



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Shrewsbury High School GDST

November 2022

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School's Details

School	Shrewsbury High School GDST			
DfE number	893/6018			
Registered charity number	306983			
Address	Shrewsbury High School GDST 32 Town Walls Shrewsbury Shropshire SY1 1TN			
Telephone number	01743 494000			
Email address	enquiries@shr.gdst.net			
Head	Ms Joanne Sharrock			
Proprietor	Girls' Day School Trust			
Age range	4 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	352			
	EYFS	4	Juniors	58
	Seniors	206	Sixth Form	84
Inspection dates	15 to 17 November 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Shrewsbury High School is an independent day school for female pupils consisting of a junior school, a senior school and a sixth form. The school is owned by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) and governed by its council. A local governing body provides additional support for the school. Founded in 1885, it moved in 1897 to its present site.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has closed its nursery and moved all pupils onto one site.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to provide an education, within an inclusive, caring and purposeful community, that is an exciting journey of discovery for each individual, opening doors to a world of possibilities and enabling them, through their own endeavour, to achieve beyond the bounds of expectation. It aims to build pupils of character with moral integrity, respect for themselves and others, compassion, social responsibility and ambition.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come mostly from the town of Shrewsbury or from rural Shropshire and bordering counties. The majority come from families with professional, business or farming backgrounds. The school has identified 32 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 17 pupils, two of whom receive specialist support. Data used by the school have identified 44 pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for seven other pupils because of their special talents in sport.

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 In the junior school, the school's own framework for assessment enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2022 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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

2.13 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.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.15 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.17 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.

2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 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.

2.20 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.

- Pupil' knowledge, skills and understanding are notably strong and they are willing to take risks with their learning.
- Pupils are enthusiastic, ambitious, self-motivated and take responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils have highly developed learning skills which they employ confidently.

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

- Pupils demonstrate excellent social development and collaborate productively.
- Pupils develop an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and know how to take responsibility for their own wellbeing.
- Pupils are empathetic and tolerant with a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable all pupils to reach their full potential by ensuring that teaching is consistently engaging and that all feedback from teachers contains clear advice on how to improve their work.

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 demonstrate excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across different areas of learning. Pupils feel safe and supported and are therefore confident to take risks with their learning and do not see getting something wrong as failure. In a French lesson, Year 7 pupils happily shared technical errors in their writing, seeing this as a way of identifying and correcting common pitfalls in order to develop greater accuracy. In a highly interactive music lesson about illustrating a story with music, Year 3 pupils accurately explained the meaning of rhythm and created their own examples related to sayings made up in their heads. In a biology lesson, Year 10 pupils showed well-developed understanding of the mechanism by which vaccines work. Across the school the achievement of pupils with EAL or SEND is strong and at least in line with that of their peers because of the care taken to identify their particular needs and the provision of high levels of support. Teaching ensures that the most able pupils are challenged effectively, fulfilling a recommendation from the previous inspection. Almost all parents agreed that teaching enables their children to make progress. A very small minority

of pupils did not agree that feedback and marking helps them to improve their work. Inspection evidence shows that there are many examples of high-quality feedback in line with the school's marking policy, which enable pupils to understand how to improve their work but that, in a few cases, feedback is not as supportive.

- 3.6 Pupils' highly positive attitudes to learning demonstrate their drive and determination. They are enthusiastic and ambitious learners with a genuine desire to succeed. This was clear from excellent levels of engagement in lessons where they work with self-motivation and intense focus, both individually and collaboratively. It is also evident from their commitment to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including those with an academic focus. As they progress through the school, pupils increasingly take responsibility for organising their own learning and development, including seeking one-to-one support from staff if required. This is encouraged by the highly positive relationships they have with their teachers. Pupils in Year 13 enjoy the significant levels of autonomy provided by the blended learning approach arising from the school's digital strategy. They demonstrated strong organisational skills when explaining their individual approaches to managing their work and resources, appreciating the flexibility to submit work and receive feedback both electronically and in hard copy. Throughout the school, pupils respond well to the high expectations, enthusiasm and passion of their teachers, in line with the school's core pillars of character, endeavour and achievement which encourage the development of positive and resilient attitudes.
- 3.7 Pupils exhibit extremely strong and sophisticated study skills for their age and develop excellent higher-order skills as seen in a chemistry lesson where Year 13 pupils determined and drew curly arrow mechanisms for acylation reactions with unfamiliar reagents. As pupils move up through the school, they are regularly challenged by their teachers to question, investigate and analyse information before drawing conclusions from this important process. From an early age, junior school pupils are systematically taught key study techniques, such as mind maps, standing them in good stead for the future. In an English lesson, Year 5 pupils successfully used a mind map and picture board to explain the plot of an adventure story before planning and developing their own version. The ability of pupils to critically analyse information was evident when Year 13 pupils in a drama lesson hypothesised about the impact of how characters are portrayed on the emotions of the audience. In an English lesson, Year 9 pupils expressed strong and well-argued opinions on the complex issue of whether making the majority of people happy is justifiable, identifying and articulating strengths and weaknesses in the proposition.
- 3.8 Pupils' levels of attainment, as indicated by the evidence from lesson observations, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of their work, together with standardised measures of progress, show that they make excellent progress. Pupils' attainment at A level in 2022 was strong with almost half of all results achieving an A* or A. This high level of attainment mirrors the centre- and teacher-assessed grades in 2020 and 2021. These results reflect the excellent progress achieved by pupils as a result of their positive attitudes to learning, supported by teachers' strong subject knowledge, careful planning and highly engaging teaching. Results in GCSE are equally indicative of the high-quality of learning and teaching. In 2022, almost six-tenths of the results were at the top grades and, in 2020 and 2021 in the centre- and teacher-assessed assessments, two-thirds of results also achieved top grades. Data analysed show almost all pupils achieve examination results that are higher than expected for those of their ability. High-quality relationships between pupils and teachers further enhance the benefits of small class sizes. Additionally, the personalised curriculum choices available to pupils ensure that their individual needs and interests are met effectively.
- 3.9 Pupils' academic and other achievements are enhanced by their fluent use of information and communication technology (ICT). This reflects senior leaders' significant investment in ICT infrastructure and training. Pupils make effective use of their own digital devices within and beyond the classroom and feel that this helps them to organise their work, find resources and work both independently and collaboratively within and beyond the classroom. Most pupils are highly supportive of the move to blended approaches to learning using ICT. Examples of innovative practice using ICT

were observed, including use of geographical information systems in a Year 12 geography lesson to assist with researching the cultural diversity of the local area and in a Year 8 geography lesson in which pupils created stop motion animations of waterfall development. Pupils in the junior school develop excellent ICT skills through regular timetabled teaching reinforced in all subject areas. This ensures learning is extremely well embedded and they develop a strong technical foundation to build upon. In a Reception class, children independently and confidently took pictures using their iPads, to show their understanding of prepositional language.

- 3.10 Pupils are highly articulate, share their ideas willingly and listen respectfully to each other. Pupils identified that an emphasis on discussion in lessons and the encouragement of them to make presentations and to debate issues, support the development of their communication and thinking skills. They particularly value the role that discussion plays in allowing them to develop their understanding of topics in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons. Pupils convey their ideas in writing with clarity and increasing sophistication as seen in work from a range of subjects. Highly developed writing featuring imaginative language use was evident in EPQ essays including one on genetics and animal phobias. In a science lesson, Year 5 pupils were articulate in explaining their understanding of gravity, hypothesising on the potential impact of gravity on their paper planes and recording the outcomes of the experiment with accuracy and precision.
- 3.11 Levels of numeracy, and the ability to apply these across the curriculum, are high. In many lessons, pupils were seen working confidently with numbers. Where individuals find things more challenging, scaffolding and teacher support proves effective in enabling them to apply their numerical skills effectively. In a business studies lesson with Year 11 pupils, where mathematical calculations were an integral part of the work on balance sheets, the teacher provided a noticeably clear model for how the calculations should operate and supported pupils as and when they required it. Year 6 pupils were confident to verbally explain their understanding of equivalent fractions. They simplified, converted and identified patterns before answering problem-solving questions set both on the whiteboard and on their individual iPads. In an economics lesson, Year 13 pupils were extremely adept at handling number and using numeracy as a tool to understand recent economic events and how multinational corporations develop their marketing strategies. They saw numeracy as simply integral to their study of the subject.
- 3.12 Pupils' achievements, both individually and as groups, across the curriculum and in a range of sporting, creative and co-curricular activities is excellent. Senior leaders' strong commitment to offering a broad and highly personalised curriculum, alongside an outstanding range of extra-curricular options including those providing academic enrichment, enables pupils to excel in areas of particular strength. High levels of success have been achieved by school teams and individual pupils at national, regional and county level in a range of sports including gymnastics, hockey, equestrian pursuits, swimming, netball, athletics and cricket. Pupils have achieved success in national mathematics, science and university essay competitions as well as in a range of academic competitions against other GDST schools. Pupils achieve notable success in the performing and creative arts including selection for regional and national ensembles and cathedral choirs. In addition, they participate in a range of large-scale performances in school and within the local and regional community alongside success in the Arts Council's Arts Award scheme. The majority of sixth-form pupils progress to their chosen university courses, including those with challenging entry requirements.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils develop outstanding social and collaborative skills through all aspects of school life as a result of the school's aim to instil core values of moral integrity, respect for self and others, social responsibility, and ambition. There is an exceptionally strong community ethos within the school, and collaborative working is a consistent feature of lessons with which pupils readily engage. In a Year 7

netball lesson, pupils worked collaboratively, observing each other's dodges and feint dodges, giving constructive advice on what went well and how to improve. They communicated effectively and with empathy, simultaneously improving skills and demonstrating excellent social development. In a mathematics lesson, Year 6 pupils collaborated strongly in groups to develop solutions to problems or challenges set by the teacher. Almost all parents agree that the school equips their children with the teamworking, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.

- 3.15 Pupils have a notably well-developed awareness of how to keep themselves and others physically and mentally safe, understanding what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and where to get help if needed. They feel able to self-regulate and take both proactive and reactive measures to support their health. In a discussion with Year 8 pupils, it was clear that they place a high value on the PSHE programme and how this helps to develop an understanding of healthy lifestyles. This is closely linked to a range of age-appropriate educational assemblies and talks. Pupils embrace the many opportunities to be involved in sport, including extra-curricular clubs, and sixth-form pupils recognise the value of games remaining a compulsory element of the curriculum. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to stay safe online and know how to do this as reflected in questionnaire responses and discussions. They speak openly and honestly when discussing wellbeing. They also gain confidence from the readily available support provided by all staff, including the school nurse and counsellor, and they are confident their voices will be heard. The strong community ethos means that pupils are excellent at looking after each other and confident to speak to a trusted adult should they have concerns.
- 3.16 Pupils value and celebrate diversity, demonstrating a deep respect for each other and their community. They speak of the school as being an inclusive community where a culture of mutual respect is pervasive. They are keen to learn more about different cultures and they actively promote diversity and discussion of different faiths, genders and sexualities. As a result, pupils show significant understanding, empathy and tolerance. Pupils say they would be willing to challenge behaviours and attitudes which could undermine this sense of inclusiveness but report that such instances are extremely rare and insist that the school encourages everyone to be themselves. Children in the Reception class demonstrated enthusiasm when learning about Swahili language and culture and enjoyed using small-world resources representing people with different ethnicities and abilities. Work seen in Year 7 religion, philosophy and ethics books demonstrates well-developed understanding of a range of major world religions. In discussion with inspectors, pupils spoke positively of pupil forums. These include the diversity and inclusion and open-minds groups which have contributed to school initiatives, including a review of uniform policy to make it more inclusive and engagement with the GDST's 'Undivided' programme and surveys. All parents agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.
- 3.17 The moral development and understanding of pupils are excellent. They fully appreciate the concept of right and wrong, taking responsibility for their behaviour, as reflected in the self-regulation seen in their respectful daily interactions with each other and with their teachers. This produces an atmosphere across the school of calm, purpose and order. Pupils speak of knowing what the school's expectations are in terms of their behaviour, and they understand the importance of rules in maintaining high standards both in school and in a civilised society. The opportunity for the school council to contribute to a review of the behaviour and conduct policy has ensured that pupils engage well with this and feel listened to. Pupils recognise the importance of a sanctions procedure but feel it is fair and used proportionally. Pupils develop a mature understanding of moral and ethical issues and are keen to debate, which allows them to express their opinions. They understand criminal laws of the land evidenced by a Year 8 lesson which focused on the issue of consent and how consent is important in all walks of life.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of realistic self-awareness, understanding their own strengths and areas for development. They are encouraged to face challenges, strive to improve and to initially attempt to work things out for themselves. This approach, together with individual target setting,

encourages and promotes pupils' self-esteem, confidence, discipline and resilience. Pupils also attribute this to opportunities provided through the curriculum and co-curricular programme and the sense of belonging which is a key aspect of the school as a community. Most are clearly aware of what they need to do to make further progress, due to detailed feedback and helpful advice from the majority of teachers. Year 11 pupils expressed the view that they try to take responsibility for independent research and for closing any gaps in understanding that may emerge from the results of tests and assessments. They say that the confidence to do this comes in large part from knowing that the open-door policy of staff means that if reassurance or reinforcement of learning is required, this is readily available. They report that teachers encourage them to have self-belief and help them to be who they want to be. They also take every opportunity to praise each other, thus demonstrating mutual respect and increasing the self-esteem of their peers.

- 3.19 Pupils develop strong decision-making skills, understanding that they are important determinants of their own successes and wellbeing. Pupils of all ages make well-informed decisions ranging from their involvement in various clubs available to identifying what helps to improve their own mental health and wellbeing whilst also reflecting on why certain techniques do not work for them. Pupils also expressed their confidence in making choices of subjects to study at GCSE and A Level. Year 13 pupils outlined a range of plans for their lives after school including decisions about progressing to university courses, with or without gap years, or seeking more vocational routes, including applying for apprenticeships. The pupils also show excellent decision-making in their self-regulation in behaviour both in class and around the school. They are highly intent on fulfilling their potential and making the most of their time at the school and are amply supported through the school's spiral PSHE curriculum in making appropriate decisions.
- 3.20 Pupils make an excellent contribution to the lives of others within the school and in the wider community, raising significant sums for the charities they choose to support. They are keen to offer help to others in a variety of ways, including the volunteering aspect of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, Sports Leaders running netball sessions at a local special school and the whole school litter pick on eco day where they enjoy the positive feedback to this from the local community. Pupils recognise that small acts can make a significant difference to other people. There are many examples of senior girls guiding younger ones, including Year 10 pupils supporting junior pupils with their reading, the initiative pairing Year 13 pupils with those in Year 6 to aid transition to the senior school, and pupils volunteering to become peer mentors and subject ambassadors. Pupils relish the many opportunities available to take on positions of responsibility as they move through the school.
- 3.21 Pupils demonstrate strong spiritual awareness through their appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. Pupils show great empathy for each other. They talk about the community as an inclusive one to which they are proud to belong. Pupils gain an awareness and understanding of other religions and cultures through the school's PSHE and religion, philosophy and ethics curriculum. The charitable work they actively engage with enables them to develop an understanding of the value of supporting others. In a PSHE lesson, Year 10 pupils displayed a clear understanding of the high value of relationships between parents and children, demonstrating an appreciation of this beyond expectations for their age. Pupils express the view that spirituality is not necessarily about religion and identify that relationships, values, memories, and hobbies all add value to life. They are environmentally aware, as seen in their strong commitment to securing Eco-schools status. Their engagement with the whole school focus on the environment provides an excellent avenue for making a positive difference to the quality of peoples' lives within and beyond the school.

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 proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. 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 Elizabeth Thomas	Reporting inspector
Mrs Karenann Hood	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Richard Evans	Team inspector (Former headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Jonathan Ricketts	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Neil Smith	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)