

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Bute House Preparatory School

October 2019



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School's Details

School	Bute House Preparatory School			
DfE number	205/6216			
Registered charity number	312739			
Address	Bute House Preparatory School Luxemburg Gardens Hammersmith London W6 7EA			
Telephone number	020 7603 7381			
Email address	mail@butehouse.co.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Helen Lowe			
Chair of governors	Mrs Susan Bailes			
Age range	4 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	319			
Early Years Foundation Stage	EYFS	22	Juniors	297
Inspection dates	1 to 3 October 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Bute House is a preparatory school for female pupils aged between four and eleven years. The school has three phases: lower, comprising Reception, Year 1 and Year 2; middle, formed of Year 3 and Year 4, and upper, which is Year 5 and Year 6. The school is an educational trust run by a governing body and is a member of the Mercers' Company group of schools. The current head has been in post since 2012.
- 1.2 The school opened on its current site in 1958. It is located in West London in modern buildings with playing fields and an adjacent swimming pool.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection, the school has upgraded its facilities with two building programmes. The latest was completed in 2019 and provides a studio theatre, a new library and digital learning space, newly refurbished science, music, art and design technology (DT) facilities. A new management structure has been introduced, intended to improve communication throughout the school.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to identify and foster every child's ability and talents, encouraging self-motivated learners and confident communicators; to help each child do her best, to reach potential and inspire personal best in a non-competitive academic environment; to provide a broad and rich curriculum which encourages a love of learning that goes beyond what is taught, and to maintain a happy, positive environment by encouraging self-discipline, respect and consideration for others and a sense of community.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils live within a six-mile radius of the school and come from a range of professional backgrounds. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate the ability of the pupils is well above average. The school has identified 17 pupils as having special education needs and/or disabilities, which include dyslexia and language difficulties. One pupil has an education, health or care plan. English is an additional language for 160 pupils, the majority of whom are fluent users of English. The school has identified one-third of the pupils as being the more able. They are catered for with extension work and challenges in 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. 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 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 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.
- 2.6 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is 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 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

- 2.9 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.10 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

- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.13 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. This 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.15 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.17 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.

2.18 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.

- Pupils are excellent communicators and speak with great articulation, confidence and passion.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary from an early age and throughout the school. They show excellent levels of perseverance and they collaborate in lessons most effectively.
- Pupils' attainment and achievements are excellent. Their academic results in most lessons and over time are extremely high.
- Pupils have highly developed study skills and work effectively individually, in pairs and in small groups.

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

- Pupils are excellent decision makers and appreciate that these may subsequently determine their own success. They can be relied upon to make appropriate choices.
- Pupils have outstanding levels of self-understanding. They display excellent self-confidence, self-knowledge and resilience.
- Pupils' levels of social development are very high. They work together effectively and collaboratively to solve problems and achieve common goals.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to the life of the school and fulfil responsibilities with diligence and commitment.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school is recommended to:

- Ensure consistency of pace, high expectations and interactivity in all lessons to ensure pupils realise their potential.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils display excellent communication skills. They are highly articulate, using a wide vocabulary with meaning and understanding. Older pupils converse with particularly high levels of maturity, for example when describing how to create a clay animation film. In a highly successful upper-school science lesson, pupils discussed fluently the amount of independence they have to take responsibility for their learning and how they test a variety of hypotheses during lessons. Pupils are able to explain their methodologies and identify how and what they have learned. Their confidence in speaking in front of others is enhanced by the numerous opportunities to use spoken English as seen in an excellent lesson where pupils hot-seated to ask questions of a character from the book they are studying. In a middle-school mathematics lesson, they respectfully used partner talk to extend their learning, by listening to one another's ideas. Throughout the school, pupils read with assurance and understanding. All pupils take great pride in their work and present it legibly and neatly with an accurate use of grammar, spelling, punctuation and vocabulary. They produce excellent extended written tasks, writing in a variety of styles and genres.

- 3.6 At all ages and abilities, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils display well-developed levels of initiative and a clear understanding of how to work independently and collaboratively. When working in groups and pairs they show great respect for each other, this was seen in a middle-school English lesson when pupils observed, 'Let's go round the group clockwise, so as everyone gets a turn.' In the EYFS, children show strong listening skills. Pupils ask insightful questions and eagerly take responsibility for their own learning, as seen in a stimulating mathematics lesson on problem solving. At times, pupils' over-enthusiasm can impede whole-class learning, as seen in a few lessons. Pupils love their learning and they respond most positively to the learning powers programme implemented across the school. They identify the language used to describe the characteristics of learning and apply it effectively during lessons.
- 3.7 Progress and achievement over time is excellent, and results achieved in tests at the age of eleven confirm that pupils are excellently prepared for their next stage of education. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, all the pupils who responded agreed they are encouraged to think for themselves and that the teachers help them to learn and make progress. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their children to make progress and develop skills for the future. In well-paced and interactive lessons, progress during the course of the lesson is rapid, but in more pedestrian lessons, progress is less pronounced. Pupils thrive on aspirational challenges and in many instances they are working beyond expectations for their age at the top of the school. This was seen in a very successful English lesson where pupils were analysing text and empathising with non-fictional characters by explaining how they felt and reacted to challenges in their lives. Pupils make excellent progress throughout the school, supported by the comprehensive systems for tracking attainment, adapting plans and implementing individualised support and additional activities. They move rapidly through demanding tasks in lessons where challenges are matched appropriately to the capabilities of the pupils. Those with SEND or EAL make excellent progress as they are extremely well-supported by highly experienced specialist help and teaching assistants. The excellent progress made by the pupils is in accordance with the school's stated aims to identify and foster every child's ability and talents, encouraging self-motivated learners. There is an excellent range of resources and facilities in all parts of the school which allow pupils to develop practical, investigative, experimental and research skills. Pupils are extended and challenged at the top of the school by the flexible groupings for maths and English, that exist throughout the school and the specialist teaching. Within its well-publicised and non-competitive academic ethos, pupils make outstanding progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- 3.8 Pupils have an excellent, well-developed range of study skills which they use to great effect from an early age. Children in the EYFS are focused and attentive, and confidently choose from a range of activities. Pupils persevere very well as seen in an excellent upper school dance lesson where pupils worked together to create innovative and original steps and movements. Pupils possess excellent higher-order thinking skills and use them effectively. In science lessons pupils confidently hypothesise and analyse to test their ideas and synthesise their results and findings accurately. Pupils are very capable and competent when researching and developing their own presentations. Pupils' use of numeracy and mathematical vocabulary is highly developed and often exceeds age-related expectations. In a very effective lower-school mathematics lesson pupils displayed excellent knowledge of mathematical understanding by correcting errors from the board. They explained their answers with clarity and understanding. Pupils can manipulate mathematical symbols and signs to produce sums and problems with accuracy. In a very well-paced middle-school mathematics lesson pupils created simple algebraic calculations and used a variety of methods with great accuracy to check their working out. Pupils talk confidently about the order and size of negative numbers and they can transpose the information into real life situations as seen in a mathematics lesson where they could identify minus temperatures. In the middle school pupils learn through significant challenge when adding decimals to non-decimals by reviewing and improving their mistakes.

- 3.9 Pupils attain high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding, and they acquire the tools necessary to ensure progress and future success. The youngest children acquire new skills and understanding at a significantly quick rate, as seen in a successful lesson when Reception children were celebrating a Jewish festival with special foods and could choose their own follow-up work. This was also seen in a lower-school mathematics lesson on 'greater than' and 'less than', where pupils quickly worked out the direction the signs must be facing. Pupils develop excellent basic skills for learning at a high level in an extensive range of subjects. They show a mastery of topics such as prime factors where they display a depth of understanding and used previous calculations to help with the next. The excellent practice in quantity of explanation by teachers' talk and assessment of pupils' learning apparent in a large majority of lessons is not always consistent across the age-groups and subjects reducing the amount of progress made in those lessons.
- 3.10 Pupils use computers confidently and independently, as seen in an animation club where they select with ease images for their character's backdrop. In a very good English lesson, pupils used laptops effectively to create a grammar slide show and displayed a competent use of hyperlinks. Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about the power and efficacy of digital classrooms and know in detail how they assist their learning. Pupils use spreadsheets effectively as seen in an upper-school mathematics lesson enabling them to focus on developing skills. They created an excellent traffic light program through using two computer programs which they combined effectively and worked independently at an extremely high level. In discussion, pupils talked animatedly and informatively about how their computing skills are utilised in other subjects such as science, humanities and DT.
- 3.11 The school does not enter pupils for National Curriculum tests and consequently the school cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but on the evidence available it is judged to be well above average in relation to age-related expectations. Inspection evidence from the observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with pupils supports this judgement. Pupils leaving the school at Year 6 gain places at their chosen senior schools with a large number being awarded a range of scholarships. More able pupils are given challenging work and take advantage of this, thus making progress in line with their potential.
- 3.12 Pupils achieve extremely well in a range of academic subjects and outcomes for pupils are high in sport, the arts, technology and music. Many pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 participate in national speaking examinations and results are excellent. Pupils show high levels of non-academic achievement as seen by their selection for a national orchestra, music grading examinations, admission to national sporting academies and external mathematics competitions. Pupils show high levels of achievement in dance lessons where they combine various styles of dance effectively. Pupils acquire new skills from the extra-curricular programme provided by the school as they develop team spirit and co-operation and an appreciation of their own and other pupils' talents and abilities. A few parents in their responses to the questionnaire felt there were not enough suitable extra-curricular activities. The inspection evidence shows there is a suitable range, including the clubs programme on Wednesday afternoons.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils make decisions effectively and assuredly from an early age due to the huge number of opportunities that exist. Pupils show exceptional decision-making skills from the early years onwards as seen when the children in Reception chose the most suitable equipment for the tasks they were given in a physical education lesson. They make thoughtful decisions, and are highly aware of the effects of their decisions on other people. Pupils respond positively and confidently to the multiple opportunities they are given to choose extension tasks and homework tasks and appreciate the opportunity to choose their clubs. Pupils know that if their choices cannot be implemented by the school, then they are confident they will get priority in the future. As a result, they are always prepared to be flexible and abide by other people's decisions. They enjoy electing their own form captains and vice-captains and they appreciate the need to choose carefully. Pupils involve themselves fully in the democratic process for electing the school council with enthusiasm and a sense of importance, confident in the knowledge they are benefiting the school community. They are encouraged to voice their opinions and thoughts and do so with great tact and diplomacy. They say with confidence that the school will always take them seriously and listen to them. Pupils make excellent decisions when choosing levels of challenge in mathematics tasks and when selecting for themselves various methods of study.
- 3.15 Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence, self-knowledge and resilience. They know how to take responsibility for and how to improve their own learning. In an excellent middle-school art lesson, pupils showed confidence in trying out new techniques and appreciated the opportunity to practise new skills. In response to the questionnaires, a few pupils disagreed that feedback and marking help me to improve, although inspectors found no evidence of this. All pupils who responded agreed that the school helps them to learn and think for themselves. They have excellent levels of self-esteem as observed in a lively EYFS physical development session where children delighted in their success and exclaimed, 'I can do this, watch me, I couldn't do it before'. Pupils are exceptionally able to relate to their own strengths and weakness as seen in an excellent upper-school music lesson when reviewing their work to critically appraise and improve.
- 3.16 All pupils have highly developed social awareness, and they work and play effectively and with a clear idea of how to achieve common goals and solve problems. There is clear evidence in pupils' books that they relish the opportunity for group work and the chance to discuss and respond to a variety of challenges. This was also seen in a middle school history lesson when pupils work together to create a range of historic roles by sharing ideas and responsibilities within a group. In a year 4 science lesson pupils showed excellent collaboration with their partners, by listening carefully and discussing how to complete the tasks. In an upper-school music lesson, pupils worked effectively together to review and improve with a clear idea of reflecting positively in order to advance their understanding. They solve problems very effectively and are socially very aware of people and their feelings. Rewards and sanctions focus on the positive and the system is well-understood and appreciated by the pupils. When interviewed, pupils spoke of a caring community that has no discrimination and which gets on well together. Pupils play happily and inclusively outside at breaktimes, with all ages interacting socially and enthusiastically.

- 3.17 Pupils make an excellent contribution to the lives of others within the school, the local community, and wider society, both nationally and internationally. Pupils embrace responsibilities with enthusiasm and a high level of understanding from an early age. They enjoy the various classroom-based responsibilities and express themselves clearly when discussing the various roles and the positive impact they have on the school community. They raise funds for the school and for other charities wholeheartedly and are actively involved in choosing which charities to support. They also involve themselves pro-actively in raising funds for their own school. The partnership programme, which reaches out to the local community and provides a range of extra learning opportunities at the school is excellent and gives school pupils the opportunity to be involved with members of the wider community and local maintained schools at the regular workshops held at school. Pupils talk with great pride of the election of Year 6 pupils to school council. When interviewed, they spoke with confidence that the pupil voice is heard and with passion about sharing ideas for school improvement.
- 3.18 Pupils have a very highly developed sense of right and wrong. They accept responsibility for their own behaviour and thrive in an atmosphere which allows them to be their own person. In the questionnaire responses, all pupils and staff and almost all parents who responded agreed that the school promotes good behaviour. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils appreciate the need for rules and take an active part in the annual drawing up of class rules and the creation of a class charter. Pupils behave in a considerate manner which allows all pupils in the vast majority of lessons to learn to their potential. Pupils are confident in understanding the rules of specialist classrooms and follow them carefully. They move safely around the rooms to allow for effective learning and consideration of others. Early years children show a strong understanding of what is right and wrong and play together well. They commented that, 'You should share, and pack away when you are told'. Pupils show a sense of responsibility in upholding the view expressed in interview that, 'we are all one'.
- 3.19 Pupils respect and value diversity within the school and society. They show great respect for and appreciation of their own and other cultures. They demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds and traditions. Pupils respond positively to the plentiful opportunities to engage with others. In discussion, pupils speak with warmth and understanding and state that differences are celebrated, but they are rarely even noticed. They have a very clear understanding of the need to ensure there is no discrimination and they appreciate the assemblies which make it clear what is and what is not acceptable. Pupils express emphatically their belief in the staff's willingness to deal with problems and any unkindness should it arise. They feel that the Head will deal with anything that is not acceptable. Pupils say that they get on together very well. Pupils talked with interest about Black History month, and in form time pupils showed great empathy with one another by stating that 'it would be really sad if everyone was the same, because, it would be less interesting'. Within the context and ethos of the school, pupils have a well-developed sense of spirituality. They discuss openly the various faiths represented in the school and they have a clear knowledge of festivals and rites of passage. They discuss animatedly how listening to music and looking at works of art makes them feel and they show an appreciation of composition, mood and style. Pupils' books show that they enjoy exploring the bigger questions, and in a lower-school beliefs and ethics lesson, pupils spoke with great empathy about how God might feel about how humans are currently treating the world. Year 5 responded very positively to the topic of what is art and what is beauty. All pupils involve themselves in the non-denominational reflection at lunchtime with the school's 'thought for the day'.
- 3.20 Pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy is excellent in all aspects. Pupils have well-developed ideas on how to stay safe and talk animatedly about the regular advice they receive about: road safety, healthy eating, food committee, food workshops and safeguarding procedures. They understand that there is always someone they can go to who will listen to them. When interviewed, pupils stated clearly and confidently the regular advice they receive about the use of social media and being safe online. They have a clear understanding of a healthy diet and a balanced lifestyle, and a vast majority of parents and pupils confirmed this in the questionnaire responses.

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, the chair of governors and the safeguarding governor, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, registrations and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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 Paul Easterbrook	Reporting inspector
Mr Graeme Smith	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mrs Clare Turnbull	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)