



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

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

Sherfield School

January 2020



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School's Details

School	Sherfield School			
DfE number	850/6084			
Early Years registration number	EY293642			
Address	Sherfield School Reading Road Sherfield-on-Loddon Hook Hampshire RG27 0HU			
Telephone number	01256 884800			
Email address	hmpa@sherfieldschool.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Nicholas Brain			
Proprietor	GEMS Education			
Age range	0 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	404			
	Day pupils	356	Boarders	48
	EYFS	89	Juniors	118
	Seniors	157	Sixth Form	40
Inspection dates	29 to 30 January 2020			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Sherfield School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils from the age of three months to eighteen years. It is situated in the village of Sherfield-on-Loddon, to the north-east of Basingstoke. The school was founded as a girls' boarding school, North Foreland Lodge, in 1947, with the current school opening in 2004. The school is owned and governed by Global Educational Management Systems (GEMS).
- 1.2 The school has four sections: a nursery for children from three months to three years of age; junior prep for pupils in Reception to Year 4; senior prep which comprises Years 5 to 8; and the senior school for those in Years 9 to 13. Boarding is available for pupils from Year 4 onwards.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to enable pupils to thrive and flourish as they experience the excitement and enjoyment of learning, guiding them towards reaching their full potential as passionate and innovative problem solvers, ready to contribute to society.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils generally come from professional or business family backgrounds. Day pupils reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the locality, whilst overseas boarders come from a range of countries. Data supplied by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is broadly average compared to those taking the same tests nationally.
- 1.5 The school has identified 83 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 55 pupils, 33 of whom receive targeted support. Data used by the school have identified 144 pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 30 other pupils because of their special talents in sport.

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 junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2016 to 2018, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2016 to 2018 have been in line with the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 The standard 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

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, 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

- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 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

- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.18 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.
- 2.19 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

- 2.20 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.
- 2.21 The standard 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

- 2.22 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision requires improvement.
- 2.23 Room leaders plan a curriculum which takes appropriate note of the learning and development needs of the Early Years framework so that enjoyable and engaging activities are planned and implemented by all practitioners. However, whilst practitioners in day-to-day contact with children provide activities that suitably support children's individual needs, including those with SEND, leaders do not yet consistently monitor or oversee the setting's practice in order to promote the best outcomes for all children who attend.
- 2.24 The previous inspection recommended that the school should develop the role of early years middle managers so that responsibility for compliance and children's care is more widely shared. In response, the role of room leaders has been enhanced so that they take a greater role in discussion with potential new parents visiting the setting. Additionally, they have now been given the responsibility of overseeing the practitioners, who report to them directly.
- 2.25 Careful attention is paid to an individual child's development, including their emotional readiness, to ensure they are able to progress to the next stage of their education. Children's progress is assessed by means of an electronic tracking system, which enables staff to establish next steps, and communicate frequently with parents. Staff enjoy warm relationships with the children, with the result that they feel safe and readily seek the security of an adult if they are unsettled. They enjoy the toys and activities provided and take particular pleasure, for example, in using props to select songs. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and the procedures to follow in order to ensure the safety and protection of children.

Quality of education

- 2.26 The quality of education requires improvement.
- 2.27 Leaders ensure that all the areas of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years framework are met, with particular and effective emphasis on communication and language, physical and personal, social and emotional development. However, whilst all children receive sensitive care, leaders do not always seek advice and support from external agencies to enhance the provision and outcomes for all children, including those with SEND.
- 2.28 Effective use is made of the key person system to assess children's progress and plan next steps in learning for all children, including those with SEND. This information is communicated by the key persons to parents so that they are able to comment on, develop and reinforce the learning described by the setting. When necessary, development issues, such as the acquisition of speech, are identified by staff and discussed with a child's parents. If advice is sought by parents, for example on issues such as toilet training, it is freely given. Learning programmes and topics are carefully chosen to ensure that they capture the children's interest and develop their skills and abilities.
- 2.29 Children learn to listen attentively, follow instructions and co-operate with each other so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school provides opportunities for physically active play, and children enjoy moving freely and using the toys outside, though facilities for smaller scale exploration activities, such as mark-making and role play, are not always readily accessible. Practitioners share in the planning and implementation of activities and the room leaders use the assessments and next steps suggested by the tracking system to focus on specific outcomes, such as helping children expand their use of language, or begin to develop the necessary pre-writing motor skills.

2.30 Children improve their social skills as they interact with other children and practitioners, playing out situations they have observed or experienced in real life in the role play areas provided, such as the hairdresser's salon. Appropriate signs and labels help develop word recognition, and practitioners skilfully introduce name and letter sound recognition and correspondence during the daily registration sessions. Children have name cards which include a picture of an animal whose name begins with the same letter as the child's. Practitioners model appropriate speech and praise the children when they respond. Good language development was also seen when the youngest children experienced an enjoyable singing session, followed by an activity based on a farm set, which enabled practitioners explicitly to link the animals with which the children were playing to the relevant lines from *Old Macdonald* and *Five Little Ducks* and use this to reinforce their vocabulary and understanding. The singing of these traditional nursery rhymes effectively introduces children to their cultural heritage.

Behaviour and attitudes

2.31 Behaviour and attitudes are good.

2.32 Children are enthusiastic learners who are keen to explore their surroundings. Their willingness to learn is enhanced through good-quality resources, a broad and interesting curriculum and practitioners who show a good understanding of their developmental needs. Children are confident that adults will respond if they require help. They persevere in their chosen tasks, as seen, for example, in the outdoor area when a child searched for his football, which he was able to name correctly, and on finding it, confidently and competently dribbled it round the garden, successfully avoiding plants and other obstacles. Children are encouraged to identify and manage their own emotions, using happy and sad faces to augment limited vocabulary, in order to enable them to play and relate to each other without distress.

2.33 The children use toys imaginatively and creatively, for example extemporising saucepan lids as cymbals. They play happily together and are beginning to develop awareness of social conventions such as understanding about taking turns. This was clearly seen when children patiently waited to choose a prop linked to a song in the circle time sessions. Practitioners supported this aspect of development well by praising the children as they awaited their turn. Children show pride and delight in what they have accomplished, and even the youngest children showed enjoyment when placing cotton wool on to sheep created from shaped card. Parents are encouraged to ensure their children attend the setting regularly in order to establish good habits for future schooling.

Personal development

2.34 The personal development of children requires improvement.

2.35 The key person system contributes positively to the children's sense of security, though some aspects of care, such as feeding and personal care, are devolved to all adults in the room. Children are able to form warm, secure attachments with the adults who care for them, so that they feel happy and safe and are confident to explore and learn. Staff deal with unsettled behaviour by using a range of strategies. They seek to discover the reason for any discomfort and move swiftly to alleviate the cause. They employ a variety of distraction techniques, including close physical comforting. Children respond to these and quickly become absorbed in a displacement activity. Children enjoy the company of their classmates and are encouraged to share and play together, for example using the computer keyboard to book their friends into an imaginary doctor's surgery. They confidently approach adults and seek to engage them in their role play. Practitioners support children to challenge themselves, for example in the outdoor areas when encouraging them to use the climbing frame adventurously but safely. However, some aspects of the provision and premises have not been thoroughly risk-assessed to ensure they meet the needs of all children, including those with SEND.

2.36 Staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that they meet the early years statutory requirements for safeguarding, welfare, learning and development. They have a good understanding of policies relating to taking photographs and the use of mobile phones. Children are supported and praised as they begin to eat independently. The school provides healthy meals and snacks, though some food is not suited to the tastes of babies or young children. Practitioners work closely with parents to help children manage their own personal hygiene needs. The setting effectively promotes fundamental British values such as acceptance and tolerance. Children are encouraged to gain a clear understanding of other cultures, as seen in the vibrant displays for Chinese New Year, including some striking dragons which children made with handprints.

Leadership and management

2.37 Leadership and management require improvement.

2.38 Leaders and managers effectively model and encourage warm relationships with children in the setting's care. However, they do not yet have an ambitious vision for inclusive care and education in all areas, the impact of which is that the needs of some children, including those with SEND, are not always consistently met. The setting does seek advice from external agencies to support children's learning and development needs as required, but leaders and managers do not always encourage parents to share any advice that they may have from external specialists to ensure a continuum of support for children's specific needs, including the management of risk. Because leaders and managers do not demonstrate a sufficiently thorough understanding of the Early Years framework and its requirements, they sometimes fail to communicate to staff the needs of all the children who attend, including those with SEND.

2.39 Leaders and managers ensure that staff are appropriately qualified, and all recruitment procedures and checks are properly completed. Professional development is provided, including suitable training for safeguarding and paediatric first aid, and leaders and managers respond positively to individual suggestions for professional development, such as providing recent training in augmented communication.

2.40 Leaders and managers administer the key person system effectively to ensure that adults know the children in their care well. Practitioners receive support and opportunities for reflection through supervision from their immediate managers. A system of informal monitoring is employed to cover a range of issues, for example mechanisms for sharing information with colleagues. Governors provide periodic oversight and support leaders to ensure that statutory duties, such as health and safety, safeguarding and safer recruitment, are fulfilled. However, arrangements to meet requirements in the framework concerning provision for children with SEND are not yet fully established.

2.41 Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed extremely high levels of satisfaction with the setting, the care and development of their children, the values the school seeks to impart and the way in which the school develops their child's independence. The school engages closely with parents and carers who have helpful contact regarding day-to-day issues with the adults who look after their children.

Compliance with statutory requirements

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

Recommendations for further improvements

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

- Improve oversight of the EYFS setting to ensure that all children receive appropriate support for their learning and development needs;
- Ensure that staff consistently receive necessary training and support so that all children's needs, including those with SEND, are fully met;
- Ensure that further consideration is given to the management of risk when assessing the setting's provision for children's specific needs.

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 the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and form meetings and assemblies. 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 Stephen Fox	Reporting inspector
Mrs Clare Moore	Compliance team inspector (Compliance officer, GSA school)
Mr Anthony Macpherson	Team inspector for boarding (Former deputy head, IAPS school)
Mrs Eithne Webster	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Former head of Key Stage 1, IAPS school)