



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

FOCUSED COMPLIANCE AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION REPORT

GAD'S HILL SCHOOL

OCTOBER 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Gad's Hill School			
DfE number	886/6007			
Registered charity number	803153			
Address	Gad's Hill School Gravesend Road Higham Rochester Kent ME3 7PA			
Telephone number	01474 822366			
Email address	info@gadshillschool.org			
Headteacher	Mr David Craggs			
Chair of governors	Mrs Kirsty Hillocks			
Age range	3 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	297			
	Boys	158	Girls	139
	EYFS	41	Juniors	134
	Seniors	122		
Inspection dates	3 to 5 October 2017			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Gad's Hill School is an independent day school for pupils aged between 3 and 16 years. It was founded in 1924, as a girls' school and became co-educational in 2001. It is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The governing body is made up of directors of the company and trustees of the charity.
- 1.2 The school comprises three sections: Kindergarten, for children and pupils aged 3 to 7 years; Junior School, for pupils aged 7 to 11 years; and Senior School, for pupils aged 11 to 16 years. Since the previous inspection the school has opened new classrooms and teaching accommodation for Kindergarten and Juniors along with a new sports hall, school hall, refectory and kitchens, and additional facilities for music and drama.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to enable students to enjoy school, to achieve good academic qualifications and to develop personal attributes to guide them on their journey through life. Excellence, Enthusiasm, Friendship and Success are core values. The school seeks to equip students to leave Gad's Hill as confident, mature, articulate, pleasant and self-reliant young people who are well-equipped for the outside world. The school motto is "First to thine own self be true."

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, mostly from families living in the local area. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils in the junior school is above average and that the ability of pupils in the senior school is broadly average. The school had identified 66 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 32 of whom receive additional support. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for four pupils, whose needs are met by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified 68 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

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, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. 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 In the junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2014 and 2016 performance has been in line with the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 **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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 **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

2.12 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.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 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.

2.19 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
KN	Nursery
KR	Reception
K1	Year 1
K2	Year 2
J3	Year 3
J4	Year 4
J5	Year 5
Remove	Year 6
Shell	Year 7
Lower 4	Year 8
Upper 4	Year 9
Lower 5	Year 10
Upper 5	Year 11

Key Findings

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

- Pupils are confident and articulate communicators.
- Pupils display positive attitudes towards their work and their extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils make good progress supported by the school's effective use of tracking systems.
- Pupils understand how they are doing with their work where they are given effective feedback, but this is not a consistent feature across the school.
- Pupils show good achievement where they receive teaching that stretches and challenges them and sets high expectations, but this is not the case in all lessons.

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

- Pupils display good levels of behaviour, responsibility and resilience throughout the school.
- Pupils have a strong sense of justice.
- Pupils show much enthusiasm for helping others, through excellent charity fund-raising and support for the local community.
- Pupils are confident and comfortable in their self-understanding and in their relations with adults and peers alike, supported by the caring environment created by the school.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that all pupils feel they understand how they are doing in their work through consistently effective marking and feedback.
- Ensure that all pupils achieve their potential through being challenged by high expectations in all lessons across the school.

THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.4 Pupils gain good qualifications through the good work of the school and are equipped for their further education, as outlined in the school's aims. In the junior school, the school does not take part in National Curriculum tests, but the available evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own assessment data shows attainment to be similar to national age-related expectations. In the years 2014 and 2016, the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available, results at GCSE have been similar to the national average for maintained schools. A significant number of pupils in Year 6 achieve the standard required for grammar school entry each year and the leavers from Year 11 are successful in gaining places at a wide range of schools and colleges, some of which select on ability. Pupils have a good standard of achievement throughout the school, supported by the school's leadership team which has a strong focus on enabling pupils to make the most of their abilities. Those individuals identified as having special, educational needs/disabilities (SEND) or as being gifted or talented, achieve good standards in relation to their abilities, supported by the school's effective use of pupil-tracking which ensures that progress is matched to potential. In all three sections of the school, pupils make good progress with their learning. They have a greater understanding of their success when they are helped by positive feedback, but this is not always the case and where the marking is not so thorough and constructive. A small minority of pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire did not think that marking helped them improve their work.
- 3.5 Pupils display good knowledge across their subjects and across the age-range in the school. Pupils make good advances in their learning, benefiting from teaching which shows good levels of subject knowledge and a capacity to demand high expectations from interesting and challenging lessons. This was seen in a GCSE mathematics lesson and in a GCSE chemistry group. However, in some lessons this is not the case and then, pupils do not achieve the success of which they are capable. A small minority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire expressed concerns that lessons were not always interesting, but the inspectors found that the large majority of lessons observed were stimulating. Their progress in literacy and numeracy has improved recently with the increased emphasis on the core skills, as seen in written work and in internal assessments, a focus identified by the senior leaders of the school and supported by the active governing body. At the same time, pupils also have developed successfully their skills in the wider areas of the curriculum, in part due to increased opportunities both inside and outside the classroom, as seen in the good creative work displayed around the school and in some good scientific work seen in senior school lessons.
- 3.6 Pupils are confident, articulate communicators and display a wide vocabulary. They listen well to each other and to their teachers, learning effectively from each other, as seen in a senior school English lesson. They display good reading skills and make good use of the opportunity for extended reading time, as well as producing interesting and creative written work. They are fully prepared to discuss their work in class, as seen in a junior school English lesson where the whole group presented their pieces of writing, using inference and exaggerated language or in another junior school group, where the pupils talked enthusiastically about making playdough.

- 3.7 Pupils display good levels of numeracy in the senior school and make good use of these skills in different situations, as seen in a senior school science lesson and in some extension work in books. Pupils in a senior school mathematics lesson on algebra made very good progress in their ability to manipulate the equations, guided by some effective teaching. In the junior school, some pupils show good numeracy skills, seen in a class working with numbers 1 to 20 and in another group working on angles. Overall, pupils learn effectively from the mathematical tasks set them in lessons, when the teaching develops good numeracy skills but a lack of consistency of expectation means that not all pupils make the most of their abilities. Pupils are very competent in their use of information and communication technology (ICT), seen in a senior school lesson on coding where pupils were expanding on their game design programmes at a high level and in a junior school lesson where pupils had to apply their technological skills, using a painting programme to illustrate some work in a literacy lesson.
- 3.8 Pupils use their existing knowledge and skills effectively when faced with new learning situations and can apply these across subjects, analysing problems and coming up with solutions. Pupils in the junior school communicated successfully with each other and developed plans to create a play area which involved analysing the problems and working out how to move a bench from one location to another. Another junior school group adapted their recent work on nutrition to create a healthy meal. A GCSE class demonstrated a high level of thinking to synthesise some complex ideas to discuss erosion patterns in rivers. Pupils show an ability to think widely and be creative in their work and this is encouraged by some challenging teaching which often seeks to present a variety of lesson styles and approaches.
- 3.9 Pupils achieve some good results and develop broader skills from participating in the school's wide programme of activities. They compete successfully in individual and team events outside of school, locally, regionally and nationally. Artists have recently achieved success in a regional competition and go through to the national stage. The fencing team has produced competitors in national finals. Two junior school pupils achieved parts in musicals staged in London. A junior school rugby team won a national plate competition for independent schools. Pupils gain useful qualifications through their involvement in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF).
- 3.10 Pupils display a strongly positive attitude to their work, taking responsibility for their learning in lessons and making good progress, helped by the encouraging atmosphere created by teaching which reveals a thorough understanding of individual needs. Pupils work successfully on their own but equally are effective in group situations, sharing ideas and seeking to develop the finished product. This was seen in a junior school lesson where pupils hypothesised on the likely behaviour of characters in their class text and showed skills of language and understanding of a high order. GCSE pupils were seen working together successfully in a humanities lesson, discussing complex ideas, reflecting their self-confidence as learners and the benefit of teaching which challenged them. Junior pupils spoke warmly at lunchtime about their school and said that they learnt to be independent through the work they were doing.

THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 3.11 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.12 Pupils display a self-confident attitude and are happy to talk about themselves. Junior school pupils confidently chose and planned their own activities in lessons, determined to carry through their ideas, as seen in the way one group persevered in making a model from bricks, showing good resilience. All pupils want to learn and make progress, looking positively to their future. GCSE pupils spoke warmly about their plans for when they leave the school. Pupils learn valuable skills from their involvement with the CCF, such as self-resilience, aiding their own personal development. Pupils are confident in making their own career choices, encouraged by the provision for such decision-making in school: the inspection saw an information evening for leavers, attended by local sixth form schools and colleges. Pupils become very involved in their own learning and develop a greater understanding of themselves, helped by the school's guidance, such as the induction and progress passports used in the senior school. Pupils complete these on a weekly basis, recording their targets and achievements to help them see what progress they are making.
- 3.13 Pupils across the school feel they are prepared well for the next stage and speak warmly about the support they receive, in making choices for the future. Junior school pupils said they felt supported and secure when they had moved from one part of the school to the next, helped by the induction programme. Pupils are very positive about their role in the school council and are able to make sensible suggestions for the school, such as the purchase of some sports equipment and improvements to the steps down on the fields. Pupils are fully involved in their lives at school, encouraged by the work they do in their personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, the advice and information from assemblies and specific situations such as senior school pupils choosing their GCSE subjects. Pupils in the senior school said that they make strong advances in personal qualities such as responsibility, independence, self-esteem and comment favourably on the benefits they gain from the activities available in school, notably the popular CCF. In the junior school, pupils develop successfully their independence and decision-making through the recently introduced forest school scheme, which promotes independent learning and discovery in a natural setting.
- 3.14 Pupils show good awareness of the non-material aspects of life, seen in their work displayed on walls around the school, assemblies and in general discussion. Junior school pupils learnt much about Sikhism following their visit to the Gravesend Gurdwara. Senior school pupils also focus on the wider issues in their lives and broaden their perspective, helped by the 'well-being' days provided for them, about which they speak positively. Junior pupils become very aware of the importance of non-material considerations and make active use of the mindfulness boards in their classrooms, offering thoughts for the day to encourage each other. They spoke enthusiastically about how it was "good to be green". Pupils learn to understand themselves more fully from their study of other cultures and from the times set aside by the school, when they can think quietly and be silent. The 'drop everything and read' lessons provide this type of environment and are good occasions for improving literacy and allowing valuable opportunities for reflection.
- 3.15 Pupils abide by the strong sense of a moral code within the school, which is set out clearly by the school's leaders and all those involved in working with the pupils. The junior pupils were keen to show their "Golden Rules" which they keep in their pockets and which they have shared in creating. Senior school pupils understand the importance of rules and taking responsibility for themselves, saying in discussion that they were very aware of the school's ethos and emphasis on good behaviour, through the way rules were displayed on walls and even on the screens around school. Behaviour in the playground and around school is supportive and sensible with excellent interaction between pupils of different ages. Most parents believe that the school promotes good behaviour among the pupils.

- 3.16 Pupils work together effectively in the classroom and support each other. Older pupils in the junior school visit the classrooms of younger pupils and read with them, something which helps the latter whilst giving valuable responsibility to the former. Similarly, in the senior school, older pupils act as mentors for new and younger pupils, helping them to settle into their new environment quickly. The youngest pupils in the junior school spoke positively about the system of “playground pals” and the importance of helping each other. Pupils learn to support each other and develop good team-building skills through events such as the drama and music productions which involve large numbers of pupils and clearly are popular activities, reflective of the positive environment created by the school and the strong pastoral support.
- 3.17 Pupils are very aware of the needs of others beyond the school gates and understand their own responsibilities in helping the community near and far. They become actively engaged in raising money for charity, looking for different ways to do this. For example, during the inspection some of the younger pupils in the junior school wore pyjamas for charity. Pupils speak proudly of their involvement in charitable causes and all they achieve with these; there had been a recent sponsored walk in the junior school which raised money for a national child protection charity. Pupils participate in events in the local community and beyond, such as a tea party for local elderly residents, encouraged by the school’s emphasis on such support for others.
- 3.18 Pupils display a good level of respect for each other’s point of view and beliefs. They gain an understanding about diversity through lessons and assemblies and say that they do not think in terms of different cultures in the school, they are all equal as peers, part of the ‘Gad’s family’, as they see themselves. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school promotes tolerance and respect for others. This was shown during a senior school assembly when pupils actively led a presentation and discussion of racism with reference to civil rights problems in the United States of America during the 1960s, displaying their solid grasp of the issues involved. In the junior school, the pupils make good use of a “kindness” tree to express their positive feelings towards each other.
- 3.19 Pupils know how to stay safe and to look after themselves. They are very confident in their understanding of internet safety and were able to explain clearly what they needed to do to be safe online. Pupils are very aware of the need to lead healthy lives and were able to talk about key issues in discussion. Pupils learn well from the comprehensive PSHE curriculum which includes a variety of topics covering physical and mental health. Pupils learn how to look after themselves and be responsible through lessons such as in technology and science, which contribute to an understanding of diet and the risk from fire hazards for example. Pupils gain a valuable understanding of their emotional health through opportunities such as circle time and assemblies, as well as special days given over to such issues of well-being. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school enables their children to learn in a safe and healthy environment.

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 vice-chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. 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

Mr Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Mr Paul Lane	Compliance team inspector (Bursar, HMC school)
Mrs Ann-Marie Elding	Team inspector for juniors (Head of prep, Society of Heads school)
Mr Andrew Selkirk	Team inspector (Deputy head, Society of Heads school)
Sister Paula Thomas	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)