



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL, BATH GDST**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Royal High School, Bath GDST

Full Name of School/College	<b>Royal High School, Bath GDST</b>		
DfE Number	<b>800/6002</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>306983</b>		
Address	<b>Royal High School, Bath GDST Lansdown Road Bath BA1 5SZ</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01225 313877</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01225 465446</b>		
Email Address	<b>r.dougall@bat.gdst.net</b>		
Headmistress	<b>Mrs Rebecca J Dougall</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Carol Lear</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>758</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (6 boys; 752 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>0</b>	5-11: <b>138</b>	
	3-5 (EYFS): <b>31</b>	11-18: <b>589</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>668</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding:	<b>139</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>90</b>		
	Full: <b>78</b>	Weekly: <b>12</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Helen Fathers</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Girls</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>28 Sep 2010 to 29 Sep 2010</b>		

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in October 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced in June 2009 by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit

- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 The Royal High School, Bath is an independent school, governed by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), for girls from 3 to 18 years and boys from 16 to 18 years. It was founded in 1998 through the merger of Bath High School GDST and the Royal School and, uniquely within the GDST, has a boarding section. The junior school and the senior school, the latter including the College (sixth form), are on separate sites in an area of great historic interest. The headmistress, appointed in January 2010, has overall responsibility for the whole school but delegates responsibility to the head of the junior school for its operation. In 2008 boys were admitted to the College for the first time, and the International Baccalaureate (IB) was introduced as an alternative to A level.
- 1.2 The school has a local board of governors that works to support its aims to foster a dynamic and supportive community, in which all pupils are encouraged to pursue a wide range of academic, cultural and recreational interests, and to strive for standards of excellence in fulfilling their potential. The school also aims to develop in each pupil a sense of intellectual independence, and social and moral responsibility in preparation for the roles which they will play in the wider community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 169 girls in the junior school including 31 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 19 of whom were part-time. There were 589 pupils in the senior school, including 185 girls and 6 boys in the College. In total, 90 pupils from 9 to 18 years were boarders.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the school is above the national average. Results of standardised tests indicate that the range of ability, especially in the junior school, is fairly wide. Day pupils, the majority of whom have a white British home background and belong to families in professional and business occupations, come from a wide geographical area. A high proportion of boarders come from overseas. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and seventy pupils have been identified as requiring support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Fifty pupils have English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 From EYFS to the sixth form, the quality of pupils' achievements, their learning, attitudes and basic skills are excellent, reflecting the school's aim to foster a dynamic and supportive community in which each pupil is encouraged to strive for standards of excellence. Pupils are articulate, write well and have a good grasp of mathematical and scientific concepts, together with their application. Information, communication, technological, physical and, particularly, artistic and creative skills are well developed. Standards of achievement in music and drama are high with many pupils successful in external examinations, and also in a range of sports, with pupils reaching regional and national level. Pupils also compete very successfully in areas such as national mathematical challenges, science scholarships, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the Ten Tors challenge. The vast majority of pupils go on to university, many of them to the university of their first choice.
- 2.2 Results in national tests at age 7 and at age 11 over the last three years for which comparative data is available have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. Results at GCSE have been far above the national average for girls' maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Nearly two-thirds of all GCSE grades awarded were A\* or A. The performance of pupils with EAL in English at GCSE has been particularly good. Pupils' performance in A-level examinations has been good when compared with the national average for maintained schools. Their performance in 2010 was particularly strong, with 84% of A-level grades A\* to B and an average score of 35 for the first IB cohort. These results, interpreted in the light of inspection evidence of good and sometimes outstanding teaching, together with pupils' positive attitude to learning, indicate that they make good progress at all stages when compared with others of similar ability.
- 2.3 Teaching is well planned and shows a good understanding of pupils' prior achievements. Comprehensive and widely used tracking systems ensure that each pupil's progress is closely monitored. The curriculum in the junior school and Years 7 to 9, and also in the College, where pupils choose to take either the IB or A level, is broad and balanced. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is less well balanced, being focused closely on GCSE subjects with little time allocated to non-examination courses. The wide extra-curricular programme, the junior school enrichment programme and the College community action service programme provide a wide range of opportunities enthusiastically received by pupils.
- 2.4 Pupils of all ages are enthusiastic learners. They take pride in their work and participate fully in lessons, showing a willingness to express their own ideas and listen to those of others when working co-operatively. By the time they reach the sixth form, pupils have developed a capacity to think critically and to work independently taking responsibility for their own learning.

## **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.5 The personal development of pupils from EYFS to the College is outstanding. Pupils show a high level of social maturity for their ages and their spiritual, moral and cultural awareness is very well developed. They respond positively to, and much appreciate, the numerous opportunities the school provides for them to take on roles of responsibility and to use their initiative to organise and run activities. From a young age pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong and understand the importance of self-discipline. Pupils speak warmly of their school, valuing its sense of community and the beauty of the campus and wider environment. They show considerable concern for those less well-off than themselves, giving both their time and their money in support of charities locally and abroad, a number of such activities each year being pupil initiated.
- 2.6 Pupils benefit from high quality pastoral care, focused closely on the needs and welfare of the individual. Pastoral care systems and procedures are well developed and most effective. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils of all ages are excellent, supportive and relaxed. The pastoral managers' open door policy, together with the junior and senior school prefect systems, ensures that there is always someone for pupils to talk to if the need arises. Pupils say they feel safe and valued. The recently appointed welfare co-ordinator provides valuable support for pupils with more serious difficulties. Some senior school pupils expressed a concern, shared by the inspectors, that their extensive academic programme leaves little time for relaxation or participation in other activities.
- 2.7 Anti-bullying and safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive. Pupils do not perceive bullying to be a problem and say that when instances do occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. A wide ranging and ongoing safeguarding programme ensures that all staff receive necessary training and that matters that arise are dealt with appropriately.
- 2.8 Health and safety and fire safety arrangements are comprehensive and well documented. Risk assessments are carried out where necessary. First aid policies and practices are excellent, with good provision for both day and boarding pupils who are taken ill. The school maintains suitable admissions and attendance registers. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and they appreciate the good quality and varied school meals.
- 2.9 Boarders of all ages speak highly of their boarding experience, feeling happy and well cared for. In particular they appreciate the diversity of the boarding population and the opportunity it provides to learn about other cultures.

## **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.10 Governance is very effective in ensuring that the school meets its aims. The GDST has mechanisms in place to provide good oversight of the work of the school and to draw up and monitor key policies and procedures, including those for welfare, health and safety. The trust appoints a local school governing board (SGB) to review the performance of the school against objectives in its strategic plan and to provide support for the headmistress and the school. The SGB has a wide knowledge of the school and takes an active interest in all areas of its work through attendance at school events and in visits. The junior school, in particular, benefits from the close links it has with designated members of the board. The excellent relationship between the headmistress and the chair of the SGB, forged through regular and open discussion, ensures that any issues that arise can be addressed quickly.
- 2.11 Strong leadership is supported by effective management and lines of communication. The restructured leadership team, together with the junior school steering group, is generating a whole-school ethos and a clear vision for the future development of the school. Policies and procedures, reviewed annually, support the school's work, contributing effectively to pupils' high levels of achievement and excellent personal development.
- 2.12 All the required checks to ensure the suitability of adults to work with children are undertaken and recorded in a central register. Staff are well trained in safeguarding matters that are overseen by senior colleagues. In pre-inspection questionnaires, parents expressed great satisfaction with the quality of education provided and the pastoral care of their children. They receive regular information about their children's achievement and progress in comprehensive written reports and through a range of formal and informal meetings with staff. Publications including newsletters and booklets, and an attractive and easily accessible website with designated parents' and pupils' areas, ensure that parents are kept well informed about school systems, procedures and activities, including those run by the active 'Friends'. The school has suitable arrangements for handling complaints.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

#### **(ii) Recommendation for further improvement**

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Review the senior school curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to ensure that all pupils have sufficient time to enjoy a wide educational experience.

#### **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

##### **4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the provision for the EYFS is outstanding in meeting the needs of all children and fully appreciating their individual differences. The setting clearly demonstrates the capacity to make continuous improvement through an excellent system of review and self-evaluation. This has led to the successful development of child-initiated learning and assessment which ensures that no child or group is disadvantaged. Staff sustain existing high standards by regularly identifying areas for improvement. Children's needs are very well met through a broad and exciting range of activities. Staff have a clear understanding of children's needs and create a stimulating and colourful environment where children feel valued and safe.

##### **4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.2 The leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are robust, with meticulous implementation of comprehensive policies and risk assessments. All staff are suitably trained, and equality and diversity are promoted appropriately. All records, policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting are in place, and are implemented rigorously. The capacity for sustained improvement is excellent and is reflected in the perceptive and detailed self-evaluation that identifies priorities and development. The head of the setting has an outstanding understanding of the provision's strengths and weaknesses, and a clear vision about how the development of the EYFS is integral to the overall development of the school. Parents express strong appreciation of their children's progress and the standard of their care. Every opportunity is taken to inform parents of their children's progress and to give them clear information about the learning environment. Parents are well informed through the visual diaries, record books, parents' evenings and workshops, and an excellent electronic emergency communication system, which was deemed invaluable during the adverse weather conditions last winter. The effective use and good management of resources, including those outdoors, lead to successful outcomes for all children.

##### **4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. All children learn and develop extremely well through stimulating play and valuable first-hand experiences, which are specifically aimed at children's individual needs. There is a clear focus on what the children are going to learn, rather than what they are going to do. A well-judged balance is maintained between adult-led and child-initiated activities, with many opportunities for independent learning. Children are observant and inquisitive, and staff ask challenging questions to develop their thinking skills. They are quick to see where support is needed, as was apparent in an assembly when one Nursery child was afraid during a dramatic participation in the story, which became rather too loud for her. Staff were quick to calm and re-assure her and all was well. Provision for the

welfare of children is exemplary. Good health and well-being are emphasised. Children have access to a wide range of resources which they use effectively. Staff guide and support children very well and provide safe and clear routines for them. Children are frequently exposed to very positive behaviour by Year 6 pupils, who spend time playing alongside them every day, and the GAP-Year students bring energy and enthusiasm, interacting with the children, supporting their learning and providing very positive role models.

#### **4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.4 Outcomes for children in the EYFS are outstanding, with rapid progress evident in all areas of the curriculum, including communication, literacy, numeracy and ICT. Children achieve very well and all are on course to meet the Early Learning Goals by the end of their Reception year, with many likely to exceed them. They are well motivated, confident, fully involved and well behaved, as they chatter animatedly with friends and adults. They respond to school life with great enthusiasm and enjoyment. Children co-operate well in their learning and begin to make choices and decisions. They join together enthusiastically using white boards to aid letter formation, and are able to count proficiently in French and confidently sing a French song. They are eager to contribute and listen to each other; relationships at all levels are excellent. Children make friends easily. They respect and trust their teachers. They feel safe and secure, and understand about eating healthily. They are aware of the need to maintain hygiene, and understand about being safe.

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited a boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Miss Jane Hamilton	Reporting Inspector
Mr Geoff Lee-Gallon	Assistant Reporting Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Miss Jean Walker	Senior Teacher, GSA school
Mr Ian Woods	Former Head, IAPS school
Mrs Lynda Boden	EYFS Co-ordinating Inspector