



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

BABINGTON HOUSE SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Babington House School			
DfE number	305/6000			
Registered charity number	307914			
Address	Babington House School Grange Drive Chislehurst Kent BR7 5ES			
Telephone number	020 8467 5537			
Email address	enquiries@babingtonhouse.com			
Headteacher	Mr Timothy Lello			
Chair of governors	Mr Christopher Turner			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils	346			
	Boys	97	Girls	249
	EYFS	72	Prep	183
	Seniors	80	Sixth Form	11
Inspection dates	16 to 17 Nov 2016			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and grade descriptors from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Reporting inspector
Mr Christopher Gatherer	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Sarah Gillam	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Andrew Williams	Team inspector (Principal, senior school, HMC school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Babington House School is an independent day school for pupils aged 3 to 18. It is co-educational to the age of 11; has girls only between the ages of 11 and 16, and is co-educational in the sixth form. Founded in 1887 in North Park, Bromley, it moved to its present site in Chislehurst in 1957. The school is an educational trust and the trustees appoint a board of governors to be responsible for governance. The majority of the board are parents of either current or former pupils.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection new facilities for performing arts and sports, and new kitchen and dining areas have been built. The school comprises an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children aged 3 to 5, a prep school for pupils aged 5 to 11, and a senior school for pupils aged 11 and over which includes a sixth form established in 2014.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to challenge pupils academically within a secure, happy and innovative environment so that they become confident, independent learners and thinkers with high personal values and an awareness of their responsibilities in the outside world. It also seeks to promote a positive home-school relationship.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, most are from White British families living within a 15-mile radius of the school. A small minority of pupils are from other ethnicities, mainly European and Asian, which reflects the local area. The school has identified 43 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 39 of whom receive additional specialist support. Also 1 pupil has a statement of special educational needs, due to physical disability. English is an additional language (EAL) for 32 pupils, whose needs are supported in class and through the learning support department. Data used by the school have identified 23 pupils as the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them. The curriculum is also altered for an additional 3 pupils due to their special talents in sport.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The school refers to all EYFS children as belonging to the Nursery.

Recommendations from previous inspection

- 1.6 The previous full ISI inspection report was an interim inspection in November 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
 - Build on best practice in teaching, in order to develop independent thinking through planning for more open-ended tasks.
 - In the EYFS, extend the use of the outdoor learning environment for children in the Reception classes.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met the recommendations of the previous inspection. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- The pupils' positive attitudes are evident in all that they undertake, and enable them to make the most of their ability.
- Pupils display great resilience and this leads them to build rapidly on prior attainment.
- Pupils are skilful communicators, keen to share their well-reasoned opinions.
- Pupils' skills to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise information are not fully developed.

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

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-esteem and self-knowledge. They fully understand how to improve their own learning, supported by the school's highly effective systematic monitoring of their individual performance and progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They display genuine concern and respect for others.
- Pupils collaborate exceptionally well with one another to achieve common goals.
- Pupils are less skilled in philosophical reflection as they have limited opportunities to develop this aspect of spirituality.

Recommendations

2.3 In the context of the already excellent outcomes for pupils overall, the school may wish to consider the following improvements:

- Enable pupils to develop further their skills to analyse, hypothesise, and synthesise information using a range of sources.
- Enhance pupils' opportunities to reflect on such aspects as the wonders of nature and philosophical ideas.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils throughout the school display excellent attitudes to learning that are evident in all that they do, and an atmosphere of happy endeavour permeates school life. This fully reflects the school aims to create a secure, happy and innovative environment in which pupils become confident, independent learners and thinkers. Hence the school has met the recommendations of the previous inspection. Pupils' eager approach to their studies and the great resilience that they display is instigated in part by their keenness to earn house points for good work, but also by teaching methods which often foster independence of mind and a sense of curiosity. Consequently, pupils display initiative. They are also excellent and compelling collaborators. For example prep pupils worked well together in constructing an electrical circuit, and lower senior school music pupils combined their individual short rhythmic phrases to produce complex musical texture. Older pupils displayed highly effective team collaboration while looking for parallels between political figures in history and characters in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.
- 3.3 Pupils demonstrate superb communication skills. In interview, pupils of all ages explained eloquently their well-reasoned points of view. Pupils with SEND gain confidence and as a result progress well. This is due to the well-planned encouragement that they receive to express themselves orally. Pupils' written work is of a high standard and always neatly presented, illustrative of the pride and care that is a hallmark of pupils at the school. Reading skills are excellent, spurred on by encouraging staff with excellent subject knowledge.
- 3.4 Pupils apply their excellent attitudes and communication skills to a wide variety of learning experiences. This leads to the rapid increases in their knowledge, skills and understanding, and their resulting high achievement across a wide range of subjects and activities. They demonstrate these skills in all the required areas of learning whether it be linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic or creative. Pupils in class apply themselves with thorough enjoyment, are keen to do well and are eager to be challenged. Pupils are enthusiastic participants in lessons; they are responsive, readily offering answers and opinions articulately and confidently, and are eager to find things out for themselves. In pairs or groups, they co-operate extremely well.
- 3.5 In the EYFS, attainment is at a high level. In response to a recommendation of the previous inspection, the use of the outdoor learning environment for children in the Reception classes has been fully developed which provides children a breath of experiences and the choice to learn inside or outside. This alongside the support of staff who know how children learn at this age has led to almost all the children in Reception achieving or exceeding the standards expected for their age, a well-above-average proportion compared with the national picture.

- 3.6 Prep school pupils' results in National Curriculum tests from 2013 to 2015 have been above the national average for maintained junior schools. On the evidence available, this standard is judged to have risen further in 2016 and is excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. At GCSE in 2013 to 2015, results have been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools, and above the worldwide norms in IGCSE. This level of attainment has risen further in 2016. The first cohort of the new sixth form took A levels in 2016. Every pupil achieved the grades that they needed to obtain a place at their first choice of university.
- 3.7 Less able pupils and those with EAL and SEND make excellent progress as they are extremely well supported both in class as well as when receiving specialist support. The most able pupils also achieve at the highest level due to the challenge they receive in lessons through enrichment and extension tasks. Those with particular talents find those talents nurtured. In consequence, individuals reach high levels of regional and national achievement.
- 3.8 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire the overwhelming majority of pupils agreed that they are making good academic progress, and most answered positively to almost every statement in the questionnaire. Parental responses were also highly positive, with almost all confirming that the teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future. Throughout the school, academic attainment is often well in advance of that expected at the relevant levels of age and of stage of development. This level of attainment indicates that pupils also achieve good and often better rates of progress in relation to pupils of similar ability.
- 3.9 Pupils record considerable success in extra-curricular activities, such as the acclaimed performances in 2016 of Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate*, team sports including netball and hockey, and individual achievements in activities such as gymnastics. These activities enable pupils to develop their aptitudes and talents, and to discover new ones. Pupils achieve notable success in festivals of music and speech, with many individuals and the choir winning gold medals.
- 3.10 The many pupils who participate in a spirited manner in other extra-curricular activities gain much enjoyment and learn wide-ranging skills in activities such as The Chef's Whiskers Cookery Club, the Equestrian Society and in the Fashion and Personal Styling sessions. Pupils also benefit hugely from the range of trips and visits available, such as to India for charity work. A theatre trip to a performance of J.B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* was much enjoyed by Years 10 and 11 during the inspection. Through opportunities such as these and the staff's enthusiastic support and coaching, pupils achieve significant fulfilment and gain great pleasure.
- 3.11 Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves by the use of open-ended tasks. For example, prep pupils responded imaginatively in their writing about haunted houses. Artwork of a high standard is widely displayed in the school. GCSE pupils in art create portfolios and use external influences of their choice, such as visits to galleries. In geography GCSE pupils develop their own thinking about the impact of erosion, considering social, economic, environmental issues, and the impact on people.

- 3.12 Pupils are exceptionally articulate, display developing analytical skills in class, and respond to the often skilful questioning by staff. Sixth form pupils reflect on their work and develop responses based on their own analysis of its quality. The predominant teaching methods in all parts of the school do not offer sufficient opportunities for pupils to fully develop their ability to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise information using a range of sources.
- 3.13 Pupils display excellent levels of numeracy and use these skills across many other subjects. Children in the Nursery could be heard excitedly counting down a rocket they had made to blast off, reading each numeral down from 10. Prep and senior school pupils regularly apply their mathematical knowledge, such as when they use measuring and calculating skills in science and geography. Pupils' secure competence in information and communication technology results from good resources and effective teaching. Their efficiency in technological skills is deployed well across the curriculum.
- 3.14 Pupils' high standard of achievements reflects the highly effective tracking and monitoring systems put in place throughout the school to help pupils develop their initiative and independence, and take the lead in their learning. Children in the Nursery and pupils throughout the school as a result can happily explain their targets and how they are going to reach them, in a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils are confident, independent learners and thinkers with high personal values and an awareness of their responsibilities in the outside world, fully reflecting the school's aims. They contribute fully to the happy, relaxed and close-knit community. Pupils grow in confidence and self-worth as the school has put in place successful systems to help them become increasingly self-aware, ensuring that they display high levels of self-esteem and self-knowledge, and a clear understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance.
- 4.3 Pupils' approach is unfailingly polite, friendly, happy and harmonious. They accept full responsibility for their behaviour, which is exemplary. This concurs with the questionnaire responses of almost all parents, who indicated that the school actively promotes good behaviour and the values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils display genuine concern for each other and for society as a whole. They are personable and self-assured with one another whatever their individual backgrounds, and they are confident in the company of adults. Encouraged and supported by teachers and coaches, they demonstrate high levels of self-discipline and resilience, and the ability to persevere. As a result, they are confident to undertake new challenges. This is evident in all that they do, for example when trying new skills such as scaling the climbing wall. A few pupils in their questionnaire responses felt that staff do not treat them fairly. Inspection evidence gained from checks of records, scrutiny of pupils' work books and discussions with pupils did not support this view.
- 4.4 Pupils co-operate and work superbly together as team members. In class, in sport, in clubs and around the school, they demonstrate thoughtfulness and respect in the high quality of their collaboration. All the pupils interviewed spoke warmly of the very friendly community in which pupils of all ages get on very well with one another and work towards common goals. In undertaking the role of buddy within their house, older pupils willingly help younger ones. Pupils have many opportunities to undertake formal roles to lead the school community and fulfil responsibilities, for example as head girl and boy, head of house, head of parliament and as global prefect, which is a post intended to raise awareness of global issues. Pupils from an early age recognise the importance of fair play and obeying rules, and they develop a strong moral sense of right and wrong. Returning from a school trip to Berlin, pupils constructed a simulation of the Berlin Wall around the whole school, which was the trigger for much discussion around related issues. Pupils come to understand and respect the system of laws. They fully understand the place of the elected parliament to make the laws, for the judiciary to then uphold.
- 4.5 Pupils gain strong spiritual enrichment from the creative and performing arts, and the excellent presentation of art displays in the school building. Their ability to reflect on and appreciate some aspects of non-material aspects of life such as the wonders of nature, and to reflect on ideas in a philosophical way are reduced through the limited opportunities they have to do this. For example, assemblies often contain a prayer but provide little time for deeper reflection.

- 4.6 Pupils benefit greatly from the opportunities provided for all age groups to contribute to others in the school and the wider community, both in leadership and service. A key element of this is the school parliament, which debates and agrees on many whole-school issues. Pupils can point to changes that they have triggered as a result, such as the installation of playground equipment and a Treetops Walkway in the grounds.
- 4.7 Pupils set excellent examples of how to get on with others, whatever their ethnicity or ability. As a result, the school is a warm and sociable environment. Younger pupils celebrate festivals from a variety of cultures and this helps them to develop an understanding of other faiths. Older prep and senior pupils involve themselves in the world community, often in Europe, where they express a keen interest in travelling to various countries to see what life is like. Pupils aspire to the traits which are promoted fully throughout the school: to respect and be tolerant, to be democratic, and respect the rule of law and freedom of the individual.
- 4.8 Pupils consider carefully the needs of other, less fortunate children. Prep pupils devised their own name for the programme of charitable giving that they organise: Children to Children (C2C). Charitable ventures are either whole-school or house-based, and awaken pupils of all ages to issues in the wider world and develop their understanding of and compassion for others. Pupils organise cake sales, for example for child refugees arriving in Greece. Older pupils sing in the local community, such as at a recent opening ceremony for a new coffee shop. Senior pupils apply for places on the local borough youth council.
- 4.9 Almost all of those pupils who responded to the questionnaire stated that they understand how to keep safe online. All parents who responded felt that the school ensures their children learn in a healthy and safe environment. In interview, pupils confirmed that they had been regularly educated in the dangers of social media. Pupils state that they feel safe at the school and that they know what to do if they need help or advice, or if one of their peers is in difficulty or distress. Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating, frequent exercise, and staying healthy emotionally and mentally. They are also aware of the importance of decisions they make in this regard, and the impact of such decisions on their future. They make nutritious and appropriate choices from the plentiful lunches. This sense of their healthy future starts at an early age. Children in the EYFS choose from a range of healthy snacks comprising a range of fruits and vegetables. Pupils appreciate that they are well looked after if they are injured or unwell. As they mature, pupils also understand that the decisions they make about subjects and careers have a significant impact on their future lives, and they appreciate the help they receive from staff to make the right choices, whether it is about work experience or which university to aim for.
- 4.10 Pupils prepare themselves well for their futures, and the school provides full pastoral and academic support which helps pupils to fulfil their dreams and potential. In the parental responses to the questionnaire, almost all commended the quality of maintenance of the premises and how this successfully supports their children's personal development while meeting their pastoral and welfare needs effectively. They praised the school for enabling their children to learn in a healthy and safe environment. These qualities form a supportive backdrop that enables pupils to be extremely well prepared for the responsibilities, opportunities and experiences of their future lives when they leave the school.