.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

23 to 25 September 2025

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

55. Inspection activities included:

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

56. 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](http://www.isi.net)**.

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