



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

QUEEN MARY'S SCHOOL

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Queen Mary's School			
DfE number	815/6000			
Registered charity number	1098410			
Address	Baldersby Park Topcliffe Thirsk North Yorkshire YO7 3BZ			
Telephone number	01845 575000			
Email address	admin@queenmarys.org			
Head	Mrs Carole Cameron			
Chair of governors	Mr Thomas Fielden			
Age range	2 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	230			
	Boys	3	Girls	227
	Day pupils	142	Boarders	88
	EYFS	24	Juniors	82
	Seniors	124		
Inspection dates	29 to 30 March 2017			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or 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 following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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

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

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and 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.

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

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. 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'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff, the chair of governors and with two other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and 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 Honoree Gordon	Reporting inspector
Mr Timothy Smith	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Catherine Jawaheer	Team inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Queen Mary's School is an independent day and boarding school. It is owned by the Woodard Corporation and governed by an independent board of governors. The current head took up her post in September 2015, and a new director of studies and leaders of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stages 1 and 2 have joined the leadership team since the previous inspection.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1925, originally as a girls' preparatory boarding school. In 1985 it moved to its present site and extended the age range of pupils up to 16 years. The school is situated on 1 site and comprises a co-educational pre-preparatory school for children aged 2 to 7 years, a preparatory school for girls aged 7 to 11 years and a senior school for girls aged 11 to 16 years. Boarders are accommodated in 1 house. The school currently has no boarders who are aged under 8.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school strives for excellence, and to create independent young people who love life and enjoy learning. It seeks to enhance pupils' character and build their resilience. The school aims to nurture spirituality, personal growth and friendship. It seeks to respect individuality and embrace diversity.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional, military and business backgrounds. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 23 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include autistic spectrum disorder and other conditions. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs; an education, health and care plan; or English as an additional language. The school identifies 27 pupils as amongst the more able in the senior school's population.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in November 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Make more extensive use of assessment data in order to improve academic progress and achievement.
 - Link the staff appraisal process to the school's development plan and check that targets set are being achieved.
 - Bring the senior library up to date as an academic and recreational resource.
- 1.7 The school has fully met the recommendations of the previous full inspection.
- 1.8 The recommendation of the intermediate boarding inspection in March 2013 was:
- Ensure that sanctions are perceived by boarders to be fair.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met the recommendation of the previous intermediate boarding inspection.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well academically.
- Pupils' progress in the EYFS is outstanding.
- Pupils with SEND make excellent progress as a result of staff supporting them effectively.
- Pupils excel in extra-curricular activities, particularly in outdoor pursuits, music and sport.
- Pupils love learning, fulfilling the school's aims.
- Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 and in the senior school is sometimes limited by lack of challenge in their academic work.

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

- Pupils have excellent inter-personal skills with well-developed self-esteem and resilience, promoted by highly committed staff.
- Pupils' spirituality is outstanding throughout the school.
- Pupils are strongly self-aware and are kind, displaying empathy and support for others.
- Pupils are strongly aware of how to lead safe and healthy lives, and are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Boarders' social skills and friendships flourish, fostered by the community environment.

Recommendation

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Provide more consistent challenge for pupils, including greater opportunities for independent learning, drawing on a wider range of teaching strategies and more consistent use of marking, so that all pupils maximise their achievement.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 The school largely fulfils its aim to strive towards excellence in both academic work and extra-curricular pursuits. Results in national tests at age 7 have been far above the national average for maintained junior schools, and at age 11 have been well above the national average for maintained junior schools. Performance at GCSE has been above average in relation to the national average for maintained schools. All Year 11 pupils in 2016 successfully gained places to the sixth form of their first choice, with 4 winning scholarships. Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future.
- 3.3 Pupils overall make good progress in their academic work. The progress of pupils who have SEND is excellent due to the good guidance they receive from the staff of the learning support department. This guidance and advice is applied in different subject lessons and leads to benefits such as the rapid improvement of reading skills, enabling these pupils to access work more easily across a range of subjects. The staff of the learning support department thoroughly track the progress of pupils with SEND; this approach is mirrored in several but not all other parts of the school. Scrutiny of a sample of all pupils' work across the two schools demonstrates that marking does not guide pupils consistently in how to improve further across all subjects.
- 3.4 Children in the EYFS make excellent progress, rising to the high expectations of their teachers and benefiting from their close support, with most children exceeding national norms by the time they move up into Year 1. This rapid rate of progress continues in the next stage; national test results at the end of Year 2 demonstrate that pupils' attainment in both literacy and numeracy is high. Pupils' results at GCSE are stronger in English than in mathematics. The numeracy skills of pupils in the senior school are sound, and they apply these skills in other subjects such as science. Leaders have recognised this difference between achievement in numeracy and literacy and have taken appropriate measures to tackle it; changes to staffing, resources and teaching methods are already proving beneficial to pupils' mathematical skills and progress. Making mathematics fun, and clear communication of mathematical concepts and of how to apply numeracy skills was evident in a senior school lesson on estimation and in Key Stage 2 numeracy lessons, where pupils successfully applied their problem-solving skills.
- 3.5 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding develop well in most subjects. Pupils are good listeners and their written skills are good, as observed in Key Stage 2 lessons where pupils used sophisticated language to describe characters. The oral communication skills of pupils are strong; in communicating with others they are outgoing, cheerful, vocal and determined. Pupils at all ages are articulate and fluent communicators, as observed during their discussions with the school council and with other groups of pupils. Their communication skills benefit from the many opportunities that they receive throughout the school to express and defend their opinions.

- 3.6 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent, in line with the school's aims. A broad, well-balanced curriculum which is appropriate to the ability levels, interests and attitudes of the pupils ensures their high enjoyment of learning. Much time is devoted to outdoor pursuits, music and sport. Pupils demonstrate a love of learning. They question teachers eagerly but politely and firmly, probing and extending their knowledge and understanding. In many cases teachers pick up on this enthusiasm and channel it effectively, pushing forward with open-ended and deeper questioning, setting challenging and imaginative tasks to maximise learning and progress, and fulfilling pupils' individual potential. This is not always the case and some teaching misses opportunities to promote pupils' thinking skills or independent learning. This variation is reflected in a small minority of pupils' responses to the questionnaire, who felt that their lessons are not interesting. Pupils commented eagerly in interview on where teaching methods suited the ways they like to learn, such as using social media feeds to stimulate discussion and comment in English or classics. In these instances their independent study skills develop more rapidly.
- 3.7 Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are sound, as observed in presentations delivered in GCSE history lessons. Pupils do not use these skills regularly and routinely to enhance their learning in all subjects. Leaders have earmarked this as an aspect for further development, with an agreed written development plan in place and a new leadership post to drive this forward. Pupils with SEND have developed good ICT skills which serve them well both as a tool to present work and to enable them to participate fully in lessons, encouraged very effectively by their teachers.
- 3.8 Pupils excel in extra-curricular activities, especially sport and music. Their achievements in these areas benefit from an excellent programme based on outdoor life and activities, which makes maximum use of the school's rural setting. Much time is devoted to outdoor pursuits, music and sport, which are highly popular. Many pupils in interview and in their questionnaire responses said that this is one of the main reasons they or their parents chose the school. Pupils compete very successfully in riding; in 2016, 11 pupils were National Schools Equestrian Association finalists, individual successes included second place in Jumping with Style, and the equestrian first team became the national champions in show jumping. In 2014, 1 girl became national champion. School teams were under-16 regional netball finalists in 2015 and under-14 regional tennis finalists in 2016. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 including those who have SEND successfully complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme at bronze level.
- 3.9 Pupils achieve equally highly in music and many pupils are successful in both sport and music, reflecting the school's wish that they experience a range of leisure pursuits as preparation for their future lives. Pupils in choirs and the orchestra perform in the local community such as in concert at Ripon Cathedral, and singing at morning prayers and the weekly Saturday morning Eucharist in the school chapel. Each year over 60 pupils sit Associated Board music examinations, and all pupils who have sat these examinations have over the last 3 years have passed. Pupils' pass rate is 100% in speech and drama examinations, with 3 pupils gaining Grade 8 with distinction in 2016. In art, the Summer Exhibition showcased the work of the entire school community: pupils, staff and parents. The school awards annual scholarships in art, music and sport following assessment by an external adjudicator.
- 3.10 Pupils achieve well in other activities, including the 'Kids' Lit Quiz' where the school's team were placed 3rd overall from 20 North Yorkshire senior schools. They successfully compete in the United Kingdom Mathematical Challenge at junior and intermediate levels. All girls in Year 8 in 2015-16 gained the Archbishop of York Youth Trust's Young Leaders Award.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils are confident and know their own mind. They brim with enthusiasm and zest for life, promoted by the school's vibrant and outgoing ethos. Pupils are not shy of voicing their opinions or proposing ideas. Excellent pupil-teacher relationships underpin learning and strongly promote pupils' personal development; teachers encourage pupils to always 'have a go'. In interview, pupils stressed the positive impact of their teachers who encourage them to believe in themselves. Pupils work hard; the school's Christian ethos successfully promotes the virtue of doing your best in every endeavour. They respond very well to the many opportunities that are also provided in chapel; assemblies; form period and personal, health, and social education (PHSE) lessons to reflect on their school and home lives, and their achievement. Pupils work highly collaboratively both in and outside of lessons and their involvement in activities such as the DofE scheme reflects their grit and tenacity, fulfilling the school's aim to develop character and build resilience. Music groups perform regularly on Wednesdays to staff and pupils, and on Fridays for parents, enabling pupils to achieve the disciplines of practice and meeting deadlines.
- 4.3 The oldest pupils know that the decisions they make can have an impact on their future. They display strong leadership skills, honed through the many opportunities the school provides to them in the final year to take on positions of responsibility such as heads of house, boarding dorm captains, and captains of teams or clubs, which include pheasant-plucking and riding, wild-water swimming, archery, netball and lacrosse. Younger pupils have fewer such positions of responsibility, yet they too learn about their own capabilities through taking up new or difficult pursuits. The pupil-teacher interface over progress and personal targets is very effective in the final years of the school, where pupils understand well their own strengths and weaknesses and how to improve.
- 4.4 Pupils have an outstanding sense of spirituality which is fostered by the school's overt Christian principles, regular chapel services, religious studies lessons and the understated work of the school chaplain. Through his guidance and encouragement, pupils are enabled to cope with the demands of their day-to-day academic work. Pupils translate their faith into action, demonstrating how successfully the school fulfils its aim to nurture their spirituality and personal growth.
- 4.5 Pupils throughout the school are notably kind and courteous, displaying genuine care for one another. They do not judge each other harshly but stress the importance of mutual respect and support, and of working as a team. This is evident in lessons, where pupils are patient and helpful to those who are experiencing difficulties. Boarding pupils put the four cornerstones of school life, 'trustworthiness; good manners; public spirit and good hard work', successfully into practice in their living harmoniously as a community. Pupils across the school respect the school's values and rules as meaningful and important. Their strong spiritual awareness leads them to undertake work in the local community and raise funds for charity, such as when older pupils organised a fashion show.

- 4.6 Pupils follow and understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The school encourages them to keep fit and active, and to seek to maintain a good work-life balance. This awareness starts early; Key Stage 1 pupils convincingly portrayed a healthy and an unhealthy character in drama. Children in the EYFS learn to choose break time snacks that are low in sugar. Older pupils' results in food technology examination are good and 'bake off' competitions are popular, indicating pupils' strong interest in eating healthily. Through the chaplain, the counsellor and the 'listening ear' of their teachers, the school places a good priority on mental health and well-being. To this end, teachers encourage the pupils to get involved in school activities and events on a regular basis, especially outdoors. Taking part in making music adds to pupils' sense of well-being. School chapel services actively encourage 'time out' to be still and reflect, in a moment of calm in pupils' busy lives. Consequently, pupils present as very self-aware and have learnt the skills of self-discipline and tenacity. Pupils' questionnaire responses indicated that they feel well-versed in cyber-safety, having good input from sources such as the programme for PHSE.
- 4.7 Boarders' parents commented in their questionnaire responses on the significant part that boarding plays in promoting their children's personal development, stressing the friendly, family atmosphere and the ease of communication with the boarding staff. Older boarders mentor and support younger ones. Younger boarders learn patience and how to resolve difficulties if they fall out with friends. Boarders commented that staff encouragement has developed their self-confidence and helps them overcome obstacles, such as a fear of heights or a dislike of outdoor activity. Pupils throughout the school are willing to try out new things and to display perseverance. They demonstrate reliability as members of sports teams or choirs, qualities which stand them in good stead for their adult lives. Pupils demonstrate strong resilience as they learn to keep going and are encouraged to believe that they can succeed. Those who have SEND report that their self-esteem is bolstered through this positive attitude that staff instil.
- 4.8 Pupils take a strong moral stance which is reflected in the way they behave one to one another, and in their sense of duty and empathy to others in society. They have an acutely developed sense of fair play. This is demonstrated in the classroom, in their patience and help towards weaker or quieter classmates, and in organising themselves well in their charitable efforts, running activities, sports teams and music groups. They display a sensitive awareness of other cultures and accordingly respond in a positive way to diversity and difference. This is notable in the boarding house, where friendships blossom across pupils of different nationalities, faiths and cultures.