



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Plumtree School

March 2023

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School's Details

School	Plumtree School			
DfE number	891/6014			
Address	Plumtree School Church Hill Plumtree Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG12 5ND			
Telephone number	0115 9375859			
Email address	plumtreeschool@tiscali.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Philip Simpson			
Proprietors	Mrs Joanne Howarth, Mr David Howarth, Mrs Lucy Simpson, Mr Philip Simpson			
Proprietor	Plumtree School Limited			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	103			
	EYFS	30	Infants	38
	Juniors	35		
Inspection dates	14 to 16 March 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Plumtree school is an independent co-educational day school located in Plumtree, south of Nottingham. The school is a limited company, governed by four directors from the same family. Founded in 1982, it was purchased in 2015 by the current proprietors, three of whom work in the school. The school comprises three sections: the EYFS for children aged three to five years; the infants for pupils aged five to seven years; and the juniors for those aged seven to eleven years.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has been restructured, including the appointment of a new head of EYFS in September 2021.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to provide a challenging and supportive environment in which every child is valued as an individual and enabled to reach their own potential. It aims to foster social, moral and Christian values and an awareness and understanding of the wider world and those who live in it. The school strives to enable its pupils to be resilient, original, outstanding, thoughtful and supportive through its 'Roots and Wings' ethos.

About the pupils

- 1.4 The majority of pupils come from professional and business families, living within 20 miles of the school. Standardised data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is average when compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 18 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include speech and language difficulties, of whom five receive additional support. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for seven pupils, whose needs are met by their class teachers. The needs of pupils identified as being the more able in the school's population are met through personalised activities and roles in the school community.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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

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

Links to the standards 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 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 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 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.

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

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

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

- Pupils of all ages and abilities make excellent progress and display high levels of skill, knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils are highly numerate and solve mathematical problems with confidence and skill.
- Pupils are extremely capable communicators. They have excellent speaking and listening skills and use their advanced reading and writing skills to good effect across the curriculum.
- Pupils are highly successful in their achievements outside the classroom in both their sporting and artistic endeavours.

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

- Pupils are extremely self-aware and confident; they have an excellent understanding of how to improve their work and of their own strengths and challenges.
- Pupils display excellent levels of social awareness and work together with high levels of success to achieve common goals.
- Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community, taking their many and varied responsibilities seriously and undertaking them with maturity and care.
- Pupils' awareness of the wide-ranging diversity in their school and the wider world is extremely well-developed.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable pupils to improve their information and communication technology (ICT) skills and use these to enhance their learning across the curriculum.
- Enable pupils to develop their study skills to the highest levels through increased opportunities to use these in their lessons.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils display excellent levels of skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum, benefiting from specialist teaching in many curriculum areas, effective planning and well-trained, experienced

staff. Small teaching groups, particularly in English and mathematics, and leaders' close monitoring of teaching, ensure support and challenge are offered in response to individual pupils' needs. This results in high attainment for pupils in all stages of the school. The recent implementation of a new curriculum for children in the EYFS has resulted in their acquisition of high levels of knowledge. This was seen in the advanced vocabulary used by Reception children when describing the life cycle of a frog. Infant pupils demonstrated excellent knowledge about matters ranging from the lives of the Maasai people to the characteristics of different categories of animals. Older pupils spoke knowledgeably about the properties of carbon dioxide and the eruption of Vesuvius. Pupils throughout the school produce skilful and creative works of art, furthering their knowledge of related topic work alongside their artistic skills. Pupils' individual talents in subjects such as craft and photography are encouraged through a programme of clubs and activities which is continually adjusted to meet their interests. Their musical, dramatic and physical skills are excellent, and it is only in modern foreign languages and ICT that they do not achieve at more than age appropriate levels.

- 3.6 Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or English as an additional language and those who are more able, make excellent progress. This is due to leaders' meticulous analysis of assessment data which is used to track progress for each pupil and identify next steps in their learning. A few parents stated in the questionnaires that their child's individual educational needs are not met. Inspectors found the school to be diligent in identifying and meeting the needs of pupils of all abilities in fulfilment of its aim to identify each child's specific educational requirements. Children in the EYFS make rapid progress, so that the vast majority achieve the early learning goals by the time they leave Reception. This progress continues throughout the school, where many pupils are working above age-related expectations and leavers achieve high levels of success in gaining places at selective secondary schools. The very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that teaching helps their child to make progress. All pupils who responded agreed with this view, expressing the view that their teachers know their subjects well.
- 3.7 Pupils achieve at extremely high levels in a range of activities outside the classroom, confirming the school's achievement of its aim to recognise each child as an individual and give them every opportunity to develop their potential. They have enjoyed considerable success in sports, such as tag rugby, running, football, hockey and netball. In response to the recommendation of the previous full inspection, the school has widened its extra-curricular provision and has engaged in partnership with a range of external providers. The many opportunities to take part in mixed-gender sporting clubs and competitions have ensured pupils' continued success in this field. Pupils are equally successful in the arts, being encouraged to engage in music and drama lessons and activities from a young age. Their achievements in this area also benefit from the teaching of a musical instrument to all children from Reception. As a consequence, many achieve high grades in music and drama examinations, whilst pupils of all ages perform with maturity and skill in plays, festivals, debating competitions and concerts. Pupils are highly successful in gaining places at their first choice schools and in recent years, pupils have been awarded music, sport and academic scholarships.
- 3.8 Pupils are highly numerate, demonstrating both ambition and resilience in their lessons. A love of mathematics is developed from the earliest age, where a range of activities designed to foster a mastery of the subject is provided throughout the day. Children in Reception explained with enthusiasm their methods of adding two-digit numbers. Older pupils spoke knowledgeably about parallel lines and the individual support and challenge offered to them in lessons. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of number and use these skills in other curriculum areas, such as when using a time line in history. Pupils throughout the school consolidate and extend their skills on a daily basis through 'number of the week' activities, approaching open-ended challenges with enthusiasm. Their problem-solving abilities develop to a high level as they move through the school, where they readily discuss their ideas and seek solutions to their mistakes. Leaders' recent introduction of new teaching resources, which include additional challenge, has enabled pupils to develop these skills, in

line with the school's aim to enable pupils to approach mathematical concepts with confidence and understanding.

- 3.9 Pupils are excellent communicators, demonstrating the school's successful fulfilment of its aim to enable all pupils to develop effective reading, writing and communication skills. Pupils are extremely eloquent and confident speakers in lessons, conversations and performance. Children in the EYFS spoke with great clarity and fluency in an assembly for parents. Pupils higher up the school recited poetry with verve and enjoyment, and recounted the content of their chosen books with great detail and understanding. Pupils' attentive listening skills are equally well developed, as demonstrated in both academic and social conversations and activities. From the earliest age, pupils acquire advanced writing skills, swiftly learning to apply their phonic knowledge to create interesting sentences in Reception. Infant pupils made excellent use of complex sentences and advanced punctuation in writing about life in Africa. Older pupils use their mature vocabulary to write evocative descriptions and build tension, benefiting from the school's recent introduction of weekly independent writing sessions. Pupils read at levels in advance of age-related expectations, doing so with expression, meaning and fluency. They express an infectious love of reading, older pupils having passed this on to younger ones in shared storytelling sessions and in their roles as class prefects.
- 3.10 Pupils of all ages and abilities demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and respond to challenges with relish. They apply themselves with commitment and enthusiasm to their work, working well both independently and in collaboration with others. Pupils produce a high volume of carefully presented work and readily take a lead in their learning whenever it is offered. Independent working was evident in many activities, from art lessons to creative writing. Younger pupils collaborated with ease during a science experiment and older pupils showed excellent cooperative skills in a role play task. From the EYFS onwards, pupils readily take the initiative in their learning and are always ready to rise to a challenge. This was seen in Reception when children planned and built a structure, carefully selecting the materials and tools required and in slightly older pupils when weighing fruits and ordering them from lightest to heaviest.
- 3.11 Pupils develop good abilities to analyse, synthesise and hypothesise from a young age. They confidently make predictions for science experiments and present their research findings in different formats such as posters and mind maps. Younger pupils hypothesised and estimated with confidence when measuring their classmates with different units of measurements and undertaking a class experiment on germs. Pupils of all ages analyse their design technology work with careful consideration, identifying points for improvement. Older pupils draw knowledge with confidence from videos, fact sheets and atlases, presenting their findings effectively in their chosen form. This was seen in newspaper style reports about different scientists and posters about different aspects of outer space. However, pupils' skills are not developed to the full because lessons do not include regular opportunities for them to undertake their own wider-ranging research or independent activities.
- 3.12 Pupils develop age-appropriate skills in digital coding, benefiting from the proprietors' provision of accessible computer devices for use in the classroom. Older pupils have enjoyed high levels of success when participating in challenging computing competitions and events outside the school. However, this is not reflected in the work they complete in school, which is limited in scope. Pupils make effective use of devices to improve their numerical skills, create films and record their work in some lessons. However, their ICT skills are limited in range and depth and little evidence was seen of their use in other areas of the curriculum in order to enhance or present their learning. Whilst the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to develop competence in computing, it is less effective in promoting their communication skills when using information technology.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are highly confident and self-aware, flourishing in an environment which is characterised by pupils' strong and productive relationships with each other and with the adults in the school community. Poised and mature, they are self-reflective, recognising their strengths and taking a clear but modest pride in their achievements. All parents who completed the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Pupils make every effort to be resilient, outstanding and original as well as thoughtful and supportive, in line with the school's 'ROOTS' ethos. They value the school's recognition of their successes in weekly praise assemblies and the confirmation of their personal and academic achievements in their 'going for gold' charts. Pupils are equally ready to recognise their weaknesses and to seek help when they need it. They have an excellent understanding of how to improve their work through the use of personalised targets and highly effective feedback and marking. They engage in self and peer assessment with confidence and express a well-developed understanding of the role that making mistakes has to play in their learning. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stages in their lives. Daily interaction with older pupils in the playground ensures younger ones are confident when moving up to their next class. Those moving to senior school benefit from personalised support for entrance examinations and visits from past pupils offering advice for the future.
- 3.15 A strong sense of community pervades the school, an overwhelming majority of pupils agreeing in the questionnaire that the school teaches them how to build positive friendships and relationships. Pupils work alongside those of other ages on a daily basis and are highly successful in achieving common goals. They are proud of their shared successes in numerous house activities such as bridge building, mathematical challenges, art and storytelling. They speak of each other and the adults in school with knowledge and insight, showing a mature understanding of the needs of others and the importance of the support which the school community provides. Whole school events, such as the annual spring walk and the Friday running club, further a wider sense of belonging, the latter including parents as well as staff and pupils. From the EYFS onwards, pupils take time in their lessons to talk and listen, take turns and help each other. Older pupils collaborate on more complex projects, such as when creating a synchronised swimming routine, and take particular care to make new pupils of all ages feel welcome when they join the school.
- 3.16 Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community through meaningful and impactful roles and by acting as role models for younger pupils. Those in Years 5 and 6 all take on leadership roles many of which are tailored and suited to the individual, each making a positive difference to the lives of others in the school. Key stage prefects, sports captains and playground leaders support the academic and personal development of younger pupils, planning and implementing their ideas with only minimal guidance from adults. All pupils take a turn in serving on the school council, where they are actively supported by school leaders in implementing positive changes in the school. In recent times these have included new competitions, changes to the uniform and improvements to the school buildings. Pupils are keen to support the local community by, for example, raising money for a defibrillator and donating gifts to care home residents. They are highly aware of the part they can play in contributing to the wider world through promoting sustainable habits such as recycling. Pupils of all ages appreciate the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves, their understanding being furthered by visiting speakers from local and national charities. They respond eagerly to the annual invitation to suggest charities to be supported by the school and engage with commitment in fundraising for each year's chosen cause.
- 3.17 Pupils have an excellent awareness of the diversity within their own school and wider society, reflecting the school's aim to foster an awareness and understanding of other faiths in a multicultural world. Their understanding of the protected characteristics is particularly advanced, and they are able to explain with sensitivity and understanding the importance of treating those who may be different from themselves with tolerance and respect. The school council has been active in its promotion of a

gender equality day and a competition to commemorate influential members of minority communities. Pupils of all ages have an excellent understanding of their own and other cultures, fostered through religious education lessons, assemblies, visiting parents and the marking of events such as Black History month. Pupils appreciate and understand the values of different faiths such as the importance of generosity in Sikhism, and how the lives of those living in other countries differ from their own. The vast majority of parents agreed in the questionnaire that the school actively promotes respect and tolerance of other people. Inspectors fully concurred with this view, observing respect for others in the behaviour of pupils throughout the school from the very youngest to the very oldest.

- 3.18 Pupils make meaningful and carefully considered decisions from a young age. Children in Reception decide for themselves how they will structure their day, using the 'rainbow challenge' to ensure they engage in all areas of learning. Pupils in a music lesson made informed and considered decisions about when to play their instruments when creating a class composition about the eruption of a volcano, having been well prepared through activities earlier in the lesson. Older pupils showed a mature understanding of the importance of the choices they make when engaging in online games in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson. In their final years at the school, pupils make responsible decisions about how to use their time in preparation for senior school entrance examinations and show a strong awareness of the importance of working hard to ensure success later on in life. Pupils of all ages engage thoughtfully in the democratic process of voting for those in positions of responsibility and readily accept the results.
- 3.19 Pupils demonstrate an excellent spiritual understanding, promoted by the many opportunities presented to them to reflect on the school's values in lessons, assemblies and activities. Pupils of all ages record their reflections in gratitude books, where entries include appreciation of a compliment from a friend or positive feedback from a teacher. Pupils have a strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life and readily recognise the importance of friends and family in their lives. Older pupils talked with great insight about the sadness they would feel on leaving the school. Pupils spoke eloquently about the importance of less tangible aspects of their lives such as music, art and sport, and opportunities to express themselves through these. Pupils greatly value the many ways in which they interact with those in other age groups in school and recognise the importance of the support offered by the school for them to speak to staff about their concerns and reflect on their lives.
- 3.20 Pupils have an excellent moral understanding and a strong sense of the importance of adhering to the school's high expectations of their behaviour. Their behaviour around the school is characterised by a considerate awareness of the needs of others and the means by which they can help each other, particularly those who are younger than themselves. Older pupils and staff act as excellent role models to younger ones, and pupils acquire a detailed understanding of the traffic light system for behaviour at a very young age. Pupils are prepared to acknowledge their mistakes and to seek the means to make reparations when these are required. They are keenly aware of the consequences of breaking rules, but also speak confidently about the new day being a chance to reset. Pupils of all ages take pride in being recognised for displaying the school's ROOTS values in their work or play. Older pupils displayed an excellent understanding of the importance of taking responsibility for their own behaviour when discussing what makes a good friend.
- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay physically healthy, and all those who answered the questionnaire said that the school encourages them to do so. Pupils told inspectors about the many ways in which the school helps them stay healthy, particularly through the varied sports programme and encouragement to eat healthily in school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe. Their road safety awareness develops well through bicycle safety training from Reception onwards, and pupils in all year groups understand how to safe online. Older pupils talked knowledgeably about the importance of maintaining good mental health. They are helped to maintain this in many ways, including through self-affirming statements in their gratitude books and regular self-assessment of their feelings. The proprietors' appointment of a well-being officer has provided

pupils with additional support in maintaining their mental well-being, and older pupils spoke with maturity about how this has helped them.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Karen Williams	Reporting inspector
Mrs Lisa Maynard	Compliance team inspector (Director of estates, ISA group of schools)
Mr Jonathan Burnet-Harris	Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)