



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

OLD PALACE OF JOHN WHITGIFT SCHOOL

OCTOBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Old Palace of John Whitgift School			
DfE number	306/6082			
Registered charity number	312612			
Address	Old Palace of John Whitgift School Old Palace Road Croydon Surrey CR0 1AX			
Telephone number	020 8688 2027			
Email address	schooloffice@oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Jewell			
Chair of governors	Mr Dean Sutton			
Age range	3 months to 18 years			
Number of pupils	686			
	Boys	32	Girls	654
	Nursery	103	Prep	116
	Seniors	386	Sixth Form	81
Inspection dates	05 to 06 Oct 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.
- 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, the chair of governors and with the chair of the Court of the Whitgift Foundation, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors 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 Alistair Telfer	Reporting inspector
Dr Alison Primrose	Accompanying Inspector
Mr Adrian Downie	Team inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)
Mrs Kathryn Stokes	Team inspector (Head of Junior school, ISA school)
Mrs Jane Buttery	Team inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school)
Mrs Lizbeth Green	Team inspector (Retired Head, ISA school)
Mr Roger Shaw	Team Inspector (Senior Master, HMC school)
Mrs Gillian Bilbo	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Old Palace of John Whitgift School is an independent day school for girls aged 3 months to 18 years and boys from 3 months to 4 years, with 2 sites. The Nursery and preparatory departments are based in south Croydon and the senior school is sited in central Croydon.
- 1.2 Governance is overseen by the Court of the Whitgift Foundation. Each school in the Foundation has its own committee to which the Court delegates day-to-day governance. Key policies are overseen and implemented by the Court, including safeguarding and health and safety.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to equip pupils with the confidence, skills and knowledge needed to lead independent, successful and happy lives in an ever-changing world. Additionally, it seeks to provide a safe, stimulating and caring environment where each individual is empowered to gain a strong sense of self-worth and purpose through recognition of their own talents and abilities as well as their contribution to the community.

About the pupils

- 1.4 At the time of the inspection the school had 686 pupils on roll, including 32 boys and 71 girls in the Nursery. The preparatory school, composed of Reception to Year 5, had 116 girls. A total 386 girls attended the senior school, which comprises Years 6 to 11. The sixth form, for Years 12 and 13, had a further 81 girls. A large majority of pupils are of White British origin. A small number come from Asian and African countries. The school provides support for 32 pupils for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those with an education, health and care plan. Also, 7 pupils are provided with additional support for English as an additional language (EAL). A further 40 pupils receive additional support for their higher ability or for particular gifts or talents.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in November 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Ensure direct representation of the juniors on the headship team.
 - Develop further the roles and responsibilities of middle managers in the seniors and of the subject co-ordinators in the juniors.
 - Ensure that all staff are trained in different teaching styles to improve the matching of tasks to ability and challenge of work for pupils and to encourage independent thought.
 - Develop further outdoor provision for the EYFS to allow greater free-flow access and opportunities for child-initiated activities.
 - Strengthen links between Nursery and Reception within the main junior building to ensure the sharing of best practice.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skills as well as performance in extra-curricular activities.
- The Pupils are articulate and display excellent communication skills using sophisticated vocabulary.
- Pupils are confident learners at all ages.
- The pupils are active learners and eager to make progress when provided with challenging opportunities, and are proud of their achievements in curricular and non-curricular activities.

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

- Pupils of all ages display confidence in and out of the classroom, supported by the personal, social, health, economic and educational (PSHE) programme in the preparatory school and the Learning for Life provision in the senior school.
- Pupils at all ages are able to make informed decisions and are empowered by strong staff support.
- Pupils demonstrate a clear respect for diversity, different faiths and cultures, which was evident throughout the school.
- Excellent collaborative skills at all ages was evidenced in lessons throughout the school.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Provide more opportunities for challenge to gifted and talented pupils in the preparatory school.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aim to equip learners with the confidence, skills and knowledge needed to lead independent, successful and happy lives in an ever-changing world. They acquire excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skill in their academic work and often demonstrate excellent levels of performance in their extra-curricular activities. Pupils achieve high levels of attainment in examination course work in the arts and sciences and in project work across the school, employing the skill of independent learning that is taught within the senior school's (PSHE programme). They display good progress in relation to their starting points. Results at GCSE, International GCSE and A level are above average compared to national and worldwide norms. All pupils benefit from efficient organisation of the day-to-day running of the school and the continuing rigorous development of the curriculum by the inclusive management of the senior leadership team, heads of department and subject co-ordinators, as was recommended in the previous full inspection in 2010. This excellent organisation is recognised by a large majority of parents in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses.
- 3.3 Pupils are able to learn and progress well in lessons as a result of responding positively to and taking advantage of the different teaching styles employed, and further benefit from the careful matching of tasks to ability in classes which are grouped by prior attainment. These arrangements meet a recommendation from the previous inspection. Pupils have a clear sense of purpose; they move quickly to lessons and settle quietly at the start, display an eagerness to learn and become involved in lessons. Pupils are articulate and use a sophisticated vocabulary, as observed in a Year 8 English class which analysed the characters in the novel *Jane Eyre*. They listen and read well, are able to reason and apply their knowledge effectively in class; Year 3 pupils used animal shapes to produce dichotomous identification keys, and those in Year 9 used chromatography in chemistry to solve forensic problems. Pupils have excellent numeracy, literary and computer skills which they apply successfully, often demonstrating skills that are well above their expectations, for example a Year 10 class successfully calculated the volume of a frustum in mathematics. Discussion is often wide-ranging and informed, such as when pupils discussed the issue of intellectual property rights regarding design whilst making clocks in design technology (DT), drawing upon their knowledge of computers and software and displaying skilful application of computer-aided design.
- 3.4 Pupils receiving SEND or EAL support progress particularly well, achieving success in national and international examinations that are in line with their peers. They actively seek support from the teaching assistants who work in preparatory and senior classrooms, and the one-to-one teaching provided in the SEND and EAL departments. Achievement in the sixth form enables the majority of pupils to successfully gain admission to their chosen universities, having benefited from the support from the careers and university entrance department. Pupils in Year 9 make informed choices for their GSCE options and draw upon careers advice to start to plan their future. Additional, beneficial career guidance from governors and other visitors talking to pupils about a wide range of professions and work placements ensure that pupils develop a clearer insight to the choice of career.

- 3.5 The more able and the gifted and talented pupils progress particularly well as a result of the stimulus provided by the school for both academic and talent enrichment. Pupils who have been identified as having exceptional potential are invited to join a programme known as the Palace Group. This includes pupils who have been awarded Academic or Music Scholarships at the age of 11 to 15, those who have demonstrated exceptional ability in lessons and assessments, and pupils who have been awarded Academic Scholarships or Exhibitions in the sixth form. Pupils in the preparatory school do not, as yet, have this provision.
- 3.6 Academic enrichment out of the classroom provides opportunities to take part in national competitions such as the UK Maths Challenge and science Olympiads. Pupils enhance their skills in activities such as musical composition workshops with professional musicians. Membership of an international network of gifted students allows them to share experiences and provide additional stimulus with an array of competitions and challenging activities in the arts and sciences. In the sixth form, further enrichment and challenge enable pupils to achieve success in the wider community through access to programmes that include: Medical Preparation Programme, Law Preparation Programme, Sixth Term Examination Paper (STEP) mathematics classes, Extended Project Qualification and Arts Award (Gold). Talented pupils enhance their education with access to of over 120 clubs and societies such as debating, dance, house drama, Spanish film club and a wide range of orchestral and choir groups. This results in regular local and national recognition of the excellent achievement of the pupils in the school at all levels.
- 3.7 Pupils' musical achievement is outstanding; the choir has performed at school, local, national and international levels. The choir performs in school and regularly at Evensong in Croydon Minster, and have also done so at a number of English cathedrals including St Paul's, Salisbury and Winchester. Pupils in Year 4 and 5 achieved second place and a distinction at the local music festival, and 28 preparatory pupils sang and were awarded the challenge shield at another. Overseas, the choir sang Mass in Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice and most recently performed at a number of locations during a tour of Malta. Extension and development of musicianship is empowered with participation in workshops and educational projects in collaboration with professional musicians and musical groups outside school. Pupils attain further success by performing in musical stage productions, such as the recent performances of *Little Shop of Horrors* and *The Sound of Music*. They are also able to achieve experience and success in stage design, theatre sound and lighting, and costume design. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a very large majority of parents and pupils agreed that these opportunities greatly enhance achievement.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate initiative; they play an active part in extending the range of extra-curricular options available to them, as shown by the games programme becoming available for sixth formers as a result. Following improvements in line with a recommendation in the previous inspection, children in the Nursery and Reception demonstrate that they enjoy initiating their own activities using the outdoor environment.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' personal development accords well with the school's aim to celebrate diversity and individuality within a culture of praise and encouragement that promotes well-being, happiness and success. Displays around the school which are written and illustrated by pupils demonstrate issues of culture and belief to their peers. Pupils are confident, self-aware and emotionally mature with a strong appreciation of non-material aspects of life. This is supported by the ethos of the school which recognises and celebrates the successes and talents, as evident in the displays of art, DT and class work across the two school sites. For example, pupils in Year 5 reflected on successes in the Paralympics in their work. In interview, pupils demonstrated that they understand how their visits to theatre, ballet and participation in performance affect their own views of the world. A particular strength of the school is that pupils work well with others when solving problems or working towards common goals, as when Year 10 pupils achieve success by participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme at bronze level and are able to progress to earn silver and gold awards in Year 11 and the sixth form. Learning and progress are enhanced by self-assessment and peer assessment, such as in science lessons where group work in experiments and collective discussion of results against stated criteria enable pupils to achieve reliability and produce evidenced conclusions. Pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle, whether through diet or exercise. They take part in a wide range of individual and team sporting activities such as athletics, netball, swimming, cross country, tennis and dance as well as physical education lessons and games.
- 4.3 Pupils respect the school's values and good behaviour is the norm in and outside the classroom. Parents overwhelmingly agreed in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire that pupils behave well. In interview, pupils voiced a strong sense of right and wrong with regard to their attitudes towards each other and those in greater need than themselves. Pupils develop an understanding of how they make an impact on the world; a group of Year 11 pupils were involved in recycling class waste paper. In their questionnaire responses, the vast majority of pupils agreed that they feel safe in the school environment and spoke of a homely, friendly community. The school's ethos embodies the ideals of fairness and respect for the law, and the taught curriculum offers opportunities for considering a wide range of moral and ethical issues such as poverty, diversity and culture for discussion in class. For example, pupils in Year 11 discussed in an objective manner the perception of girls and boys by the media with regard to the marketing of children's fashion. Pupils are accustomed to hearing many approaches to a single issue and are respectful of the opinions of others. They recognise each other's strengths and weaknesses, and are supportive towards each other. This was evident in the preparatory school, where pupils worked on a drama reflecting the impact of spreading rumours. A large majority of parents and pupils recognised this in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses.

- 4.4 Pupils accept responsibility and willingly contribute to the school family and wider community. Service and leadership roles are experienced and enriched by participation in the DofE scheme and through mentoring younger pupils as house parents and buddies. Pupils support the charity work undertaken by the Whitgift Foundation, giving up their free time to visit, talk and play with patients in a children's hospice and to visit the elderly in local care homes. Fund raising is a key feature of pupil involvement in charity work. Examples of this include the Nursery pupils raising money in a Jeans for Genes Day event and Year 13 holding a cake sale in support of a cancer charity.
- 4.5 Pupils have an excellent social and political awareness acquired through the Learning for Life programme, classes and assemblies. They understand British democracy and how the institutions of government in the United Kingdom operate to provide justice, law and order, freedom of speech and tolerance. A display in the mathematics department demonstrated how pupils had used graphs to show election results and understand the impact of different systems of balloting, for example they could explain how first past the post and proportional representation could produce very different results. Pupils use opportunities to experience democracy in action; the year forums and councils have elected members. They also express their views through the thoughtful use of suggestion boxes.
- 4.6 Pupils enjoy the friendships formed with others from differing backgrounds, cultures and faiths. They recognise that the school is a multicultural community and greatly value the experiences that their friends share with them. Celebrations of food and costume such as a Chinese New Year lunch and a displayed project on African culture in the senior school, and an India Day in the preparatory school demonstrate how pupils appreciate the customs and traditions of others. In religious studies, pupils thoughtfully study and reflect on the beliefs and traditions of major faiths. Pre-inspection questionnaire responses from pupils and parents indicate that pupils are appreciative and respectful of others, whatever their background.
- 4.7 Most pupils agree in their questionnaire responses that they are well supported by the guidance and pastoral support offered by their teachers and heads of year, and are able to make informed choices at all stages of school life. They showed a clear understanding of the concept of safeguarding, the need of e-safety and the prevention of radicalisation. Their strong sense of duty also enables them to report issues of peer pressure and they are firm in their belief that the strong pastoral system provides an efficient conclusion to any issues of bullying and bad behaviour. Preparatory school pupils are prepared for the transition to the senior school with visits by senior school staff and the close liaison of the senior leadership team, following the recommendations of the 2010 inspection. They grow used to the senior school through use of the swimming facilities, joint school assemblies and chapel services.
- 4.8 All pupils in interview expressed that they are well prepared and positive about meeting the challenges of the next stage of their lives. This too was agreed by most parents in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses.