Good Schools Guide review - updated 2025

Notting Hill & Ealing High School
A GSG SCHOOL

Why we think Notting Hill and Ealing High School, London is a good school

Notting Hill and Ealing High School is pervaded by a sense of good humour, with the ability to work hard yet not always to take life too seriously. 'It's learning with fun', enthused one parent. It is a genuinely academic school which delivers excellent results but with an understated air. Parents say it feels more inclusive and 'less chippy' than some competitors, lacking their 'hard edge of superiority.' It's a 'happy, tolerant place' with an 'unfussy and unintimidating' atmosphere. NHEHS is an unshowy school that consistently delivers a rounded education and demonstrates admirably that kindness counts.

Headteacher

Head Mrs Allison Saunders

Since April 2025, Allison Saunders, previously senior deputy head at St Catherine's, an independent girls' school in Twickenham, for two years. Before that, deputy head at St Helen's in Northwood. Has also held positions at Haberdashers' Girls' School and Queen Anne's, Caversham, and has worked outside the education sector with the civil service and in consultancy roles.

Entrance & admissions

Very oversubscribed but, say parents, a personalised approach to ad hoc places, with 'a big shout out' for the 'really accessible and kind' admissions staff. Four-form entry at year 7. Around 45 girls move up from the junior school each year (automatic progression provided coping academically), with another 50 coming from local primaries and preps—praise for 'well-thought-through integration of newcomers.' The school is a member of the London 11+ Consortium, whose assessment consists of a 100-minute online adaptive test to assess potential in creative and critical

thinking, analysis, synthesis and problem-solving. For occasional places at 12+ and 13+, applicants sit maths, English and MFL exams. All applicants to the senior school have a one-to-one interview. 'We are looking for girls with an inquiring nature,' says the school and parents agree 'there isn't just one type.'
Around six to 10 girls join at sixth form. Entry requires grade 8 or above at GCSE in their proposed A level subjects, and a minimum of grade 7 in at least five further subjects. There is also a 30-minute written paper in each proposed A level subject, followed by interviews with the relevant heads of departments and head of sixth form.

Open days May, June, October and November

Exit

The number leaving after GCSEs varies greatly from year to year. Most of the leavers are looking for co-ed schools, primarily local state sixth forms such as Twyford, but also some co-ed independents. School is not complacent about its sixth form offer and certainly there are plenty of compelling reasons to stay, not least that staff know their pupils well and leadership opportunities abound. Majority head straight to university after A levels, predominately Russell Group, with Bath, Bristol and UCL current favourites. Several most years to art foundations. STEM related degrees perennially popular, including aeronautics and astronautics, mechanical engineering and computer science, as well as strong interest in economics, classics and modern languages. Three to Oxbridge in 2024, and six medics. Increasing interest in international universities; one heading to the University of Michigan and one to Trinity College Dublin in 2024. 'Guidance on universities is second to none', according to several parents; conversations start gently in year 10 and head is joint chair of GSA/HMC's universities committee.

Latest results

In 2025, 93 per cent 9-7 at GCSE; 62 per cent A*/A at A level (91 per cent A*-B). In 2024, 91 per cent 9-7 at GCSE; 70 per cent A*/A at A level (95 per cent A*-B).

A levels or equivalent - Average points score (2025)
School 48.23
LA avg. 37.07
Eng. avg. 35.08

Teaching & learning

NHEHS 'fosters education above and beyond the curriculum', say parents, especially in years 7-9 before the inevitable constraints of GCSEs kick in. It gets the balance right between creating a nurturing environment and being thoroughly outward-looking, fostering an impressive range of links with other schools locally, nationally and internationally and producing a staggering number of student-led journals. Plenty of opportunities for stretch - we met a year 10 student who was excited about attending a forthcoming STEM conference in Philadelphia and sixth

formers engaged in 'greenSTEM' research projects with Imperial postgrads. An engineering programme runs throughout the school with different projects for each year group. Stairwells full of busy displays about science projects, which our guides bubbled over with enthusiasm for, reminiscing fondly about flour explosions and being a 'duckling mummy' in year 7.
Humanities are not neglected, however, and also offer innovative approaches. VR is being trialled in classics and geography. Carousel of modern languages in year 7, including Mandarin (a NHEHS staple), with Latin added in year 8. Strong language teaching reflected in high uptake of languages including classics at A level. English department also garnered high praise, encouraging young writers to work on school journals and the Newsquest young reporter scheme, and we could happily have spent the day listening to an inspiring A level English group discussing Hamlet.
Parents say that generally 'teaching is very, very good' and pupils agree that teachers (several of whom are alumnae) 'are very inclusive and make the time to support us.' 'There's a collegiate relationship between pupils and teachers', noted one parent, which doesn't detract from high academic expectations. A warm and mutually respectful dynamic prevailed in all the lessons we visited, with girls entirely comfortable whether working independently, asking questions or sharing their views.
School 'strives for excellent academics without excessive pressure', agree parents, and also embeds skills sought by graduate employers – teamwork, entrepreneurship, digital literacy — across the curriculum. Laudable efforts to ensure years 10 and 11 aren't just about 'jumping through the GCSE hoops', with plenty of intellectual stretch and encouragement to explore academic interest eg through the innovative and over-subscribed academic symposia and research projects held with Harrow (some parents would like to see more girls able to participate in these). We loved reading the outcomes of a year 10 exploration of bees through science, literature and music and were intrigued by a sixth form study of gender in subjects as diverse as biochemistry and textiles. Sixth form symposium participants are also paired with industry/academic mentors.
'They create curious and passionate girls who really enjoy learning', approved one parent and we certainly saw this in action. 'Pi day', part of science and maths week, was in full flow during our visit, with Pi scavenger hunts around the school, Pi pies on sale at break and a range of mathematically-inspired games in the atrium. The NHEHS spirit was in full fettle, with girls of all ages cheering on competitors reciting Pi numbers at impressive speed.
Most sixth formers take three A levels plus EPQ, alongside short courses such as Italian and photography plus life skills as part of weekly enrichment programme. Plenty of opportunities for stretch – we met a year 10 student who was excited about attending a forthcoming STEM conference in Philadelphia

Qualifications taken in 2025

- A level
- EPQ
- GCSE

6:1 Pupil to teacher ratio
17 Average class sizes (up to GCSE)

Learning support & SEN

Learning support provision has been enhanced recently, with a new full-time SENCo who parents say is 'absolutely on it', liaising closely with pastoral and academic teams and providing 'really proactive support' including identifying specific issues. Nineteen per cent with a formal diagnosis, including ADHD, ASD, dyscalculia and some complex needs. Colour-coded provision map (triangulated with pastoral tracking) that all teachers can access helps monitor any developing patterns. SEN team also includes junior school specialist who works cross-phase plus a learning support assistant. Support mainly through one-to-ones (no extra charge), which pupils say they prefer, before or after school if necessary. Very positive approach to neurodiversity: 'We prefer to celebrate individuals not conditions', and parents agree that there is 'a very strong positive mental health culture' that embraces everyone.

0.22% Students with a SEN EHCP
13.87% Students with SEN support

Arts & extracurricular

'Music is 'exceptionally good' and 'incredibly inclusive', offering 'an eclectic mix' from indie rock to a capella that 'allows us to express ourselves in whatever way we want musically', say girls. Plenty of workshops with composers and professional musicians, as well as musician-in-residence, and even year 7s have a class orchestra and learn how to conduct. Ensembles at all levels, some requiring audition and others open to all; all music scholars from year 9 up lead at least one. School has recently appointed a director of choral singing to expand its musical offer and extend its partnership work.

High quality art on display throughout the school, including inventive textiles and stunning linoprints. We loved the air of creative industry in the spacious art room, chilled café jazz playing while year 7s created gorgeous felted models. Very high take up at GCSE and A level, with students preparing inventive designs for the architecture/recycling-themed fashion show. Our guides also enthused about DT – 'we can't tell you how much fun we have in classes'— and it's popular at GCSE, with several students a year going on to gain Arkwright engineering scholarships. 'Really strong culture' of student-led drama, with the popular 'backstage pass' that sees 'incredibly focussed' sixth formers train younger girls in lighting and stage management. Fabulous performance spaces and drama tech support a good variety of 'really bold and impressive' productions including The Addams Family and The Rover.

A mind-boggling 120 clubs a week, mainly at lunch for younger years but also before and after school, include a quirky range of student-led offerings such as

‘knitter natter’ whose knitted sunflowers are sported by Ukrainian soldiers, wittily-titled physics club ‘defining gravity’ and the very popular ‘memento mori’ (think medicine meets Horrible Histories). STEM-based opportunities proliferate – including popular ‘space tech’ club run by year 12 and competitive programming masterclass with a former Cambridge don; school also recently hosted a GDST-wide astrophysics conference.

Leadership starts early, with public speaking in year 7 and plenty of house drama, debating and fundraising events initiated by pupils. Enthusiastic participation in GDST-wide events, from film-making competitions to MFL spelling bees to sport. ‘They have exposure to so many opportunities that the challenge is what to leave out of their personal statements’, observed one parent.

DofE popular, with heaps of volunteering opportunities including helping out with clubs. ‘It’s a school with a conscience’, say parents, and this ethos clearly permeates the school culture, with students keen to talk about volunteering projects and mentoring, including a recent ‘hackathon’ with several local schools. Year 10/11 enrichment programme sees students spending at least half a term on a community engagement project such as teaching Latin in local state primary.

NHEHS has its eyes firmly on the future, developing ‘real world skills’ alongside excellent academics. Around a dozen sixth formers take the GDST enterprise diploma, a ‘mini MBA’ devised by NHEHS and accredited by Buckingham University. Four to five teams in years 8 and 12 participate in young enterprise competition Tycoon and our guides enthused about interesting speakers from academic experts on colonisation to angel investors.

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Sport

Engagement and standard of sport ‘has shot up in the last few years’, with 97 per cent of year 7 representing the school in something. Very successful competitively, especially in netball (U16 team reached England finals this year), cricket (U12 and U13 Ladies Taverners winners) and water-polo (U13 national champions) – the lovely pool is a real winner and year 11s up can train as lifeguards. ‘Really broad range of sports’, including trampolining, Zumba, golf and yoga, means that ‘every girl can find the sport they love’, approve parents, with no ‘major/minor’ hierarchy or gender stereotypes here – football growing in popularity, and cricket has now replaced rounders, with NHEHS now in The Cricketer’s top 20 girls’ schools nationally. Plenty of teams, but some would welcome more training opportunities (eg in water polo) for year 7 newcomers and high-performing sportswomen can perhaps find themselves overly in demand. Sports day aims for collective fun, complete with tug of war, alongside celebrating personal bests.

Ethos & heritage

Founded in 1873, NHEHS is the oldest in the Girls' Day School Trust family and embodies its feminist values 'with a really good vibe'. Firm commitment to girls-only education, based on GDST's solid research and school's own experience. Its approach allows girls to become confident, questioning members of society who will find their path in whatever takes their fancy, be it astrophysics or costume design. School emphasises its pioneering spirit and 'have a go' culture, with assemblies about its history alongside new traditions established by girls with admirable frequency – eg house university challenge set up by house captains a few years ago. Parents pick up on how involved pupils are from open day onwards, noting the 'palpable sense of joy and fun': it's 'not just the head's show.'

'No either-or' is the school's strapline, and this sense of tradition reinvented is echoed in the marriage of old and new buildings, with plenty of versatile spaces. Handsome London-stock villa is enhanced at the rear by a stunning glass-walled atrium with tiered balconies full of girls working independently. Friendly, relaxed air in the modern book-lined entrance, presided over by a huge oil-painting of the first headmistress. Sixth form have their own very stylish self-contained modern block on the other side of what will be the new junior school (due to be completed end of 2023).

Strong spirit of social and environmental responsibility – 'it's important that our students appreciate how privileged they are'. Extensive local partnerships, opening up the school through joint academic/careers events, monthly Saturday 'Buds' programme for state primary pupils, and Tuesday afternoon enrichment programme that sees years 10 and 11 spent volunteering in local schools and care homes. When we visited, a suitably graphic Royal Institution show on the digestive system was eliciting gasps of horrified delight from year 5 visitors. Distinguished alumnae include historian Bethany Hughes.

Pastoral care, inclusivity & discipline

'Extraordinarily brilliant' pastoral team, enthuse parents, who say school supports girls with a wide range of needs in a highly individualised and very joined-up way. Starting point is helping each girl feel safe and secure to try things out – easy to say, harder to do, but NHEHS manages this beautifully; parents can't speak highly enough of how staff at all levels work with parents to help girls thrive. And thrive they most certainly do! Parents were fulsome in their praise of how shy girls have been supported to become confident sportswomen and public speakers, developing strong friendships and excelling academically. Strong vertical relationships encouraged through the house system and extra-curricular activities, plus the popular 'big sister, little sister' peer mentoring system: year 12 mentors spoke fondly of their own experience as year 7s.

Strong focus on positive mental health, with sixth form psychologists working with year 10 digital leads and wellbeing reps to research and promote healthy use of social media. Several teachers trained as coaches to help students work through lower-level worries (eg essay procrastination); professional counsellors on hand for more complex issues. Big focus too on inclusivity; diversity council runs a programme of events throughout the year to celebrate school's many different faiths and cultures as well as addressing inequalities. 'It's a very open-minded place', agreed everyone we spoke to; 'you're really accepted for who you are'.
We loved the innovative World Ready programme, which engages all year groups in exploring how the world would look like based on kindness and community. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and challenge emerging orthodoxies and different opinions without confrontation.

Widespread praise too for talks on pastoral issues for parents. Only slight parental niggle was lack of proactive contact from form tutors, but girls we spoke to felt they always had someone they could go to with any concerns. Behavioural issues are rare, and any that arise 'aren't allowed to fester.'

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Mobile phone policy

A clear mobile phone policy is a really important part of modern schooling. This school has provided us with their policy.

Years 7-9 are not allowed a smartphone. Year 7-11 must put their phones in their lockers on arrival and may not use them unless permission is given for a specific educational reason. Otherwise they will be confiscated for a week. For years 12-13, mobile phones should be switched off and kept out of sight during lessons and in the main school buildings. Year 12-13 girls may use their phones in the sixth form centre if this is not disruptive to others or to the normal routine of the school.
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Pupils & parents

Generally quite local families but good coach routes broaden the demographic, eg to Bayswater, Kensal Rise and Kew. Attracts down-to-earth professionals — 'people with a love of learning,' said one — who value good education and intellectual endeavour but also put a premium on kindness rather than social cachet. Strong sense of community — staff and parent team recently competed in the Ealing half marathon to raise funds for a local children's charity, and the annual careers fair is very well supported by parents, offering advice on CVs and interview practice. Articulate and friendly students are supportive of each other and accepting of newcomers, say girls and parents alike. We noticed plenty of good-natured interaction between year groups as we toured the school. 'It's a very kind

environment,' with a strong focus on diversity, and all agree that 'you can just be yourself here'. Not the 'edgiest' of pupils perhaps, say parents (quietly relieved about a somewhat less precocious party scene than at some competitors), but NHEHS produces confident, interesting and well-rounded young women, 'good-hearted and generous-spirited', whose readiness to take on the world should not be underestimated. Strong alumnae engagement with plenty of input into careers festival and sixth form talks speaks volumes about the school ethos of giving back.
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624 Number of pupils

Money matters

Academic scholarships and music scholarships, worth 10 to 20 per cent of the fees, available for year 7s. At sixth form there are academic, art, music, sport and drama scholarships, usually worth five per cent of the fees. Means-tested bursaries (up to 100 per cent) available, and scholarships can be supplemented by these. Currently around 45 girls benefit from bursaries (almost eight per cent of pupils).

Notting Hill and Ealing High School fees
£29,424 pa (2026 - 27 academic year)

The last word

Notting Hill and Ealing High School is pervaded by a sense of good humour, with the ability to work hard yet not always to take life too seriously. 'It's learning with fun', enthused one parent. It is a genuinely academic school which delivers excellent results but with an understated air. Parents say it feels more inclusive and 'less chippy' than some competitors, lacking their 'hard edge of superiority.' It's a 'happy, tolerant place' with an 'unfussy and unintimidating' atmosphere. NHEHS is an unshowy school that consistently delivers a rounded education and demonstrates admirably that kindness counts.