



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**KIRKHAM GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

**FEBRUARY 2017**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Kirkham Grammar School			
<b>DfE number</b>	888/6013			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	526721			
<b>Address</b>	Kirkham Grammar School Ribby Road Kirkham Lancashire PR4 2BH			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 671079			
<b>Email address</b>	info@kirkhamgrammar.co.uk			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Daniel Berry			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Rosemary Cartwright			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 19			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	839			
	Boys	445	Girls	394
	Day pupils	784	Boarders	55
	EYFS	27	Juniors	206
	Seniors	427	Sixth Form	179
<b>Inspection dates</b>	08 to 09 February 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 unmet 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 and with the 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 junior and senior schools, the boarding house, 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 Alistair Telfer	Reporting inspector
Dr Carolyn Shelley	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Michael Goodwin	Team inspector (Former head, Society of Heads school)
Mr Martin Kettlewell	Team inspector (Head of department, HMC school)
Mr Richard Knott	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Jason Lewis	Team inspector (Assistant head, HMC school)

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## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Kirkham Grammar School is a co-educational day and boarding school offering education to pupils from the ages of three to nineteen. It is a charitable trust with its own incorporated board of governors. Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster has been appointed and a number of projects have been successfully completed as part of the school development plan; these include building a refurbished sixth form centre, music centre and sports hall, and the refurbishment of the school café. In addition, a campus wide Wi-Fi system has been installed.
- 1.2 The school originated in 1549 as a Chantry school linked to the local parish church and it moved to its present site in 1911. From 1655 until 1944, it was supported by the Drapers' Company with whom it still maintains some links. It became a voluntary aided grammar school in 1944 but established itself as an independent school in 1979 when it also became co-educational. The junior school was opened in 1990 and moved to its own premises across the road from the senior school in 1992. A nursery was added in 2003. Boarding is housed in a purpose-built facility, housing boys and girls aged 11 and older in separate accommodation. Flexi and weekly boarding are also available.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.3 The school aims to provide a caring, secure, family-based environment where the highest priority is given to the pursuit of academic excellence and to fulfilling the potential of each pupil. The school endeavours to provide its pupils with a breadth of educational opportunities, offered in a motivating and supportive environment that promotes self-respect and respect for others within the spirit of its broad Christian ethos.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.4 Pupils come largely from professional and business families and from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds that are representative of the school's large catchment area. There are 55 boarders, of whom 39 are boys and 16 are girls; the majority of overseas boarders are from Asia. In the junior and senior schools, standardised tests indicate that the ability of pupils is above the national average. The ability of pupils in the sixth form is in line with the national average. The school has identified 30 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional learning support, mainly for dyslexia. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs, or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Nine pupils have English as an additional language, all of whom receive support. The school has identified nearly half of the pupils as being highly academically able or as having a talent. Teachers make provision for them in their lesson planning and co-curricular activities.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report 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>
First Year	Year 7
Second Year	Year 8
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	Year 11
Lower sixth	Year 12
Upper sixth	Year 13

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a Standard Inspection in November and December 2010.
- 1.7 The recommendations from this inspection were:
- Implement the teaching and learning policy to ensure that pupils are more consistently challenged in lessons and in their homework.
  - In the senior school, implement marking practices that enable pupils to benefit from constructive and developmental comments and subject-specific targets.
  - In the junior school, provide sufficient opportunities for independent research and extended project work.
  - In the EYFS, extend opportunities to enhance parents' involvement in their children's learning in all six areas of the curriculum.
- 1.8 The school has fully met the recommendations of the previous inspection to provide greater opportunities for research and project work in the junior school and to provide more opportunities for parents' involvement in EYFS, but it has only partially addressed the recommendations regarding the implementation of the marking practices and ensuring that pupils are more consistently challenged in lessons in the senior school. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.
- 1.9 The recommendation of the intermediate boarding inspection in November 2013 was:
- Ensure that risk assessments for boarders' trips and outings at weekends are systematically and centrally recorded.
  - Provide more sporting activities for younger boarders in the evenings.
- 1.10 The school has successfully met the recommendations of the previous inspection. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

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

- Pupils are articulate and display excellent verbal and communication skills.
- Pupils achieve excellently in co-curricular activities.
- Pupils are ambitious learners, eager to respond to challenging opportunities in lessons and clear target setting in marking, which in the senior school is not always evident.

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

- Pupils reflect the strong family ethos of the school and demonstrate excellent collaboration in and out of lessons.
- Pupils develop excellent levels of confidence at all ages, supported by the strong personal, social, health and educational (PSHE) and enrichment programmes.
- Pupils show a clear respect for different faiths and diversity, demonstrating excellent levels of empathy and tolerance towards others.
- Pupils make informed choices, empowered and supported by their teachers.

### **Recommendations**

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

- In the senior school, monitor the quality of teaching and the sharing of best teaching and marking practice to promote excellence across all departments.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Kirkham Grammar School pupils are educated to a high level in accordance with the school's aim to pursue academic excellence and ensure that each pupil fulfils their potential. They acquire very good levels of knowledge and understanding in lessons and demonstrate excellent levels of performance and creativity in co-curricular activities.
- 3.3 In the years 2013 to 2015, the most recent three years for which comparative data is available, performance at GCSE and A level has been above the national average for maintained schools. Results at IGCSE have been higher than worldwide norms. In the junior school, results in standardised tests have been above the national average. The achievement of pupils in the sixth form enables an overwhelming majority to gain admission to their first choice of university and a small number of pupils have successfully obtained apprenticeships with local, national and international companies, all having benefitted from the support of careers guidance they received from the school and the school's university entrance department. Pupils are beginning to benefit from a newly implemented assessment programme, which enables them to know how well they are progressing. They make rapid progress, which results in high achievement in lessons, especially when tasks are matched to pupils' ability.
- 3.4 Pupils with SEND or EAL progress especially well and are enabled to achieve standards in external examinations that are in line with their peers. They actively seek support from the SEND teaching staff through one-to-one and small group support sessions, as well as the study support provided by the SEND and EAL departments. A small group of Year 7 pupils confidently asked questions regarding the application of punctuation and correctly applied the rules to their written work. Senior school pupils eagerly make use of the lunchtime and after school subject support sessions provided by their teachers, recognising that these enhance their understanding and enable them to progress in lessons. Boarders greatly appreciate the assistance and support of academic staff, who act as house tutors, during their homework and study sessions.
- 3.5 More able pupils progress when there is provision of suitably challenging work in class, though this is not provided consistently, and further benefit from enrichment in the wide range of co-curricular activities. In the junior school, pupils are inspired and benefit from extra challenge through extended work projects. A substantial number of pupils achieve scholarships on entry to the senior school for academic, music and sport and a significant number also achieve such awards on entry to the sixth form.
- 3.6 Pupils are enthusiastic and determined learners in lessons, prepared to take risks, and they respond positively to different styles of teaching and challenging opportunities when these are offered. Children in the EYFS are inquisitive learners when investigating measurement. Year 1 pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning; they investigated sentence construction and the use of adjectives enthusiastically, using word strips successfully to make descriptive sentences across the classroom floor. Pupils demonstrate a clear sense of purpose, moving calmly to their lessons. They settle quickly and show an eagerness to learn and be involved in discussion and questioning. For example, pupils in a geography lesson worked well in small groups to produce models and diagrams of tectonic plates and a member of each group eloquently described their findings to the class and successfully fielded questions. Pupils respond well to guidance in lessons. However, while marking enables progress and self-reflection in the junior school, it is not always meaningful and engaging in the senior school. This supports the view of a very small minority of pupils in the pupils' questionnaire responses that marking does not help them to improve.
- 3.7 Pupils use sophisticated language confidently and are articulate, as observed in a science lesson when they investigated electric circuits, discussing series and parallel circuits and resistance. They read well, are attentive and apply knowledge in class and reason thoughtfully and logically. Active

and lively discussion skills are wide-ranging and informed. For example, in an enrichment philosophy lesson, the class thoughtfully discussed the soul and questions about existence before and after life. In interviews, pupils expressed enthusiasm for being able to discuss and debate ideas freely in and out of class. Literacy is very strong; pupils in the junior school are avid readers and enjoy competitive reading challenges. They also make the most of the libraries in the junior school and senior schools, which are well stocked with a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books and periodicals and are avidly used places for quiet reading and independent research.

- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate good numeracy skills and apply them successfully; sixth form chemistry pupils effectively demonstrated the competent use of formulae and calculation in their lessons and homework. The use of computers within the curriculum show that pupils often have skills well above those expected for their age. In a design technology (DT) lesson, senior pupils showed dexterity and perseverance to design images using computer aided design software, and young junior pupils used a range of hardware and software to produce musical arrangements, record them and play them back to the class. Pupils employ a variety of independent learning skills, developed within the school's PSHE and other programmes, as demonstrated by Year 7 pupils who successfully undertook research on the internet to research information on different countries and produce presentations to their class.
- 3.9 Pupils make informed choices to successfully participate in the co-curricular programme of suitably age-related clubs and activities, which provide recreational activities for the boarders in the evening and at weekends. An example of this is the wide variety of projects that pupils undertake, such as Young Enterprise where, using DT skills, independent research and public speaking ability, senior pupils have won a regional technology competition and eagerly await the national finals. Pupils achieve awards in several mathematical competitions such as the individual and team Maths Challenges. In Years 9 to 11, pupils have achieved bronze and silver awards in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and some sixth form pupils, through further endeavour, have successfully attained the gold award scheme. Active and skilful participation in team sports, such as rugby, netball and hockey, results in success in local and national competitions, which is demonstrated by the fact that the senior school achieved the prestigious award of 'Rugby School of the Year' last year. Success is also achieved by individuals in athletics, dressage and swimming. Pupils enjoy the challenge of competitive sport and show support for each other in the team and individual events, as observed on posters throughout the junior and senior schools. Pupils also enhance their educational and cultural understanding by participating in visits, which are organised by the junior and senior schools, to destinations in the United Kingdom and overseas. Boarders also benefit from weekend excursions, which are designed to enrich their boarding experience. Additionally, pupils' learning experience is further enriched by listening to visiting speakers and authors, as observed in inspection, when English language and literature pupils enthusiastically watched a streamed video of a live production of *King Lear*.
- 3.10 Pupils achieve national awards in music and drama. They avidly engage and demonstrate their musical talents in activities such as the orchestra, choirs, and other musical ensembles. Pupils become confident public performers through involvement in theatre. Junior pupils received a national award for their production of *Beauty and the Beast* and senior pupils achieved three national awards for their production of *Hamlet*. A vibrant and enthusiastic musical rehearsal for *Aladdin* was observed during a break time in the junior school. Pupils gain experience and achieve success back stage in theatre sound, lighting, stage and costume design. Many pupils find pleasure and achieve personal and academic success in creative work and are encouraged to develop their interest and talent in drawing, painting and photography. A very large majority of parents and pupils agreed in the questionnaires that these opportunities greatly enhance pupils' achievement.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages show high levels of self-confidence and a profound understanding of how to progress. They willingly participate in the highly effective personal tutor system, and benefit from the setting of individual academic targets, termly reviews and good quality informative reports. Pupils show personal pride in the quality of their work, and their ability to complete tasks inside and outside the classroom. Children in the EYFS actively and thoughtfully build block towers whereas Year 2 pupils enthusiastically persevere to construct mathematical shapes from marshmallows and sticks in a mathematics lesson. Senior pupils self-assuredly rise to a variety of challenges in the sports hall, such as that of a wall climb. Throughout the school, pupils are unafraid of being wrong and do not judge this as a failure but as a learning opportunity. They react positively to challenges and occasional setbacks, and thus develop strong resilience. Children in the EYFS strengthen their resolve through creative play and activities in their outdoor learning area. The self-confidence and resilience they gain enables them to successfully respond to the choices open to them at the different key stages of their educational development. Pupils who recently joined the boarding house reported that the welcoming and supportive family atmosphere enabled them to make a confident start to their school life. This was further recognised in responses by a very large majority of pupils and parents in the questionnaires.
- 4.3 Senior pupils are well prepared to face the challenges of living and working in modern Britain through the strong provision of PSHE, careers guidance and health education. Both junior and senior pupils employ sensible and productive use of their free time, with the support of their tutors, boarding house staff and the pastoral system, making informed decisions regarding their co-curricular choices. Additionally, they utilise and appreciate quiet rooms and study areas to further their learning opportunities. Senior pupils make informed choices regarding subject options to follow a chosen career pathway and sixth form pupils respond successfully to further guidance regarding suitable university courses. A small minority of senior pupils expressed their concern that they did not receive good advice regarding subject and career choice in their questionnaire. This was not reflected in discussion and interviews with pupils, where senior pupils expressed that there was appropriate support to enable them to make an informed choice.
- 4.4 From the earliest years, pupils have a strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life and they actively participate in art, music and theatre throughout the school. The leadership and management have recently reviewed this provision to ensure a wide range of opportunities, which pupils said at interview that they firmly appreciate and enjoy. They show a genuine appreciation of how kindness makes for a better family orientated community.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate understanding that individual success is not the only factor in their development and that co-operation can result in better outcomes. Pupils foster strong skills in working together as members of the school community. They begin in the EYFS, responding successfully to the emphasis on co-operative play and sharing. Throughout the school, pupils eagerly and successfully participate in carefully planned group tasks in their lessons. In the junior school, pupils engaged actively in a project to design and produce a motor controlled car and they worked together in a physics lesson to successfully develop their understanding of electric circuits to be used in the lighting. In a history lesson, pupils successfully collaborated to find solutions to codes. Out of class, pupils successfully meet group challenges, appreciating and sharing joint success through their participation in The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and the Combined Cadet Force; members in the sixth form develop their leadership skills as non-commissioned officers. Pupils relish the opportunities given by age-related responsibilities such as team and form captains, membership of the school council, mentors and prefects. Mentors fulfil their responsibilities in the support of younger pupils during their transition from the junior school to the senior school or as a new pupil to the school or boarding house. They and the prefect body provide excellent role models to the school community.

Pupils may request additional activity provision and bid for funding; an example of which is a medical club, successfully organised and managed by a senior pupil.

- 4.6 The pupils demonstrate high levels of empathy and tolerance towards others, respecting and valuing diversity. Peer respect is also reflected in the low levels of bullying that are recorded and pupils who were interviewed did not believe bullying to be an issue. Pupils actively support each other and help monitor behaviour. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of the wide range of cultures within the school and are supported by a visiting chaplain. They also demonstrate a rich understanding of the key values that characterise modern Britain. Throughout all the settings and the boarding house, pupils appreciate that family spirit and unity, rather than difference, is the key to tolerance. Pupils successfully acquire greater understanding of these characteristics through academic lessons, PSHE and participation in assemblies and educational visits. Pupils exhibit respect for the school rules and understand that an individual is responsible for his or her own actions.
- 4.7 The school council provides a greatly appreciated forum for the pupil voice and contributes to fundraising activities. A recent request to celebrate Chinese New Year with a school lunch was granted and greatly appreciated. In the junior school, an elected eco-council discusses helpful environmental issues, such as saving electricity by rewarding classes for turning out the lights, and makes representation to the junior school head. In PSHE lessons, pupils learn effectively about and understand the democratic process and experience the use of their vote; for example, pupils vote for form captains, house captains and school council representatives. Pupils enthusiastically participate in the close links that provide direct support to many local, national and international groups through community service and charity sponsorship. They have an active voice in the choice of charities and the manner of fundraising, ranging from own clothes days, cake sales, sponsored running and spinning.
- 4.8 Pupils voice a strong understanding regarding their physical and mental well-being. They appreciate the need for a balanced approach to life, through their willing participation in physical activities as well as their academic studies. They continue to develop the concept of risk taking with the support of the pastoral team, which includes support from a mindfulness programme. Pupils fully realise the benefit to the individual and to wider society of a good diet and suitable levels of exercise and pursue these. They participate enthusiastically in the extensive range of individual and team sports provided. Pupils make informed choices from the high-quality school menu, about which they voiced great appreciation in general discussion and in boarding interviews.