



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**GAD'S HILL SCHOOL**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Gad's Hill School

Full Name of School/College	<b>Gad's Hill School</b>
DfE Number	<b>886/6007</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>803153</b>
Address	<b>Gad's Hill School Higham Rochester Kent ME3 7PA</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01474 822366</b>
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Email Address	<b>admissions@gadshillschool.org</b>
Head	<b>Mr David Craggs</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr John Melville</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 16</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>416</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (202 boys; 214 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>5-11: 129</b>
	<b>3-5 (EYFS): 33      11-16: 254</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>Total: 416</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>29 Nov 2011 to 30 Nov 2011</b>

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in November 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Gads Hill School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from 3 to 16. The school is located in a Grade 1 listed building, the former home of Charles Dickens, just west of Rochester. It was founded as a girls' school in 1924 by the Burt family, but has been co-educational since 2001. Pupils come from a wide catchment area with approximately 30 contributory schools.
- 1.2 The school aims to enable pupils to enjoy school and to achieve good academic qualifications. It also endeavours to develop those personal attributes and qualities which will help guide them on their journey through life. It is the school's intention that their pupils leave the school as pleasant, articulate, mature, confident and self-reliant young people who are well equipped to achieve a place at university or succeed in a career of their choice. The school is an educational foundation, a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity administered by an appointed board of governors.
- 1.3 There have been no significant changes in the nature of the school since the previous inspection.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 416 pupils on roll, of whom 33 were in the EYFS, 129 in the junior school and 254 in the senior school. Overall, the ability profile of the junior school is slightly above the national average. There is some variance between the abilities of each year group, and a fairly wide spread of abilities represented in the junior school. The ability profile of the senior school in Year 7 is also slightly above the national average, with pupils demonstrating a fairly wide spread of abilities. In Year 10, the ability profile is closer to the national average overall. The school reflects the diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the area. Most of the pupils come from professional or business backgrounds, with a wider range of backgrounds in the senior school.
- 1.5 The school has identified 59 pupils as having Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), of whom 37 are provided with learning support. One pupil has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN). All pupils have English as their first language.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

### ***Kindergarten***

School	NC name
KN	Nursery
KR	Reception
K1	Year 1
K2	Year 2

***Junior Department***

School	NC name
J3	Year 3
J4	Year 4
J5	Year 5
Remove	Year 6

***Senior School***

School	NC name
Shell	Year 7
Lower 4	Year 8
Upper 4	Year 9
Lower 5	Year 10
Upper 5	Year 11

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 In line with the school's aims pupils' achievement is good at each stage. Pupils throughout the school write well for a wide range of purposes, their grammar and spelling are good for their ages and their work is neatly presented. Pupils read confidently from an early age and read widely for pleasure and information. They are confident conversationalists. Listening skills are well developed. They are numerate and use their skills well. Most pupils are confident, competent with information and communication technology (ICT) and use it appropriately to support their studies in many other subjects. They display secure scientific knowledge and demonstrate appropriate experimental skills. Logical thinking is widely evident across the curriculum and pupils are creative, particularly in the arts. Physical skills are well developed at all stages. Pupils achieve high standards in competitive sport and do well in competitions against similar schools. Achievement in extra-curricular activities is high particularly in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Pupils raise considerable funds for charitable causes. At the age of 16 pupils are highly successful in gaining entrance to sixth forms in selective schools. Results in GCSE are above the national average for maintained schools, and have shown improvement from 2008 to 2010.
- 2.2 All pupils make good progress. School data shows that those with SEND progress well in relation to their prior attainment. Above average ability pupils, including those identified as gifted and talented, progress steadily and achieve appropriately high standards.
- 2.3 Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They enjoy their work, concentrate well and work productively with their peers. Cooperation across year groups in activities such as school music and drama productions is good. Pupils enjoy challenges and taking the initiative. Behaviour is excellent.
- 2.4 The pupils benefit from a good curriculum at each stage. Linguistic development receives appropriate emphasis throughout the school. Drama contributes to pupils' speaking and listening skills, and French to Year 9, provides a good introduction to foreign language skills. Mathematics is appropriately organised with grouping arrangements in the junior school and setting in the senior school. Scientific and technological development is suitably emphasised and numerous appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to use ICT. Creative and aesthetic development is well supported through arts subjects and many opportunities for physical development exist through sport and physical education, including swimming lessons. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught as a separate subject until Year 9 and across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, which is less successful because it lacks coherence. Suitable careers education is provided in Years 7 to 9 and subjects include vocational elements in Years 10 and 11, but careers guidance receives less emphasis at this stage. A good range of optional subjects is provided in Years 10 and 11. The extra-curricular programme is extensive and popular with the pupils, catering for a good range of additional interests and the CCF is particularly well supported. School visits are valued and theme days, such as a Greek or French day, facilitate in-depth study.

- 2.5 Suitable learning support is provided for pupils with SEND but the level of support is constrained by staffing levels. Individual tuition is arranged for those with specific learning difficulties. The requirements of statements of special educational needs are met. Some pupils have been identified as gifted and talented and additional opportunities are provided for them in the extra-curricular programme and sometimes in lessons.
- 2.6 The quality of teaching is good and sometimes excellent. This is in line with the school aims. The best lessons are thoroughly planned, varied and interesting. Such lessons engage pupils, progress at a businesslike pace and enable pupils to make good progress. Most teachers provide detailed planning to support the needs of the full range of ability in each class. Teachers demonstrate secure knowledge of their subjects and examination requirements, giving pupils confidence. Teachers know the pupils well and use questioning effectively to gauge understanding and to prompt thinking. Homework is relevant and appropriate and helps pupils learn. Teachers give good spoken feedback and pupils' work is marked thoroughly. Pupils' progress is tracked in relation to standardised test data and where necessary additional support or challenge is provided.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.7 In line with the school's aims pupils exhibit excellent personal qualities; they are confident and self-reliant. Self-knowledge is evident in self-assessment and target setting. A well-developed moral awareness exists; pupils express strong opinions based on secure factual evidence. They are aware of the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves and raise considerable funds for charitable causes. They are concerned about ecology and ethical issues. Pupils undertake posts of responsibility well. An active interest in culture is shown through their participation in the arts and understanding of other cultures.
- 2.8 The contribution that the provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety makes is excellent. Relationships are positive, pupils are well known by staff, rewards and sanctions are straightforward and effective. The school council and yellow card system ensure that pupils' views are taken into account. The school deals effectively with bullying. Safeguarding is secure and relationships with external agencies are sound. Pupils' health and safety are effectively promoted. Meals are of good quality and pupils are effectively encouraged to exercise and eat healthily. Registers are properly completed and retained for three years and provision for pupils who are ill is good. The school has a suitable plan to improve access for disabled people.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.9 The school benefits from excellent governance that ensures the school achieves its aims. Senior staff and governors work closely together and relationships are positive and supportive. The sub-committee structure supports the work of the governing body well. Governors are linked to departments for support and monitoring and are very closely involved with the school. Suitable, relevant governor training has been attended and governors are fully up-to-date with their statutory responsibilities. Governance ensures that responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety are fully met. The policy and procedure for safeguarding are reviewed annually. Governors are appropriately involved in the school improvement planning process and budgetary planning ensures the provision of

adequate resources. Parents', staff and pupils' opinions are taken into account and monitoring focuses on the effect of steps taken.

- 2.10 The school benefits from excellent leadership at each level that ensures that the school achieves its aims. A very positive approach is evident the school constantly seeks to improve; it has already taken steps to improve careers and PSHE and recognises the need for their further improvement. Robust policies and procedures guide the work of the school closely and are consistently implemented. The school improvement planning process at each level is thorough; it is based on careful review with achievable objectives in place. Sufficient, suitably qualified members of staff have been appointed for most aspects of the school's work but the increasing number of pupils with SEND has not yet been reflected in increased staffing levels. Safer recruitment procedures are thorough and induction arrangements for those new to teaching are good and in line with requirements for independent schools. Appraisal for all staff is comprehensive: it involves lesson observation, target setting and training needs identification and has been instrumental in assuring high standards of teaching and learning. Thorough systems are in place for checking the suitability of all staff, and the central register is completed appropriately. The premises and accommodation are fit for purpose and kept in sound decorative order.
- 2.11 Excellent links exist with parents and this contributes strongly to the school's success. High-quality publications, an excellent website and a digital school information management system helps keep parents fully informed. High-quality reports and regular parents' evenings, supplemented as necessary by electronic or other communication, ensures that parents are informed of their child's progress. Parents' information evenings help parents understand aspects of school practice. Daily contact for any parent is available when pupils are collected at the end of the school day and an appointment can be made for further consultation if necessary. Parents are involved in the work of the school in many respects, such as hearing pupils' read, accompanying trips and matches and attending assemblies. The Friends Association is very active and raises considerable funds for the school. The school responds appropriately to the few complaints from parents that are received.
- 2.12 Response from the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the school. Parents are particularly pleased with the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views, the range of extra-curricular activities and the quality of information about the school, including its policies. There are no significant areas of concern.
- 2.13 The response to the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire in the junior school was entirely positive with no significant areas of concern. Although mainly favourable in the senior school some pupils had concerns regarding several pastoral issues, most significantly the extent to which the school treats them equally. These concerns were not supported by inspection findings.
- 2.14 The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection. Teaching is now supported by mostly good quality planning, captures pupils' imagination and provides for their differing abilities, and marking shows pupils how to improve their work and checks that they have done so.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

#### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Increase the support for pupils with SEND.
  2. Strengthen provision for PSHE and careers education in Years 10 and 11.
  3. In the EYFS, facilitate the good practice that is already established in the setting to be applied consistently for all children.

#### **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

##### **4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is good with some outstanding features. All children's needs are very well met through a wide range of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Children are enabled to make good progress in their learning and development throughout the EYFS curriculum. The setting provides experiences that broaden, enrich and extend the skills and talents of every child. Children's welfare is very effectively promoted and careful attention is given to implementing safeguarding procedures. A strong partnership exists with parents and external agencies. Effective self-review and the progress made since the previous inspection indicate that the setting is well placed to continue to strengthen its provision.

##### **4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.2 Leadership and management are outstanding in almost all respects. Comprehensive arrangements for risk assessment and safeguarding are in place. High quality records, policies, procedures and records are maintained. Adults are suitably qualified in the care of children and very thorough risk assessments and procedures minimise risks. A suitably ambitious vision exists and efficient organisation ensures that staff co-operate successfully in planning, follow the curriculum and evaluate their practice for further improvement. All policies and procedures are fully implemented. Assessment procedures are thorough and records inform the next steps in learning. Excellent links with parents ensure that pupils' progress and care are fully integrated. Children have access to a wide range of resources which they use effectively. The extensive outdoor environment supports and adds much to the educational experience.

##### **4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.3 The quality of provision is good. Children's learning and development are supported well. The indoor environment is welcoming and outside space is used extensively. A wide range of activities engages children but planning is not always detailed. Younger children are extended and challenged by a wide range of child-initiated, purposeful play, but this is less evident for older children. Organisation is efficient and ensures that all children thrive and succeed. Careful observations are made of children's individual achievements and inform subsequent planning to meet the abilities and needs of individuals. Children's welfare is promoted effectively, and their emotional and social needs are well supported with safe and clear routines. Children are effectively taught how to be safe and understand the need for a healthy lifestyle. They are able to make informed choices for snacks; lunchtime is a sociable and pleasant experience.

**4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.4 Outcomes for children are good. Children enjoy their learning and develop well. They are imaginative, creative and evaluative. They behave well, talk confidently to one another and adults and play in harmony, relating well to adults. They listen to staff, focus on tasks and respond with delight and enthusiasm. Social and communication skills are very good; children are keen to use their knowledge to write and are able to count and use numbers for different purposes. They investigate, solve problems and occasionally develop their own theories. Safety and hazard are understood; children show care for their own personal hygiene and become independent.

**Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision other than take the action specified above.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

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Mr David Bown

Mrs Catherine Lane

Mrs Katherine Stokes

Reporting Inspector

Deputy Head ISA school

Early Years Lead Inspector

Head of Junior School ISA school