

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Sackville School

January 2020



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School	Sackville School	
DfE number	886/6058	
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	Tonbridge	
	Kent	
	TN11 9HN	
Telephone number	01732 838888	
Email address	office@sackvilleschool.co.uk	
Headteacher	Mr Justin Foster-Gandey	
Proprietor	Alpha Schools Group Ltd	
Age range	11 to 18	
Number of pupils on roll	175	
	Seniors 134 Sixth Form	41
Inspection dates	28 to 30 January 2020	

School's Details

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Sackville school is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged 11 to 18. Founded in 1987, the school still occupies the same site within the village of Hildenborough. The school became part of the Alpha Schools Group in January 2017, whose directors provide governance of the school.
- 1.2 The school is divided into two departments: the senior school, for pupils aged 11 to 16; and a sixth form, for pupils aged 16 to 18. Since the previous inspection the school has increased classroom space in the main house, developed further its BTEC provision in the sixth-form and expanded its extracurricular activities programme.

What the school seeks to do

1.3 Sackville School aims to foster a positive, friendly, happy, family atmosphere for learning and for pupils to achieve to the best of their ability. The aim is that pupils will leave the school as well-rounded individuals with sufficient independence of thought to be successful in the next stages of their lives.

About the pupils

1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, mostly from Tonbridge and the surrounding areas of Kent and Sussex. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils in the senior school is above average and that of those in the sixth form is below average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 85 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia, 43 of whom receive additional specialist help. There are 31 pupils who have an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 3 pupils, who are fluent and require no additional support. Data used by the school have identified 23 pupils as being most able in its population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 26 other pupils because of their special talents in music, drama, sport and art.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

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

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

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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 regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; 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 full regulations and requirements can be found here: <u>The Education (Independent School</u> <u>Standards) Regulations 2014</u>.

Key findings

2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 Pupils take GCSE examinations in Year 11. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages.
- 2.3 Pupils take A-level examinations in their final year at the school. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.

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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

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

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.
- 2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
 - Pupils of all ages make good progress relative to their starting points and abilities.
 - Pupils attitudes to learning are positive and demonstrate good study skills for their age and abilities.
 - Pupils achieve a good measure of success in extra-curricular activities with notable achievements at individual and team levels.
 - Pupils' basic skills for learning are good but on occasion pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to enable them to develop independence of thought and high-order thinking skills.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - Pupils show high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem which enable them to be well prepared for the next stages of their lives, in response to a strong, nurturing environment.
 - Pupils behaviour is excellent, they are polite and courteous to all they meet and demonstrate a highly refined sense of right and wrong.
 - Pupils collaborate well and are highly supportive of each other due to the community feel and family ethos within the school.
 - Pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and keep healthy is highly developed.

Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
 - Ensure the needs of all pupils are fully met by providing all with sufficient challenge.
 - Enable pupils to learn independently and develop skills of critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation by extending opportunities to do so through the provision of open-ended activities in teaching.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 Throughout the school pupils achieve extremely very well, in line with the school's aims to enable them to achieve to the best of their ability within a personalised curriculum that is carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Pupils with SEND make good progress because their needs are identified at an early stage and they receive highly effective and personalised support from both teachers, teaching assistants and pastoral support staff. Pupils with EAL make good progress as they are fluent and need no further support with their English. The small numbers of pupils taking both GCSE and A-Level examinations makes comparison to national benchmark data difficult. Over a threeyear period between 2017 and 2019, results at GCSE across subjects have been in-line with the national average with stronger performance across core subjects taken. Almost all pupils met their targets established on entry to the school. Over a three-year period between 2017 and 2019, results at GCE A level have been in-line with the national average. Over the same period, there has been an improvement in sixth-form pupils achieving results in BTEC Level 3 examinations with notable individual performances in some subject areas. A very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, said that the school enables pupils to make good progress, a view supported by inspection evidence.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages make good progress with their knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide variety of subjects due to opportunities to apply those skills in a creative and imaginative way in their learning. In interviews, lower school pupils spoke confidently about how they had used leaves as an alternative method to calculate the wind direction during a geography lesson. In a GCSE biology lesson, pupils designed a role play maturely, using narrative, sounds, actions and key scientific terminology to excellent effect to describe the menstrual cycle to their peers. Pupils develop excellent aesthetic skills over time as evidence by the high standard of artwork displayed around the school, and opportunities to reflect on other artists' work in lessons or by visits to galleries. For example, lower school pupils achieved an excellent standard of digital Pop Art portraits of themselves, inspired from the work of a well-known artist.
- 3.7 Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and pupils enjoy being at school. In interviews, pupils proudly explained how they had achieved a very good standard with their project work. They identified that this was due to opportunities to reflect critically with their teachers in a positive and constructive way and being given the responsibility to decide to take on board any suggestions made. For example, GCSE design and technology projects demonstrated excellent woodworking and design skills, as a result of regular informative teacher annotations on concept planning worksheets. In A-level photography, high quality slow-motion scenes of a high street to portray 'moments in time' were produced as a result of technical guidance provided by the teacher. In the pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a small minority of pupils disagreed that feedback and marking helps them to helps them to improve, however this was not reflected during interviews or scrutiny of pupils' work. Pupils stated that they understood how to improve further due to the opportunity to set and review their own targets with teachers in their own individual subject progress trackers, in line with the school's established monitoring and assessment procedures.
- 3.8 Pupils are good communicators across the range of literacy skills both written and verbal as observed in lessons, scrutiny of their work and the talent observed in rehearsals for the Year 7 school production, 'The Boy in the Dress'. Pupils' written work as seen in folders and in lessons was of good quality across all ages. In particular, the standard of journalistic reporting, design and production of the school's newsletter by sixth formers was notably high. Pupils' confidence in communication develops further as they progress through the school. Pupils with specific learning needs develop the confidence to communicate their thoughts, because they are nurtured by a classroom environment which is characterised by strong adult and peer support. In a GCSE Spanish lesson, all pupils were able to pronounce clearly the vocabulary of sport and leisure, effectively using active and passive voice due to the support provided with accents from their peers. Across the school, pupils demonstrate an ability to listen, carry out tasks with enthusiasm and respect other's contributions in lessons. Pupils are willing to discuss and question ideas when encouraged by teaching and when opportunities arise for working with each other. In a GCSE English lesson, pupils collaborated with enthusiasm in a trading ideas game to share their views about Portia as the heroine in The Merchant of Venice. In an A-level literacy lesson, pupils articulately read out lines from 'A Streetcar Named Desire' to stimulate further discussion about the thoughts and feelings about the main characters being reviewed. This strength of communication across the school originates from leaders and proprietors' successful focus on building up pupils' confidence in learning and this was very apparent from speaking further with the pupils, some of who are looking forward to competing in recently introduced public-speaking examinations.
- 3.9 Pupils develop good numeracy skills because teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to apply them across the curriculum as well as practice them in UK Maths Challenge competitions. In a lower school geography project, pupils provided suggestions on how to alleviate local traffic congestion after successfully conducting a traffic survey and analysing patterns of traffic movements. In an A-level physics lesson, pupils demonstrated their knowledge of the Vernier scale measurement system, by effectively using a micrometer to measure the ductile strength of a metal wire.

- 3.10 Pupils apply their well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills in a range of subjects and are encouraged to use the school's own systems and devices to enhance learning and carry out their own research. In a senior school PSHE lesson, pupils very articulately expressed balanced viewpoints on whether drugs should be legalised, after very effectively reviewing the reliability of evidence they had researched from the internet. In an A-level design and technology lesson, sixth-form pupils confidently manipulated computer aided design software to ensure they had achieved the correct angles on their table designs. Pupils develop confidence with their ICT skills due to opportunities to plan and develop programmable lighting sequences or manipulate graphics packages to produce posters for the school's dramatic productions, very successfully. Pupils with SEND make good progress with ICT to enhance their access to the curriculum through the use of bespoke programmes such as voice recognition, accessing support materials and using devices to word process rather than to write in class and in examinations.
- 3.11 Pupils attain a good level of success both in school and locally in extra-curricular activities such as music, drama, sport, and at bronze and silver level with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. In 2019, notable individual pupil success has been achieved at national championship level across dancing and equestrian disciplines and in the Junior European Open Golf championship. Team successes have included Year 7 pupils achieving bronze, silver and kangaroo level awards in the UK Maths Challenge, and Year 8 pupils coming fourth in a regional inter-schools bridge tournament. Individual local successes have included a second place and commendation prizes for other pupils for their lamp, furniture and case designs at a regional show. Pupils' successes in musical examinations across piano, strings, woodwind and brass is very good for their ages with pupils achieving from grade 2 to grade 8 during their time at school. Pupils demonstrate excellent performing skills across a number of genres such as choral singing, ensembles and performing on stage in regular school productions.
- 3.12 Pupils' basic skills for learning are good. They plan and organise their work effectively, as exemplified by the very good standard and volume of work produced in books and good progress observed in lessons. Their study skills are well-developed, demonstrated by the way they organised their work methodically, take a pride in its presentation and act effectively on advice provided by teachers. However, at times pupils' development is limited in independence of thought and acquiring high-order thinking skills such as the synthesis and critical analysis of information because they are not always sufficiently challenged to do so. Pupils progressed particularly well in lessons where teaching provided an appropriate balance of varied activities and higher-level questioning to deepen pupils' learning, and opportunities for pupils to work independently or collaboratively on tasks. In some lessons, all pupils worked on the same task and further challenge for pupils who found the task straightforward, including the more able, was missed. The most successful teaching allowed opportunity for further reflection and enquiry by pupils. In a GCSE history lesson, pupils produced in groups a concise fact sheet from collating their ideas and evaluating their research on how Billy the Kid and Wyatt Earp had an impact on law and order in the American west. In a A-level law lesson, pupils maturely and articulately discussed recent news events and their own thoughts on the legal consequences of possible psychiatric injury claims, as a result of the teacher's exploratory questioning.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND, EAL and the more able, have high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem due to highly supportive and aspirational staff who want pupils to achieve to the best of their ability. Pupils have gained additional confidence in trying new challenges or activities that they may have never encountered before following new investment by the proprietors and the senior leadership in increased opportunities in extra-curricular activities. Across the curriculum, pupils grow in their self-confidence and develop notable resilience for their age due to a culture of being empowered to 'have a go' and make mistakes, as experiences to be learned from. Pupils develop good personal and collective decision-making skills. As they progress through the school, pupils take increasing control of their learning and are still provided with an opportunity to change their minds about their GCSE and A-level options, if they feel on reflection, once started, they were not the best combination. In response to questionnaires, a small minority of parents and pupils stated that the school did not provide suitable advice and guidance about subjects and careers, however inspection evidence does not support this view. In interviews, sixth-form pupils spoke highly of the friendly and encouraging staff, who have believed in them and gone the 'extra-mile' so that they are well-prepared for the next stages in their lives and often achieving their first choice university or employment.
- 3.15 Pupils exhibit outstanding behaviour across all ages and ability groups. Their high levels of tolerance and consideration for others is due to the high standards and expectations set by staff. Pupils are polite and courteous to all they meet both inside and outside the classroom. This is apparent from the orderly and friendly way they move about the site and the positive and supportive atmosphere seen in lessons. In interviews, pupils spoke confidently about the new behaviour 'CODE' system in the school, which enables them to think about the consequences of their actions and how they might put things right, such as writing an apology letter if they have upset anyone. Pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong, together with high levels of moral understanding. In interviews, pupils clearly stated that they would never tolerate bullying of any kind on the rare occasions it occurs, and that they naturally always look out for each other. Pupils develop a strong sense of empathy and an appreciation and understanding of the learning needs of their peers as they are provided with a range of opportunities to make and build upon their friendships from joining the school. In interviews, sixthform pupils reflected fondly on how they had quickly built positive relationships with others during their outward bound induction programme in Year 7 and similarly with new sixth formers and staff during their 'Escape room challenge' induction day last term.
- 3.16 Pupils collaborate well both within and outside of the classroom and are highly supportive of each other due to the family ethos and community feel within the school, where everyone feels valued. Pupils demonstrate an excellent ability to work together. Sixth formers spoke highly of opportunities to develop effective team building skills to achieve common goals such as planning, budgeting and running the annual school prom or completing expeditions as part of the DofE scheme. The high number of pupils successfully completing their awards, the high standards of sporting achievements and other competition successes demonstrate that pupils are extremely effective when also working in teams.

- 3.17 Pupils make an extremely positive contribution to improving the lives of others, both within and beyond the school. Pupils have a strong sense of community and take pride in taking on responsibilities that will benefit others. Lower school pupils appreciate the help of Year 10 pupils as mathematics mentors and sixth formers spoke highly of supporting staff with supervising younger pupils at taster days or as guides on parents' evenings. The school council plays an effective role in representing pupil voice and stimulating action in order to effect change to the benefit of others. A recent example was the successful installation of green plastic recycling boxes for wastepaper which pupils also requested to be made of recycled plastic to help save the environment. Pupils demonstrate a natural empathy and appreciation of those less fortunate than themselves as demonstrated by their reflection time in assemblies, or in the PALS club, reflecting on they could make someone feel better if they had had to give up playing football due to sustaining a permanent injury. Pupils spoke highly of the opportunities to undertake a variety of successful fundraising activities supporting and raising awareness of a range of national and local charities. Pupils have raised significant sums of monies through cupcake sales, recycling ink cartridges, a Christmas cracker raffle and other challenges organised through their three houses.
- 3.18 Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent; pupils gain an excellent appreciation and understanding of different races, faiths and beliefs through their lessons, regular church assemblies, visits to different religious places of worship and overseas cultural trips to different European cities. Pupils also have a strong understanding of the aesthetic aspects of life that is enhanced by their artwork, photography and furniture design displays and regular visits to museums and theatres. In art, design and science lessons pupils value the opportunities to undertake survey work and also gather and work with natural materials on the school's estate. Pupils have expressed their delight on how the decomposition of their 'Giant Guardian of Sackville school' art installation has created new habitats for a hedgehog and insects to thrive. From an early age, pupils demonstrate excellent tolerance and acceptance of others. Year 7 pupils showed great maturity regarding gender and sexual identity during rehearsals for their annual production of 'The Boy in the Dress'; Year 8 pupils successfully performed, 'The Spiffing Adventures of The Perils of Pauline', which explored the social construct of the 'new woman' in the 1900s.
- 3.19 Pupils of all ages understand how to stay safe including online, exemplified by the high standard of internet safety posters designed and displayed by pupils themselves around the school. Work scrutiny showed that in lower school food studies, pupils correctly identified all the food hygiene risk placed around the food room. In a GCSE design and technology lesson pupils put on the correct personal and protective safety equipment before they operated handheld power tools under supervision. Pupils understand how to maintain their physical health as a result of the strong emphasis senior leaders and proprietors' give to physical education and the expansion of healthy related activities in the extracurricular activities programme since the previous inspection. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the benefits of positive mental well-being due to opportunities to learn mindfulness and yoga techniques or participate in organised craft sessions as part of the whole school assembly programme. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of pupils stated that the school did not encourage them to follow a healthy lifestyle. These views were not supported by inspection evidence; this shows that the school does provide numerous opportunities for pupils to participate in team and individual sports, access to free local gym membership for sixth-formers and the options to choose from a range of healthy snacks such as salad and fruit. In interviews, pupils stated that they recognised the benefits of having access to a range of options and the importance of keeping healthy.

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registrations and a church assembly. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Geoffrey Marston	Reporting inspector
Dr Simon Orchard	Compliance and Team inspector (Headmaster, ISA school)
Mr Andrew Rattue	Team inspector (Principal, ISA school)