



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST PAUL'S GIRLS' SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Paul's Girls' School

Full Name of School	St Paul's Girls' School
DfE Number	205/6011
Registered Charity Number	6142007
Address	St Paul's Girls' School Brook Green London W6 7BS
Telephone Number	020 7603 2288
Fax Number	020 7602 9932
Email Address	hmpa@spgs.org
High Mistress	Ms Clarissa Farr
Acting Chair of Governors	Mr Richard Cunis
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	731
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Inspection dates	01 Feb 2011 to 02 Feb 2011 02 Mar 2011 to 04 Mar 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the 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 Standards 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.

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 St Paul's Girls' School was founded by the Worshipful Company of Mercers in 1904, using part of the endowment of the Colet estate, to create a girls' school to match that founded for boys by John Colet in the sixteenth century. The school is a charitable trust, and since 2007, a company limited by guarantee. The governors hold proprietorial responsibility, and some are representatives of universities in Oxford, Cambridge and London. The school occupies a complex of buildings in Hammersmith, west London.
- 1.2 The school seeks to enable girls to become the thinkers and leaders helping to shape the 21st Century. It aims not only to achieve exceptional examination results, but also to stimulate intellectual curiosity, to open young minds to new ideas, and to prepare girls for a challenging and fast-changing future. It aspires to produce confident, outgoing young women who leave school well equipped to make the most of the many opportunities that will come their way.
- 1.3 The school educates 731 girls between the ages of 11 and 18. Of these, 215 are in the sixth form. The pupil body represents a number of nationalities, and is drawn mainly from business and professional families across central and outer London. In recent years, all girls have proceeded to university and other places of higher education after taking their A-level examinations.
- 1.4 The school has a selective entry. Aptitude and ability tests used by the school indicate that the ability profile of the girls is far above the national average. One hundred and thirteen girls come from families who speak English as an additional language (EAL), and three of these require English language support. One girl has a statement of special educational needs (SEN), and the school has identified a further eighteen who receive varying degrees of learning support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 1.5 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 table.

School	NC name
MIV	Year 7
UIV	Year 8
LV	Year 9
V	Year 10
VI	Year 11
VII	Year 12
VIII	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 St Paul's Girls' School is highly and conspicuously successful in meeting its aims to produce girls who can think for themselves, make the most of their talents, lead productive and fulfilling lives, and achieve exceptional public examination results. Girls' achievement is excellent. They exhibit high levels of subject knowledge and understanding, frequently far beyond what is needed for A-level success. The excellent public examination results are well above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. The girls make exceptional long-term progress and enjoy significant success in many diverse extra-curricular activities. This is complemented and supported by the high quality taught curriculum and the community projects with which they are involved. A major factor in the girls' success is the excellent teaching they receive, and their positive attitude to all that they undertake.
- 2.2 The girls' personal development is outstanding. Girls appreciate and respond well to the dynamic and stimulating atmosphere within the school, and to the many challenges and opportunities open to them. They are strongly supported by the excellent pastoral system and the high standards of welfare which ensure their safety and well-being. Currently, tutor groups are relatively large in size. The new system, which is about to start, has plans for smaller groups to give greater opportunities for one-to-one support for pupils.
- 2.3 Governors provide strong support for the school. Their monitoring of the school's compliance with statutory requirements has not always been fully robust, and has sometimes concentrated more on policy than practice. Leadership and management structures are good, and a strong sense of corporate identity and common purpose pervades the school. The monitoring and evaluation of some day-to-day procedures, such as assessment and marking, are not yet fully efficient. The school has formed an excellent partnership with its parents. The great majority of those responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of the school's life and work, and of the education offered, and the attitudes and values promoted by the school. Inspection evidence did not corroborate the view of a small minority who felt that contact with staff is difficult.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it was required to:
- ensure that the governing body undertakes and adopts formally an annual review of the effectiveness of the school's policy and procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of children [Part 3, paragraph 7.(b), under Welfare, health and safety];
 - ensure that parents know what information about the school is available to them and the manner in which it can be obtained [Part 6, paragraph 24.(1)(b), under Provision of information];
 - ensure that it makes available to parents of current pupils and those soon to arrive, its arrangements for educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of SEN or pupils with EAL [Part 6, paragraph 24.(3)(b), under Provision of information].
- 2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure greater consistency of practice between subject departments with respect to the marking and assessment of girls' work, the use of clear targets to help them improve further, and the ways in which the quality of teaching and learning are evaluated.
 2. Involve the girls more fully in helping to evaluate the consistency and effectiveness of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the development of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The girls' overall achievement is excellent and their success demonstrates how well the school achieves its aims and purpose. Girls are highly independent and original thinkers, drawing well on their extensive subject knowledge and understanding. They listen well, and are able to assimilate knowledge rapidly and apply it effectively when answering and asking questions. They are articulate and persuasive in their written work, and they are highly confident orally. They are generally competent users of ICT.
- 3.2 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009, the most recent three-year period for which comparative statistics are currently available. Attainment at GCSE and A level has been excellent in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools, and well above the average for maintained selective schools. In 2010, virtually all the grades achieved at GCSE were at least A grades, with nearly nine out of ten being A* grades. At A level, half the grades achieved were at A*, with over nine out of ten being at least grade A. These results, taken in conjunction with other inspection evidence and a consideration of girls' achievements and successes in other areas, indicate that girls make exceptional long-term progress.
- 3.3 Girls respond avidly to the demanding academic challenges presented to them, and show outstanding success in many areas of academic achievement, beyond public examination requirements. Girls in Year 7, for example, are challenged to read books in a genre unfamiliar to them, and then write book reviews and present them to the class. The girls undertake rigorous research and debate, and are highly skilled in presenting papers on, for example, such subjects as symbolic logic and modular arithmetic through the mathematics society. Many Year 11 girls carried out independent research and produced essays that were of a high enough standard to be submitted for an external competition, primarily aimed at undergraduates. At the end of Year 12, half of the year group competed for a senior scholarship, which generated many more well-researched essays of quality and originality on topics chosen by them, such as neurogenesis and apocalyptic literature.
- 3.4 The girls have achieved many outstanding successes in recent years in other academic areas and in their extra-curricular endeavours. Particularly notable is their success in competitions and Olympiads at both regional and national level in art, creative writing, poetry, debating, drama, music, sport, mathematics and science. Half of the Year 13 leavers proceeded to the two most competitive British universities in 2010, and others gained places at highly competitive American universities.
- 3.5 The girls' attitudes to learning are excellent. They display a genuine thirst for knowledge and a passion for learning for its own sake. They grasp ideas rapidly and confidently, using higher level skills such as analysis, interpretation and evaluation. Girls are highly motivated students who make connections creatively and with consummate ease. They probe incisively with their questioning, showing strong logical and independent thought. They work very well together in teams and small groups.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.6 The excellent curriculum enables girls to achieve their full potential and enjoy significant success. It is broad and stimulating, is suitable for all ages and abilities, and makes a strong contribution to enabling the school to fulfil its aims. Recent improvements include a greater choice and variety of subjects and improved opportunities for independent learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of trips and visits, both within the UK and overseas, the comprehensive extra-curricular programme and frequent visits from external speakers.
- 3.7 The girls benefit from a broad range of available subjects, including a particularly wide range of six modern and two classical foreign languages, and twenty-three subjects at A level. The technological area of the curriculum is less broad, with design based options provided within the art syllabus. Particularly strong features of the curriculum are the opportunities to extend girls' thinking and develop their intellectual skills well beyond the confines of the A-level syllabus. Many girls are involved in academically rigorous projects and competitions designed primarily for university undergraduates, and a departmental extranet provides a strong stimulus to read about and research a wide range of intellectually challenging areas.
- 3.8 A well-conceived PSHE programme is in place, and the school is already considering ways to improve its implementation further. Elements of citizenship and a general studies programme enable girls to study, for example, critical thinking, finance and politics. The sixth form's Friday lecture programme makes a further valuable contribution to the girls' wider education. Those who require learning support are identified and helped very effectively. The careers and higher education programme is excellent and is particularly well organised from Year 9 upwards, with regular themed careers forums available for all girls. Those in Year 11 are given individual advice on subject choices for the sixth form, and can carry out work experience at the end of the year. A strong focus is given to the preparation and appropriate choice of applications for university.
- 3.9 The excellent extra-curricular programme is varied, comprehensive and stimulating. It includes strong provision for music, with a wide range of choirs, orchestras and ensembles. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme provides good opportunities to develop girls' initiative and a sense of service. A wide variety of sport, drama and debating takes place, as well as a range of intellectual clubs and societies, such as an Amnesty International group, and poetry, psychology, philosophy and literary societies. Older girls often lead activities, such as the dissection club, for those who are younger. Community service is popular and is of considerable benefit to the girls by enhancing their awareness of those less fortunate than themselves. Some teach Latin to local primary school children and others are involved with an enrichment project with gifted and talented pupils in inner London primary schools.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 The excellent teaching enables girls to reach high standards of achievement and promotes rapid progress in their learning. This makes a major contribution to supporting the educational aims of the school to achieve exceptional results, and to promote intellectual curiosity and independent thinking. The school has made slow progress since the previous inspection in improving the consistency of marking practices.
- 3.11 Teachers know their pupils extremely well and understand their learning requirements. The relationships and rapport they have with the girls are excellent. The girls' academic needs are well met through challenging extension activities and the honing of higher level skills such as analysis and evaluation. Teachers' sensitive support for their pupils and positive encouragement promote high levels of achievement. Their excellent subject knowledge is used effectively to stimulate and answer perceptive questions from the girls, which frequently provoke further discussion and debate. The teaching employs varied and imaginative methods to ensure that fast progress and extended learning take place. For example: girls analysed photographic evidence in geography; they learnt new techniques in drama; they grasped underlying principles in chemistry and applied these to new and unfamiliar situations; and they used peer evaluation and assessment effectively in physical education.
- 3.12 The best teaching is extremely well planned and structured, with engaging and appropriately challenging tasks designed to extend girls and make them think creatively and critically. Such lessons reveal the teachers' passion for their subjects, have a brisk pace and motivate girls to excel. Learning tasks are carefully matched to the needs of the girls, and stimulate independent thought and a thirst for more knowledge. Suitable open-ended tasks and encouragement to carry out extensive individual research enable girls to take responsibility for their own learning and extend themselves academically. Appropriate use of technology and other resources enhances many lessons. In a very small number of lessons observed, ineffective planning and excessive direction by the teacher led to a limited range of learning tasks, closed questions and slow pace, all of which restricted the girls' involvement, and as a result, their learning was limited and progress slowed.
- 3.13 Assessment systems are well used to inform girls and their tutors about long-term academic progress. Teachers use excellent questions to assess girls' understanding, and oral feedback is frequently used effectively. The methods used to mark girls' work vary significantly between departments. At its best, marking is frequent, accurate and detailed, and provides helpful comments to guide future improvement. However, the quality of correction, annotation and comment varies significantly between subject departments.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The girls' personal development is excellent, and they demonstrate spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness at a very high level. This makes a strong contribution to fulfilling the school's aim to produce confident and outgoing young women, well equipped to succeed in the wider world. Girls are articulate and well informed, and considerate and sensitive in their dealings with others. They are proud of their school and they thrive on the vast range of opportunities it offers them.
- 4.2 Girls develop well spiritually and show considerable emotional maturity. They have an awareness of themselves, others and of the world around them. They are able to consider spiritual matters both through the curriculum and through thought provoking assemblies led by the chaplain, other staff and often the girls themselves. Such occasions encourage quiet and personal reflection. The girls' self-esteem is carefully fostered by the school's recognition of the fact that every pupil matters, and they confidently express their emotional responses to the wider world.
- 4.3 The girls' moral development is exceptional. They have an extremely strong sense of right and wrong, and express their views confidently. They are knowledgeable about issues such as healthy eating and lifestyles. The PSHE curriculum includes subjects such as smoking, alcohol and drugs so that girls can make informed choices and decisions about their own lives. The girls' conduct towards each other and staff in lessons and around the school is exemplary.
- 4.4 The social development of the girls is outstanding. They are courteous and considerate towards staff and each other, and are exceptionally articulate in expressing their views. They have many opportunities to take on responsibility for others, for example as 'big sisters' to younger girls, and members of Years 10 and 12 are trained to act as peer supporters to other girls. Form captains are elected to the school council, through which they have the chance to represent the views of their peers, whilst learning how to discuss and debate issues in a formal committee setting. Girls of all ages show remarkable awareness of their social responsibilities and many make extensive contributions to the community outside school.
- 4.5 Girls benefit from the wide range of nationalities, mother tongues, cultures and faiths represented in the school, and this helps to develop their strong cultural awareness. They show remarkable sensitivity to the feelings of others in their discussions. For example, when discussing Islamic attitudes towards women in GCSE religious studies, they took care to consider the impact of their comments on their peers. Assemblies, such as those celebrating the quadricentenary of the King James Bible, reinforce the girls' awareness of the richness of the English language and its cultural history. Overseas links, charity collections, and an awareness of international organisations and causes, such as the plight of orphans in southern Africa, all enhance the girls' appreciation of other cultures.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.6 Girls receive excellent pastoral care from exceedingly supportive and committed staff. Arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the girls are of a similarly high standard. Pastoral care is an outstanding strength of the school and fully supports its aspiration to help girls to live their lives with confidence and optimism, and to enable their enthusiasm and sparkle to pervade the school.
- 4.7 The heads of year have worked very effectively to ensure that the excellent quality of pastoral care reported at the last inspection has been maintained. They meet regularly as a team with the high mistress and other senior staff, and monitor and oversee the pastoral and welfare provision. Current tutors and those new to the post have received appropriate training to enable them to support the girls effectively. The new tutorial arrangements are intended to provide the opportunity to achieve even better support and guidance. Smaller groups are aimed at enabling enhanced opportunities for one-to-one contact between girls and their tutors. Tutors undertake close monitoring of the girls' academic progress through the half-termly progress reports. These are used as the focus for discussion with the girls to ensure that they are strongly involved in their own learning. The PSHE programme and its component topics are currently under review, but formal and consistent evaluation is not yet in place. The overwhelming majority of girls responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that help is readily given by staff when needed, and that teachers show concern for them as individuals. A significant minority would welcome increased consultation about aspects of school life.
- 4.8 Relationships between staff and girls are excellent. They are open and friendly, and provide the girls with support and confidence, and a strong foundation from which to develop their interests and talents. Girls report that they greatly appreciate the willingness of staff to spend time with them outside their formal lessons, especially to provide individual help with work. Relationships amongst the girls themselves are harmonious. They readily and willingly help and support each other throughout the school. The 'head girl' and her elected team of prefects are seen as approachable and helpful. Peer counselling representatives offer further support to younger girls. Courtesy and mutual respect are evident throughout the school.
- 4.9 The school has highly effective policies and procedures to promote the girls' welfare and well-being, encouraging good behaviour, guarding against harassment and bullying, and dealing constructively with any unacceptable behaviour. Measures to safeguard girls' welfare are now fully in place, and all staff receive appropriate child protection training. Arrangements to ensure health and safety, including minimising risks from fire and other hazards, and caring for girls who are ill, are very well planned and efficient. Girls respond well to the encouragement to eat healthily through a range of curriculum subjects, including PSHE, biology and modern foreign languages. Lunch provides an excellent opportunity to exercise this choice, with a good variety of high quality food. Girls benefit from many opportunities for physical exercise, both within the curriculum and through the wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs.
- 4.10 The school has an appropriate plan for improving educational access for girls with particular learning needs or disabilities. Admission and attendance registers are kept efficiently, and suitably completed and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance provides good support for the school and has many significant strengths. It achieves effective oversight of the school's life and work, in support of the school's aims. It builds on the history and traditions of the school, while being forward looking and innovative. However, the governors' close monitoring of regulatory compliance has not always been fully robust.
- 5.2 Governors have a strong strategic vision, and have identified clear priorities and targets to guide the school's future development. Their oversight of financial matters and the deployment of human and material resources is excellent. They carry out rigorous evaluation of the success of the school in financial and educational terms, and, through the work of their committees, engage in vigorous and constructively critical debate when reviewing and approving existing and new initiatives.
- 5.3 Governors are well informed about the workings of the school. They make regular visits, support functions and events, and seek ways to maintain contact with staff and girls. They receive regular reports from senior staff, and presentations from subject departments. Their grasp of health and safety matters has been good, but they have not been sufficiently rigorous or vigilant in achieving and monitoring the school's full compliance with regulations. Their oversight of other pastoral and welfare areas has sometimes concentrated more on policy than on the effectiveness of the school's practice. They have now rectified an earlier omission to review child safeguarding procedures by carrying out a thorough review of practice.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Leadership and management throughout the school are good, and have many excellent features. They fully support the school's aims, and ensure that high academic standards and excellent personal development are achieved by the girls. Much progress has been made, and improvements achieved, since the previous inspection. Its recommendations have largely been appropriately addressed. However, assessment and marking practices are still not fully consistent across all departments.
- 5.5 The process of redefining senior management roles is further strengthening the leadership provided. Senior managers work extremely well together, providing strong and highly effective leadership. They have identified and promoted a clear vision of the school's identity and purpose, and work positively to sustain the extremely high standards reached by the girls. Staff at all levels share this commitment to academic excellence and developing a strong spirit of enquiry and independence in the girls. Staff benefit from excellent opportunities to take part in consultation and discussion about the school's current practice and future direction.
- 5.6 Heads of year form a strong team and provide consistent and clear leadership of the pastoral systems. They are efficient in overseeing their teams of tutors, who are committed to the welfare and well-being of the girls. Heads of department and the academic policy committee monitor and sustain the academic pulse of the school, and provide intellectual stimulus and a clear sense of academic direction within their subject areas. Many systems and processes within subject departments, such as the monitoring of teachers' marking, and the evaluation of teaching and learning,

operate in rather different ways and on various levels of formality. They are not always consistently effective.

- 5.7 The school has good systems for evaluating its practice and the success of the education provided. Clear priorities and targets for improvement are set for academic, pastoral and operational areas. These are linked effectively to the school's comprehensive development plan which is regularly reviewed and evolves flexibly in response to changing needs and circumstances.
- 5.8 The school places a high priority on the development of its staff. An improved professional development review process enables their expertise and talents to be shared and enhanced, and training needs identified. Appropriate training has been given to staff to ensure the girls' health, safety and welfare, including child protection training. All required staff and governor recruitment checks have now been rigorously carried out and suitably recorded.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.9 The school has formed an excellent partnership with parents, which helps it to achieve its educational aims. Significant progress has been made since the previous inspection in keeping parents informed and providing opportunities for them to become involved in the life of the school.
- 5.10 Those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very strongly supportive of the school's life and work. They particularly approved of the range of subjects and activities provided, the progress made by their daughters, the worthwhile attitudes and values promoted by the school, and the high standards of behaviour. A small minority expressed concerns about the level of encouragement given to them to become involved in school life, difficulties in communicating with the school, and the way in which their concerns had been handled. Inspection findings did not support these concerns.
- 5.11 The school provides many opportunities for parents to become involved in its activities. Parents attend sports matches, drama productions and concerts, and some are involved in supporting the library. They are invited to a variety of information evenings as their daughters approach stages where choices have to be made, such as GCSE and A-level subject choices, or university applications. The parents' association is extremely active and offers a range of social events and fundraising activities for parents to join.
- 5.12 The quality of information provided to parents is high; the new website is attractive and easy to navigate, and contains a wide range of pertinent material about the school's activities, policies and procedures. A number of printed booklets and newsletters provide details of the girls' achievements and progress during the year. Parents are also alerted by electronic means whenever new information is available. Two written reports are sent to parents each year for girls in Years 7 to 10, and one each year thereafter. Reports are of good quality and are supplemented by one or two parents' evenings each year for every year group.
- 5.13 The school handles concerns of parents carefully, and publishes its complaints procedure on the website. Any concerns and complaints are appropriately dealt with under these arrangements. The school now makes available to existing parents and those of prospective pupils all the statutory information required.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with girls and examined samples of their work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman and other 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 girls. The responses of parents and girls to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Timothy Holgate	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Fiona Boulton	Headmistress, HMC school
Mrs Karen MacGregor	Assistant Head, HMC school
Mrs Susan Marks	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Clare Trelfa	Deputy Head, GSA school