



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report
For Schools with Residential Provision**

Taunton Preparatory School and Taunton School International Middle School

February 2020



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School's Details

School	Taunton Preparatory School and Taunton School International Middle School			
DfE number	933/6214			
Early Years registration number	EY310094			
Registered charity number	1081420			
Address	Taunton Preparatory School Staplegrove Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 6AE Taunton School International Middle School, Kingston St Mary, Taunton, TA2 8HP			
Telephone number	01823 703307			
Email address	tps enquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk			
Headteacher (TPS)	Mr Andrew Edwards			
Headteacher (TSIMS)	Mr James Duncan			
Proprietor Chair of governors	Mr Henry Keeling			
Age range	0 to 15			
Number of pupils on roll	543			
	Boys	290	Girls	253
	Day pupils	473	Boarders	70
	EYFS	132	Juniors	224
	Seniors	187		
Inspection dates	12 to 13 February 2020			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Taunton Preparatory School (TPS) was founded in 1994, following the merger of the former girls' and boys' junior schools. Taunton School International Middle School (TSIMS) was established in 2012. TPS includes a pre-prep and nursery, for pupils from six months to thirteen years, whilst TSIMS caters for overseas pupils aged eight to fifteen years. Both schools are fully co-educational and are part of Taunton School; the trustees of Taunton School educational charity act as governors.
- 1.2 In TPS, boarders are accommodated in one boarding house for both male and female pupils. At TSIMS, there are two single-sex boarding houses, which are situated about three miles away from TPS.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to challenge, inspire and nurture pupils to achieve in a global community and rapidly changing world, and prepare them for life beyond school. It seeks to provide pupils with strong leadership and communication skills and put their well-being at the heart of all it does.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional, business, military and farming backgrounds, and represent a diverse range of cultures. Data provided by the schools indicate that the ability of pupils is broadly average, compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The schools have identified 29 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive extra support for a range of conditions including dyslexia and speech, language and communication needs. No pupil in either school has an education, health and care plan (EHC). English is an additional language for 17 pupils in TPS, and for 44 pupils in TSIMS, all of whom receive additional support for their English. Data used by the school have identified 62 pupils in the TPS, and 15 pupils in TSIMS, as the most able in the schools' populations, and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

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, including the boarding NMS, 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 COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. 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](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#), [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, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the preparatory and middle schools, 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. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.6 The standards relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are 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 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2–4, 6–12, 15 and 16 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering 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. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes 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. It also includes 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. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.

2.15 The standards relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.

2.19 The standards relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.

The quality and standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

- 2.20 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is outstanding.
- 2.21 The curriculum is very well structured and meets the needs and interests of the children. It supports the children's development in the prime areas of their learning extremely well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and additional needs. Comprehensive monitoring practices are in place to ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively. The setting provides a very high standard of care and staff demonstrate a deep knowledge of how children of this age learn. All children under the age of two make good or better progress from their starting points and are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- 2.22 Due to the excellent levels of care that the setting provides, the personal and emotional development of the children is outstanding. They are safe, secure and happy. All requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare have been fully met. Staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding and welfare requirements and they fulfil their responsibility for protecting children in their care diligently. Leadership and management demonstrate a strong commitment towards continuous improvement through detailed cohesive self-evaluation and a clear vision for future developments. This ensures that all children receive the best possible support and care.

Quality of education

- 2.23 The quality of education is outstanding.
- 2.24 The curriculum is extremely well balanced and provides excellent opportunities for children's communication and language, physical skills and personal, social and emotional development. Regular monitoring of the curriculum and the evaluation of the activities provided ensures that all children receive high level support for their learning needs, including those with SEND. Staff have an excellent understanding of how children learn at this young age. They carefully plan activities and have high expectations of what children can achieve in relation to the stage of development of each child. These experiences allow children to explore, discover, and be curious. For example, staff challenged a baby's problem-solving skills when exploring a push and pop-up toy. Staff demonstrated how it worked and then, through gentle prompts, encouraged the baby to 'have a go' and keep trying until they succeeded.
- 2.25 Staff readily engage with children during routine activities and take every opportunity to develop language and social skills. They read and sing with the children, encouraging them to repeat words, answer simple questions and join in with songs and actions. Staff make excellent use of the opportunities when playing with the children, to introduce mathematical language by counting and talking to the children about shape and size. Positive feedback is given to children through appropriate use of praise and encouragement, which helps them to acquire the skills and attitudes to learn effectively. Regular assessments, recorded on the child's electronic learning journal and tracked against the levels of development for their age, ensure that each child's progress is carefully monitored, and their needs are met effectively. This serves to identify those children who may be falling behind, so that the curriculum can be tailored to support them appropriately.
- 2.26 In interviews with parents during the inspection, they highlighted that they would value being able to access the electronic tracking system to add their own comments. Inspection evidence concludes that, whilst highly effective links are in place with parents and there is a two-way sharing of information, strengthening this area of communication will enable staff to build on children's current home learning experiences and interests. The high-quality experiences that children receive, provides them with a firm foundation for future learning. Children are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Behaviour and attitudes

- 2.27 Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding.
- 2.28 Children show great enjoyment in their learning. They are very enthusiastic learners and they are extremely keen to explore their surroundings. Toddlers show great fascination and intrigue as they experiment to make marks on the sensory mats using different media. Children make excellent use of the available resources in the rooms, that stimulate them to explore different textures. This was evident when toddlers experimented by squeezing wet oats with their hands to make them stick together and then making patterns with their fingers. Babies demonstrated an eagerness to explore crunchy hoops. Older babies ably use a spoon to feed themselves and toddlers can find their own boots and coats, showing that they are developing strong skills of independence.
- 2.29 Toddlers maintain excellent focus on activities for appropriate periods of time, such as during 'sing and sign' time; activities such as these enable children to develop good habits for future learning. Babies sustain high levels of concentration as they look at the pictures when handling books. Children of all ages in the setting are keen to 'have a go' for themselves and will persevere until they manage to do something. For example, a toddler kept trying different ways to manoeuvre a pushchair over the different levels and surfaces in the outdoor area until successful. Staff encourage children to be creative and inventive in their play so that they can develop their own ideas and choose ways to do things. For example, a toddler in the wooded area, filled a pan with leaves and twigs, stirred it and put it in the oven, then retrieved it later blowing it and saying 'it is hot'.
- 2.30 Children demonstrate excellent behaviour and show respect for one another, often helping each other to find things. For example, toddlers eagerly direct their friends to help them find their respective coat peg. They respond to gentle reminders from staff about using 'kind hands, how to share things and how to play co-operatively. Prompt and regular attendance is encouraged and robust procedures are in place to investigate unexpected absences.

Personal development

- 2.31 The personal development of children is outstanding.
- 2.32 The exceptional relationships that children have with adults around them are built on strong, secure attachments. The highly effective care practices that staff employ, support children's emotional security and development of their character, so that children feel extremely happy and safe. During discussions, parents commented that they always impressed by the high standard of emotional support given to their child and that they have great confidence in the standard of care offered at the setting. The nurturing key person system promotes children's well-being and independence most effectively. Children know that they can seek assurance from their key person at any time and they will frequently go straight to them on arrival at the setting. Parents report, during discussion, that they are given the time they need to share information about their child with the key person during handovers at the beginning and at the end of the day.
- 2.33 Staff encourage children to take appropriate risks both indoors and in the outside area. Children try to do adventurous things, such as negotiating cars around the different levels and surfaces in the outdoor area. Gentle reminders, for example to hold hands when walking to lunch, help children to understand when they might be at risk.
- 2.34 Staff help children to lead a healthy lifestyle from the very beginning of their time at the setting. They provide children with high quality cooked food, fresh drinking water and fruit for snacks. All children have regular access to outside areas that are well equipped to promote physical activity. Babies are taken for daily walks around the school grounds in their pushchairs. Hygiene practices, which are diligently followed by everyone, ensure that the personal needs of the children at this age are met appropriately. Staff encourage older children to understand the need and importance of handwashing before meals and after nappy change. All staff give high priority to safeguarding and are aware of their

responsibilities to ensure that they meet the EYFS statutory requirements for safeguarding, welfare and learning and development.

- 2.35 Staff are highly effective in preparing children for life in modern Britain by enabling them to make decisions, such as choosing a book to read and deciding which particular activity to explore. As they encourage them to share and take turns, children learn to respect and care for one another. Children celebrate a variety of British festivals as well as those from other cultures. All children are offered the same experiences. British values of fairness, tolerance and kindness towards each other underpin the setting's practices.

Leadership and management

- 2.36 Leadership and management are outstanding.
- 2.37 The strong direction from the leadership team results in an enthusiastic and strong team of staff in the Nursery, who share an ambitious vision to provide high quality education and exemplary levels of care. They realise this through shared values, policy and practice. Leaders consistently monitor the standards of care and regularly scrutinise the curriculum to ensure that high standards are maintained. They have high expectations of what children under two can achieve, as well as very clear understanding about supporting all children so that they achieve the best outcomes.
- 2.38 Staff are extremely well qualified; leaders monitor their performance carefully through annual appraisal. This is further supported by an effective system of individual supervision meetings, which enable staff to discuss issues, including their own well-being, which is extremely important to leaders and managers. The recommendation from the previous inspection, relating to strengthening leader and staff liaison to advance support for children's needs has been implemented. Leaders encourage staff to attend regular professional development courses to improve and update their practice. Staff disseminate the information learnt on these courses to their colleagues. This in turn has a highly positive impact on improving outcomes for children.
- 2.39 Leaders know the children very well and respond quickly to the needs of children, including those with SEND and additional needs. The setting can access internal specialist help when required, together with support from outside agencies through the local authority. Thorough systems are in place to ensure that every child's needs are met. Leaders and managers are highly effective in engaging with children, their parents and others in the community, including local services. Leaders provide a variety of opportunities for children to learn the importance of caring for those less fortunate than themselves, such as participating in initiatives to raise money for local and national charities.
- 2.40 The needs of the setting are well known and understood by the school governors, who are highly effective in holding leaders and managers to account for the quality and care and education. They ensure that resources are managed effectively and efficiently. They offer support and guidance and are extremely well informed about practice and standards of the setting. High priority is given to safeguarding and the implementation of all health and safety policies to ensure that children are kept safe. They fully comply with statutory duties for example under the Equality act 2010 and other duties in relation to the 'Prevent' strategy and safer recruitment.

Compliance with statutory requirements

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Recommendation for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvement to its provision for children in the early years.

- Strengthen, further, systems of communication with parents, so that children's current home experiences and interests are fully considered in activity planning.

3. Inspection Evidence

3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Kerry Lord	Reporting inspector
Mr David Bicker-Caarten	Compliance team inspector (head of prep, IAPS school)
Ms Jillian Walker	Compliance team inspector (head, IAPS school)
Mrs Harriet Connor	Team inspector for boarding (head, IAPS school)
Mrs Valerie Holloway	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (former head, IAPS school)