



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

SHERBORNE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Sherborne School for Girls			
DfE number	835/6024			
Registered charity number	307427			
Address	Bradford Road Sherborne Dorset DT9 3QN			
Telephone number	01935 812245			
Email address	office@sherborne.com			
Headmistress	Mrs Jenny Dwyer			
Chairman of governors	Mr Stephen Wingfield-Digby			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	471			
	Boys	0	Girls	471
	Day pupils	48	Boarders	423
			Sixth Form	174
Inspection dates	15 to 16 March 2017			

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended morning prayers. Inspectors visited boarding houses and took meals with pupils. 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 Timothy Holgate	Reporting inspector
Mr Stephen Holliday	Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mr Daniel Phillips	Team inspector (Head of department, HMC school)
Mrs Karen Pickles	Team inspector for boarding (Senior housemistress, HMC school)
Mrs Elizabeth Thomas	Team inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Ms Clare Trelfa	Team inspector (Headmistress, ISA school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Sherborne School for Girls is an independent school for girls aged between 11 and 18 years, the great majority of whom are boarders. It was founded in 1899 by the local MP, primarily as a school for the sisters of boys at Sherborne School. In 1903, it moved onto its current 40-acre campus on the edge of Sherborne, a market town in Dorset. The school is a registered charity overseen by a Council of Governors, whose 19 members are the trustees of the charity and the school’s proprietors. The current chairman is the great-nephew of the school’s founder. All pupils belong to one of seven houses. One house is for pupils in Years 7 and 8, and one is for Year 13 pupils. The other five include those in Years 9 to 12.
- 1.2 Since the school’s previous full inspection in 2010, new and improved facilities have been achieved, including a new junior boarding house for Years 7 and 8, a new science centre, and a number of refurbishments and improvements to academic and other areas. Major enhancements of the academic and extra-curricular provision have been created, including the provision of the International Baccalaureate (IB) as an alternative to A levels. The tutor system is now house based.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to provide a broad, academic, full-boarding education for girls, enhanced by links with other academic communities. In so doing, it aims to develop the unique gifts of each girl by providing an environment and curriculum through which all members of the school will flourish. The school aspires to create a community founded on Christian values and in which every girl is encouraged to develop their whole selves including a spiritual dimension. Finally, it hopes to send out into the world young women who are adaptable, intellectually enquiring, courageous and compassionate with the confidence to be effective leaders.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Most pupils come from a range of professional and business family backgrounds in the south of England and around one in ten comes from overseas, predominantly Hong Kong and China. English is an additional language (EAL) for these 49 pupils and, for 33 of them, their language needs are supported by specialist staff. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan and the school has identified a further 118 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Support is provided for their mild learning difficulties, mainly dyslexia. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils up to Year 11 is above average. In Years 12 and 13, the pupils’ ability profile is broadly average for pupils in sixth-form education.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school’s own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Lower Fourth	Year 7
Upper Fourth	Year 8

Lower Fifth	Year 9
Middle Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

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 consistency in the quality of marking across all areas of the curriculum.
 - Ensure consistency of approach in the awarding of pupil rewards.
 - Ensure that pupils understand the rationale and timescales behind the responses to their requests.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection.
- 1.8 The recommendations of the intermediate boarding inspection in November 2013 were:
- Ensure that the new on-line procedure to record medicines administered provides accurate information for the boarding houses and health centre.
 - Ensure that meals are of consistently good quality across boarding houses.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils of all ages show high levels of subject knowledge, understanding and skills.
- The academic success of pupils is strongly influenced by highly effective teaching which stimulates interest and provides a high degree of challenge.
- Pupils of all abilities benefit from a wide variety of extra-curricular and enrichment experiences and many achieve high levels of success, developing their talents to the full.
- Pupils show excellent study skills and develop an outstanding ability to plan, organise and carry out work on their own initiative.

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

- Pupils exhibit very high levels of self-confidence, self-esteem and independence, largely due to the support and encouragement of their teachers and houseparents.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual and moral awareness, nurtured by the strong ethos and values promoted successfully by governors and senior leadership.
- The outstanding social development of pupils enables them to demonstrate strong leadership and support for others.
- Pupils have a genuine and well-developed commitment to contribute usefully to the lives of others.

Recommendation

2.3 Within the context of these excellent outcomes, the school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Ensure that all pupils receive appropriate advice and support to fulfil their future academic and career aspirations.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils of all ages show high levels of subject knowledge, understanding and skills that are developed, applied and demonstrated in subjects across the curriculum. This is shown, for example, in finely detailed drawings in art that reflect a strong knowledge of different artistic styles, and a clear understanding of the way the properties of materials influence their behaviour, shown very effectively in the cookery skills of younger pupils and the prediction of chemical reactivity in those who are older. Pupils studying *Hamlet* showed marked understanding of a challenging text and some sophisticated insights into how choices of language contribute to the presentation of characters. Pupils' creative skills in art, drama, design and music are very highly developed. The academic success of pupils is strongly influenced by much effective teaching which stimulates interest, provides a high degree of challenge and encourages active pupil involvement. It is also due to the imaginative and flexible curricular and extra-curricular provision which caters for the needs of all pupils, a view strongly endorsed by almost all of the pupils' and parents' questionnaire responses.
- 3.3 Pupils' academic success is reflected in their public examination results. The following analysis covers the period 2013 to 2015, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. A-level results have been well above the national average for maintained schools and those for the IB well above international norms. GCSE results have been above the maintained school average, and international GCSE results above worldwide norms. Given these results and the pupils' starting points, progress to GCSE has been good, and progress in the sixth form has been excellent, compared to pupils of similar ability elsewhere. The proportion of the highest A-level A* grades declined slightly in 2016.
- 3.4 Lessons and work seen, and interviews with pupils show that they make consistently good progress over time and, for many, progress is excellent. Those with SEND and EAL make progress that is at least as good as their peers. Many of those with EAL make excellent progress in improving their command of the English language. The achievement and progress of the most able pupils are excellent, and they show high levels of understanding in areas such as literary criticism and applying existing knowledge to predicting and explaining new situations. They link cause and effect well. One sixth-form pupil, for example, undertook independent research to discover in detail the biochemical processes that sustain living organisms. Pupils' success is stimulated and supported by the careful and effective monitoring of their progress that takes place at subject and whole-school level. It is also nourished and encouraged by the active reflection of senior leaders and teachers on learning strategies that maximise pupils' achievement. This represents successful fulfilment of the school's aims to produce pupils who will flourish academically and be possessed of intellectually enquiring minds. Almost all of the pupils' questionnaire responses confirmed that they feel that the teaching enables them to learn and make progress.
- 3.5 Pupils exhibit excellent communication skills and high levels of literacy. Their presentation skills are very good and their contributions in class are invariably backed up with sharp and detailed research. They are active listeners. Their ability to discuss their ideas and explain their thinking, and to propose and defend an argument orally is marked. Pupils speak fluently when expressing and explaining complex ideas and concepts, such as the nature of God or the justification for war. They use a wide range of vocabulary, including technical terms, with confidence. Pupils read aloud with considerable conviction and accuracy. Most write fluently, persuasively and at length in a number of different styles.

- 3.6 Pupils use their well-developed numeracy skills to perform calculations and manipulate figures in mathematics, and apply these skills successfully in many other subjects. Confidence in measurement in art, design and home economics improves the effectiveness and accuracy of their work. Competent use of graphical techniques, statistics and data analysis enables them to interpret natural phenomena in science and geography. Pupils show well-developed competence in information and communication technology (ICT) and use this naturally and confidently to enhance their learning through a range of digital applications. Pupils use portable digital devices in innovative and interesting ways to support their learning. They write computer code to design websites, produce imaginative and informative multi-media presentations, compose and record music with appropriate software, and manipulate images in art and photography to enhance the impact of their work.
- 3.7 Pupils show excellent study skills and develop an outstanding ability to plan, organise and carry out the tasks presented to them. Their ability to work independently is very strong and they rarely need encouragement to show initiative in researching new information. Younger pupils show very marked learning skills and the ability to organise their work and think for themselves. This has been enhanced by the Sherborne Diploma, a programme of personal learning strategies which ensures that they embark on their GCSE courses well prepared to cope with more demanding academic and intellectual expectations. Pupils utilise their strong reasoning, analytical and evaluative skills routinely in their work, such as analysing the subtleties of character in English literature and questioning the validity of historical sources. They are able to transfer and relate their knowledge across subjects and in their wider lives. They invariably ask perceptive questions, often not being satisfied until they completely understand a concept or debate an issue fully. Pupils move easily between different modes of learning, from group discussion, through quiet personal reflection, to efficient written responses. Pupils enjoy collaborative working in lesson tasks and this helps them to learn from each other. Senior pupils taking the Extended Project Qualification reveal a strong ability to research and present a lengthy discourse on intellectually challenging topics, such as an evaluation of Putin's relationship with the West, the causes and impact of the Boxing Day tsunami, and the influence of women in Ancient Greece.
- 3.8 Pupils have achieved high levels of academic and personal satisfaction in the many extra-curricular activities in which they participate. Pupils of all levels of talent and skill feel that they have achieved success in their participation, regardless of the outcome. Almost all pupils and parents in their questionnaire responses praised the success of the extra-curricular programme. High levels of achievement have been reached in many individual and team sports, including representation at county level and participation in national events. A significant number of pupils have achieved success in music examinations up to diploma level. As a result of this, as well as strong performances in speech and drama examinations, pupils have been selected to perform in several music and drama ensembles locally and further afield. Success in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) has been highly notable, with 60 awards gained at all three levels in the last term alone. Especially marked has been the achievement by pupils of all abilities and ages in the many academic enrichment activities and competitions in which they choose to take part. They have achieved academic and personal success and satisfaction from a wide range of academic competitions and Olympiads and from involvement in many learned societies and clubs, some involving participation from local schools as well.
- 3.9 Pupils show outstandingly positive and productive attitudes to their work and study. They are highly effective learners who work hard and persevere in all they do. They show high levels of commitment and sustained application. Pupils are adaptable and flexible when faced with multiple challenges and settle quickly to new tasks. On a few occasions, pupils become passive in their learning when the teaching discourages active engagement by them. Pupils spoke

enthusiastically about their enjoyment of learning and the freedom they are allowed in developing their individual learning styles. Samples of work seen were nearly always extremely well organised. EAL pupils showed evidence of a positive and mature attitude to work by clearly following up on the feedback given by teachers. SEND pupils showed clear evidence of good progress and a determination to rise to a higher level of challenge. Pupils freely acknowledge and pay tribute to their subject teachers and tutors who willingly provide additional help and support. These highly productive relationships between pupils and staff are a key factor in their success, increasing confidence and inspiring strong progress.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils show a high degree of self-confidence which, for some, has been strongly enhanced on joining the school. They have a balanced approach to life and are able to self-regulate their responses when they encounter difficulties. Pupils explained that there is so much to do and so many new things to experience, and these build independence and help them to discover their personal strengths and weaknesses. As they grow older, pupils have an increasing understanding of how to improve their work, due to the helpful feedback they receive from their teachers. They develop the confidence to speak out and express their opinions. Pupils develop very strong resilience and perseverance through participation in the DofE Award. They spoke about their experiences of encountering and coping with adversity on expeditions and how it had helped them to overcome fears, to learn about themselves and realise that perseverance brings reward. Pupils of all ages felt they had developed confidence and self-esteem through being trusted to take on responsibility, whether in the house, around school or on the sports field. Pupils' self-understanding is enhanced by the strong pastoral and support systems in the school, by the experience of boarding, and by the encouragement to try new things and become involved.
- 4.3 As a result of this growing self-esteem and self-confidence, pupils make increasingly secure decisions about their own lives and future pathways. Pupils recognise that valid decisions need to be based on appropriate information to make informed choices. They understand that decisions and choices made have consequences. In this, they are helped significantly by the well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and tutorial provision, and the opportunities in lessons for reflection and discussion on contemporary events and pressures. Pupils are given plenty of choice in academic and personal decisions, especially from the GCSE years, but value the support and help provided to make wise decisions. They learn to manage time well as they are given more freedom as they move up the school and resolve the multiple demands made of them. A small minority of pupils' questionnaire responses suggested that there is an imbalance between the activities and free time available, but inspection evidence indicates that there is an appropriate balance between them. Pupils value the support and advice they are given to guide their academic and higher education choices, although a few older pupils felt that they lacked the confidence or knowledge to pursue the most appropriate choice of future academic pathway.
- 4.4 This ability to make informed decisions is particularly important in pupils' understanding of the benefits of living a healthy and safe lifestyle, and the consequences of doing otherwise. Pupils confirm that they are presented with much useful, thought-provoking and challenging information which helps them to ensure their own personal safety and well-being. Curricular provision and input from the health centre and external speakers enable them to appreciate the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise. Houseparents contribute strongly in this area and pupils value their encouragement. Pupils confidently explained their understanding of stress, its triggers and symptoms, and identified ways by which they could stop it escalating in their own lives. The overwhelming majority of pupils stated in the questionnaire that the school provides them with a safe and healthy environment.
- 4.5 Pupils develop a pronounced ability to reflect on personal issues and on the non-material aspects of life. They speak sensitively and with conviction about the benefits of quiet moments to ponder on their private circumstances, such as sessions in the gym, weekly prayers, and candle-lit gatherings in the houses. Pupils identified the nocturnal reflection in Sherborne Abbey, sitting quietly in darkness, as a particularly profound and memorable experience. Many

appreciate the philosophical discussions and debates in subjects such as religious studies and history that cause them to think hard about their own lives. Pupils were deeply moved by the experiences of elderly local residents who recounted their memories of World War 2. Pupils' art portfolios show sensitive reflection on themes and their relevance to personal experience. Pupils explained that a study of the beauty of love, explored by Shakespeare, was a particularly thought-provoking moment. Through these experiences, pupils have a growing understanding of the nature of faith and belief, and the development of empathy. A real strength of the school is the open way in which spirituality in its widest sense is discussed and explored by the pupils. In this, they acknowledge the contribution made by the chaplaincy and the imaginative approaches to promote and explore spirituality.

- 4.6 Pupils of all ages demonstrate a high degree of moral awareness, based on mutual trust and an instinctive ability to act on what they know to be right. Key contributory factors in this are the ethos and values of the school promoted by governors and senior leadership. These permeate many aspects of day-to-day life within and outside the curriculum, so that pupils naturally respond strongly and positively to the clear values and expectations of the school. As a result, they develop the ability to consider moral issues carefully and make well-informed choices. This is continually reinforced by the pupils' involvement in many opportunities and messages given in lessons illustrating moral themes on issues such as Fair Trade and the moral dimension of women's suffrage. Older pupils entered into a mature discussion on sexual ethics in different social settings: they recognised how social context can blur issues. Pupils feel that school is a safe place to make mistakes and they respect the school's sensible, mature approach to dealing with those who get it wrong. As a result, pupils genuinely try not to let the staff or the school down. They appreciate the opportunities given to them to be able to reflect on their mistakes and atone for their transgressions. Pupils value the trust placed in them and this is due, in no small measure, to the example set and behaviour modelled by senior pupils and the excellent relationships within the school community. Parents overwhelmingly felt that the boarding environment had helped their daughters' progress and personal development.
- 4.7 Pupils exhibit outstanding social awareness and development. They are comfortable in a range of different social situations. They respond easily and confidently to formal dinner nights as well as deriving comfort and comradeship from the more relaxed house meals. They understand how to make formal applications and presentations. Pupils work extremely well with each other, collaborating and showing initiative and leadership in organising house events and competitions. This corporate sense of responsibility is exhibited to a marked degree by their co-operation and management of many of the domestic arrangements in the houses. Pupils appreciate the wider social experience of taking part in events such as the joint symphony orchestra, where they play alongside boys from Sherborne School and pupils from local maintained schools. Pupils enjoy working in teams on projects and activities and appreciate the satisfaction that collaboration and helping each other brings. Pupils' social development is particularly enhanced by the strong and supportive house-based communities and the input of house parents. Other important contributory factors are the challenging and stimulating extra-curricular and enrichment programmes, which promote wide participation and provide valuable leadership opportunities for pupils, which they embrace with enthusiasm.
- 4.8 The excellent social development and awareness mean that pupils of all ages show a particularly strong commitment to making a useful contribution to others. Senior pupils provide influential and valued support to younger pupils who regard their elders as respected role models. Peer mentors, known as 'supporters and listeners', provide a valuable listening ear to those who seek them out, and the mentors, in turn, learn important personal skills as a result. House 'subject ambassadors' and 'digital leaders' offer advice to their peers seeking academic and ICT support. The school's aim to produce effective leaders is very well met. Pupils

willingly and enthusiastically volunteer for a wide range of projects and community charity events, working and coaching in local schools, working in charity shops and participating in local organisations and forums. Pupils spoke eloquently and sensitively about what these experiences meant to them. They felt that they build confidence and help to overcome shyness; they provided valuable practical and inter-personal skills, and gave them a better understanding of other people's situations and lives.

- 4.9 The presence of international pupils and others from different backgrounds enables pupils to appreciate and understand the diversity of different cultures, faiths and customs. They firmly believe that they benefit from an inclusive and tolerant school community. Pupils are open-minded and are keen to break down stereotypical attitudes to race, disability and gender equality. They gain valuable and, for some, life-changing insights into the lives of others through exchanges with pupils from Qatar, Australia, South Africa and Canada. Some reflected sensitively on the moving experience of teaching blind children in Rwanda. Pupils said that they gained a heightened awareness of other cultures from the school's International Week, which enables each house to experience different national dishes and research the customs of the countries represented. Closer to home, pupils are aware of the plight of areas of this country where people live in deprivation.