



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

THE ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL, BATH GDST

NOVEMBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	The Royal High School, Bath GDST			
DfE number	800/6002			
Registered charity number	306983			
Address	The Royal High School, Bath GDST Lansdown Road Bath Somerset BA1 5SZ			
Telephone number	01225 313877			
Email address	royalhigh@rhsb.gdst.net			
Headmistress	Mrs Jo Duncan			
Chair of governors	Mrs Jane Robb			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils	615			
	Boys	0	Girls	615
	Day pupils	506	Boarders	109
	EYFS	33	Juniors	117
	Seniors	309	Sixth Form	156
Inspection dates	16 to 17 November 2016			

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.

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 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 following their inspection 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.

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.

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 an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting 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 grade descriptors from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they 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 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.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Roberta Georghiou	Reporting inspector
Mrs Bridget Windley	Accompanying inspector
Mrs Ann Aughwane	Team inspector (Former headmistress, GSA school)
Mr Garry Binks	Team inspector (Former housemaster, HMC school)
Mr David Dawswell	Team inspector (Second master, HMC school)
Mrs Rachel Eaton-Jones	Team inspector (Head of prep, ISA school)
Mrs Claire Osborn	Team inspector (Headmistress, ISA school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	1
About the school	1
What the school seeks to do	1
About the pupils	1
Recommendation from previous inspection	1
2 KEY FINDINGS	2
Recommendation	2
3 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	3
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	6

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 The Royal High School, Bath is an independent day and boarding school for girls aged between 3 and 18, owned and governed by The Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) and supported by a local governing body. It was formed in 1998 from the merger of two schools that were founded in the nineteenth century. The school is located in historic buildings on two sites in Bath, Somerset, with one accommodating the junior school and the other housing the senior school. Boarders aged 11 to 18 are accommodated mostly in School House on the upper floors of the main senior building. Sixth form boarders mainly use the purpose-built Gloucester House within the grounds of the senior school.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has refurbished and renovated accommodation for juniors and the EYFS. The current headmistress was appointed in 2015 and a new head for the junior school was appointed in 2013.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's aim is to provide an outstanding day and boarding education, specifically tailored to the needs of girls in the twenty-first century. It aims to sustain high performance, embed social responsibility, drive innovation and be an exceptional school community.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Day pupils come largely from professional White British backgrounds and live locally. Most boarders are from overseas locations. The school has identified 54 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia. Of these, 46 receive additional specialist support. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 78 pupils, 24 of whom receive additional support for their English. Using its own data, the school has identified 81 pupils as the more able of its population. Their needs are met within the classroom and through the programme of extra-curricular activities.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendation from previous inspection

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in September 2010. The recommendation from that inspection was:
- Review the senior school curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to ensure that all pupils have sufficient time to enjoy a wide education experience.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met the recommendation of the previous inspection. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils achieve highly as a result of them responding readily to the ambitious expectations of the teaching, which provides stimulating resources and sets varied and challenging tasks.
- Pupils have very mature study skills and are highly motivated.
- Pupils with SEND or EAL, and those who have been identified by the school as more able achieve their potential in response to teaching which is well matched to individual abilities.
- Senior school pupils are not always provided sufficient opportunities to use their well-developed ICT skills.

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

- Pupils respect and embrace the school's ethos, which emphasises social responsibility and encourages their exemplary behaviour and self-discipline.
- Pupils' understanding of diversity and their cultural awareness are highly developed.
- Pupils have high levels of self-knowledge and resilience, and these qualities enable them to display mature independence.

Recommendation

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school should consider making the following improvement:

- In the senior school, make opportunities in all subjects for pupils to use their well-developed skills in ICT.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils contribute fully to the successful fulfilment of the school's aims to provide an outstanding education. The aims have been carefully articulated by the senior leadership and are well understood and upheld by staff and pupils; all are committed to maintaining high performance. As a result, pupils achieve highly and gain access to a range of university courses including the most challenging. In 2016 the great majority obtained entry to their first choice of university.
- 3.3 Attainment in the EYFS is very high. A very large majority of children exceed the expectations for their age by the time they enter Year 1. The well-designed, creative activities provided and the close monitoring by the staff contribute to their high level of achievement. Pupils' attainment in Years 1 to 6 is judged on the available evidence to be above the national average. Pupils achieve so well due to them responding readily and positively to the breadth of the junior school curriculum, together with its emphasis on real life experiences.
- 3.4 Using the most recently available nationally standardised data, results at GCSE for Year 11 pupils have been higher than the national average and overall results at International GCSE (IGCSE) have been higher than worldwide norms. Results at A level have been above the national average, and in the International Baccalaureate (IB) results have been higher than worldwide norms. These results reflect the impact of teaching, which is both skilful and knowledgeable. It includes planning which incorporates work appropriate to pupils' abilities and provides challenge including for the more able. Detailed, close marking especially in Years 10 to 13 identifies pupils' strengths and provides comments to enable improvement.
- 3.5 From the available evidence, pupils' overall progress through the school is judged to be excellent and is never less than good in each section of the school. Pupils' progress in most lessons observed during inspection throughout the school was rapid, especially where particularly challenging targets had been set. Very occasionally in the junior school such targets had not been set or were not made clear to pupils, who as a result were uncertain of how to improve their work independently, and consequently their progress was not as high.
- 3.6 Pupils' study skills are at a high level and their attitudes to learning are decidedly positive. They enjoy learning from teachers, collaboratively from one another and through independent research. Pupils in the junior school including the youngest in the EYFS like to talk about their learning, and they ask questions and select tasks to extend it. Older pupils are adept at accessing a wide range of sources, especially through the internet and can synthesise these to produce sophisticated pieces of independent research. In preparation for the next stage of life, pupils in Years 12 and 13 develop mature independent research skills, know when to ask for help and increasingly plan their own approach to projects, such as when taking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).

- 3.7 School data display that pupils with SEND at all stages make good progress in line with their peers. This is a result of teaching which makes adjustments for their difficulties, and the learning support department which prepares appropriate individual learning programmes. Pupils with SEND respond well, as these offer them excellent guidance to meet their targets and so ensure that their needs are met in all lessons. This practice of target setting makes a strong impact for pupils in the senior school, and for all pupils with SEND. Pupils with EAL perform in line with and even exceed their peers as their English becomes more assured. They receive support with their English when needed and benefit from the careful introduction of specialist terminology by staff. More able pupils make progress in line with their high expectations. They achieve highly as teaching provides suitable challenge and stretch, and due to their motivation to succeed; more able pupils were observed in Year 1 creating their own questions to challenge further their numerical skills and in Year 11 deftly analysing Shakespeare's use of language.
- 3.8 Pupils also achieve high levels of success in a wide range of activities. Pupils in the junior school have competed successfully in local and county sports competitions such as cross country and gymnastics, and have been national finalists in a biathlon event. They have also been successful in regional music and literary festivals. Pupils in the senior school have had success in national competitions in a variety of subjects including religion and philosophy, geography, engineering and modern foreign languages (MFL). Individuals have achieved national recognition, for example in design and engineering, in science and mathematics challenges and Olympiads, and in achieving the gold level in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Senior pupils have achieved representational honours at a regional level in hockey and netball, and have represented England in swimming and biathlon competitions.
- 3.9 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding progress at a rapid rate across all areas of learning. In the EYFS, children enjoy learning about language and develop excellent communications skills. They make independent use of a popular library. Children in the EYFS's mathematical skills are well developed and they can use number systems within their activities, for example when trying to choose a favourite colour. They use information and communication technology (ICT) such as interactive whiteboards and laptops confidently. Pupils in the junior and senior schools including the sixth form demonstrate assured linguistic skills in their MFL lessons. Their mathematical skills which they apply in other subjects such as geography and science are well developed.
- 3.10 Pupils throughout the school communicate exceptionally well orally and express themselves with ease in their writing. This is in response to the encouragement that they receive in class to speak and voice their opinions, and in making presentations. Within lessons, open-ended questioning by teachers is particularly valued by pupils with SEND. In interview these pupils expressed that the encouragement of their teachers had provided them greater confidence in their speaking. Pupils including those with EAL are motivated and challenged by the use in teaching of demanding vocabulary and increasingly sophisticated subject terminology, and this moves their learning rapidly forward.

3.11 Pupils are adept at using ICT, not only to enhance the presentation of their work but also to find more effective ways of expressing concepts. Where opportunities are presented for the pupils to apply these skills, they work very effectively. Such opportunities were not always available in lessons, particularly within the senior school. Pupils' skills in technology and art are exceptional. They benefit from the display of pupils' work in all areas of the school, as it provides them with further inspiration. Pupils at all stages enjoy sport, and their assured physical skills allow them to improve as they respond quickly to coaching. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop their skills at all levels including in Years 10 and 11, thus meeting a recommendation of the previous inspection. It also allows extension for the more able in the provision of challenging IGCSE courses, and through the IB and EPQ in Years 12 and 13.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils make a full contribution to an exceptional school community, fully reflecting the school's aims to embed in all a deep sense of social responsibility.
- 4.3 Pupils understand and respect systems of rules and laws. During the inspection, their behaviour towards one another and to staff was exemplary. Scrutiny of behaviour logs demonstrated that misbehaviour is rare. Responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils in the senior school indicated that teachers do not treat them fairly. Inspection evidence gained from observations and checks of records does not support this view; rewards and sanctions are applied fairly. Pupils accept the need for rules and appreciate opportunities to express their views. In their questionnaire responses, a small minority of pupils expressed the view that teachers are not always balanced in discussions of politics and current affairs. Inspection evidence gained from discussion with pupils did not support this view. Pupils strongly support British traditions, for example in respecting the way that Remembrance Day had been held in school.
- 4.4 Pupils value highly the diversity of culture within the school. Junior pupils enjoyed comparing different religions and learning about the work of Nelson Mandela. Senior pupils enjoyed learning about South Asian raga music and composing their own pieces. Boarding especially is multi-national, and allows pupils to appreciate other cultures and traditions at first hand. Pupils who arrived from overseas said that they soon settle in and, one described how she had found role models in fellow pupils' acceptance of other beliefs and traditions.
- 4.5 Pupils are mature for their ages and develop high levels of self-knowledge. From a young age they take responsibility for their actions, and as they grow older become increasingly aware that the decisions they take are important determinants of their own success and well-being. Children in the EYFS can explain their own emotions and enjoy their teachers asking them 'what next?'. This leads them to decide the direction their tasks should take. They are similarly confident in expressing their concerns and reflecting upon their good and bad decisions. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 gain self-esteem through the opportunities that they are provided to recognise their own and one another's strengths. They are not afraid to admit mistakes due to the encouragement and praise they receive when using initiative and the resilience they display when things go wrong, embracing fully the junior school initiative: 'Dare to fail: Bounce back'.

- 4.6 By the time they reach the senior school, pupils are expecting to succeed. They enjoy problem-solving together and will work through the challenges set, for example when examining the design criteria for potato peelers in a sixth form design technology project. They appreciate that decisions they make will have an impact on their future, for example in the balance of their studies and extra-curricular activities. Pupils in both the junior and senior schools are involved through school councils in school decision-making; for example junior girls have set their own sanctions for misbehaviour and senior pupils discussed the school's behaviour code. Pupils relish opportunities to choose their own tasks in lessons. Sixth form pupils are very capable learners and knowledgeable about their own progress. They expect to make the decisions that will determine their future course in life. In responding to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils mainly from Years 9 to 13 said that the school has not provided them good advice about their choice of subject or career. Inspection evidence found from records and checks of other documentation determined that valuable advice is provided, for example through talks and visits arranged by the school that help pupils in their decision-making about future courses. The oldest pupils expressed pride in the university applications that they had written, as these were their own work and had contributed to their receipt of offers for places.
- 4.7 Boarders are self-disciplined and recognise that they develop strong independence within the strong community ethos of their houses. They spoke enthusiastically of the benefits that boarding provides them. In interview older boarders said that within a clear framework they would set their own tasks, and younger boarders expressed enjoyment in choosing their activities at weekends. Boarders appreciate the independence that they are provided as they move on to the next stage which enables them to manage finances, complete domestic chores and organise transport. This prepares them well for their future lives. Of those responding to the questionnaire, all parents of boarders agreed that the boarding experience helps their children's progress and personal development.
- 4.8 Pupils have highly developed spiritual understanding and appreciate non-material aspects of life. Throughout the school, pupils choose charities to support and demonstrate a mature appreciation of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. Children in the EYFS reflect upon their own good fortune and express joy in the natural world. Encouraged by the emphasis upon the outdoors within the curriculum, junior school pupils display wonder at the environment; younger pupils listened to its sounds and smells and found an outside place that makes them feel happy. Older juniors show appreciation of many different types of music. Within the senior school, pupils demonstrate thoughtful awareness of spirituality within their writing, some of which is shown in wall displays. Pupils throughout the school take pleasure in art. A discussion among Year 7 pupils in an art lesson demonstrated their informed appreciation of the work of various artists. Pupils take and respond to assemblies with a mature awareness of sensitive issues, and in interview expressed with sincerity their view that there is more to life than material goods.
- 4.9 Pupils at all ages work very well together. They appreciate one another's needs and differences, are generous in praise of one another's achievements. They are tolerant of one another, respect differences and display understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. Older pupils in the senior school said that collaborating with fellow pupils was a natural way of working within the school, and this was borne out during the inspection.

- 4.10 Throughout the school, pupils appreciate the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. They enjoy sport. Children in the EYFS described the importance of ‘washing away germs’ before they ate. Girls in the junior school said that they made healthy choices in their eating, and could all describe the benefits of exercise. Pupils in the senior school were pleased to have opportunities to exercise, including for boarders at weekends. They benefit from the very strong pastoral care in the school which ensures that they have the information they require, such as through personal, social, health and economic education courses, to make wise decisions for example in protecting themselves while using the internet. Pupils were unanimous that they always have a number of adults in school and boarding to whom they would readily turn in times of need.
- 4.11 Pupils are extremely proud of their school community and they are keen to, and do, fully contribute to it. They are less fully engaged in service and leadership in the wider community. The school has already taken action to provide more opportunities in the wider community for service and leadership. Pupils use the wide range of opportunities within the school to engage in service and leadership, and they take their responsibilities seriously. ‘Eco-warriors’ from the Nursery to Year 6 help keep the immediate environment clean and tidy. Within the junior school, older pupils help the younger as ‘Book Friends’. They support many charities both locally and further afield and enjoy singing to members of the local community at Christmas. In the senior school form, ambassadors organise the Christmas bazaar and assist at open events. Year 13 international representatives in the boarding houses take responsibility for helping overseas boarders to adapt and overcome any initial difficulties with communicating their needs. Sixth formers take very seriously their position as role models; they are language and science mentors for younger pupils, and offer support to pupils in younger age groups. Some are undertaking the Community Sports Leader Level 2 award to enable them to coach younger pupils.
- 4.12 By the time they leave school, pupils have highly developed skills for the next stage in their life. They are responsible, thoughtful and mature. Pupils are keenly aware of their social responsibilities and are eager to seize the opportunities that lie ahead