



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Ditcham Park School

February 2020



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School's Details

School	Ditcham Park School			
DfE number	850/6049			
Registered charity number	285244			
Address	Ditcham Park School Ditcham Park Petersfield Hampshire GU31 5RN			
Telephone number	01730 825659			
Email address	info@ditchampark.com			
Headmaster	Mr Graham Spawforth			
Chair of governors	Mr Christopher Pickett			
Age range	2 ½ to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	406			
	EYFS	24	Juniors	155
	Seniors	227		
Inspection dates	4 to 6 February 2020			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Ditcham Park School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 2 and 16 years. It was founded in 1976 and occupies its original site on a rural campus in the South Downs National Park. The school centres on a large Victorian house, with specialist facilities, including those for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), in purpose-built accommodation. The school is a charitable trust and a council of governors oversees its work.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new headmaster. It has built four new classrooms for its junior pupils and recently opened a purpose-built nursery.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school sets out to nurture and encourage each pupil to learn and make progress within a supportive, happy atmosphere in which all pupils are known as individuals. It aims to prepare its pupils for the future by developing their self-confidence while they work for academic qualifications and learn useful skills including technological and creative skills. The intention is that pupils will move on to the next stage of their education with Christian values, a growth mindset and a desire to help shape the modern world for the better.

About the pupils

- 1.4 The pupils' backgrounds reflect the ethnic and social mix of the local area. Nationally standardised tests indicate the ability profile of the pupils across the school is slightly above the national average, with a relatively wide range, in comparison to pupils who take similar tests. The school has identified 125 pupils as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) for issues such as dyslexia. There are no pupils with an education and health care plan (EHCP) or who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The 89 pupils who are more able are provided with extra challenge in the classroom and through extension activities supporting their specific talents.

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.

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 REGULATORY 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.

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 relevant 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 2017 to 2019, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 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

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

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

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

2.19 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Pre-Prep	Year 1
Prep	Year 2
Transition	Year 3
Lower Juniors	Year 4
Middle Juniors	Year 5
Upper Juniors	Year 6

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- All pupils have a very good attitude to learning and work hard.
 - They develop strong communication skills, especially in the juniors.
 - Their creativity is highly developed and a strength of the school.
 - Senior pupils' progress in lessons is slowed on occasion by excessively directed teaching and lack of challenge.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils develop considerable self-confidence and high levels of self-esteem, evident from an early age.
 - Their understanding of the importance of respect and tolerance is excellent.
 - Their behaviour is excellent, based on their moral understanding and willingness to accept responsibility.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:
- Enable all pupils in the seniors to make consistently good progress by sharing best practice in questioning technique and in encouraging pupils to think for themselves.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 Pre-inspection questionnaire responses indicate that virtually all parents and pupils are satisfied with the quality of the education provided by the school and the standard of attainment pupils reach. In 2018 to 2019 all children in the EYFS achieved at least the expected levels of progress in all areas of learning, with several children exceeding these in many aspects. In 2019 pupils in the juniors exceeded national levels in literacy and numeracy in comparison with pupils who take similar tests. The overall pass rate at GCSE was 97%, with grades 7-9 being awarded for 38% of results. Results at grade 5 or above for both English and mathematics were gained by 88% of pupils, an improvement in results since the previous year. The value-added measure of pupils identified with SEND from their baseline assessment to GCSE results was better than that of their peers, thanks to well-targeted support initiated by the learning support department. The school's analysis shows that girls outperformed boys overall, a disparity being addressed by the school leadership by an increased focus on literacy aimed at improving boys' performance.
- 3.6 Pupils in the juniors make good progress across all the required areas of learning, including linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Pupils of all ability levels are able to progress in line with their ability although on occasion lessons activities do not provide sufficiently for the different needs of pupils, leading to a loss of focus which impedes progress. Children in EYFS develop a good grasp on basic mathematical concepts and confidently counted the number of pandas in their miniature bear enclosure. EYFS children develop very good fine motor control and pencil grip and as pupils move through the junior school, they develop strong literacy skills. Nursery children show curiosity in the world around them, wanting to know where elephants come from and those in the Reception class were eagerly exploring their theme of Chinese New Year. Older junior pupils spoke excitedly of what they had learnt about the Great Fire of London. Pupils have a well-developed grasp of scientific concepts; they were intrigued by their day

spent in simulated space exploration. Pupils' physical skills are good, enhanced by recent changes in the curriculum enabling all junior pupils to spend time learning outdoors every day in addition to physical education lessons.

- 3.7 Junior pupils develop excellent communication skills. Their assurance in speaking in front of others is encouraged by the many opportunities for public speaking which the school provides. Imaginative use of language develops from an early age, pupils in EYFS describing the sound made by tiny balls rubbing together as being like the wind in a storm. Many older juniors read with great confidence; they use a range of sentence structures and good descriptive language in their writing. Pupils at the top of the juniors were confident and articulate as they interviewed each other about their recent trip to the O2 arena before writing a newspaper report about this. Numerical skills develop well. Younger junior pupils show a very good understanding of three-dimensional shapes, some able to explain the properties of the shapes. They confidently counted in tens and correctly subtracted in increasingly complex calculations in giving change. Older junior pupils showed very good knowledge of partitioning and of basic coordinates in mathematics lessons. They apply their numerical skills confidently in other areas of the curriculum, for example in designing a maze. Across the junior school, pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently, from employing recordable binoculars to learning coding skills as they mature. Their learning is strongly supported by the senior leadership's introduction of a course in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) in line with its aim to prepare pupils for an increasingly technological future.
- 3.8 Senior pupils make good progress across all the required areas of learning. Pupils with SEND make progress which is especially good in relation to their starting points, benefiting from the guidance and support of the learning support department. Pupils' overall progress is further supported by the restructured timetable with increased teaching time and GCSE courses started in Year 9. More able pupils are not consistently stretched in lessons, however, as there is not always appropriate challenge. For instance, in some lessons opportunities for pupils to make progress are limited by directed teaching which lacks incisive questioning. The marking of written work seen in pupils' books was inconsistent, as at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils in Year 7 and 8, however, do much work using laptops and they say that they find this allows for very useful interactive marking.
- 3.9 Senior pupils develop a good understanding of sciences, further developed in their STEM lessons. Younger pupils' excitement was evident as they conducted and cleared up their experiments on the reactivity of metals. Older pupils showed good recall of previous learning in biology and confidently completed a work sheet on chemical processes. Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of environmental issues, evident in geography lessons as well as their wider activities. Their sporting skills develop well, those identified with particular talents in this area well supported by a specialist programme including some training sessions led by professional athletes.
- 3.10 In the senior school pupils demonstrate good levels of literacy. They express their opinions in lessons clearly, using appropriate subject specific language across the range of their learning. This was seen, for example, in a leaflet produced in geography and in discussions of the poetry in a GCSE anthology. The more mature pupils demonstrate an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary and can support their opinions orally with clarity and fluency. Their growing ability to communicate with assurance both in speech and in writing is supported by the encouragement to speak out that they receive in many lessons including drama.
- 3.11 Senior pupils apply their numeracy skills confidently, for example in physics when measuring distance or in geography to analyse data. Their written work shows confident use of different types of graphs, flow charts and annotated drawings. They use ICT with great assurance, assisted by the governors' increased investment in resources such as laptops. Pupils use these imaginatively, for example to explore complex problems on computer networks or, in design technology (DT), to design furniture.
- 3.12 Pupils throughout the school show very strong creative skills, both in using technology and in more traditional forms. The school is very successful in meeting its aim in this area. Junior pupils' musicality

is encouraged by the school's provision of instrumental teaching, so that pupils are introduced to different families of instruments as they mature. Older pupils were enthusiastically preparing for a 'Battle of the Bands' during the inspection, performing their own compositions with gusto. In DT, pupils across the school use tools with assurance and evaluate their work thoughtfully. The quality of the art work produced by pupils of all ages is excellent. They produce highly imaginative three-dimensional pieces and vibrant paintings. Their talents are highly valued and supported by the school, for example by a three-day music, dance and drama project during which professionals from a range of disciplines worked with senior pupils.

- 3.13 This creativity has resulted in considerable success in national school competitions. The school was a finalist in a national STEM competition. Pupils' art work has been selected for regional exhibitions and the school short listed for an award for excellence in the performing arts. Pupils compete successfully in local arts festivals. Individual successes have included a Young Composer of the Year award and several successes in speech and drama categories. Many pupils take external speech and drama examinations, achieving high levels of success. Sporting successes are also numerous. The tennis team was county champions in 2018 and individuals have achieved success in cross country, road cycling and sailing. Pupils have also been successful in academic competitions including the UK Maths Challenge, biology challenge and winning an Arkwright engineering award.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages have a good attitude to their learning. They settle to work well with a real sense of enjoyment when presented with new material. Teaching often presents this in the form of games which catch pupils' attention, as seen in junior mathematics lessons and a senior Latin class which introduced new declensions. The oldest senior pupils showed good ability to synthesise and analyse material, as in a religious studies lesson when they considered different sources including sacred texts and scientific theories to plan an essay answer. Pupils are very capable of taking the initiative and deciding for themselves how to complete a task. In many lessons, however, their opportunities to do so are limited by excessively directive teaching with closed questioning. They are very good at working collaboratively and check each other's work sensibly to make helpful suggestions on how to improve.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.15 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.16 Pupils develop considerable self-confidence, especially evident in the junior school. Pupils from EYFS to Year 6 confidently approach visitors to shake hands and explain what they are doing. Year 3 pupils who helped inspectors find their way around the school, were exceptionally mature and polite, happily making conversation and holding doors open. Junior pupils learn to keep on trying in the face of difficulties because they are taught that making mistakes is actually useful. This culture was also evident in the seniors, as in a Latin lesson when pupils' caution about contributing was met by reassurance that it's acceptable to be wrong, that's how people learn. Pupils are very adept at finding the determination to persevere when work goes wrong, for example when a piece of pottery breaks and they have to start again. Pupils who have faced health challenges have shown considerable self-discipline and determination to catch up with work on returning to school. Junior pupils were very responsive and reflective in talking about their personalities and qualities, such as being a positive person; seniors were less forthcoming, for fear of sounding boastful. They were, however, very clear in identifying themselves as being able to persevere and spoke of the importance of not expecting success to come without effort.
- 3.17 Pupils show a strong understanding of the importance of making decisions carefully, knowing that their choices affect the quality of their work and potentially their futures. Children in EYFS sit sensibly and listen carefully to directions before setting off to select activities for themselves. Juniors enjoy deciding for themselves which clubs to join; they say that they know they must choose for themselves and not be led by what friends are deciding to do. Older pupils, too, say that they do not find themselves subject to peer pressure. They show very good decision-making skills in their STEM

activities and in lessons. In drama, for example, they say they know that the quality of their final performance is dependent on the effort they put in during rehearsals. Pupils generally feel well-prepared for the next stage of their education, although some say that they would have liked more careers advice. Inspectors judged that the school has a good programme of visits and speakers, although the main focus is on preparing pupils for further education rather than on ultimate careers.

- 3.18 The excellent quality of the pupils' art work and their pleasure in music making are strong indicators of their awareness of the intrinsic value of beauty and the non-material. They know that what they achieve in their creative and sporting endeavours is valued by the school as much as their academic successes. Their good appreciation of matters beyond the material is supported by the school's calm atmosphere and nurturing environment. In a discussion which was extremely mature for their age, junior pupils readily identified the things which really matter in life as love, art, music, caring, and family. Some older pupils identified the most important thing in life as finding happiness in a job you enjoy. In discussion in a religious studies lesson, pupils in seniors mused with great maturity on the power of religions for good or evil, the difference between spirituality and religion and on humanity's apparent need for something transcendent to revere.
- 3.19 In questionnaire responses parents expressed great satisfaction with the school's behavioural expectations and pupils throughout the school are very well behaved. They are happy and positive, knowing that that they are all known and valued, as the school states. Children in EYFS know the importance of kindness and sharing with their classmates. Junior pupils understand the need for school rules and know that the literal and behavioural boundaries set are for their own safety and well-being. In a junior class, their cartoon stories on the theme of forgiveness showed the pupils' very good understanding of the need to forgive and also to ask forgiveness. Senior pupils have fully assimilated the school's expectations of their behaviour and almost always live up to these. When misbehaviour occurs, miscreants accept their responsibility for mistakes and apologise.
- 3.20 Pupils have an innate sense of fairness and firmly reject bullying as unacceptable. Their moral understanding develops well, strongly supported by the excellent personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Senior pupils' personal development has benefitted from the increased time now given to this element of their education, as recommended in the previous inspection. They have an excellent awareness of the importance of respect for all, regardless of background, gender or belief, saying that we are all the same, regardless of such differences. Responses in an English lesson touching on *The Tempest* to Caliban being enslaved by Prospero were indignant, and pupils independently linked this to the unfairness of contemporary racial discrimination. In another class, discussions on Victorian poetry led to a consideration of misogynistic attitudes. Such is the strength of the pupils' commitment to respect and tolerance that they feel that they do not have to be taught this but just take it for granted. In fact, it is because these values are constantly reinforced by the school's clear ethos and the provision of resources and trips which encourage awareness of other cultures.
- 3.21 Pupils are socially aware and show an excellent ability to work together to solve problems. They are naturally very supportive of each other and sensitive to others' feelings; they are modest about themselves and quick to praise their friends. Children in EYFS listen carefully during carpet time and reach agreements cooperatively. In juniors and seniors, pupils collaborate in pairs or groups to reach common goals in the classroom or in house activities. Those entrusted with responsibility carry out their duties seriously, be it tidying up in EYFS, seniors helping in the juniors or becoming prefects. Their ability to negotiate and organise is used to very good effect in their community involvement and charity work. They contribute to the local community by actions such as litter picking, and volunteering as part of their Duke of Edinburgh's Award. They raise money for a range of charities, a recent example initiated by junior pupils being for victims of the Australian bush fires. Senior pupils organised a local demonstration to raise awareness of climate change and a 'Hopeful Earth' conference to which local schools were invited.

3.22 Pupils make the most of the school's extensive site to seek exercise and get fresh air, and appreciate this especially when they are feeling under pressure. Junior pupils speak of the usefulness of mindfulness colouring and yoga, showing their awareness of the importance of maintaining good mental health. Pupils appreciate the fact that school leadership has ensured that there is counselling support available to them if they need it. Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and appreciate recent changes in catering provision which allow for meat free days. Pupils have a good general awareness of safety issues when using laboratory or DT equipment, so they manage potential risk sensibly. Senior pupils have the mature presence of mind to be helpful and not panic should a peer be taken ill or hurt on an outing. They accept their responsibility for acting on what they are taught about diet, exercise and a balanced lifestyle.

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 a group 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

Mrs Colette Culligan	Reporting inspector
Mr Vaughan Jelley	Accompanying inspector
Mr Paul David	Compliance and team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Andrew Rudkin	Team inspector (Headmaster, ISA school)
Ms Emily McGhee	Team inspector (SENCO, HMC school)