



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Brighton Girls

November 2019



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School's Details

School	Brighton Girls			
DfE number	846/6014			
Registered charity number	306983			
Address	Brighton Girls Montpelier Road Brighton BN1 3AT			
Telephone number	01273 280280			
Email address	enquiries@brightongirls.gdst.net			
Headteacher	Mrs Sian Cattaneo			
Proprietor	Girls Day School Trust			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	463			
	EYFS	25	Prep	122
	Seniors	283	Sixth Form	33
Inspection dates	12 to 14 November 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Brighton Girls is an independent day school for females aged from three to eighteen years and includes a co-educational Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Founded in 1876, the school is a member of the Girls Day School Trust, whose council provides oversight for the school. A local advisory governing body is also in place.
- 1.2 The school comprises a prep school incorporating the EYFS, and the senior school which includes a sixth form.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection the school has undertaken major refurbishment of both schools, including the creation of a design hub.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to create an environment where students are fully supported to shine academically and socially, to discover and develop their own character, strengths and interests, and to make a real difference in the world.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from diverse backgrounds with the majority living within a 20-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average in both the prep school and the senior school. The school has identified 85 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) including dyslexia, auditory issues and anxiety, and they are supported within lessons and through one-to-one support. There are no pupils in the school who have an education, health and care plan (EHC). There are 12 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and they receive support on an individual basis when required. Data used by the school have identified 72 pupils as being the most able in the school's population and the curriculum is modified for them both within and outside lessons.

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 are 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.

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 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 FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. 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. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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](#), [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 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 prep school, the school measures attainment using nationally standardised tests. In the years 2016 to 2018, the results were above the national average for maintained schools.
- 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 above 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.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is 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 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 are met.**

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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.13 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.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.15 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.

2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.17 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.

2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 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.

2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports 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 arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates 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 the national inspectorate, 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'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Progress made by the pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and English as an additional language (EAL), is excellent.
 - Pupils have excellent higher order thinking skills, encouraged by the high quality of teaching in lessons.
 - Pupils set themselves high standards in their approach to learning.
 - Pupils develop excellent linguistic and communication skills.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- The pupils' behaviour and their relationships with each other and their teachers is excellent.
 - The pupils are very confident and have high self-esteem.
 - Pupils demonstrate great respect when challenging each other's ideas in order to engage in healthy debate.

Recommendations

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:
- Enabling all pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) skills more effectively in their lessons, especially in the sixth form.
 - Enabling pupils to achieve more when engaging with the local community.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2016 to 2018. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for maintained schools. A-level results have been above the national average for maintained schools. From the evidence of performance in external examinations, lesson observations, pupil interviews and work scrutiny, the inspectors found that a large majority of pupils of all abilities achieve an excellent standard across the curriculum in both the prep and senior schools. In the Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS), all children make very good progress in relation to their age and development. By the end of Reception, the majority are exceeding many of the Early Learning Goals. Throughout both schools, the achievement of pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent and is at least in line with their peers because they are identified quickly and receive high quality support.
- 3.6 In the EYFS, children make very good progress in lessons as the teachers allow them to work independently on well planned, focussed activities thus setting a solid foundation for future years. In the prep school, pupils' above average progress is encouraged by their involvement in recording how they meet the clear targets set by the teachers and identifying how they can improve. As pupils move up through the senior school and into the sixth form they maintain excellent progress as a result of small class sizes, excellent teacher knowledge and different styles of teaching, enabling all pupils to learn and contribute. Teaching also includes one-to-one support outside lessons which contributes to enabling pupils to shine academically.

- 3.7 The knowledge, skills and understanding of all pupils is excellent for their age and abilities across the senior and prep schools. In a Year 10 French lesson, pupils displayed a secure command of advanced vocabulary and were very accurate in their use of the future tense. The diverse range of high quality art on display around both schools indicates the pupils have very well developed technical skills and pay attention to detail, as observed in the drawings and sculptures of horses exhibited in the senior school art gallery. In the EYFS, excellent creative skills were demonstrated as the children produced puppet shows based on the story of the Stickman where they drew and coloured in the scenery with dexterity, devised their own imaginative scripts and performed for each other with enthusiasm. Pupils' physical skills are well developed, as exemplified by their high level of co-ordination in the senior school trampolining club as they prepared for a regional competition. Pupils successfully recall and use key technical and scientific terminology, as seen in a Year 9 physics lesson where students competently explained the effect of adding a resistor to an electrical circuit. In a Year 13 English lesson, pupils demonstrated outstanding knowledge and understanding of the novella Heart of Darkness and were able to analyse its themes and characterisation in great detail.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate excellent oral and written communication skills. Year 4 pupils read diary extracts with confidence, fluency and expression. In a Year 12 classical civilisation lesson, pupils delivered a series of polemical speeches representing the different factions in the assassination of Julius Caesar, showing excellent awareness of rhetorical devices and the importance of emotive language to convince. In a Year 9 English class, pupils assumed the person of Macbeth and fluently wrote letters to his wife in the first person.
- 3.9 Pupils develop very good numeracy skills which they apply well across the curriculum. In a Year 8 mathematics class, the pupils demonstrated their confident grasp of ratios. In a Year 10 physics lesson, pupils made very good use of algebraic manipulation to solve equations as part of an Ohm's Law practical experiment. In Year 13, pupils in economics applied their mathematical knowledge very effectively to substantiate and graph their findings with regard to marginal revenue product theory. In Year 3, pupils skilfully applied their understanding of number and direction to map work. Pupils in a Year 1 science class also demonstrated good critical thinking skills when successfully identifying and sorting materials and objects into different groups to create Venn Diagrams.
- 3.10 Pupils' ICT skills in both the senior and prep schools are good. Children used iPads effectively in a reception class to video their puppet shows. Pupils' intuitively use online platforms to complete homework. Year 7 pupils employed good ICT skills in the creation of clear, concise and well thought out presentations in the newly built design hub, a modern space built as part of the governors' highly effective development strategy. However, pupils do not consistently use their ICT skills effectively enough across the curriculum, including in the sixth form where there is insufficient application of such skills in preparation for the next phase of their lives.
- 3.11 Pupils have excellent study skills and interpret information from a wide range of sources very effectively. In a Year 9 geography lesson, pupils demonstrated strong higher order thinking skills when analysing environmental and political considerations of potential oil exploration in Alaska, weighing up the interests of politicians, businesses and the indigenous people. In history lessons pupils used their excellent analytical skills, for example in Year 9 where they investigated factory conditions in the mid-eighteenth century. Year 11 pupils' written work showed they had gained an outstanding understanding of the health issues in the Middle Ages by synthesising several sources to create cogent, persuasive arguments in philosophy, religion and ethics (PRE). In Year 6 science, pupils were able to successfully review and refine their circuit game designs to improve functionality and aesthetics.

- 3.12 The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that, in line with its aims, the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities in order to develop the pupils' own character, strengths and interests. Inspection evidence agrees and shows that pupils achieve notable success beyond the classroom. The majority of pupils are successful in The Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Sports teams compete very well at regional level, for example Year 6 recently won the Girls Day Schools Trust (GDST) netball tournament. The school team reached the final of the Brighton Young Enterprise competition. There have been notable individual successes, including representing England Under 21s at indoor nets and performing in West End productions.
- 3.13 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and they respond eagerly to well-prepared activities and teachers' questioning. In a Year 9 biology lesson, pupils reviewing their recent work on osmosis were keen to show their understanding of the subject to the teacher and their peers. The pupils are ambitious, have a genuine desire to succeed and set themselves high standards in their approach to learning. Year 7 pupils readily collaborated in small groups during physical education (PE) when hypothesising on how to apply the skills they had recently practised in a netball game. Year 10 pupils showed great persistence when they were painting a pepper using watercolours, having high expectations of themselves by looking for ways in which they could improve by adding shade and contrast. Pupils challenge each other's ideas in a constructive way whilst being highly supportive and respectful of each other's views. In a Year 10 English lesson, pupils devised well-informed, probing questions for their peers, thus helping to deepen the collective understanding of the play *Much Ado about Nothing*.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 The pupils are very self-confident and exhibit high degrees of self-esteem, self-reliance and self-discipline. For example, in Year 9 and 10 modern language lessons, pupils took responsibility for filling in gaps in their knowledge and understanding by using classroom resources such as displays, reference books and the knowledge of their peers, rather than seeking answers from their teacher. As part of the mathematics department assessment procedures, Year 7 pupils demonstrated the confidence to analyse how to improve in half-termly tests. Year 5 pupils in PE were keen to share feedback with their peers, to respond positively to advice from their teacher, and to self-reflect in a mature way to enhance their performance. Pupils' high self-esteem was evident as they put themselves forward as candidates for the forthcoming mock election. In discussions and conversations with inspectors the pupils in the senior school were particularly self-assured and self-motivated when explaining that they often attend optional academic clinics in order to improve. Pupils in both the senior and prep schools also commented on their own resilience, for example, being able to take positives from tests in which they had underperformed.
- 3.16 Through strong and effective pastoral leadership throughout the school pupils have an excellent understanding that the decisions they make are important. In a Year 9 chemistry lesson, pupils were not afraid to consider the strengths and weaknesses of their own decision making when discussing their agreement or disagreement with regard to climate change. This enabled excellent pupil self-reflection after an open discussion about the human impact of greenhouse gases, facilitated by the teacher being sympathetic to the topic and encouraging the pupils to make their own judgements. Year 9 pupils showed a very good understanding of how their words and behaviour impact on others as they discussed in a tutor group why it is important to talk about bullying, and demonstrated an excellent awareness that in anti-bullying week the planned activities would raise the profile of this topic around the school. Year 6 pupils considered different leadership styles in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), and were able to ascertain which personal behaviours are most effective. The leadership of the school enables the pupils to make well informed decisions with regard to the next phase of their lives such as organising attendance at careers fairs and gaining insight into A level and GCSE choices by speaking to older pupils about what studying a subject entails.
- 3.17 Pupils have a strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. In a Year 7 music lesson, pupils reflected on the sense of calm produced by Hans Zimmer's music and then created their own contemplative compositions using xylophones. Year 13 pupils in a philosophy lesson demonstrated a deep understanding of spiritual matters through mature discussion, leading to thoughtful role play scenarios on the theory of falsification and the meaning of religious language. Year 7 pupils wrote with insight about the concept of the soul in PRE, having watched an episode of The Simpsons as a stimulus. Pupils in the prep school value the time they have for reflection, for example when reading in the library or colouring during mindfulness form periods. Children in the EYFS Reception class clearly enjoyed the sense of space when outside collecting leaves in response to the Leaf Man story.
- 3.18 Pupils behaviour in and around the school is excellent and they distinguish between right and wrong as indicated by the few sanctions that they receive. Pupils are polite, hold doors open for the staff and each other, and respect the school rules. Pupils show a great deal of respect for their teachers by listening attentively to instructions and asking questions in a courteous manner. They also have a very good understanding of the rule of law in a democratic society, as observed in a Year 7 PSHE class where they reflected on the laws of the United Kingdom and whether or not prison was a suitable deterrent for different types of crimes. Pupils in a Year 2 PSHE lesson demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of sharing worries about bullying behaviours and actions by identifying someone they could talk to, such as a teacher or a Year 6 buddy.

- 3.19 Pupils form excellent and productive relationships with each other, which the school facilitates through strong pastoral leadership, the PSHE curriculum, team-building days and residential educational visits to the field centre in Wales. In assemblies, pupils are eager to celebrate each other's achievements, such as congratulating those who won the house bake-off and those who had recently been elected as charity officers. In lessons, pupils actively engage in class discussion with enthusiasm. In a year 2 class, pupils were keen to share ideas when considering how many items they can buy from a shop with 20p and calculating how much change they will receive. Reception pupils also actively support each other, offering help and working together when organising belongings and packing bags at the end of the school day.
- 3.20 Within the school, pupils make very positive contributions to the lives of others. Through the house system, pupils work together very effectively across year groups, for example sixth form pupils taking on leadership roles to write, produce, and direct younger pupils, to great effect in the house plays. Year 7 pupils commented on how well they felt supported by the older pupils when they started in their new surroundings at the beginning of the year.
- 3.21 The pupils are very aware of those less fortunate than themselves. All pupils have the option of nominating a charity through their tutor groups, and those selected demonstrate their commitment to helping by giving a presentation enabling the whole school to decide which cause to support for the coming year. Pupils engage with the wider community by collecting and sorting provisions for local foodbanks, taking part in beach cleans and holding a tea party for older citizens at Christmas. In the summer term, Year 6 pupils volunteer at the Hove luncheon club. The pupils are aware of their responsibilities to wider society, however, the opportunities for them to be regularly engaged and achieve more in this regard are not yet fully developed.
- 3.22 Pupils demonstrate a high degree of awareness of, and respect for, the culture and religious beliefs of others. In a Year 13 philosophy lesson, the pupils discussed their views on theological language in a variety of religious beliefs. In a Year 11 PRE class, pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding of different religions and value systems in order to analyse how each might interpret contemporary issues such as divorce and homosexuality. In the EYFS, the children were keen to learn about each other's families by sharing pictures of home events, customs and traditions. The LGBTQ+ alliance lunchtime activity provides a warm and friendly environment where pupils are actively supporting those who feel under-represented; the school has been awarded the Stonewall silver level award to recognise their work in this area.
- 3.23 The pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe, including online, through a broad and well-led PSHE programme in both the senior and prep school. In interviews, the pupils explained the importance of a healthy diet and the need for regular exercise through regular participation in sport and dance. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire commented that they knew how to stay safe when online. In food and nutrition lessons pupils demonstrated an excellent awareness of hygiene standards and of the risk of cross-contamination.

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 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 assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Dr Andrew Storey	Reporting inspector
Mr Duncan Byrne	Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC School)
Mrs Paula Mortimer	Team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Mrs Christine Rees	Team inspector (Former housemistress, HMC school)