

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Abbot's Hill School

January 2020



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School's Details

School	Abbot's Hill School			
DfE number	919/6000			
Early Years registration number	EY490982			
Registered charity number	3110533			
Address	Abbot's Hill School Bunkers lane Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP3 8RP			
Telephone number	01442 240333			
Email address	enquiries@abbotshill.herts.sch.uk			
Head	Mrs Kathryn Gorman			
Chair of governors	Mrs Janet Mark			
Age range	0 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	551			
	EYFS	77	Juniors	175
	Seniors	299	Sixth Form	0
Inspection dates	14 to 16 January 2020			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Abbot's Hill School is an independent day school for pupils aged between 6 months and 16 years. It is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils and additionally for boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The Board of Abbot's Hill School Limited acts as the Board of Governors of the School. It is a non-profit making charitable trust.
- 1.2 Since the last inspection a new Head, Bursar and Head of Prep have been appointed and four additional classrooms, a design technology suite and an outdoor learning environment have been developed.
- 1.3 The school was founded in 1912 as a Church of England boarding school for girls but later became a day school. The school comprises a co-educational nursery and pre-school, a girls' prep school and a girls' senior school occupying a single site.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school's vision is to develop happy self-assured, compassionate young people, expertly prepared to face the world through a relevant, ambitious and inclusive curriculum.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds, the majority living within a 10-mile radius of the school. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 85 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) including dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). Data used by the school has identified 67 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for other pupils because of their special talents in a variety of subjects and interests.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as met or as not met. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), and [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2017 to 2019, performance has been well above the national average for all schools.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

The quality and standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

- 2.20 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is outstanding.
- 2.21 Leaders take excellent care to ensure that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum is implemented fully. Curriculum and care are carefully designed to meet the needs of all children including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and English as an additional language (EAL). Particular attention is paid to fostering children's personal and emotional development so that they can learn and thrive. Requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare are fully met and staff have a secure and thorough understanding of the regulations and their own responsibilities for protecting children. They know not only the rules but the purposes of them and how their implementation is beneficial for the children in their care.
- 2.22 Leadership and management have excellent procedures in place for continuous self-evaluation and development and securing continuous development that improves the children's education. This is shared amongst the staff who take responsibility for the evaluation of their own rooms and practice. Children make excellent progress from their varied starting points and are well prepared for the transition to the next stage of their education. Leaders have taken careful note of the recommendation in the previous inspection: 'To ensure the outside classroom poses greater challenges and gives children more opportunities to investigate', and have provided a range of equipment and opportunities for risk taking and investigation which have been actively engaged in by children in the setting.

Quality of education

- 2.23 The quality of education is outstanding.
- 2.24 Leaders and management have designed and implemented a challenging, demanding and appropriate curriculum that meets the needs of all children in the setting. The content, sequencing and progression of the curriculum is demanding and ensures that children are able to consolidate and deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills across all areas that they are challenged in. This was observed when a child was asked about their interests and responded, 'dinosaurs' and then was further prompted as to why dinosaurs interested him. Rigorous oversight of planning and assessment ensure that practitioners deliver a stimulating and progressive curriculum that focuses on the prime areas while prioritising independence and resilience. Practitioners provide opportunities for risk and challenge and are happy to observe children and allow children to test their capabilities before intervening as necessary. This was seen when a child was cautiously experimenting and testing his own physical proficiency when walking down the climbing frame steps. His hesitation was observed but the practitioner did not intervene until the child asked for assistance by extending his hand.
- 2.25 Language development is supported by knowledgeable practitioners who sensitively use conversations and interactions with the children to model speech, praise children's attempts and build confidence in the child's own use of language to communicate their needs, wants and wishes. This takes place when interacting with other children and staff, particularly their key person and so builds linguistic cultural capital and knowledge. The staff know that language understanding precedes speech to provide a rich stimulating language environment for the children, preparing them very effectively for the next stage of their education.

Behaviour and attitudes

- 2.26 Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding.

- 2.27 High quality resources, a challenging investigative curriculum and adults who show a thoughtful understanding of children's developmental needs, enable children to demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning, constructive behaviour and productive relationships. This was seen when children were fully engaged while playing with colourful spaghetti that provided a nest for a collection of large plastic insects. The tactile experience of the slimy pasta and the fascination with the model insects motivated the children through sensory stimulation to actively investigate, explore, and discover textures, smell and colour, both individually and collaboratively. In the outdoor areas the availability of resources enables children to make their own choices and think critically about what they are doing and how a problem such as getting in and out of the model cars could be solved without direct adult input. This approach promotes children's ability to manage their own feelings and behaviour extremely well and supports excellent relationships between children. Parents are encouraged to have their children attend regularly, which contributes to the children's feelings of safety and security.

Personal development

- 2.28 The personal development of children is outstanding.
- 2.29 The key person system is embedded in the setting. Generous ratios enable staff to build a warm close relationship with the child for whom they are responsible. Key persons take responsibility for personal hygiene needs, sleeping routines and mealtimes for their children and encourage increasing independence in these areas. They establish warm reciprocal relationships with parents and carers. Children form secure bonds with their key person and so develop independence and confidence when dealing with other adults and children. For example, as two children played with dolls, one child wanted both dolls; a three-word reminder from the adult, "remember, good sharing", enabled them to solve this problem. The setting uses digital technology safely with appropriate controls and supervision which enables children to gain an effective understanding of risk.
- 2.30 An excellent range of home cooked meals and snacks strongly contributes not only to the children's health but to their social and personal development. Noticeable was the skilful way that children independently fed themselves, supported by encouragement and praise from their key person. Photographs of themselves on their own cup enable the children to find their cup easily. Children are able to access freely the outside areas and use a variety of stimulating equipment to pursue activities, including climbing that encourages risk taking when moving unaided up and down slopes and steps. Focus and perseverance are seen when children dig in the mud area or construct guttering channels to observe and examine the flow of water. Adults support this independent exploration by praise, approval and applause.
- 2.31 Adults demonstrate a clear and reflective understanding not only of child development and how outcomes can be promoted but also show excellent understanding and implementation of policies and procedures including statutory requirements for safeguarding and welfare. The culture of the nursery is welcoming and inclusive, high quality displays explicitly link to early years outcomes and fundamental British values. These values are further demonstrated when children's choices are respected by the adults. Books, dolls, toys and names in other scripts reflect and respect the diversity and differing needs of the community.

Leadership and management

- 2.32 Leadership and management are outstanding.
- 2.33 Leaders and managers' vision for the EYFS is inspired by their passion and enthusiasm for the children in their care. Their knowledge and insight of how to support, motivate and encourage the practitioners who are confident, reflective and have a thorough understanding of the policies, procedures and are fully cognisant of their statutory responsibilities for example, relating to safeguarding and the Equality Act 2010 is outstanding.

- 2.34 Professional development is strong with training provided for all compulsory requirements; safeguarding, food hygiene, paediatric first aid. In addition, leaders identify other training needs through evaluation and the well-regarded supervision system. This training and reflection results in a positive impact on the care and outcomes for the children who attend Abbot's Hill nursery. Leaders and managers carefully consider pupil's needs and stages of development ensuring that all children, particularly those with SEND are appropriately supported for their individual needs. Great care is taken that children with EAL are supported and their home language is identified and respected. Consequently, children gain confidence in their own language ability.
- 2.35 The leaders and managers have a close relationship with the local authority and are pursuing further accreditation in order to improve practice and outcomes for the children. This has enabled them to start to begin to share their excellent practice with other settings. Leaders encourage parents to be involved through care diaries, conversations with the key person and welcoming accounts of significant family outings and celebrations. Leaders also encourage nursery parental involvement in whole school parent forums and events. This helps the child to develop confidence as their home is recognised, respected and celebrated in the setting. Leaders and all staff speak highly of the active involvement and support of the senior leadership of the whole school as well as the governors, including governor visits during times when the nursery is open and the school is on holiday. Leaders are held to account for the quality of the care and education by a very supportive governing body which has developed an effective strategic view of the importance of the setting in the context of the whole school.

Compliance with statutory requirements

- 2.36 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.**

Recommendation for further improvement

In the context of the outstanding provision and outcomes, the setting might wish to consider:

- Ensuring that the outstanding practice in the setting is shared.

3. 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

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

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils show strongly developed communication skills and apply them consistently well to all areas of their learning.
- Pupils' achievement in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular facets of school life is excellent.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils have a strongly developed moral awareness, clearly distinguishing right from wrong and accepting responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils display a sensitive understanding of each other and so are able to work effectively together to solve problems and achieve common goals.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and recognise how to be physically and mentally healthy, particularly in terms of diet, exercise and a balanced lifestyle.

Recommendations

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes for pupils, the school might wish to consider the following:

- Ensure a whole school numeracy policy is implemented.
- Put in place a whole school digital learning strategy.
- Implement a plan to fully integrate the school into the wider community for the mutual benefit of both.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils demonstrate the successful fulfilment of the school's aims as they enjoy learning, think independently and have energy and passion in their drive for success. Pupils of all abilities develop comprehensive subject knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of learning as they are appropriately challenged by teaching that addresses linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative aspects of learning. Pupils display insight into how their learning enriches their lives, now and in the future. This is because pupils respond well to a thoughtfully constructed curriculum and to teaching that is effectively differentiated and demands active engagement by pupils. Small class sizes lead to pupils having many opportunities for personalised support and challenge. Pupils respond well to teachers' precise questioning and accurate feedback. This was seen in a Year 3 history lesson on Stone age timelines where work was carefully differentiated for SEND pupils who were then further supported by a teaching assistant in their chronological thinking and successfully put in place a BC – AD timeline. Pupils show independent learning as a result of skilled teaching which develops their confidence to hypothesise, analyse, synthesise and engage in thinking. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson reviewing their mock GCSE exam, pupils used a template to write down areas of strength and areas requiring improvement which enabled them to reflect, and then express how to improve.

3.6 Pupils' verbal and written communication is excellent. They are articulate and speak with confidence. This is promoted through accomplished teaching which encourages pupils to ask probing questions spontaneously and engage in thoughtful discussion. Pupils are able to explain their thoughts with precision and use a wide vocabulary. This was seen in a Year 11 art lesson where students spoke with

great interest and enthusiasm about their GCSE portfolio and were able to express their motivations and solutions with great clarity. For example, a pupil spoke with real passion on her piece 'Tongue Tied' from a LGBTQ perspective. Essay work undertaken by pupils in English and the humanities shows a very well-structured approach which becomes stylistically more sophisticated and nuanced as pupils matured. The quality of written work was excellent, showing pupils who take a real pride in their learning. For example, in a Year 6 lesson using the text 'The Breadwinner' pupils focused on evidence to support opinions to evaluate their own and other's work very effectively. Very valuable learning of visual communication was seen in the Reception class as they used sign language to 'sing' a goodbye song at the end of the day which illustrates the application of their learning in other areas of their work.

- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate sophisticated study and research skills which are always of very high quality, including detailed note taking using, for example, mind maps and memorisation techniques which encourage independent study. Pupils with SEND achieve impressive levels of focus through the application of effective whole school approaches to scholarship which showed pupils exhibiting resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity in their learning. This strategy is supported by a well-resourced library, newly upgraded as a result of the governing body and school leadership implementing their learning focused strategic plan. This allows more pupils to work independently which was observed throughout the inspection. Extended work reflecting pupils' perseverance in research skills and reflection was seen in a range of Year 9 history projects which illustrated purposeful synthesis and analysis of a range of sources. Additionally, in Year 11 art portfolios, pupils displayed sustained work done between lessons and genuine interest in the work being produced. High standards in music are attained, because of the dedication, commitment and practice of the pupils. This is enhanced by expert staff supporting pupils' independent approaches as a means of developing their instrumental and singing skills to high standards, as they achieve recognition in local and national performance groups. Pupils move to the next stage in their lives with confidence.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate a good range of ICT skills under teacher direction, using resources for research and presentation across a range of subjects. Pupils use ICT to undertake research proficiently across the school and in a Year 3 computing lesson pupils made rapid progress in developing a coding game because of the well-planned lesson. A further example of focused use of ICT was seen in a Year 11 physics lesson on refraction and reflection which through pupil use of an application and subsequent explanation to their peers, developed a deeper understanding of the concepts. Pupils have not yet fully developed the ability to independently make choices regarding their selection of ICT applications and hardware in specific situations and so embed an integrated ICT confidence across all subjects and ages. Pupils confidently select appropriate mathematical processes when required across a range of curriculum areas and demonstrate convincing mathematical subject knowledge, such as two year olds matching shapes. The most able pupils demonstrate excellent numerical skills, as exemplified through the many successes in a range of external mathematical challenges and competitions. Those who are less talented are well supported and meet their full potential. Pupils competently incorporate their mathematical knowledge in a range of different contexts, for example Year 2 using Venn diagrams in humanities lessons to classify concepts. Pupils are mathematically challenged by a progressive framework which extends mathematical thinking and methods within the mathematics curriculum. There is variability in applying this mathematical thinking across all subject areas which limits pupils applying their mathematical knowledge consistently.
- 3.9 Pupils' achievements in external competitions, in gaining other scholarly distinctions, and their success in sport and the arts are outstanding. Those with special talents outside school are also given full support and credit for their achievements. Pupils gain speech and drama awards and a large majority of pupils are successfully involved in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme leading to the development of sustained improvements in a wide range of skills. In sport, individuals have enjoyed national and international success in athletics, skiing, swimming and lacrosse. Pupils develop high levels of resilience, perseverance and teamwork through their committed engagement in the wide range of creative and performing arts available to them. Pupils valued working with theatre

professionals as role models in supporting school productions particularly those involved in backstage work. As a result of the enthusiastic commitment of pupils to achieve personal success, the pupils who participate in the activities offered outside the classroom attain very high standards and for many this results in a resilient well-grounded approach in other areas of their lives.

- 3.10 The pupils' high levels of attainment are reflected in their performance in public examinations. From 2017 to 2019 results at GCSE have been well above the national average for maintained schools. Pupils' levels of attainment, as indicated by the evidence from lesson observations, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of their work, together with the school's standardised measures of progress show that pupils in all sections of the school, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and the most able make excellent progress whatever their starting points. Data provided by the school show that pupils with SEND make progress that is in line with their peers and in some cases exceeds them. These pupils achieve well as their individual needs are accurately identified by the learning support department and effective support plans put in place, ably supported by the enhanced pastoral team. This is followed up by careful monitoring and review to ensure that teachers adapt their lessons to ensure that these pupils' needs are met. For example, EYFS profile results show good and outstanding progress and where weaknesses are identified strategies are put in place to close the gaps. The school leadership, supported by the governors has put in place staff flexibility which enables classes to be split for periods of time to target specific underperformance. This was reported in Year 2 mathematics where use of an additional set promoted rapid progress for those pupils identified as underperforming. More able pupils are identified and challenged to develop their thinking; they consistently achieve high levels of success in a wide range of external competitions and entry to competitive post 16 education providers. Almost all parents and pupils in the questionnaires agreed that the school enables high levels of progress.
- 3.11 The pupils' positive attitudes and consistent success across the school are due to carefully focused and planned management of the learning environment by the school's leadership. This nurtures pupils to work collaboratively and to take on the responsibility for their own learning. This was exemplified in a Year 2 tag rugby lesson where pupils had the opportunity to work in pairs, threes and fours to both lead and develop their skills. All groups of pupils consistently demonstrated excellent attitudes to learning and achievement and sought to do their very best. Pupils were focused for the start of lessons to engage in a classroom ethos of mutual respect which fully embraced the values of the school. This was further exemplified in pupil discussions and the questionnaire comments where the overwhelming majority of pupils wanted to celebrate their school and how it supports them in their pursuit of excellence as they progress. The pupils' excellent commitment to success is strongly inspired because teachers set high expectations and consistently model very positive attitudes to learning and achievement which are firmly embedded in and reflective of school values. This results in pupils who are comfortable in challenging their own understanding and take responsibility for their own learning.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.13 Pupils are responsible, confident and have a highly developed sense of self where through their authentic personal understanding and contemplative nature they display self-confidence without arrogance. These qualities are developed by the school meeting its aims regarding compassion, integrity and tolerance, and a sense of responsibility in its pupils through its strong commitment to teaching and learning and the holistic approach it takes to each individual. Pupils' strong sense of responsibility, confidence and self-esteem is also the result of excellent staff role models who demand high standards of behaviour and responsibility within the community which also inspires pupils to live their lives with self-discipline and a strong moral purpose. This approach was characterised by pupils using assembly time to reflect on a presentation on climate change which prompted subsequent thoughtful conversations regarding what individuals can do to influence a global challenge.

- 3.14 Pupils revealed in discussions their understanding of resilience and development of self-esteem as they reflected on how they improve their own learning and performance through a range of strategies underpinned by neuroscience and mindfulness. In discussion pupils lucidly described how they build their own self-confidence because of the multiple opportunities provided in music, dance and drama and in classroom activities. They readily demonstrate reflection and awareness of their personal and social situation. EYFS children show clear understanding of rules and the importance of behaving correctly as exemplified through the displays in reception. Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong; they are kind to each other and considerate to their teachers. They are respectful of the school rules and accept responsibility for their own behaviour in a mature manner. Their behaviour towards each other is exemplary. They have a full understanding that it is unacceptable to be a bystander so they will challenge their peers if they think they are misbehaving. Older pupils commented that, though the school encouraged excellence it did not mean perfection and they were helped to take a balanced approach to life. These very positive outcomes are developed through a well organised caring proactive pastoral system which has developed a mutually supportive set of common values. This leaves all pupils knowing there is always someone to talk to and that they will be supported in making the right decision when facing difficult choices regarding leading a moral life. They are prepared to challenge injustice inside and outside of school. For example, in challenging misbehaviour on a school bus. This was also shown in the pupil questionnaires where a very small minority felt that favouritism took place regarding the way in which school rules were administered; on investigation the inspectors recognised that there were perceived inconsistencies and that the occasional anomaly stuck in a pupil's mind because it was so rare.
- 3.15 Pupils have extremely well-developed decision-making skills and understand that the decisions they make are important in determining their own success and well-being. This is because the school provides a nurturing personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education (PSHCEE) programme which encourages reflection and the skills to determine academic and extra-curricular targets. Pupils' informed decision-making skills are also the result of a school culture, embedded by the leadership, which requires pupils to make their own decisions, from the nursery onwards, where, for example, children have a voice in selecting their key worker. Pupil voice is rooted through an active school council which influences the direction of the school; for example, in the selection of trousers as part of a new uniform. Pupils are able to make well-informed academic choices at GCSE and beyond and have the freedom to be flexible in the number of options that they take as they are carefully supported in their decisions by the school. Pupils actively choose charities that they wish to support, and many have been involved in presenting their chosen ones to their peers in assemblies for their consideration. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students were given the autonomy to choose their own exercises and then follow their own path when solving a problem. Underpinning the pupils' excellent decision-making skills is the application of integrity, a quality that pupils understand through clear unambiguous teaching and guidance from the pastoral team who encourage young people to think for themselves particularly if they have made an error of judgement.
- 3.16 Pupils develop spiritual understanding through a range of activities, in particular a proactive assembly programme from which pupils commented on 'ripples of kindness' that are created through reflection on a range of religious themes. Pupils have an appreciation of the non-material aspects of life as shown in discussions regarding mindfulness and the effect that simply looking out over the grounds can have on one's emotions and the wonder of seeing a duckling hatching live through a video link. Pupils' excellent development in this respect is supported by their enthusiastic engagement in a focussed PSHCEE curriculum, including philosophical modules, coupled with opportunities for meditation and discussions with staff regarding mortality and life which enabled pupils to think carefully on their place in the world. This is further enhanced through visits to religious buildings in this country, and trips overseas, for example to Normandy, where pupils reflected with a sense of awe at their surroundings and expressed gratitude for their own personal circumstances. Likewise, EYFS pupils were aware of British traditions such as wearing a poppy, stating, 'because people have been in battles'. Regular lessons in the junior school are conducted in the woodland school and the site is used by pupils as a

stimulus for poetry and creative writing that enabled pupils to articulate more abstract aspects of existence in their work.

- 3.17 Pupils socialise and interact confidently with ease with each other. They are skilled at maintaining excellent friendships based on mutual respect and provide support to each other. For example, older pupils support younger pupils as they move through the school. Much of the support is spontaneous as seen in pupil support of the Clan (house) music competition. This is a consequence of the leadership creating a school culture of easy relationships and social confidence. Pupils showed sophisticated empathetic skills as they worked together, across the years, solving problems and achieving common aims, as they produced a wide range of musical, dance and drama productions and organised charitable events. In discussion pupils exhibit confidence beyond their years as a result of the school's organisation as Year 11 pupils take on school leadership roles which permeate down throughout the school community.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate excellent productive relationships towards each other irrespective of culture or background. The Clan system encourages successful relationships as older pupils fully embrace the responsibility to look after younger pupils and help them with their relationships. Pupils demonstrate strong mutual respect towards each other and value each other highly. For example, older pupils act as subject ambassadors to help younger pupils in academic study, giving a real sense of responsibility for younger pupils' well-being. Pupils can be themselves and are respected for their individuality and what they bring to the school community. Pupils have limited opportunities for activities and engagement with the local community which would enhance and develop further many of the skills and attributes pupils have developed through their activities within the school community. The school promotes a culture of taking informed risk which is reinforced through the pupil support seen in lessons when pupils hypothesise and are encouraged to articulate their responses, fully supported by their peers and in the inclusive approach that pupils take in joint workshop activities with local maintained schools.
- 3.19 Pupils have well developed levels of sensitivity to pupils from different backgrounds and traditions through a clear curriculum focus and in extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils spoke very positively about their cultural knowledge in dance through learning the Haka and a Bollywood sequence. Pupils are committed to the ethos that everybody is equal, which is evidenced through the positive relationships that exist across the school. EYFS children are open to the diversity of their own peers and do not seem to be aware of difference. In discussion pupils exhibit cultural curiosity and spoke warmly of the wide range of overseas trips, including language exchanges offered by the school. Pupils are supportive of peers who have disabilities, for example pupils from a local special school who have profound learning difficulties jointly undertake pond dipping on the school site, supported by junior school pupils which enhances the experience for all pupils taking part.
- 3.20 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and appreciate how to be physically and mentally healthy, particularly in terms of diet, exercise and living a balanced lifestyle, a view supported by most of the pupils and parents responding to the questionnaire. This is because the pastoral hub, the diverse PSHCEE programme and school council enable pupils to feel that they have a voice as they make reasoned choices in pursuing a healthy lifestyle. Meals attended by the inspection team were nutritious and appetising, with a good range of dishes available throughout the lunch period, which always include salads and fresh fruit. Pupils benefit from a wide-ranging programme of sport and other vigorous physical activities. The overwhelming majority of parents felt the school is a safe environment, particularly with regard to online safety. Pupils learn how to stay safe and be healthy both from the role modelling of staff and older pupils and through a carefully planned PSHCEE curriculum. Pupils move on to the next stage in their lives with confidence and self-assurance wanting to live adventurously whilst approaching the concept of risk sensibly in all that they do.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 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 educational 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.

Inspectors

Mr Ian Carter	Reporting inspector
Mrs Areti Bizior	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Fiona Angel	Team inspector (Deputy master, HMC school)
Mrs Angela Dominy	Team inspector (SENCO, IAPS school)
Mrs Ann-Marie Elding	Team inspector (Head of preparatory, SofH school)
Mr David Robert Gajadharsingh	Team inspector (Head, SofH school)
Mr Francie Healy	Team inspector (Headmaster, SofH school)
Miss Finola Stack	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Eithne Webster	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Former head of Key Stage 1, IAPS school)
Mrs Amanda Jennings	Team inspector for EYFS (Head of EYFS, IAPS school)