



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Royal Grammar School

October 2021

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School's Details

School	Royal Grammar School			
DfE number	391/6037			
Registered charity number	1114424			
Address	Royal Grammar School Eskdale Terrace Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE2 4DX			
Telephone number	01912 815711			
Email address	hm@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Geoffrey Stanford			
Chair of governors	Mr Alan Fletcher			
Age range	7 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	1344			
	Juniors	273	Seniors	716
	Sixth Form	355		
Inspection dates	5 to 8 October 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 The Royal Grammar School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 7 and 18, owned and governed by a charitable trust. It comprises a senior school for pupils aged from 11 to 18 and, on the same site, a junior school for pupils aged 7 to 11. The school was founded in 1525, moving to its present site in Jesmond in 1906. The current headmaster was appointed in September 2019 and the chair of governors in August 2021.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has been rewired for Wi-Fi and a head of digital learning appointed. A new building houses the library, art and mathematics departments, careers hub, the Agora (a communal meeting and presentation space), and science and engineering design technology (EDT) classrooms. The sixth-form centre has been refurbished.
- 1.3 During the period March to July 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers and for vulnerable pupils. During this period of closure the school provided remote learning and live lessons, plus daily checks on well-being, for all pupils.
- 1.4 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.5 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.7 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades and teacher-assessed grades were awarded.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.8 The school aims to inspire young people and equip them to make a positive contribution to society. It seeks to be a centre of excellence in the north east, enthusing young people to achieve highly and to make a good contribution to their local community. The school seeks to provide pupils with a sense of belonging, a love of learning, a belief in each other and ambition to succeed.

About the pupils

- 1.9 The school is academically selective. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that pupils' ability in both sections of the school is well above average. In Years 12 and 13, pupils' ability profile is well above average for pupils taking A-level courses.
- 1.10 Most pupils come from Newcastle and the immediate surrounding areas. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 112 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including dyslexia and needs on the autistic spectrum, around two-thirds of whom receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 16 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Pupils who are particularly talented in sports have dispensations to support their training around their schoolwork.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are 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 FOCUSED 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 standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. In addition, the standards relating to behaviour and to the supervision of pupils are also included.]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 standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 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, National Curriculum tests in the years 2018 to 2019 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2018 to 2019, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2018 to 2019 have confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.7 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.8 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.9 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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

- 2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.13 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

2.14 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' 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.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.16 A range of information is 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.18 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.20 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.

2.21 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.

The headline judgements apply 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.

- Pupils attain highly and make excellent progress across the school.
- Pupils' extra-curricular achievements are a particular strength.
- Pupils are highly self-motivated, with strong leadership qualities.
- Pupils are excellent, insightful, and thoughtful communicators.

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

- Pupils are mature, resilient, self-confident and perceptive young people.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and learning in a highly supportive environment.
- Pupils have a strong sense of community and responsibility towards others.
- Pupils have a highly developed and sophisticated understanding of diversity.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes the school might wish to consider:

- promoting individual achievement and personal development further, by developing recent initiatives towards more personalised learning.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Junior school pupils demonstrate impeccable behaviour around the school that strongly supports their overall achievement. All pupils are excellent learners and demonstrate the ability to work on their own with confidence. They thrive on the opportunity to work with independence, to work collaboratively and to develop resilience. They demonstrate a wonderful love of learning and a passion for the various subjects that they study. There is a sense of awe and wonder that begins in the youngest pupils and that is still very much in evidence as they reach Year 6.

3.6 Junior school pupils progress rapidly in acquiring basic skills, making swift progress at an early stage, for example being around two years or more ahead in reading and in mathematics at the end of Year 3. This rapid rate of progress is maintained thereafter, as reflected in the most recent nationally-validated attainment test results in 2019, where the vast majority of pupils attained levels well above those usually expected for their age.

- 3.7 In the years 2018 and 2019, results in external examinations at both A level and GCSE were excellent, being well above national averages. Academic outcomes are consistently high across all subjects. The centre-assessed grades for 2020 and teacher-assessed grades for 2021 show pupils' high attainment has risen still further, by some margin, with over half of A-level results at A*, and at GCSE four-fifths at grades 8 or 9.
- 3.8 The school and pupils rightly judge that this is because of the very strong provision the school made for online learning during the periods pupils were at home. Pupils are extremely self-motivated; they say that they could study extensively without the interruptions of their normal competing demands of co-curricular activities, although they missed these immensely. Most pupils progress to highly regarded universities, with between 10 and 16 in each recent year to Oxbridge.
- 3.9 Added-value data show that pupils make excellent progress in all areas of the curriculum, performing well above the national average. Pupils across the full age range demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning across all subjects. They take great pride in their academic achievements and relish the opportunities for independent learning, assuming responsibility for their own progress to a high level.
- 3.10 Most of the teaching is inspiring and challenging, usually highly enjoyable and elicits excellent responses from pupils. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can and should do. Where the teaching is challenging, yet sufficiently refined to respond well to pupils' individual needs, pupils make rapid progress, far exceeding the expectations for their age and stage.
- 3.11 However, occasionally lessons are dull or draw on a more limited range of strategies. This acts as a barrier to the pace of learning and progress of a small number of pupils, because their engagement falters, and they say they can feel on the fringe of the lessons, not fully understanding. Leaders and governors have recently embarked on various ambitious initiatives to address these gaps, to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently personalised, in order to promote further the achievement of individual pupils. These include a full review of teaching strategies and plans for digital learning. The review of teaching is ensuring that the best practice evident in the school is being shared more widely. Senior posts have been appointed to drive forward the school's well-judged plans. On the way, the school's leaders recognise they could do yet more to reflect the views of all groups of pupils.
- 3.12 Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities display knowledge and skills on a par with their peers, both in lessons and in written work. The school's data show that they, too, attain highly in examinations, but it is less clear how individual pupils are progressing at any given time, nor the impact of any strategies to support them. This is because the school's systems for tracking the progress of particular groups of pupils are not sufficiently refined to be able to demonstrate this. The attainment of pupils for whom English is an additional language is also high.
- 3.13 Pupils achieve highly because of the excellent leadership of academic provision. Pupils comment fulsomely on the very high quality of teaching and their subject teachers' excellent knowledge and skills as key to their success. They and their parents speak with gratitude of the support and guidance given by staff. Inspectors agree, and note the highly positive, enthusiastic and collegiate approach of the staff.
- 3.14 Pupils achieve highly in a broad range of other areas, including science, music, drama and dance. All pupils excel in some aspect of wider achievements, with over 400 pupils successfully taking lessons in music and drama, and large numbers of examination successes in these. Sport is a particular strength of the school. Many teams of different age groups perform strongly in regional and national competitions in a good number of sports. For example, the girls' netball team reached the England national schools championship finals in 2019 and were the regional under-19 winners. The senior hockey team also reached national finals. The boys' rugby teams regularly win or reach national finals in several schools' championships and RFU cups, including winning the national level St Joseph's U18 tournament since the last inspection.
- 3.15 Individual successes abound: these include a national surfing champion, two national female hockey players, under-18 rugby and basketball England players, musicians playing with professional

orchestras and national Olympiad champions in mathematics and science. Pupils excel in national competitive essay writing and other national competitions, from *British Brain Bee* to *CyberFirst Girls* at GCHQ and Oxford and Cambridge essay competitions. Each year, many pupils gain the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. School leaders celebrate individuals' achievements and adapt the curriculum to support high achievers outside school.

- 3.16 Pupils across the school demonstrate very effective skills for learning, and work in a highly collaborative way. Pupils display excellent organisational and practical skills, as they are given frequent opportunities to apply these skills. Leadership of teaching has instilled a strong learning culture in both parts of the school, in which teachers model appropriately courteous behaviour. A high level of trust between pupils and teachers allows pupils to progress rapidly. This supportive classroom environment ensures that pupils feel confident asking questions to help them resolve issues where they are unsure.
- 3.17 Pupils, including those with SEND, are fluent communicators, both written and oral. Pupils are given many regular opportunities for extended writing and discussion, allowing them to develop extremely strong and confident communication skills. They clearly enjoy engaging in lessons and activities, including class presentations and debates, and do so in a highly mature, articulate fashion. Most pupils across the school demonstrate excellent levels of knowledge and a deep understanding of subjects, because prior knowledge and key words are consistently tested. Pupils take care when communicating, making great efforts to use correct subject-specific terms, even when these are newly introduced and, consequently, achieve exceptionally clear and technically correct communications in many subjects.
- 3.18 Pupils contribute their ideas with an extremely sophisticated level of vocabulary relative to their age or stage of study. Older pupils are articulate, insightful speakers who discuss complex ideas thoughtfully, evaluating the accuracy of their or another pupil's argument. Pupils show highly developed capability in the use of advanced conceptual language, as seen, for example, in philosophy lessons. Pupils develop a high level of oral competency in modern foreign languages as teachers use the target language to conduct lessons.
- 3.19 Pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively in a range of contexts, such as in understanding harmony in music, and in information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, and in using data in geography. In a sixth-form art lesson, pupils spoke passionately about the use of measurement in devising a conceptual piece. All students speak confidently of their ability to apply numeracy in other subject areas.
- 3.20 Online learning has had a significant impact on how well pupils apply their ICT skills across different subjects. Most pupils are now extremely adept at using different platforms and quickly adapt to different uses of ICT for learning. Pupils are confident in exploring problem-based approaches to ICT and applied aspects of this. Younger pupils in the senior school have applied these skills very successfully to build a rocket car prototype. Applying their ICT skills when online learning has significantly increased pupils' independence in learning, allowing them to go further and deeper, if they choose. The introduction of computer science studies as a compulsory subject in Years 7 and 8, and as an option thereafter, has expanded their ICT skills.
- 3.21 Pupils make appropriate and sensible use of mobile phones to enhance their learning within school. They identify tasks where their mobile device is an appropriate tool; older pupils do this instinctively, for example using their phones to research dictatorships in Latin America. In *Fabricarium*, the digital workshop, pupils used coding very successfully to create robots. The school creates an environment where project-based work provides an excellent vehicle for this kind of approach to applying ICT skills.
- 3.22 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent across the school. Pupils work with focus and great determination in their lessons, viewing academic achievements as the most important outcome of their time at school. They clearly understand the link between good study skills and success and have high expectations of themselves academically. Pupils apply highly developed study skills to help them achieve their ambitions. Skilled hypothesising is very often evident as a means of arriving at consensus.

Pupils analyse information extremely well and draw clear inferences from a variety of sources. In science, they use highly evaluative and well-reasoned arguments, backed up by references to data.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.23 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.24 Social development and collaboration within the community are key features of what makes the junior school so successful. These factors help pupils develop into considerate and empathetic young people. The purposeful atmosphere in school drives all the pupils and staff to meet the common goals set out in the school's aims.
- 3.25 Junior school pupils are extremely polite and supportive of one another, remaining focused on their lessons even when discussing topics or in practical activities. The personal development programme contributes significantly to this culture of mutual respect and tolerance.
- 3.26 Pupils in the junior school are very aware for which subjects they demonstrate the greatest aptitude and which areas of the curriculum require more attention. They are less aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their personal development, although once prompted will speak eloquently about the need for self-esteem and kindness as they grow up. Provision for the performing arts contributes greatly to developing pupils' self-confidence and to their evident enjoyment of school.
- 3.27 Pupils throughout the senior school show excellent levels of self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-discipline and resilience for their age. Highly reflective, they identify that remote learning improved their independence remarkably, because they became much better organised, chose to read more widely, and researched topics of particular interest to them in much greater depth, using wisely the increased time made available. Missing the social aspects and benefits of participation in team sport and music and their friendship groups, they showed high resilience, reflecting their inbuilt determination to succeed, pursuing their longer-term goals without constant reminders from teachers. Pupils, nevertheless, quickly learned to adapt to different situations and environments, engaging enthusiastically at a distance in all aspects of the extra-curricular programme. They developed a collegiate and ambitious approach to taking part in choral singing, drama, and practical scientific experiments facilitated by the staff.
- 3.28 Pupils greatly appreciate the constant encouragement, support and individual guidance of their teachers and pastoral leaders throughout their schooling and, more recently, when learning online. They cite the individual mentors, assigned as part of the school's increased provision for pupils' mental health and well-being, as helping them to persevere: 'If you don't believe you can do it, try again!' Pupils often take up something new and, across the school, show strong leadership skills and high initiative. Pupils with a particular talent or interest frequently set up and confidently lead a wide variety of clubs for younger pupils.
- 3.29 Pupils often use these clubs very successfully as a vehicle to consider and effect change, with tangible outcomes, such as LGBTQ+soc and Femsoc seeking the further promotion of equality: across the school pupils and staff can now opt to wear a preferred pronoun badge and a good number have chosen to do so. Pupils led rigorous debate and a subsequent school survey on the possible renaming of a school building with historical connections to the slave trade, and the ultimate decision to retain the name.
- 3.30 Such activities reflect the high moral awareness and stance pupils take on fairness and social justice showing a clear and keenly developed sense of right and wrong, seeking actively to redress perceived injustice. The school actively encourages pupils to question and to speak out. Pupils respond intelligently and empathetically to the many opportunities provided through the school's personal, social, health, sex and relationships education (PSHSRE) programme and the sixth-form plus programme, when considering topical themes and matters relevant to their future lives. Pupils say that their eyes are opened and that they are often willing to reshape their views, if convincing

argument is presented, for example when faced with hard-hitting speakers such as an apartheid survivor. In Year 10, when discussing the topic of male suicide, pupils showed remarkable self-awareness and compassion on being exposed to such emotive, challenging subject matter.

- 3.31 Pupils willingly challenge others and their teachers, and readily debate ethical questions, such as those related to the advancement of design and technology, when discussing what it means to be human in relation to robots and artificial intelligence. In an English lesson on *1984*, pupils very astutely provided examples of moral responsibility, and considered carefully the issue of climate change in geography. In a history lesson, discussing Clive of India, pupils in Year 9 re-evaluated his legacy, structuring their ideas logically, using sophisticated vocabulary. Pupils engage in the ethical dimensions of their subjects and wider societal issues: in a sixth-form English lesson critically analysing the text *Bluest Eye*, pupils reflected empathetically on aspects of racism, social hierarchies and relationships.
- 3.32 Some pupils feel that there is more still they could contribute and that, sometimes, their voices are not heard. They do not always agree with the rationale of decisions taken on their behalf. Inspectors note that there are many mechanisms, some highly effective, through which pupils already channel their views. However, pupils are indeed capable of contributing more, and many are keen to do so, offering well-reasoned opinions and suggestions. For example, female pupils appreciate the work the school does to raise awareness of sexual violence and sexual harassment and understand well how to help keep themselves safe. However, they are keen to suggest the school might approach this now from a different tack.
- 3.33 Occasionally, pupils with SEND feel marginalised. Inspectors observed where this was the case, occasionally, in lessons, when their individual needs were not always being fully met.
- 3.34 Pupils have extremely well-developed social skills, showing high levels of kindness and compassion towards others. They are quietly proud, but conscious of being highly privileged to attend the school. They eagerly seek out ways to contribute to their school community, and beyond, engaging actively in leadership opportunities through the activity programme, such as supporting games coaches, mentoring new pupils and supporting learning in lessons. Over time, most undertake the role of a prefect, broadening their social skills in supporting younger pupils, and leading weekly tutor periods in vertical house groups. They provide excellent role models for younger pupils, demonstrating their highly positive attitudes and cooperative behaviour.
- 3.35 Pupils self-regulate their behaviour, reflecting their evident immense enjoyment of school. They are overwhelmingly collegiate, value each other and are very respectful of difference. They consider maturely and thoughtfully questions of religion, gender, climate change and humanity, showing kindness and consideration for others in school and beyond, for example by raising money for those less fortunate and helping with food bank collections and primary school partnerships. Many sixth formers contribute directly in their local community, as part of a Newcastle United initiative, helping gifted pupils in local primary schools. Pupils comment that working in less familiar settings and situations prepares them very well for moving on to university.
- 3.36 Pupils confidently articulate their understanding of the impact on themselves of their own decisions and how to escalate to others if further guidance is needed. They understand that their decisions are instrumental in determining their future success and feel that school provides a safe place to test important, life-changing decisions. Sixth-form pupils consider a range of tertiary opportunities from gap years to university courses and apprenticeships, taking responsibility for their actions, and leaving school extremely well prepared for the next stage.
- 3.37 Pupils very successfully manage busy schedules, balancing the competing demands of co-curricular and academic commitments. They have developed an acute awareness of the importance of reliability and teamwork through their co-curricular commitments. In physical education (PE) strength and conditioning sessions, pupils show excellent leadership and applied knowledge; and in hockey practice pupils devise their own skill sessions to improve performance.

- 3.38 Pupils have an inherent, natural respect for diversity, demonstrating sophisticated understanding, with many commenting on how inclusive the school is. Pupils speak thoughtfully about respecting others, valuing diversity and differences in sexual identity. Pupils feel valued for themselves and know that they can express themselves without meeting a lack of acceptance. New entrants to the school are buoyed by realising that, if you make a mistake, you will still be supported.
- 3.39 Pupils take an active part in their year groups and seek to help other pupils, quickly developing tolerance and understanding of different perspectives through the vertically integrated tutor groups. They easily form positive friendships in their own year groups and through clubs. High numbers of pupils participate in the co-curricular programme, taking part in team sports, drama productions, music and charitable activities, developing excellent social skills.
- 3.40 Pupils understand the importance of being physically and mentally healthy, and of maintaining a balanced lifestyle. They appreciate the support they receive for their mental health and well-being through the strong pastoral system, and the access to quieter areas for reflection, including safe spaces such as *The Retreat*. Most pupils appreciate the school food, with healthy choices available and increased provision for healthy vegetarian options, following successful lobbying by the school council. Many pupils regularly choose to take part in a wide variety of sports in school, both team and individual, including swimming, use of the gyms and fitness suite, which promote their health. Pupils have a good understanding of online safety.
- 3.41 Governors take decisive and highly effective action to promote pupils' personal development, by directly supporting the senior pastoral staff, offering high-quality training and a bespoke mentoring programme, and by increasing the professional counselling support available to promote pupils' mental health. School development planning shows that governors and school leaders have good plans to further their vision of a holistic and more personalised view of education, to run alongside academic excellence.

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 the chair of the governors' education committee. Inspectors observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings, PSHSRE lessons and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Mrs Honoree Gordon	Reporting inspector
Mr Michael Evans	Accompanying inspector
Mr Daniel Cross	Compliance team inspector and team inspector (Deputy headmaster, HMC school)
Mr Will Newman	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Jason Lewis	Team inspector (Assistant headteacher, HMC school)
Mr David Morgan	Team inspector (Deputy headmaster, HMC school)
Mr Steven Pearce	Team inspector (Head of science, HMC school)
Mrs Sarah Raffray	Team inspector (Headteacher, SofH and GSA school)
Ms Caroline Rogerson	Team inspector (Head of senior school, SofH school)