



THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
BRISTOL

The Downs Preparatory School Inspection Report

September 2017

Independent Schools Inspectorate





“One of the strongest achievements of the school is that the curriculum provides the pupils such a breadth of experience and ensures time to develop their academic potential alongside a broad range of activities”

*I am delighted to share with you
the Independent Schools
Inspectorate Report on The
Downs Preparatory School.*

The Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection was carried out in September 2017. The new inspection framework focuses on three key areas: Pupil Achievement, Pupil Personal Development and Regulatory Compliance.

We welcomed a team of five Inspectors to the school at 24 hours' notice. They each took considerable time and care to observe many areas of school life including teaching and learning, co-curricular activities and pastoral care. They met with children, staff and governors, spent time in lessons and clubs, reviewed extensive documentation, observed procedure and requested that parents and pupils complete a pre-inspection questionnaire.

Throughout the three days of inspection, there was an amazing atmosphere of mutual support and teamwork within the school. My thanks to everyone who spoke to the Inspectors or gave up their time to complete a survey or collate documentation in order that our community was seen at its best.

I am thrilled to report that the Inspectors found the quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements, as well as their personal development to be excellent. This is the highest grading that can be awarded.

The key themes that emerge throughout the Inspection Report includes excellent progress, strong study skills and attitudes to learning, exceptional communication, confident risk-taking and highly productive relationships between pupils and staff.

With regards to the pupils' personal development, the Inspectors recognised that pupils thrive and enjoy school. They observed high standards of behaviour and outstanding social skills. They also noted the Christian ethos of the school as demonstrated by the pupils' conduct and by their commitment to serve others less fortunate than themselves.

During the course of the Compliance Inspection, the Inspectors thoroughly assessed the school's policies and procedures against the many stringent regulatory requirements of independent schools, set by the Department of Education. I am very pleased to report that The Downs is fully compliant in all areas.

I am delighted that the Inspectors recognised and endorsed our incredible community and our fabulous school. This is a report that should make everyone extremely proud and it is my privilege to share it with you.

I hope you will enjoy reading the full report, however we know how busy people can be and so we have pulled out a selection of extracts on the following pages.

Marcus Gunn.



Marcus Gunn, Headmaster

Extracts from the Educational Quality Inspection Report

The quality of Pupils' Academic and Other Achievement is Excellent

- The pupils' determination to succeed and to do the best they can owes much to the passion evident in teaching which inspires the pupils.
- Excellent progress overall across a wide range of subjects and activities is achieved at all ages.
- Almost all children completing Reception make excellent progress and exceed the Early Learning Goals.
- By the end of Year 6, all pupils are making better than expected progress for their ability in Mathematics and high levels of progress in reading and spelling.
- In Years 7 and 8, pupils demonstrate excellent progress across both year groups.
- Pupils with SEND demonstrate excellent outcomes...and make rapid progress.
- The school prepares pupils thoroughly for entrance requirements to senior schools.
- Pupils display exceptional oral confidence and have a highly developed vocabulary.
- Pupils have strong study skills and attitudes to learning. They are organised and have a good work ethic.
- Outstanding achievement is evident in a wide range of co-curricular activity.
- The standards achieved by pupils in sport and in creative interests such as art, music and drama are notably high.



The Quality of Pupils' Personal Development is Excellent

- Pupils thrive and enjoy school in response to the nurturing environment they experience and the excellent pastoral care they receive.
- Pupils are resilient in the face of challenge, relish healthy competition and are not afraid of failure as they recognise it is a vital step in learning.
- Pupils have good manners, are courteous and exhibit excellent skills in everyday life which are clearly inculcated by the school.
- Pupils of all ages exhibit high standards of behaviour.
- Older pupils provide excellent role models.
- Pre Prep pupils display a considerable amount of empathy.
- Pupils display outstanding social skills. They are friendly, happy people who are caring and support each other.
- Pupils are keen to help make decisions in the running of the school and to take responsibility.
- Pupils contribute positively to the lives of others outside the school community and this is an area where pupils excel.
- Pupils are confident that they are known as individuals and that they are safe at school.

FOCUSED COMPLIANCE AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION REPORTS

THE DOWNS SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	The Downs School		
DfE number	802/6001		
Registered charity number	310279		
Address	Charlton House Wraxall Bristol BS48 1PF		
Telephone number	01275 852008		
Email address	office@thedownsschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Marcus Gunn		
Chair of governors	Mr Mark A Burchfield		
Age range	4 to 13		
Number of pupils on roll	273		
	Boys	165	Girls 108
	EYFS	15	Pre-prep 96
	Prep	162	
Inspection dates	12 to 14 September 2017		

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 The Downs School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 4 and 13 years. It was founded in 1894 and moved to its present site in 1927. The school is located in a Victorian building set in 60 acres of parkland, 5 miles to the south of Bristol. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has its own purpose-built facility on the same site. The school is governed by a charitable trust.
- 1.2 The school is divided into two sections: the pre-prep which comprises the EYFS and Years 1 to 3; and the prep school for Years 4 to 8.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide an excellent modern education that embraces traditional core values. It strives to ensure that each child will enjoy an invigorating and stimulating experience, allowing them to develop to their full creative, physical and intellectual potential.

About the pupils

- 1.4 The school provides education for pupils of all backgrounds and does not select by ability. The majority of pupils come to the school from north Somerset. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average with low numbers of pupils having below average ability. Twenty-eight pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) predominantly with dyslexia, dyscalculia and slow processing difficulties, for which twenty-five receive additional specialist support. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for six pupils and all receive additional support in the classroom. The pupils who the school identifies as more able receive some additional provision in preparation for scholarship entry to senior schools.

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. 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, 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, and relevant 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 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 **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

- 2.9 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.
- 2.10 **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

- 2.11 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy 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.
- 2.12 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.13 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include 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 those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, and its results in public examinations, 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.
- 2.14 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

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.

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

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.
- High levels of attainment are achieved by pupils of all ages and many gain scholarships to senior schools.
 - The breadth of skills and knowledge developed by pupils is excellent due to the provision of an extensive curriculum.
 - Pupils are thoroughly prepared to move on to senior schools.
 - Outstanding achievement is evident in a wide range of co-curricular activity, especially sport.
 - Pupils of all ages are confident and enthusiastic learners who respond positively to challenge.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils thrive and enjoy school in response to excellent pastoral care and a supportive environment.
 - Pupils develop to become mature, confident and responsible young people.
 - The moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent and they exhibit high standards of behaviour.
 - Pupils excel in their service to others outside of the school community, especially in their charity work.
 - Pupils are confident that they are known as individuals and that they are safe in school.

Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider the following improvement:
- Increase further pupil-initiated learning across the curriculum to provide more challenge for all pupils.

THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils of all ages happily rise to the educational challenges presented to them each day in a positive and lively manner. Their determination to succeed and to do the best they can owes much to the passion evident in teaching which inspires the pupils, and to the evident dedication in governance and senior leadership which provides them with an extensive and exciting range of educational opportunities. The school works hard to meet its aim to ensure that each child develops to their full creative, physical and intellectual potential. Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that the school produces high-achieving, well-rounded, happy and confident pupils.
- 3.6 Excellent progress overall across a wide range of subjects and activities is achieved at all ages, as evidenced by pupils' attainment standardised tests and the school's own assessments. Results in standardised tests for reading and mathematics between 2014 and 2016 indicate that pupils made good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities, reaching standards which are above average. Almost all children completing Reception make excellent progress and exceed the early learning goals. By the end of Year 6, all pupils are making better than expected progress for their ability in mathematics and high levels of progress in reading and spelling. Evidence available from lesson observations and work scrutiny supports these findings. Tests and assessments completed in Years 7 and 8 demonstrate pupils' excellent progress across both years. The school prepares pupils thoroughly for the entrance requirements for senior schools and almost all pupils succeed in moving to their first choice of school. Pupils demonstrate considerable success in achieving scholarships. Between 2011 and 2016, scholarships were offered to a high proportion of leavers, many to highly selective schools, and these included offers for academic, sporting, music, art and all-round ability.
- 3.7 Pupils with SEND demonstrate excellent outcomes in their learning and by the time they reach Years 7 and 8 they are confident in the classroom, achieving good standards of English and mathematics. The high ratios of teachers to pupils in the classrooms result in close individual attention, especially in the pre-prép. With additional support from specialist teaching, pupils with SEND make rapid progress. The few pupils with EAL learn English rapidly due to the special attention and support provided to them in the classroom.
- 3.8 The breadth of skills and knowledge developed by pupils is excellent. Pupils display exceptional oral confidence and have a highly developed vocabulary due to the plentiful opportunities to develop and practice their communication skills. Reception children who were in their new school for only one week could confidently sound out new letters and simple words. Younger pupils were able to work in groups to think of excellent rhyming words which linked to *George's Marvellous Medicine*. They were enabled to do this by watching the teacher uncover items such as fish blood and bone from under a golden blanket, which encouraged pupils to attempt pronouncing adjectives and have fun with words such as 'disgusting'. In Year 4, pupils know how to use words such as 'hyperbole' and 'metaphor' having already mastered the use of onomatopoeia. Year 8 pupils are able to analyse a text and then present it clearly to the rest of the class. Pupils speak with confidence and with excellent accents in French.
- 3.9 Pupils' best work demonstrates a great deal of pride and care in presentation, and pupils respond well to detailed and constructive marking. The school's good marking policy is used well in some teaching, especially to provide strategies such as the use of the 'pink box' to extend pupil learning by asking additional questions. This is not consistent across all ages, resulting in some variable quality in written work. Standards of handwriting and presentation do not always represent the ability of the pupils and marking does not always encourage an improvement in standards.

- 3.10 Pupils in interview reported that they love mathematics, and they demonstrate well-developed levels of numeracy across all subjects. Pupils use previous learning with confidence and apply it with skill to new ideas. They employ different methods for mental calculations, further enhanced by good questioning from teachers. Workbooks demonstrate excellent breadth and application. Work both in and out of the classroom, in the weekly maths challenges, external competitions and during special events such as the Mathematical Olympiad enthuses and motivates the pupils in their enthusiasm for mathematics and enables excellent progress. Excellent analytical skills are evident in science, and pupils can work with minimal instruction on experiments to deduce the reasons for results. In the humanities, their quick thinking leads to perceptive questioning as they are able to see the implications of cause and effect over time. Reception children now benefit from sufficient opportunities to investigate and solve problems as recommended in the previous inspection.
- 3.11 Individual pupils' use of information communication technology (ICT) for project work demonstrates that they have high levels of competence in a number of applications, although limited evidence was observed of its use in class during the inspection. Those pupils at the forefront of ICT development are known as the 'digital leaders' and display great enthusiasm and expertise.
- 3.12 Pupils have strong study skills and attitudes to learning. They are organised, have a good work ethic, listen carefully to each other and the teacher, and can follow instructions to complete their work independently. Pupils enjoy working collaboratively and help each other in a very mature manner. They are happy to learn by trial and error as they are not afraid to make mistakes. Teaching explicitly rewards risk taking and this provides the pupils confidence to commit themselves. Children in Reception experience a good balance between teacher-directed learning and play, as recommended in the previous inspection. In the prep school, pupils occasionally have the chance to choose how to learn. Pupils in interview said that they relish the opportunity to learn in different ways, improve their work and experiment with different techniques. Prep school pupils excelled when they were allowed to discover answers for themselves in science by choosing the type of experiment to prove a hypothesis. Pupils achieved excellent results in a European challenge run by the European Space Agency. All 4 teams reached the final 250 schools out of thousands of entries. They successfully designed a scientific experiment and wrote the computer code needed to execute an experiment in space. The school has identified a need to develop such pupil-initiated learning further. Excellent examples were observed during the inspection but it is not yet fully developed across all ages and subjects.
- 3.13 Outstanding achievement is evident in a wide range of co-curricular activity. The standards achieved by pupils in sport and in creative interests such as art, music and drama are notably high. Pupils enjoy taking part in a huge variety of activities that enable them to explore their interests and develop their talents successfully. One of the strongest achievements of the school is that the curriculum provides the pupils such a breadth of experience and ensures time to develop their academic potential alongside a broad range of activities. The pupils achieve exceptional standards in sport. In recent years the school has won the Roslyn Park National Rugby Sevens tournament for prep schools four times and nine times in total. Pupils have been national school finalists in hockey, lacrosse and netball, and won numerous regional tournaments. Many pupils individually represent their county in a wide range of sports and achieve nationally in others such as golf, equestrian and tennis. Skill levels observed during the inspection were outstanding for the age of the pupils, such as the hockey skills of Year 4 pupils.
- 3.14 Pupils achieve excellence in music, performing in highly acclaimed venues in choirs and ensembles. All pupils achieve success in theory of music examinations and around fourth-fifths play at least one musical instrument, many achieving high grades in examinations. All pupils belong to a choir. The Junior Choir recently won a regional festival and the Chamber Choir reached the 2015 and 2016 finals of the Choir of the Year competition. The pupils demonstrate outstanding achievement in art, inspired by the work of visiting artists. Almost half of the school achieve commendable results in speech and drama examinations, performing in many productions to a high standard.

THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 3.15 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.16 Pupils thrive and enjoy school in response to the nurturing environment they experience and the excellent pastoral care they receive. Parents and pupils place a high value on the excellent pastoral care provided. Pupils are mature for their ages, self-confident and exhibit high levels of self-esteem. Those in Year 4 are asked to share things about themselves and these self-observations are displayed on a board in the classroom, demonstrating their positive attitudes. Pupils are resilient in the face of challenge, relish healthy competition, and are not afraid of failure as they recognise it is a vital step in their learning. They are encouraged to take risks and step out of their comfort zone from a very young age when they begin to make presentations to their peers, speak in assemblies and perform for their parents. The supportive and encouraging attitude of the adults in school encourages self-belief and confidence to try new experiences and to succeed. Certificates are awarded in assemblies to reward effort as well as achievement. Pupils have good manners, are courteous and exhibit excellent communication skills in everyday life which are clearly inculcated by the school. They understand what they need to do to improve and are keen to do so. Year 8 pupils feel well prepared to move forward to their next school, ready to face further challenge and strive to be the best they can.
- 3.17 The Christian ethos of the school is evident in the values promoted and these are reflected in the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Christian values are on display in everything they do, including in their personal relationships. Pupils understand that the school has high expectations of them as people in how they live their lives both now and when they are older. Pre-prep pupils appreciate that if you are especially kind you can place a leaf on the 'kindness tree' and go to have lunch with the headteacher. In their personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, the Year 5 pupils write about positive qualities, and then consider themselves, and gain an understanding of what would make them better people. Pupils take the opportunities to reflect on the world around them and their place in it. They understand the importance of taking responsibility for the earth, appreciating their own environment of beautiful school grounds and countryside. Outdoor education is important to them, whether it involve playing in the tree house or working in their garden. The pre-prep pupils grow their own vegetables to eat and compost everything, understanding the need for regenerating the earth. They find quiet reading times useful for reflection, and the younger pupils are able to join a meditation and yoga club.
- 3.18 Pupils of all ages exhibit high standards of behaviour and understand that their behaviour has an impact on the school community. Older pupils provide excellent role models. Pupils of all ages are respectful of the excellent relationships they establish with their teachers and other adults in school. They understand that rules are necessary and that laws are an essential part of a safe and successful society. In religious education lessons, pupils consider the laws of the land and can identify the rights and wrongs of their actions when under temptation. The pupils gain a good understanding of right and wrong through the high expectations reinforced in assemblies, tutor time and their PSHE lessons. This is supported by staff who work towards maintaining a real consistency of behaviour across the school. Reception children quickly learn the golden rules of the classroom in their first week due to constant reinforcement by the staff and the generous use of praise. Pre-prep pupils display a considerable amount of empathy and will quickly apologise, for example if they hurt someone. They are aware not to just apologise but to also ask how they can help. Older pupils understand that children will sometimes be unkind to each other and that the school needs time to work with them on conflict resolution, but they reported that pupils get on well together most of the time and believed that the school is friendly and accepting of everyone.

- 3.19 Pupils display outstanding social skills. They are friendly, happy young people who are caring and support each other. Collaborative effort is woven into the daily life of the school, reinforced by a plethora of opportunities to develop teamwork and leadership skills and to reach common goals. All prep school pupils attend camps which help to develop their social skills. The leadership camp provides highly effective focus to pupils at the top of the school, where they work in groups on demanding tasks and physical challenges which require trust and mutual support. They are equally happy to work independently and pursue topics and activities of interest to them, such as fly fishing or orienteering. Whether success is achieved individually or in a team, pupils celebrate the success of others and are proud of one another's achievements. The house system is used to excellent effect to encourage integration across the age groups, and pupils enjoy eating lunch together with those from other years.
- 3.20 Pupils are keen to help make decisions in the running of the school and to take responsibility. Pupils in the pre-prep vote for their house captains and school council and they eagerly put their ideas and suggestions forward, many of which are adopted. The members of the school council in both the pre-prep and the prep are encouraged to make sensible decisions and consider carefully their implications. In response, pre-prep pupils make many useful decisions, such as about different toys to play with and school food. Pupils in the prep belong to many committees, making important decisions about charities, green policies and the school environment. Pupils are engaged in their decision to adopt a green policy for the school, such as turning off lights and encouraging staff not to waste things. The school has a 'No Waste Week' and pupils who are part of the 'Eco team' go round with clipboards to check that staff have turned off classroom lights. They award a prize for the teacher who is best at turning off lights. Year 8 pupils all hold a post of responsibility with clear job descriptions that enable them to improve their sense of service. In PSHE lessons, pupils discuss how the decisions they make can affect both themselves and others. In some lessons a 'Think' board is used which features a question that makes pupils think, for example 'would you rather play badly and win or play well and lose'. Pupils enjoyed debating their varied response to this, respecting their different opinions.
- 3.21 Pupils contribute positively to the lives of others outside the school community and this is an area where pupils excel. Through the Christian ethos of the school they understand the imperative to think of others less fortunate than themselves and the importance of service to others. Pupils have good cultural awareness and enjoy participating in the wider community or involving themselves with communities overseas. The school works hard to provide pupils a strong understanding of the diverse nature of the world. Pupils have a good understanding of different belief systems and cultures through their work in the curriculum, trips to cultural and religious centres, and through the talks arranged for them by parents and visitors who share their experiences of their travels and work abroad. They willingly provide generous amounts of time and raise significant amounts of money through their charity work to help others. Strong links with local charities have been established, including the neighbouring children's hospice. Pupils happily share their music and drama with children in a local hospice and raise money for them through numerous charity events. An exchange with an inner-city school in a deprived area of Bristol and a close link with a foundation in South Africa helps further with their understanding of how people live. Through exchanging information using the internet with the school in South Africa, and sponsoring a librarian and an after-school club, pupils understand how to help others have an improved school life.

- 3.22 Pupils feel that they are known as individuals and feel well cared for and safe in school. They understand the need for a healthy lifestyle, enjoy plenty of exercise and outdoor education in the extensive grounds, and are aware of the importance of good nutrition. A change in lunch menus has recently been introduced with a focus on healthy eating which the pupils have recognised as important. They know how to use the internet safely and of the dangers of cyber-bullying. As a result of a broad education that concentrates on developing the whole person, they have a healthy attitude to maintaining a good balance between academic pressures and enjoying and developing their many interests outside of the classroom. An increased focus by the school on mental health and mindfulness allows for pupils to enjoy periods of 'time out'. The school has introduced a tracking and monitoring process to assess pupils' mental health and spot concerns early. Pupils with worries or concerns benefit from excellent support from trained staff. Almost all parents' questionnaire responses indicated that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development.

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 the chair of governors, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and 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 Maureen Bradley	Reporting inspector
Mrs Jane Stanley	Compliance team inspector (Bursar, HMC school)
Mr Ian Griffin	Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mr Alex Osiatynski	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Janet Watts	Team inspector (Director of studies, IAPS school)



“Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that the school produces high-achieving, well-rounded, happy, confident pupils”



THE DOWNS
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