



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**IPSWICH HIGH SCHOOL**

**MARCH 2017**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Ipswich High School			
<b>DfE number</b>	935/6055			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	306983			
<b>Address</b>	Ipswich High School GDST Woolverstone Ipswich Suffolk IP9 1AZ			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 780 201			
<b>Email address</b>	office@ihs.gdst.net			
<b>Head</b>	Ms Oona Carlin			
<b>Chairman of governors</b>	Mr John Pickering			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	494			
	<b>Boys</b>	0	<b>Girls</b>	494
	<b>Day pupils</b>	494		
	<b>EYFS</b>	26	<b>Juniors</b>	125
	<b>Seniors</b>	303	<b>Sixth Form</b>	40
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22 to 23 March 2017			

## PREFACE

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

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or 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 following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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

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

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

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

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and 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.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. 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'.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

### Inspectors

Mr George Fisher	Reporting inspector
Mrs Lynda Corry	Team inspector (Teacher, GSA school)
Miss Sarah Menegaz	Team inspector (Director of studies, IAPS school)
Mrs Louise Robinson	Team inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Mr Paul Sanderson	Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)

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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### About the school

- 1.1 Ipswich High School is an independent day school for girls aged 3 to 18 years. The school is one of 24 Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) schools. The Trust's Council has overall responsibility for the school with the school's local governing board providing advice and support. Since the previous inspection, a new senior school head has been appointed. New developments include a new canteen, and refurbishment of the music department and the studio for theatre and dance. A woodland learning environment programme now operates within the pre-prep department.
- 1.2 The school was founded in Ipswich in 1878 and moved to its current site in 1992. It has a separate junior school which incorporates the Woodland Pre-prep for children within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). All sections of the school, including the sixth form, are on the same site.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's aim is to educate girls to become resilient, positive and successful young women, ready to embrace the challenges of the future. This accurately reflects the GDST's overarching aim which is to provide an all-round education of high quality for pupils of intellectual promise.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of family backgrounds, including academic, business, professional, business and farming. The vast majority of the pupils are from white British families, reflective of the surrounding area, but a number of other minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds are represented within the school. Nationally standardised tests indicate that pupils in the junior school and in the sixth form are of average ability; those within the senior school are of above average ability. One hundred and one pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including dyslexia and dyspraxia. Of these 50 pupils receive specialist support from the school. Two pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are sixteen pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), two of whom have specialist help from within the school, the others being supported by their classroom teachers. The school identifies 81 pupils as being the more able within the school's population, and the curricular enrichment programme supports their academic, musical or sporting talents.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.
- 1.6 The previous inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in March 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- To ensure that all marking in the junior school is at the standard of the best to ensure that all pupils are given guidance on how to improve their work.
  - In the EYFS, further develop the good practices in monitoring and evaluating progress and achievement through the analysis of the setting's information against its year-by-year data and national expectations.
  - In the EYFS, develop more flexible access to, and better resourcing of, the outdoor area to enable more extensive use in promoting learning across the curriculum.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Children make rapid progress in the EYFS, and pupils make good progress overall in the junior and senior schools which enables them to achieve well at GCSE and at A level.
- The more able pupils make strong progress within the senior school as a consequence of stimulating teaching and an effective enrichment programme. Pupils with SEND and the less able sometimes make slower progress because of the uneven quality of provision which they receive.
- Pupils in the senior school do not always know how to improve their work because the quality of marking is variable.
- Pupils of all ages are excellent communicators, particularly in spoken English.
- Pupils are adept at applying their skills across other subject areas.

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

- Pupils have well-rounded personalities, are self-aware and socially mature.
- Pupils are highly respectful and supportive of one another and articulate their feelings clearly.
- Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community, with older pupils acting as excellent role models for their younger peers.
- Children in the EYFS, and pupils within the junior school are happy, industrious and enjoy learning.

### Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Within the senior school, share existing good practice in the marking of pupils' work to provide helpful and timely feedback for all pupils.
- Continue to develop the provision for pupils with SEND and the less able within the senior school so that they make progress which is in line with that of their peers.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 Pupils of all ages achieve well and so ensure the fulfilment of the school's aim to educate girls to become resilient, positive and successful, and thus ready to embrace the challenges of the future. Pupils are academically ambitious and set themselves realistic yet demanding targets by which to measure their success. Attainment by children within the EYFS is strong across all of the seven areas of learning, and they make rapid progress. This is due to the meticulous planning by staff which underpins their curriculum, considered and regular assessment, and thorough monitoring. Children's learning is supported through exceptional resources for indoor and outdoor play, including areas dedicated to reading, the creative crafts, for looking after the guinea pigs, and a spacious garden. The recommendations of the previous inspection are thus fully met.
- 3.3 Pupils' attainment between Years 1 and 6 cannot be measured against nationally standardized test results. However, the achievement observed in lessons was of a high standard, and pupils showed enthusiasm, pride in their work and a determination to succeed. For example, Year 5 pupils showed a strong understanding of the difference between physical and human features in geography, and in Year 6, pupils showed excellent conceptual understanding of three-dimensional number sequences which they applied independently with enhanced logic skills. Pupils' writing shows evidence of increasingly sophisticated prose and imaginative poetry. They develop strong basic skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling through a rigorous approach to teaching. Pupils make good progress within the junior school because of enthusiastic teaching, regular marking and relevant feedback on their work, a stimulating environment and a well-resourced curriculum. This view was endorsed by pupils and their parents in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The marking policy, 'tickled pink and green for growth', is effective in making younger pupils consider their next steps so that the recommendation in the previous inspection to improve the quality of marking in the junior school is fully met.
- 3.4 Nationally standardised data for the Years 2013 to 2015 shows that pupils' attainment at GCSE has been above the national average. This reflects the good standard of teaching, a close understanding of the examination requirements, and the secure subject knowledge of staff. Results at A level for the same period have also been above the national average, and were well above average in 2013 and 2014. In the sixth form the more able pupils in particular benefit from expert teaching which stimulates high levels of thought and analysis, as well as from small group sizes which enable individual attention.
- 3.5 Nationally standardised data indicates that pupils make good progress at GCSE and excellent progress at A level in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Strong progress was noted in the majority of lessons, where careful planning and the expertise and enthusiasm of staff act as catalysts for the rapid development of ideas. In the questionnaires, a very large majority of pupils said that they made good progress. However, other inspection evidence, including the school's own data, suggests that pupils with SEND and the less able do not always make such strong progress. Observations confirmed that, in a few lessons, some lower ability groups do not make sufficient progress because the lessons are not always planned carefully enough to meet their needs. Furthermore, some pupils comment that they do not always know what to do to improve their work because the quality of marking and feedback is insufficiently precise and not regular enough. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils with EHC plans make good progress through extensive additional support, and pupils with EAL make good progress through their own determination to succeed and supportive teaching.



- 3.6 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are strongly developed. This is because they are enthusiastic learners and enjoy applying recently acquired techniques to new situations. Most teaching also promotes a love of learning. Within the EYFS, children in Reception enjoy gaining confidence in the seven areas of learning, and the challenge of using their knowledge of phonics to decode early reading books and to create labels in a cress-planting activity. In the junior school, pupils are encouraged to 'be brave' and not to be afraid of making a mistake when trying out something new. In the senior school, pupils apply knowledge confidently within modern foreign languages where excellent use of the target language was noted within GCSE French, and an emerging confidence within Year 9 Mandarin. Pupils are quick to apply skills, exemplified by an A level English group applying their understanding of literary techniques within *Jane Eyre* and being able to link Mr Rochester to the Byronic hero, supported by independent and challenging wider reading.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages are good communicators and are highly articulate. They explain clearly, reason logically and have a mature command of technical vocabulary. They are confident in speaking in class, interviews or in assemblies. This is because teaching actively encourages pupils to voice their opinions, and because pupils themselves are highly respectful of one another and make good listeners. In the creative arts, such as music, drama and dance, pupils seize the opportunity to participate with relish, for example where Year 5 and 6 pupils performed in a drama production of Shakespeare *Rocks*.
- 3.8 Excellent numeracy skills were demonstrated by more able children within the EYFS where they wrote extended 'addition' sentences using dominoes. Pupils generally are adept at applying their numeracy to a wide variety of subjects. For example, they manipulate figures and data confidently, from drawing graphs in science to creating formulae on spreadsheets in computing. This is because of careful curriculum planning, and through the policy of the mathematics departments to promote mental arithmetic, thereby boosting the confidence of pupils in number-based activities. Further instances were noted in personal, social and health education (PSHE) where pupils applied their mathematical skills to a consideration of budgeting and finance, and within food science where pupils used estimates of values and scaling to complete the practical tasks effectively.
- 3.9 The pupils' ability to use information and communication technology (ICT) is much in evidence throughout the age groups, starting within the EYFS where Reception pupils use portable electronic devices to photograph their work. Pupils in the senior school made excellent use of ICT; movie making in history, multi-media in languages, image manipulation in art and composition in music. Pupils' strength in applying ICT is due to the awareness of teaching staff of the potential for learning, together with good resources and technical support.
- 3.10 Pupils throughout the school show strong study skills. For example, Year 3 demonstrated excellent problem-solving skills when analysing the potential flaws in the design of a 'buddy bench', and Year 6 showed higher-order thinking skills in religious studies in debating whether you should promote your religion. In the senior school pupils are adept at accessing a wide range of resources and can synthesize these to produce sophisticated pieces of independent research for the higher and extended project qualifications. Pupils work well collaboratively, but are also capable of independent study and show considerable perseverance when tackling extended tasks. Their study skills are also developed effectively within the PSHE programme and through teaching which is expert at progressively increasing their levels of independence.
- 3.11 In 2016 a large majority of pupils within Year 13 obtained entry to their first choice of university, and the breadth of courses to which they gained admission is illustrative of the range of interests and talents within the school. Pupils' achievements beyond the formal curriculum and public examinations are good, reflecting the school's aim to provide a wide and

varied of activities. The provision for extending opportunities is mainly through an extensive enrichment programme which takes place principally at lunchtime and was commented upon favourably by the overwhelming majority of pupils in the questionnaire. Pupils' choices are monitored by tutors who ensure that all pupils adopt a suitable balance of activities. Pupils achieve well in music and in public speaking, and a significant number compete at a county and regional level in hockey and netball, where the school recently won the seniors' GDST championship. In the junior school pupils have been successful in poetry and art competitions.

- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally extremely positive. Children within the EYFS are bursting with enthusiasm, and pupils throughout the junior school are committed and energetic learners. The vast majority of the pupils in the senior school are also highly motivated and the norm is to always give of one's best. Occasionally, pupils' attitudes to learning within the upper part of the senior school are immature, leading to some disruption within lessons. In general, however, pupils are strongly self-motivated and some take additional GCSEs via the enrichment programme, such as Greek and dance. Contributory factors to this positive approach to learning are the ethos within the school which is created through supportive governance, strong leadership and management, and the constructive approach of parents.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils make rapid progress in developing their self-confidence, resilience and self-awareness. They are untarnished by arrogance and demonstrate a delightful sense of purpose, coupled to an enjoyment of life and the challenges which the day may bring. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves about 'where they are' both within their studies and as people. This self-awareness is actively promoted through the PSHE programme, for example when they examine and challenge their own values when considering future potential employment. All pupils are taught about the need for resilience, illustrated by pupils persevering with challenging tasks such as making a model helicopter until it finally flies. Where a pupil fails to achieve a task, the supportive ethos of the school and of their peers encourages them to try again and not to be downhearted. In interviews, pupils speak openly about their strengths and their weaknesses, unabashed by the presence of their peers.
- 4.3 From an early age, pupils learn about the importance of making sensible decisions, and thereby taking responsibility for their own future success and well-being. Children in the EYFS make informed choices about healthy eating, whilst Year 3 pupils decided to design and raise money towards a 'buddy bench' which acts as a tangible focus for enhancing their own sense of well-being, and that of others. Pupils rapidly develop the ability to understand what influences their own academic performance and how the decisions they make are important determinants of their own success. This approach is promoted through teaching and pastoral staff who encourage self-reflection and the setting of suitably informed goals. Pupils learn quickly about teamwork and the self-reflective and listening skills which are required for success. They enjoy making choices in their own research; for example, in higher-level projects such as the benefits of vegetarian diets. Whilst pupils have many opportunities to make their own decisions, their choices are carefully monitored by staff. A small minority of pupils within the questionnaire expressed a view that they did not receive good advice about their future choices of subject or career; however, inspection evidence, including interviews with pupils and a study of school documentation, suggested that timely support and guidance is given.
- 4.4 Pupils develop a deep-rooted spiritual awareness and an attendant understanding of the importance and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. This arises organically, and as a natural consequence of the ways in which teaching encourages pupils to reflect upon their surroundings, and to explore their feelings and emotions. EYFS children were helped to understand how facial expressions can demonstrate emotions. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrated a powerful appreciation of the beauty in nature through their poetry, and they wrote persuasively about their own courage, exploring concepts such as doubt, worry and pride. Careful planning and the creation of a supportive environment enable junior school pupils to be open about their emotions, including through the weekly meditation sessions and the study of works of art and music. In the senior school, pupils use drama to consider the effect of emotions, for example in Year 8 when considering the feelings of refugee children through body image, facial expressions and words. Year 11 pupils value the lovely grounds which give them 'space to think and to be', and they speak of the reaffirmation of a sense of belonging which arises through the daffodils which they planted reappearing each spring. Form activities and assemblies further promote spiritual understanding, for example where pupils reflect upon the story of the good Samaritan.
- 4.5 Pupils have a strong moral framework, and an instinctive ability to distinguish right from wrong. They have a clear understanding of the need for rules and an acceptance of what will happen if they are broken. In the junior school, the 'golden rules' are firmly embedded, and

there is a collective effort by all pupils to maintain their 'golden time' activity as a reward. Pupils are encouraged to think about how their own behaviour might affect others, exemplified by a Year 9 English lesson where pupils' self-reflections were a spur to embracing high levels of achievement. In questionnaire a small minority of pupils expressed a view that staff did not treat them fairly, and a number of comments to this effect were also made. However, at interview, pupils were clear that the school's sanctions and rewards were applied fairly, and a scrutiny of the school's records showed that sanctions, where necessary, were applied appropriately and in line with policy. During inspection, little poor behaviour was observed, and pupils were highly supportive of one another. They also explained that they knew who to turn to if they had a problem. They commented upon the excellent provision which is available for support or intervention in personal issues through various school staff and an external counsellor.

- 4.6 Pupils have a highly developed social awareness which empowers them to make a strong contribution to the school community. They work effectively with their peers and are pre-eminently 'team players' who see it as a personal duty to benefit others. Within the EYFS, the woodland learning environment provides a natural forum for a collaborative approach where children enjoy the opportunities to work together and to solve problems. In the school council, pupils learn to discuss, negotiate and formulate proposals for the benefit of all, for example with regard to the increased provision of fruit in the canteen and of themed food days. Pupils are unfailingly polite, both towards one another, and to staff and visitors. Recorded incidents of bullying are rare, and although a small minority of pupils in the questionnaire commented adversely on the school's measures to combat bullying, pupils at interview said that where bullying does occur it is 'nipped in the bud', with pupils themselves often intervening helpfully to resolve the problem. The strong pastoral structure within the school creates an ethos which means that bullying is seen as being totally unacceptable and documentation shows that any such incidents are dealt with appropriately.
- 4.7 Pupils willingly take on many roles of responsibility, and are either elected through a democratic voting system or volunteer, for example as members or leaders of the school council, the food council or the e-committee. Junior school pupils act as ambassadors, whilst sixth form pupils act as pastoral mentors. Pupils are actively involved in shaping the development of the school and in supporting the wider community. For example, they contribute significantly to charitable activities through form-based work and whole-school charities, raising money for Ipswich Hospital and sponsoring children's education in India. Pupils who follow The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme benefit the local community in many ways through their volunteering activities. The catalysts for pupils' contributions to others are the strong leadership and management which create the supportive ethos within the school, together with the commitment of staff in encouraging pupils to get involved.
- 4.8 Pupils greatly value the different backgrounds of their peers, demonstrating tolerance for and interest in the beliefs and customs of others. For example, within the EYFS children experienced a Flamenco workshop as part of the modern languages festival, thus discovering about different traditions from other European cultures. Pupils in Year 6 discussed a charity in India and expressed sensitivity and empathy for those people less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are confident in expressing their views regarding religious tolerance towards other faiths. Following the recent terrorist incident in London, sixth-form pupils led a mature and thought-provoking debate with Y11 pupils about democracy, the rule of law and the role of MPs which demonstrated their understanding of British values. Although a small minority of pupils in the questionnaires expressed a view that teachers did not always give a balanced view of politics and current affairs, inspection evidence noted that no comments were made to substantiate this point. Pupils in interviews, together with scrutiny of school documentation,

suggest that teaching actually makes a very positive contribution towards the pupils' balanced view of political matters, their respect for other cultures, and pride in their own.

- 4.9 A very large majority of pupils in the questionnaire say that they feel safe within the school and the overwhelming majority say that they understand how to keep safe on-line. They are clear about e-safety rules, and feel well informed through a well-conceived and suitably resourced PSHE programme which is taught by trained staff. The e-safety committee, with pupil representation, is also invaluable in helping to safeguard pupils, as well as ensuring that they have appropriate access to internet-based resources as they mature. Pupils are very clear about how to stay healthy through exercise, diet and drinking sufficient water. The physical education and enrichment programmes, together with varied and nutritious menu choices in the canteen, further support pupils' healthy lifestyles. Parents are also strongly supportive of the school's provision and information sessions regarding issues in the bringing up of teenage girls are well attended.