



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Heathcote School

February 2019



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School's Details

School	Heathcote School			
DfE number	881/6018			
Address	Heathcote School Eves Corner 1 Little Barrow Road Danbury Chelmsford Essex CM3 4BQ			
Telephone number	01245 223131			
Email address	enquiries@heathcoteschool.co.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Caroline Forgeron			
Proprietor	Heather Partnership			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	86			
	Boys	46	Girls	40
	EYFS	24	Key Stage 1	13
	Key Stage 2	49		
Inspection dates	26 to 28 February 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Heathcote School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 11 years, situated in the village of Danbury, in the borough of Chelmsford. It was founded in 1935 and has been owned and governed by the Heather Partnership since July 2018.
- 1.2 The school comprise three sections: Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for children aged 2 to 5 years; Key Stage One, for pupils aged 5 to 7 years; and Key Stage Two, for pupils aged 7 to 11 years.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to ensure that every pupil recognises their own self-worth and that through their school journey they build character, confidence and compassion, as well as a solid academic foundation.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, mostly from white British families living within a 15-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is well above average. The school has identified 13 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for two pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified 33 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for three other pupils because of their special talents in sport and performing arts.

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 REGULATORY 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.

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, 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 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.
- 2.12 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 any 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, 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.
- Pupils demonstrate a high level of achievement by the time they leave the school.
 - Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. As a result, they persevere, and are resilient and confident learners who involve themselves fully in all they do.
 - Pupils' numeracy skills and knowledge are very strong.
 - All groups of pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills overall as they progress through the school.
 - Pupils display excellent thinking and research skills in relation to their age.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils demonstrate very strong self-confidence through trying things out for themselves and learning from mistakes.
 - Decision making among all pupils is excellent.
 - Pupils are socially mature and readily take on responsibilities.
 - Pupils demonstrate a natural acceptance and tolerance of others who represent different backgrounds, beliefs, cultures and lives.

Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:
- Ensuring rapid progress in reading and writing is sustained throughout Key Stage 1 to match that observed in most lessons across the school.

The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests, but the available evidence shows attainment to be above national age-related expectations for EYFS children, and well above national age-related expectations for the oldest pupils. School assessment data, confirmed by lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, show that year-on-year improvement has taken place in the last three years. This is because senior leaders demonstrate a wide range of skills, including effective tracking to monitor pupils' attainment and progress across the school. By the time they leave the school, the pupils demonstrate a high level of achievement.
- 3.6 Children in the EYFS make rapid progress because their interests and aptitudes are quickly identified, resulting in a programme of well-planned activities. Most children exceed expected levels of development at the end of the Reception year. Their swift development is enhanced through selecting photographs of and writing about their favourite activities of the week. Throughout the school comprehensive personal profile records and containing termly targets for reading, writing and mathematics have a direct impact on increasing the achievement of each pupil. Class teachers effectively use assessment information to plan activities that challenge the more able pupils and deepen their understanding with more complex tasks. The information is also used to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge understanding and skills to enable them to quickly catch up with their classmates. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, all parents felt that the school meets their children's educational needs effectively, including those with SEND or EAL and the more able. Pupils are highly successful in gaining places at local independent and state grammar schools.
- 3.7 Pupils show an excellent attitude to learning and are overwhelmingly positive about their personal achievements. Pupils of all abilities show a willingness to persevere and try out new ideas. For example, pupils interviewed said, 'We learn something new every day'. They take risks and readily contribute their own thoughts to evaluate their learning. Pupils are highly motivated to achieve as a result of the effective use of praise throughout lessons and in their books. Pupils understand the system of pink and green marking very well. They said that teachers' feedback helped them to improve their knowledge and understanding. Many pupils voluntarily undertake additional research or extension to improve the quality of their work in their own time.
- 3.8 Pupils display excellent communication skills. Most children in EYFS are able to read at a level above their chronological age. Progress in reading and writing is rapid from EYFS onward, but this is not always sustained at the same rate throughout Key Stage 1. Year 4 pupils read with confidence and expression, and convey meaning when reading aloud. They also involve themselves fully in learning how adjectives improve character descriptions and so improve their understanding about how to further engage the reader. Year 5 pupils produce high quality writing in their poetry anthology books. Their work is enhanced by high teacher expectations about using verbs in every line of their poetry work and making frequent use of metaphors. Year 6 pupils' extended written work is well-crafted. They have an excellent grasp of language structure and technique. They can distinguish the difference between metaphors and similes and explain why writers might use these examples of figurative language. These older pupils deepened their learning about how to plan a playscript by identifying key features of text when deciding about character names, written dialogue and instructions for stage directions.

- 3.9 Pupils demonstrate excellent progress in mathematics and diligently apply numeracy skills with enthusiasm to a range of situations. Children in EYFS count up to 20 with confidence and demonstrate a reliable understanding of number value. The younger pupils display above average ability in mathematical tasks. In one lesson, pupils in the middle of the school demonstrated strong understanding as they explained the process of column addition using accurate mathematical vocabulary. Pupils of all abilities across the school show high levels of resilience as they work to tackle more complex mathematical material and are motivated and inspired to achieve. For example, pupils persevered when using a protractor to identify perpendicular and paralleled lines and shapes, such as pentagons. This leads to the production of high-quality work in mathematics. Older pupils' work shows that their numeracy skills are very strong both within mathematics lessons and in their application across a range of subjects when undertaking both mental written calculations and problem-solving. For example, the oldest pupils displayed high levels of confidence and competence when simplifying algebraic expressions and explain why some statements could not be simplified.
- 3.10 All pupils from the nursery to Year 6 develop and demonstrate well-honed information and communication technology (ICT) skills as a result of the specialist teaching that they receive. EYFS children use interactive touch screen programmes very well, while younger pupils use the keyboard confidently. They correctly identified and confidently explained how to use the backspace and delete keys. Pupils in the middle of the school talked enthusiastically about programming a sequence of instructions to generate high quality images on screen. They use ICT very effectively in art lessons using a variety of software techniques to enhance the quality of their work. The oldest pupils confidently use ICT for research topics. They perceptively manipulate digits in mathematics, as well as communicating and collaborating effectively online, including video conferencing. The older pupils are confident to create and publish information through blogs and websites as well as make use of ICT to improve their knowledge and understanding of algorithms and sequencing.
- 3.11 Improvements across the school have enabled pupils to develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects and apply their skills very effectively. For example, when referring to a particular text during an English lesson, older pupils could put themselves in the shoes of the main character, discussing with a high level of maturity about how they would feel in a similar situation. Pupils use their scientific skills highly effectively and are encouraged to do so by enthusiastic teaching and high expectations. For example, budding scientists in Year 6 were able to explain clearly and without reference to notes, how they solved a 'murder mystery' over a six-week period, using traditional light experiments. They presented forensic evidence very well during the final lesson, which took the form of a scene in court scene.
- 3.12 Pupils display excellent thinking and research study skills, both in lessons and in their independent project work. The youngest pupils exhibit high-quality imaginative skills by staging conversations between themselves and soft toys, leading onto them using these confidently in show and tell sessions. Pupils understand the concept of challenge and each year group has very skilfully created their own visual images to describe the progressive level of challenge they choose to tackle every lesson. Pupils are able to research confidently, independently, and well, especially when they are allowed to choose their own topic. For example, the oldest pupils' research into how life in Victorian times compared to life in modern Britain demonstrated strong historical skills.

- 3.13 Pupils achieve considerable successes in many spheres of school life. Sporting successes are many. For example, boys and girls successfully compete in the local schools' sport partnership events for cross-country, football, netball and swimming. Individual pupils have represented the school in ISA Championships in swimming, athletics, show jumping and triathlon. Pupils are also particularly successful in music and speech and drama, where a significant majority of entrants pass examinations with merit and distinction. Pupils' achievements in art and performing arts are particularly strong with large numbers of pupils participating in school productions and local festivals. Art awards gained by the school in national competitions highlight their excellent achievements, such as when a scarecrow produced in art and textiles achieved a national award in 2018. Pupils' success stems from their high levels of motivation when choosing from a programme designed in response to pupils' interests. In questionnaire responses, an overwhelming majority of parents agreed that a suitable range of extra-curricular activities is provided.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 Pupils demonstrate high levels of confidence and self-esteem by the time they leave the school as a result of the leadership opportunities they receive. The school's personal development profile system provides a valuable vehicle to track pastoral development. As a result, pupils are confident, self-assured and positive. Personable and unfailingly polite, the pupils demonstrate a perceptive awareness of their own self-worth, character, confidence and compassion in line with the school's aims. As a result, pupils reflect thoughtfully on what they achieve at school, as seen in Year 6's comments about the personal, social and health education (PSHE) values programme. They know about their strengths and vulnerabilities, coupled with a mature sense of the need to take responsibility for their own actions. Younger pupils told inspectors that if they keep trying, they are successful in overcoming difficulties. Older pupils reported that they are encouraged by staff to take risks and have learned that they can use any mistakes made to improve their work.
- 3.16 From the earliest years, pupils organise themselves well and learn to make excellent decisions about their daily needs and routines, such as which clubs and activities to attend and how to spend their breaktimes. Young children shared toys and equipment willingly and co-operatively. They showed high levels of independence and made choices. For example, pupils are given and respond positively to a second level of optional work to extend themselves. Pupils across the rest of the school showed an excellent understanding of the impact of their decisions on themselves and others. This was illustrated when pupils talked about how a presentation by a children's national charity made them realise that all decisions have consequences and repercussions and they need to be careful about what they say. The comprehensive assembly programme, form time and the new well-structured PSHE curriculum helps the pupils develop an excellent knowledge of themselves, their place in the school and the wider world. Year 6 pupils talked enthusiastically about debating issues and reaching an agreement. They were very appreciative of the need to listen to other pupils' opinions in order to support their decision making, such as when canvassing views and ideas and realising the value of being a good friend.
- 3.17 Pupils are very thoughtful and reflective. They appreciate the non-material aspects of life, guided very effectively by the robust pastoral programme and the school's promotion of the Heathcote values, such as kindness, honesty and happiness. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about how they find a fascination and a sense of satisfaction in ideas of faith, fantasy and mythology. The *Eco Committee* display remarkable understanding of the need to care for the environment and the plants and creatures that inhabit it. The environmental day, planned by the committee, provided activities responded to with awe and wonder as pupils helped raise awareness across the school about the ecological footprint that they are responsible for.

- 3.18 Pupils have high levels of moral conscience, and a strong sense of right and wrong from an early age. They are confident that the school's moral code is for their protection and they are able to articulate clearly the school's high expectations for their relationships with and attitudes towards their peers. In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority of parents and all pupils and staff agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour with rewards and sanctions that are fully understood. Pupils' kind, considerate and responsible behaviour in the classroom and at breaktimes demonstrates how leaders' successful embedding of the school's values programme permeates everything they do. Pupils eloquently expressed their respect for the school's value-based learning by describing how the word of the month influenced interactions between classmates and staff. They demonstrate a strong understanding about why their community needs rules to keep all its members safe and in interview were able to link this understanding to the need to respect laws of the country.
- 3.19 Across all year groups, pupils show well developed social skills. Pupils regularly work in pairs to great effect whilst striving to meet lesson objectives. They work with one another very well to solve problems. They show genuine care and concern for each other and for adults. For example, pupils commented that 'If the other people in the group are doing more work than you, you must ask what you can contribute'. As a result, pupils develop very effective teamwork skills in extra-curricular activities, such as science and board games clubs, and willingly help each other when learning to play new games. Collaboration is promoted in the classroom, and pupils respond very well to clearly established routines whereby they work together to carry out their daily responsibilities. Pupils talked enthusiastically about happiness and *Great Dreams* project work where creative activities are used to develop excellent caring and compassionate behaviour. Pupils demonstrate excellent social awareness when involved in the house sporting and charity events that enable them to work with those in different year groups.
- 3.20 Pupils' excellent contribution to the lives of those within the school and wider society is strongly underpinned by their deep respect for their local community. EYFS pupils engage very well in the weekly *Danbury Doodlers* school community project with other pre-school children from the locality. Younger pupils are ably collected by the older pupils and taken to shared house assemblies where the pupils interact with and support each other very well. The school council and eco-representatives provide a very effective voice. They generate action plans which enable pupils to contribute meaningfully to school life. Pupils with roles of responsibility, such as prefects, very effectively seek information from pupils across the school. For example, pupil heads of school ensure that the daily number of pupils choosing school meals and packed lunches is shared with the school leadership team. Older pupils shared their concern at the proposed loss of the local library and collectively took action through written and verbal communication which was praised by the local town councillor. They made presentations, demonstrating great courage, confidence and self-belief, which were applauded by the authorities at a local meeting.
- 3.21 Pupils respect and value diversity within their school community and beyond. They actively enjoy sharing their own customs and views with each other and they show high levels of interest, respect, tolerance and acceptance of each as an individual, irrespective of faith, race, religion or gender. Ideas were discussed with pupils across all age groups in the house assembly on tolerance where all pupils from nursery to Year 6 engaged with each other with ease. Older pupils said that throughout the school, differences were effectively invisible with pupils simply enjoying being with each other. This was illustrated during the inspection in the way pupils and staff enthusiastically joined in with a whole school music and dance activity during morning break. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes the values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.

- 3.22 Although a very small minority of pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire disagreed that the school encourages them to follow a healthy lifestyle, inspection evidence found that pupils learn how to make healthy choices about diet and understand the type of foods they should eat and the importance of sleep. Pupils of all ages have a strong understanding of what it means to stay safe physically, emotionally and when using technology to access the internet. The school's recently introduced well-being tracking ensures the whole child is considered and their needs are very well catered for. As a result, it has not only raised awareness of mental health, but there are some examples in the school where pupils increased their own self-empowerment because they were given time to talk. The school staff trained as mental health first aiders have improved pupils' social awareness about healthy lifestyles. There is a positive 'can do' mentality throughout the school that encourages pupils to take part in play time activity or sporting events. Pupils leave with a strong awareness of their strengths and are well prepared for the next stage of education.

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 two directors of the Heather Partnership, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registrations and house 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 Desmond Dunne	Reporting inspector
Miss Sue Duff	Accompanying reporting inspector
Mr Rhys Johnston	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mrs Claire Robinson	Team inspector (Headteacher, ISA school)