



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**MONKTON COMBE SCHOOL**

**DECEMBER 2016**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Monkton Combe School			
<b>DfE number</b>	800/6008			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1057185			
<b>Address</b>	Monkton Combe School Church Lane Monkton Combe Bath Somerset BA2 7HG			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01225 721111			
<b>Email address</b>	reception@monkton.org.uk			
<b>Principal</b>	Mr Christopher Wheeler			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Professor Helen Langton			
<b>Age range</b>	13 to 19			
<b>Number of pupils</b>	376			
	<b>Boys</b>	245	<b>Girls</b>	131
	<b>Day pupils</b>	153	<b>Boarders</b>	223
	<b>Sixth Form</b>	162		
<b>Inspection dates</b>	07 to 08 December 2016			

## PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house meetings and chapel. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the 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 Tony Halliwell	Reporting inspector
Mr Alan Cooper	Team inspector (Senior teacher, HMC school)
Mrs Sarah Gomm	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Stephen Pugh	Team inspector (Senior deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Karl Wilding	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)

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## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Monkton Combe School is an independent day and boarding school for boys and girls aged between 13 and 19 years. The Monkton Combe group of schools consists of the senior school which is located on its own campus in the Midford Brook valley, and the pre-prep and prep schools which are located on a separate campus on the edge of the city of Bath.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1868 to educate the children of clergy and overseas missionaries. It remains true to its founding aims and still provides for a significant number of children from such a background, as well as many from the local area and boarders from surrounding counties and overseas. The school is a registered charity and is overseen by a board of governors.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has completed several new buildings including specialist classrooms to accommodate mathematics and science, music, art and design technology. Boarding pupils are accommodated in six houses; four for boys and two for girls.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.4 The school aims to inspire young people to become confident, kind and ambitious adults who live fulfilling lives. It does this by creating a positive pastoral environment which enables pupils to become academically enthusiastic learners within a living Christian ethos. The school encourages its pupils to embrace its fundamental core values of confidence, humility, integrity and service. Its central aim is to reflect the Christian faith in a contemporary and biblical manner.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds, and are either from families living within a 20-mile radius of the school or from families who live throughout the United Kingdom and abroad who chose to board their children at the school. Many parents select the school for its distinctly Christian character. The school has 35 pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mainly dyslexia. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The school has 72 pupils who learn English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 58 receive support.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.7 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in November 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Embed the development of independent styles of learning more consistently across the whole curriculum.
  - Explore ways in which the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into teaching strategies can be further extended in order to support, enhance and accelerate pupils' learning.
- 1.8 The recommendation of the intermediate boarding inspection in March 2014 was:
- Ensure that boarders have regular opportunities to voice their opinions about food, particularly their evening meal.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous intermediate boarding and interim inspections.

## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

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

- Pupils' achievement is boosted by a consistently strong focus on learning skills.
- Pupils aspire to aim for greater levels of achievement.
- Pupils are strongly encouraged to be inquisitive, think for themselves, be organised and develop independent study skills.
- Pupils are competent in using ICT, however this is not yet evident in all subject areas.

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

- Pupils have extremely well-developed personalities for their age, with high levels of self-esteem and maturity.
- Pupils demonstrate a very strong sense of spirituality.
- Pupils fully embrace the international nature of school and have a strong sense of shared goals.
- Pupils respect the diversity of others; they are sensitive and tolerant.
- Boarding and day pupils are fully integrated into the school thanks to the pastoral care of the house system.

### **Recommendations**

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider the following improvements:

- Ensure the continued development of pupils' use of ICT across the curriculum in all year groups.
- Ensure a greater consistency of marking in Years 9 and 10 in order to better inform pupils of how they may improve further.



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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The pupils are very successfully educated in line with the school's mission to develop academically strong and enthusiastic learners within a living Christian ethos. Their success in both academic and non-academic areas closely reflects the school's values. The pupil community, of which two thirds are boarders, quickly embraces these values on arrival at the school. Pupils are encouraged to aim for the highest standards by the school culture which promotes and celebrates success at all levels. This positive drive for success is closely supported by a recent pastoral care initiative that links well-being to pupil achievement and is helping to promote a sense of continuous improvement across all age groups.
- 3.3 Pupils' ability has been consistently above the national average, with very low numbers observed to have ability below the national average. The ability profile of the sixth form is above the national average, with a wide distribution of ability. The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2015, which are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Performance at GCSE has been well above the national average for maintained schools, and at A level has been above average. Results for GCSE in 2015 displayed an increase in the number of A\* and A grades achieved, and this picture was sustained in 2016. The results in IGCSE examinations overall have been higher than worldwide norms.
- 3.4 Pupils' progress at GCSE and A level is good in relation to pupils of similar abilities. The school makes careful use of assessment milestones across the age groups, which are used to track pupils' progress. This enables all pupils including the more able and those with EAL or SEND to make significant progress in relation to their difficulties or starting points, as demonstrated by the pupils' positive value added scores. Pupils who require additional support in all subjects attend extra lessons called 'voluntaries' which provide a valuable support network for pupils who wish to boost their academic achievement. Staff and older pupils both act as tutors in the voluntaries, which are greatly appreciated by the pupils who attend and benefit from them. More able pupils are subject to further challenge through membership of the 'Dearlove Society' in Years 9 to 11 and the 'Clark Society' in Years 12 to 13. The former offers essay competitions and visits to locations such as Bletchley Park and the Houses of Parliament, and the latter provides discussions with visiting guest speakers on current topical issues.
- 3.5 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects is excellent. They are able to communicate clearly and with confidence, as observed in a Year 10 biology lesson in which pupils discussed factors affecting transpiration in plants. Pupils of all ages are able to apply their literacy and numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum, for example pupils were observed applying mathematical concepts to route planning in a Combined Cadet Force (CCF) exercise. Pupils discuss challenging concepts eloquently and ask perceptive questions; pupils in a Year 12 English lesson pupils were willing to venture creative ideas on the underlying meaning of a set text. Pupils readily accept responsibility for their own learning; they are lively, hardworking and self-aware, responding enthusiastically to the academic and non-academic challenges available to them. The collaborative approach to learning across all year groups contributes positively to pupil achievement.

- 3.6 Pupils' achievement over the past three years has been promoted by the school's ambitious academic development plan which has prioritised pupil engagement, achievement and personal development, and resulted in growing self-awareness and academic ambition amongst the pupils. In interview, older pupils felt that one-to-one tutoring and the mixed-age tutor system had better focused their individual academic needs. Pupils in Year 11 who were interviewed felt that the fostering of excellent relationships with Year 12 and 13 pupils through the tutoring system had encouraged them into good work habits, and that this was better preparing them for life in sixth form. In addition, the introduction of study periods in Year 9 and 10 and of week-long assignments encourage the younger pupils to learn the discipline of organising and planning work outside lesson time. Pupils participate in and achieve considerable success in science and mathematics challenges with other schools.
- 3.7 Pupils benefit from access to an online learning environment which allows them to use a range of academic resources for homework and longer-term assignments. This initiative is part of a five-year plan to ensure the continuous raising of pupils' achievement across all year groups. Pupils used ICT well in a Year 13 photography lesson where they were completing project work, and in a Year 9 religious studies lesson in which they were debating the influence of Christ as a role model.
- 3.8 Pupils thrive as a result of high-quality leadership and management which ensure that the school is highly successful in fulfilling its aim to provide a high-quality education in a distinctive boarding school environment, where all pupils including day pupils are members of a house system. Pupils can develop and fulfil their potential due to the high levels of pastoral care. A culture of self-evaluation and target setting strives to maintain the highest standards of pupil achievement across the school. The governing board has strong oversight of the school and offers both support and challenge to staff, ensuring that pupils' achievement and academic progress are high priorities.
- 3.9 Pupils of all abilities have the opportunity to succeed in an activity of their choosing, as the school offers an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. High levels of success are achieved, most particularly in sport, drama and music. Initiatives such as the 'Team Monkton' elite extension activities programme ensure that the best athletes are continually encouraged to reach for greater success. In tennis, pupils have represented England and Scotland, and a boys' team reached the national tennis finals. Pupils have also represented England at under 17 and under 19 level in netball. The counties of Somerset, Wiltshire, Avon and Sussex have been represented by pupils participating in rowing, cricket and hockey. The school won a national poetry competition in 2014 which resulted in the Poet Laureate presenting the award at the school. High standards of individual pupil achievement are illustrated by current pupils who have been awarded army scholarships, engineering scholarships and places at the National Youth Theatre.
- 3.10 The school has responded to the recommendations in the previous inspection report, with reference to increasing the development of independent learning across the curriculum and integrating the use of ICT into teaching strategies. Pupils' academic self-awareness and personal organisation levels have been raised to further encourage them to carry out work beyond the immediate confines of the classroom, and as a result they have become more focused learners. The use of ICT by pupils in lessons is not yet fully embedded in all subject areas, and opportunities to stimulate pupils' learning by the use of such technology are occasionally lost.

3.11 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, the vast majority of parents were positive about the school overall. Almost all felt that the teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future, that the school is well governed, led and managed, and that information about the school's routines and policies is readily available. The very large majority of pupils in their questionnaire responses were positive about the school. Almost all felt that the school provides them the opportunities to learn and make good progress. A very small minority felt that their teachers do not always provide a balanced view during discussions of politics and current affairs. Discussions with pupils and lessons observed during the inspection indicated that teachers do try to present both sides of an argument.

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The excellent personal development of the pupils reflects their genuine belief in the school's core values of confidence, integrity, humility and service. Pupils respond very effectively to the pupil-specific tracking scheme which provides early support on an individual basis. The boarding environment strongly influences pupils' overall development, as the house structure enables the school to function as one community. The overall integration of pupils of all age groups into the house structures contributes significantly to pupil development. It creates a positive and friendly atmosphere, observed in the 'in house' social sessions which take place after evening prep. In discussion, pupils in the sixth form displayed a genuine interest and enthusiasm in looking after and acting as role models for the younger pupils. Several sixth form pupils participate in extra lessons in subjects such as science and sport studies, which are led by teachers and assisted by older pupils in the tutoring of younger pupils. A noticeable sense of common purpose is underpinned by the strong Christian faith, embraces the community, and encourages good and caring relationships between staff and pupils alike. Boarders spoke of the positive benefits of boarding on their personal development and study habits, and many day pupils are happy to stay in the boarding houses to complete their homework before returning home in the evening.
- 4.3 Those new to the school in Year 9 or entering as international students are quickly integrated into the boarding houses, where house staff know their pupils well. Pupils' confidence and resilience is strengthened due to the high quality of pastoral care. In interview, pupils commented that the staff knew them well and treated them as individuals. Pupils are aware of the significance of safeguarding structures in the school, and in discussion confirmed that they know who to approach if they had any concerns or worries. They felt that bullying was not an issue at the school, and that they had confidence that it would be dealt with quickly and fairly should it occur in any form. Openness, respect and acceptance are apparent in pupils' relationships. Assemblies and attendance at chapel offer opportunities to discuss and make personal decisions concerning spirituality, religious beliefs and moral standpoints in a safe environment. A clear example of this was observed in the manner pupils from the Christian Union led a morning chapel service, reflecting the way in which Christian values are embedded in the daily lives of pupils at the school. Pupils of different faiths have opportunities to follow their own beliefs, and the school has strong links with faith groups in the local community. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by opportunities to tackle long-term projects, such as Year 12's sustainability conservation work in the school's surrounding area and the restoration of a dilapidated classic rally car by cadets in the school's CCF. The house system is very strong within the school. Pupils enjoy the healthy atmosphere of competition provided by inter-house activities, of which they lead several.

- 4.4 Pupils have an outstanding moral awareness and a sense of right and wrong, honesty and fairness, and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour around the school. They demonstrate high levels of self-discipline and integrity which is reinforced through personal development lessons, assemblies, house meetings and chapel. A Year 9 personal development lesson on sexual education which was taken by medical centre staff was highly effective in discussing the morality of sexual relationships. Pupils responded in a very mature and responsive manner to the delicate nature of the subject material discussed. In a Year 12 English lesson, pupils openly and enthusiastically discussed their responsibility to act as role models for the younger pupils. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing good eating habits, taking regular exercise and participating in the many extra-curricular activities on offer. A minority of boarding pupils in their questionnaire responses felt that the food on offer is not of sufficient quality or quantity, however discussions with pupils and inspection evidence gained from meals sampled confirmed that food is of good quality, nutritious and sufficient in quantity. The emphasis placed on physical fitness and topical personal development lessons successfully promotes healthy living, and the pupils make good use of the extensive campus which supports their active lifestyle. Pupils are very supportive of each other and recognise that others may have particular needs or characteristics. They celebrate the successes of pupils with special needs and those with EAL equally as well as those who may be particularly talented or more able.
- 4.5 Pupils appreciate the opportunities for leadership and to take on responsibility, and they enjoy playing an active role in the school community. Outstanding opportunities for leadership are provided in the form of participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme for Year 10 to 13 pupils at bronze, silver and gold level. In addition, the school's CCF provides a focus for developing further skills in either the Navy, Army or Royal Air Force sections whilst also promoting core British values and a good understanding of public institutions and services in England. Through community service work and their charitable fundraising, pupils at all levels in the school contribute to a range of local activities and raise funds for those who are less fortunate than themselves. Older pupils also take part in challenging international projects such as a community aid scheme in Nepal. Pupils over the last two years have visited Malawi, working in four schools, an orphanage and a prison. This enabled pupils to experience life-changing opportunities which they felt impacted enormously on their personal development. Other excursions which provided cultural and development opportunities included a cricket tour to Sri Lanka, a French exchange trip to Lille and a history trip to Berlin.
- 4.6 The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school actively promotes good behaviour, ensures that their children learn in a healthy and safe environment, and promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school provides them the opportunity to learn and make good progress, that they are encouraged to respect other people, and that they are well supervised both in school and on school trips. A very small minority of pupils felt that staff do not treat them fairly, however discussions with pupils and examination of school pastoral records during the inspection did not support this view.

- 4.7 Pupils' excellent personal development is sustained by the strong and focused support for the school's aims offered by the school's governance which promotes the school's distinctive Christian ethos. The governing board sub-committee structure enables consistent and effective monitoring of all aspects of school life to take place, including monitoring of pupils' progress. Since the previous inspection the school has made significant progress in monitoring the pastoral care of its pupils to ensure that their well-being is seen as a priority, and this is having a marked effect on the pupils' personal development overall.