



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Solefield School

December 2019



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School's Details

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|----------------------------------|--|-----|-----------------|----|
| School | Solefield School | | | |
| DfE number | 886/6038 | | | |
| Registered charity number | 293466 | | | |
| Address | Solefield School Solefields Road Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1PH | | | |
| Telephone number | 01732 452142 | | | |
| Email address | office@solefieldschool.org | | | |
| Headmaster | Mr Dougal Philps | | | |
| Chair of governors | Mr Robert Clewley | | | |
| Age range | 4 to 13 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 158 | | | |
| | EYFS | 12 | Pre-prep | 21 |
| | Prep | 125 | | |
| Inspection dates | 3 to 5 December 2019 | | | |

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Solefield School is an independent day school for male pupils aged 4 to 13 years. It was founded in 1948 and became a charitable trust in the 1980s. The school is administered by a governing body.
- 1.2 The school comprises two departments: pre-prep, for pupils aged 4 to 7 years, and prep for pupils aged 7 to 13.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school has added new information and communication technology (ICT) and art rooms and an atrium.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to engender in their pupils a sense of self-worth. It seeks to encourage pupils to be polite, confident but not arrogant, ensuring they think of others, are benevolent, charitable and take an interest in the wider world. The school endeavours to enable pupils to discover their strengths and make the most of their talents to become self-motivated, intellectually curious and have enquiring and open minds, respond positively to challenge and gain skills that prepare them to meet the challenges of later life.

About the pupils

- 1.5 The majority of pupils come from professional white British and white European families in the Sevenoaks area. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of pupils is above average. The school has identified 34 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, mild autism and other conditions, 20 of whom receive additional specialist help. Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). The curriculum is modified for those pupils identified by the school as being most able in the school's population.

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. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. 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 **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 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: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 **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

- 2.9 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.10 **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

- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.13 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.15 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.17 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.

2.18 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 excellent.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding and underpin their achievement in other areas.
 - Pupils' knowledge and skills in all areas of learning are excellent.
 - Pupils are very competent and confident oral communicators.
 - Pupils are highly proficient in their approach to enquiry and use of thinking skills.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of self-confidence without being arrogant.
 - Pupils have a strong understanding of morality and excellent manners.
 - Pupils display an outstanding sense of social responsibility.
 - Pupils show excellent levels of respect and appreciation of diversity. They value the contributions and abilities of others.

Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:
- Ensuring that all pupils understand how to improve their work, by developing a more consistent approach to setting targets, in line with the best practice observed.

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' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They demonstrate a clear love of learning and are very willing to be engaged in all the activities on offer, focusing quickly on new tasks. Pupils clearly enjoyed learning new French vocabulary by dressing up in different clothing, and when extending their thinking skills, by offering up innovative ideas for additional items which might be useful in a handbag. A very large majority of pupils, who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, felt the school supported them in becoming confident and independent. This was seen through the group work carried out in many lessons. All parents who responded to the questionnaire felt the school helped their child to be confident and independent and develop skills for their future. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is supported by their excellent relationships with their peers and the supportive and caring learning environment created by the teachers. It is underpinned by the ethos and aims of the school, actively promoted by the leadership team, that pupils should be 'happy'.
- 3.6 Pupils have excellent knowledge and skills across the whole range of areas of learning. Pupils communicate orally, with high levels of accuracy and competence because of the very many opportunities they have in class, debating activities and performances to discuss and express their views. Pupils are skilled in refining oral arguments to persuade and engage the listener. Pupils across all ages demonstrate strong understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils have an excellent understanding of a wide body of scientific knowledge, with the older pupils confidently explaining the differences in the reactivity of metals and applying their skills to measure the density of irregular objects. They demonstrate high levels of knowledge in human and social areas of learning, such as when applying their knowledge of volcanic activity and their skills in interpreting information from diagrams and graphs to explain the difference in the impact of volcanic eruptions on developed and developing countries. The most able pupils make excellent progress because they are often challenged to extend their thinking through the use of pertinent questions. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) achieve and make very good progress because they are

effectively supported by classroom assistants, as well as through targeted one-to-one lessons, with tasks planned at suitable levels of challenge. A small minority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt that marking did not guide them to make progress. The inspection found marking to be thorough and positive with comments to indicate how the work could be 'even better if'. However, in a minority of cases these marking responses did not give explicit guidance to make it clear how pupils could improve their work. Pupils are very active and demonstrate advanced physical skills. Pupils have excellent aesthetic and creative abilities and a wide knowledge of the work of different artists. Their work exhibits strong artistic skills in many different media. This is because teachers know their subjects well and communicate about them clearly.

- 3.7 Pupils are highly competent communicators, especially orally. They express their views and opinions clearly when discussing a variety of topics. This is because leaders and staff meet the school's aim for pupils to be intellectually curious and have enquiring and open minds. Pupils listen attentively to their peers and teachers and are happy both to challenge and be challenged by different ideas. The oldest pupils spoke with confidence, authority and from notes when leading an assembly. The youngest pupils demonstrated good understanding of the basic sentence structures. They worked together to improve sentences on the white board, spotting where capital letters, full stops and spaces between words had been written incorrectly. Most of the youngest pupils are beginning to use clear cursive writing with increasing independence and accuracy. Older pupils demonstrated their excellent writing skills through extended pieces of work in a wide variety of genre, using many sophisticated writing techniques to engage, enthuse or challenge the reader. Older pupils utilised a variety of persuasive techniques in collaborative writing, discussing the most suitable choice of adjectives to create the best phrase. Pupils demonstrated their excellent reading skills when researching for projects. They use a wide variety of sources when researching and infer information from texts effectively, to inform their project work. Pupils read and contributed constructive criticism of each other's Victorian posters, offering justified opinions as to which invention has the most impact on us today.
- 3.8 Pupils exhibit excellent study skills. They competently use a wide variety of information to produce high quality work. Pupils hypothesise in science when making predictions about circuits and switches or in geography, to explore the potential impact of natural disasters on different types of countries, using facts from independent and group research. The most able pupils demonstrate highly developed thinking skills because of the extra level of challenge planned into most of their lessons and because of specific lessons in the curriculum to develop such abilities. Most pupils felt they were encouraged to think and learn for themselves. The school meets the recommendation from the previous inspection to encourage greater independent work and open ended discussion.
- 3.9 Pupils are highly able mathematicians and achieve well above age-related expectations. Younger pupils can confidently apply their understanding of simple subtraction in making up their own number stories and solving one another's number problems, with the most able understanding addition as the inverse operation of subtraction. Older pupils competently use their understanding of fractions and number to solve complex problems about ratios. Excellent progress was seen in most mathematical work because of the use of carefully guided questions to systematically build understanding, excellent planning at different levels of challenge so all could engage with the core task and positive relationships between pupils and staff so that pupils felt confident that any mistakes were viewed as opportunities to learn. Pupils apply their mathematics skills, such as those relating to measurement and computation, effectively in other subjects. In discussion older pupils clearly valued their strong mathematics skills and explained their importance to being able to measure river speed and gradient of hills when on a residential trip to Wales.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate outstanding ICT knowledge and skills which they can apply in many subjects. Pupils competently use the range of tools and programs available to word process and produce presentations. They use video technology imaginatively to make presentations for Remembrance Day and enjoy coding. Pupils' ICT competence is encouraged because they are given opportunities to use appropriate equipment funded by the governance of the school. Pupils' reading skills are enhanced

through engagement with an online program to produce an e-book. ICT is used effectively by pupils, as a tool to enhance the understanding of symmetrical patterns in art and to develop understanding of the story of *The Good Samaritan* through use of an animation program. Pupils are highly engaged in learning because of the creative use of technology as a teaching tool. Pupils used the interactive white board in music to compose a tune and participated with engagement and enjoyment in a virtual history lesson from the National Archive. The school meets the action point from the previous inspection to use ICT more creatively in lessons.

- 3.11 Pupils of all ages and abilities make very good progress from their starting points. Pupils with SEND make rapid progress in relation to age expectations because of individual support and targeted teaching in lessons. Able pupils make very good progress because of the targeted support and challenge they receive. Pupils consistently gain places at their first choice selective grammar and independent schools. The school does not take part in National Curriculum tests, but evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' books and the school's own assessment data, shows attainment to be above in relation to national age-related expectations and well above average for the most able pupils.
- 3.12 Pupils enjoy significant success in many dramatic, musical, artistic and sporting areas. The Judo team were national champions in the independent association of prep school (IAPS) championships in 2018. The basketball team have been finalists and semi-finalists in the national IAPS championships. The school colts sevens rugby team won a local tournament in 2019 and a number of the school gymnasts and the football teams achieved recognition in local competitions. Individuals have also achieved sporting success at national level in tennis, fencing and ice hockey. In recent years pupils have gained academic scholarships and scholarships in art, drama, music and sport, to a range of competitive independent schools.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate strong understanding of their own abilities and know how these can be used to help both themselves and teams achieve success. Older pupils competently led an assembly encouraging younger peers to reflect on their own skills. They spoke confidently about opportunities to study an area to scholarship level and how an understanding of their own skills had helped them make appropriate choices. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that this is because they feel the teachers know them well and support their individuality. Pupils spoke with high levels of self-confidence when describing the many opportunities they are given to perform in class, school or to the wider public. Pupils feel encouraged to improve to achieve success because of the supportive verbal and written comments from teachers. They feel well prepared for the next stage in their lives because of the time given by staff to support and prepare them for examinations to their future schools. They are also prepared for the future because of initiatives from the leadership team, supported by governance, in the 'scholarship pathways', a program open to all in years 7 and 8. This meets the school's aims, to enable its pupils to discover their strengths and make the most of their talents to become self-motivated.
- 3.15 Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong arising from their high levels of commitment to and understanding of, the school's core values; 'value ourselves, value others and value our world'. Pupils are polite and well-mannered, clearly enacted in their attitudes to staff when making lunch selections. Pupils demonstrate excellent understanding of the importance of being kind, and being able to reflect on their actions if they misbehave. They are quick to apologise when their behaviour impacts negatively on others. There is a clear culture of forgiveness in the school, encouraged by the school council who give out kindness awards in assemblies, to deserving peers nominated by the pupils. Pupils' excellent understanding of morality is developed through the supportive structures in place within the school to encourage positive behaviour, which the pupils respect and clearly understand.

They understand how to apply moral principles seen through work presenting a speech on the ethical question, 'Is one life worth more than another?' They learn about the wider context for rules and laws in society through events such as parliament week. A very large majority of the parents who responded to the questionnaire felt the school promotes good behaviour.

- 3.16 Pupils in the school exhibit high levels of mutual respect and appreciation of each other's skills. They work effectively together, both within their classes and in mixed age groups. For example, during a music lesson all pupils collaborated well to perform a piece of music, with each individual playing single notes of a tune, so the whole tune only worked if all played their part. Older pupils demonstrate strong nurturing skills and empathy for the younger pupils who clearly see them as excellent role models. This is demonstrated by pupils through the class prefect system, which involves Year 8 pupils being attached to younger classes. Pupils develop their excellent problem solving abilities, when working in collaborative activities across a number of subjects to produce group presentations and projects. All of the parents who responded to the questionnaire and a large majority of pupils felt the school helps pupils develop strong team work and social skills.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate outstanding respect for diversity within their own school and society both in terms of acceptance of others life choices and in terms of being accepting of difference. They speak with respect for others' religious beliefs and practices, when studying about different faiths through the curriculum or when given the opportunity to listen to the thoughts, values and experiences of people from a range of different religious and cultural backgrounds who are invited to speak to the pupils. The pupils raise money to support a school in Malawi. The overwhelming majority of parents and most pupils felt the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.
- 3.18 Pupils are enthusiastic in making use of opportunities to exercise choice, when these are provided, and demonstrate excellent decision making skills when doing so. During discussions, older boys showed wisdom in explaining why they chose challenging tasks in mathematics from a range of exercises, as they understood the importance in learning from a breadth of experiences and not just completing what they know they can do. This is because of the supportive advice offered by staff so pupils feel confident in the choices they make. Pupils know that teachers will look at their work and praise its positive attributes, and so they are willing to learn how to make better choices in the future. Pupils learn to compromise in making decisions for the good of all, through the opportunities offered, such as participation in residential school trips. Pupils show strong understanding of their social responsibilities and the way their decisions can impact on others for good. This was demonstrated when discussing ideas in class to propose to the food committee.
- 3.19 Pupils clearly recognise the importance of connecting with the non-material world and value the opportunities they are given to do so, through group activities such as 'draw and talk' and 'talk time', where pupils can express their hopes and desires for themselves and the world. They appreciate the spirituality of others expressed through faith when learning about different world religions and reflecting on their teaching in lessons. Pupils have a deep appreciation of philosophical debate when exploring topics such as, 'Are Solefield boys lucky?'. Younger pupils effectively articulated their philosophical views and reflections in reworking the speech of Dr Martin Luther King, to reflect on their own dreams for the world and the people in it.
- 3.20 Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of developing healthy choices in their life styles. They demonstrate high levels of engagement with physical activities, both through the varied sporting opportunities offered and in their play. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors clearly articulated the importance of physical fitness and how this can be developed. This is because of the clear focus on teaching fitness as well as providing opportunities for all to be engaged. Pupils are pro-active in making healthy choices at lunch time, partly as a result of being encouraged to engage with a healthy diet through the displays in the dining hall. Pupils take an interest in promoting health within the community through the actions of the food committee and 'Boys choice Tuesday', where classes choose the menu for all. Pupils have strong appreciation of the importance of mental wellbeing which is very actively promoted and encouraged by the leadership and staff body. Safety in all its forms is

promoted in assembly themes and house meeting discussions. Pupils develop a strong understanding of the importance of online safety through their curriculum. The vast majority of parents and most pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt the school encouraged them to adopt a healthy lifestyle, and almost all pupils said that they knew how to stay safe when online.

- 3.21 Pupils show a highly developed sense of responsibility for others in their community and in the wider world. They clearly enjoy using their voice, through the school council, food committee and environmental group, to improve the school. They constantly seek ways to contribute to charities, organise all charitable endeavours in the school, and have a strong sense of their obligation to consider the needs of others. For example, older pupils took harvest festival produce to the local foodbank and collected products for a local women's shelter. Pupils raised money to support the local air ambulance. They also showed their awareness of the contributions they can make to the environment by recycling crisp packets. The pupils enjoy and value the many positions of responsibility they are given such as house captains and prefects. The school meets its aims to encourage pupils to think of others, be benevolent, charitable and take an interest in the wider world.

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 chair of governors, attended house form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with 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

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Mrs Vivien Sergeant | Reporting inspector |
| Mr Stuart Bain | Compliance team inspector (Deputy principal, ISA school) |
| Mrs Deborah Shephard | Team inspector (Head of seniors, IAPS school) |