



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

SOUTH LEE SCHOOL

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

| | |
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| School | South Lee School |
| DfE number | 935/6025 |
| Registered charity number | 310491 |
| Address | South Lee School Nowton Road Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP33 2BT |
| Telephone number | 01284 754654 |
| Email address | office@southlee.co.uk |
| Headmaster | Mr Mervyn Watch |
| Chair of governors | Mr Stephen Honeywood |
| Age range | 2 to 13 |
| Number of pupils on roll | 215 |
| | Boys 120 Girls 95 |
| | EYFS 60 Pre-prep 50 |
| | Prep 105 |
| Inspection dates | 8 to 9 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 the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support areas. 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

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mrs Serena Alexander | Reporting inspector |
| Mr Mark Brain | Team inspector (Head, IAPS school) |
| Mrs Prudence Lynch | Team inspector (Head, IAPS school) |

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 South Lee School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 13 years. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) caters for children aged 2 to 5 years old in the Nursery and Reception. Pupils from Years 1 to 3 are taught in the pre-prep, and the prep department is for pupils from Years 4 to 8. The school operates as a charitable trust, of which all parents are trust members. The charitable trust is overseen by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1961. Since opening, further grounds have been acquired and new buildings have been constructed including classroom blocks, a hall, a science laboratory, a computer room and a new prep school. Since the last inspection, a new sports and performance centre has been opened. The headmaster has been in post since September 2015, and a deputy head and head of pre-prep have recently been appointed.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide challenging, inspiring and individualised education for all pupils that fosters a love of learning and a desire to work hard. It endeavours to sustain a caring and stimulating environment, and to provide opportunities to develop interests and contribute to the local community and world beyond. The school strives to promote positive relationships and to encourage an interest in current affairs, an understanding of different cultures, and skills of teamwork, leadership, and responsibility towards oneself and others.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly average. The school has identified 68 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 45 of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 12 pupils, none of whom require additional support. Data used by the school have identified 26 pupils as the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.
- 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> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Cygnets | Nursery (Age from 2 to 3 years) |
| Swans | Nursery (Age from 3 to 4 years) |
| Kindergarten | Reception |

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in January 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Set clearly defined targets to assist pupils in the improvement of their work.
 - Ensure that classroom teaching in all subjects makes provision for specific challenge for all pupils, whatever their ability or need.
- 1.7 The previous inspection of the EYFS by ISI was an intermediate inspection in November 2013. The recommendation from that inspection was:
- Formalise the ongoing system of staff supervision.
- 1.8 The school has fully met the recommendations to set clearly defined targets to assist pupils in the improvement of their work, and to formalise the ongoing system of staff supervision in the EYFS. It has partially addressed the recommendation to ensure that classroom teaching in all subjects makes provision for specific challenge for all pupils, whatever their ability or need. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils attain excellent results in their entry examinations to senior schools, with several attaining scholarships.
- Pupils of all ages and abilities demonstrate excellent numeracy skills and knowledge.
- Children in the EYFS make excellent progress.
- Pupils exhibit outstanding physical skills and play sport to a very high standard.
- Pupils' progress is sometimes limited due to leaders not tracking their achievements over time in order to provide additional challenge where needed.
- Pupils' progress is assisted when their work is carefully marked with helpful comments, but such practice is not consistent across the whole school.
- Pupils' development of higher order reasoning skills is sometimes limited as they have few opportunities to take leadership of their learning.

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

- Outstanding social and collaborative skills are extremely well developed through the mutual respect displayed by pupils and staff.
- Pupils' moral development is outstanding.
- Pupils have a substantial awareness of the importance of keeping healthy and demonstrate a high level of participation in sports.
- The EYFS children's confidence flourishes as they enjoy the wide variety of learning opportunities in their woodland learning environment.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Improve pupils' progress by tracking their achievement to identify those in need of additional challenge.
- Improve pupils' progress by ensuring that the marking policy is consistently applied.
- Extend the opportunities for pupils to take leadership of their learning and develop higher order reasoning skills.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 The school is successful in meeting its aim to sustain a secure, caring and stimulating environment, and to provide an education for all pupils that fosters a love of learning and a desire to work hard. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, all parents agreed that the range of subjects on offer is suitable and all pupils agreed that the school provides them the opportunity to learn and make progress. Pupils of all ages have excellent attitudes to learning. They listen attentively and collaborate well with one another, sharing ideas and offering suggestions. The school does not take part in national curriculum tests, but available evidence demonstrates that their attainment is judged to be above national age-related expectations. By the end of their time at school, pupils' examination results are excellent for their age and ability. They regularly win academic, art, drama, music and sports scholarships to senior schools of their choice. Pupils succeed due to the excellent preparation for their senior school examinations that they receive from specialist teachers in Years 7 and 8.
- 3.3 From their earliest days in the EYFS, children forge strong foundations for learning and make excellent progress. This is a consequence of the support which they receive from a broad curriculum, imaginative resources, and by staff that know pupils well, offering both support and challenge as it is needed. Children in the EYFS particularly benefit from the many opportunities offered in the surrounding woodlands. Here they develop physical, reasoning and creative skills such as using drainpipes to make a swamp which they then work out how to drain. Children in the Nursery are very articulate for their age; they describe how caterpillars turn into butterflies. In Reception, children achieve a high level of writing for their varying abilities. Their numeracy skills are well developed and they know that a solid with faces that are triangles and rectangles is a triangular prism and not a tetrahedron. Children have many opportunities to think and learn for themselves, guided by open-ended questioning and encouraged when their efforts are rewarded by stickers and praise. By the end of the Reception year, almost all children have achieved all the early learning goals and several have exceeded them.
- 3.4 Pupils at all ages demonstrate outstanding physical skills, playing team sports to a very high standard and winning trophies such as the IAPS netball bowl in 2017. They participate in a variety of sports in school and in their local clubs. Several pupils play at county and/or national level in team sports such as rugby, cricket (both boys and girls), netball, football and hockey as well as individual sports such as cross country, dressage, sailing and ice skating. The school is highly supportive of their pupils' endeavours, and offers extra tuition and flexible deadlines while monitoring their personal well-being. Pupils are well supported by the shrewd financial management by governors that has enabled the school to invest in new sports facilities.
- 3.5 Pupils' aesthetic and creative skills are nurtured to a high standard through art, design technology and music. Pupils participate and win awards in many local and national competitions, such as at a local classical music festival. Several pupils sing in the local cathedral choir and many gain merit and distinctions in their music, speech and drama grades. Pupils of all ages spoke very positively about the range of opportunities open to them both in and out of the curriculum. This was confirmed by an overwhelming majority of pupils' and parents' questionnaire responses.

- 3.6 Throughout the school, pupils' speaking and listening skills are of a high standard and their presentation of work is excellent. When provided the opportunity for creative writing, pupils respond with great imagination. They enjoy writing poetry, and can explain how metaphors and adverbs can be used as descriptors to powerful effect. Pupils apply these skills across all subjects. For example, Year 5 pupils demonstrated substantial understanding of Tennyson's poem, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Pupils speak with confidence in public, such as in drama productions and when reading their match reports in assembly.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages and abilities demonstrate excellent numeracy skills and knowledge. They apply their understanding with confidence when answering questions and solving problems. Older pupils have a firm grasp of algebra, for example they can describe how they solve problems on area by setting out equations and multiplying out brackets. Pupils' mathematical skills benefit from a well-planned curriculum and a wide range of resources. They also apply their mathematical skills in other subjects such as finding averages and studying graphs and tables in geography and using equations to calculate gravitational force in science and in converting their examination marks into percentages.
- 3.8 Pupils are proficient in information and communication technology (ICT) and in its application across the curriculum. Year 3 pupils use vocabulary such as 'algorithm' and 'coding' with understanding, and confidently embark on exciting and clearly introduced programming tasks. Pupils apply their ICT skills in other subjects. For example, they word process their poetry, use graphics to design Victorian Christmas cards and postcards from India, and research forests in art lessons. Pupils' scientific skills are of a high standard. Pupils in Year 6 can use extracts from red cabbage to test for acids and alkalis. Pupils' skills in humanities are well developed, and they enjoy imaginative tasks such as reflecting on whether they would like to be the king in a Year 4 history lesson. Pupils' language skills are also strong; by Year 7 most pupils are proficient in French, Spanish and Latin.
- 3.9 Pupils in the pre-prep make steady progress, and pupils in the prep school make good progress particularly in mathematics. This is because pupils who need support are readily identified by a programme of standardised tests that has recently been reviewed by the newly appointed academic leadership team. Pupils' progress is not yet tracked as they move up through the school in order to ensure more rapid progress for those pupils who would benefit from additional challenge. In their questionnaire responses, a small minority of pupils disagreed with the statement that they know how well they are doing in their work. Work scrutiny demonstrated that all work is marked but that this is not always thorough. In some subjects, pupils' progress is assisted by helpful comments provided to guide improvement but frequently these are concerned over presentation rather than content. Pupils talked very positively about the use of self-assessment in some subjects but this practice is not consistent across the school. They are also complimentary about the assistance that they receive from their teachers. In their questionnaire responses, all pupils agreed that teachers are supportive and helpful if they have any problems with their work.
- 3.10 Pupils with SEND or EAL are well supported through individual development plans tailored to their needs. These pupils make good progress because they are supported in class by trained assistants and work in individual sessions with specialist teachers when required. More able pupils are less readily identified, and whilst challenges that extend their knowledge and understanding are set for them in some lessons, this is not yet common practice. Pupils enjoy some individual assignments such as the scholarship art programme, and projects such as researching a notable Victorian of choice in history. They do not have many such opportunities nor are they regularly set challenging tasks that develop their higher order reasoning skills and require them to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' social skills are outstanding. These skills are extremely well developed through the mutual respect of pupils and staff. They support each other, collaborate well and work together to achieve common goals in the many opportunities for shared work in lessons. Pupils' collaboration is very well demonstrated in the extensive programme of team sports, where staff value the work of the whole team. The EYFS children work naturally with each other, taking turns and spontaneously sharing play and resources. Pre-prep pupils talk openly about any social issues in their personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons. Older pupils are keen to look after younger ones. For example, in the prep school the recently introduced peer listening scheme for Year 8 has developed into a peer mentoring scheme where Year 8 pupils mentor any younger pupils who are having any academic or social concerns. Year 4 pupils talked about how they had benefited from this, and those in Year 8 spoke of how much they are learning from the experience. Pupils readily engage adult visitors in social conversations, politely enquiring about how they are enjoying their day. Year 8 pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives, socially aware, confident in themselves and excellent ambassadors for the school.
- 4.3 Pupils demonstrate excellent moral sensibilities. They respect the school rules but said that they understand how to behave without the need for them. All parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Pupils are extremely well mannered towards each other. They demonstrate deep moral understanding through discussions of ethical issues in lessons, such as the story of the Good Samaritan in religious education (RE) and human rights in PSHE. Year 8 pupils recognised the difference between good-natured teasing and bullying in a discussion during form time.
- 4.4 Pupils have a substantial awareness of the importance of keeping healthy through exercise and participation in sport. They know about healthy eating. Pupils understand how to stay safe as they walk along the road to the sports fields. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they know what to do in order to keep safe online and if the fire alarm sounds. The promotion of pupils' outstanding awareness of safety issues whilst allowing them to benefit from their rural surroundings has been successfully managed through clear strategic planning by leadership and management, with the assistance of governors.
- 4.5 Pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and resilience are well developed. They have an understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance, working on targets set for them. Children in the EYFS particularly benefit from the many opportunities to develop their independence in their learning environment set in the neighbouring woodland. Here they can explore and use the natural resources to discover and create, such as making mud cakes together to give to teachers and 'fairies'. Older pupils talk about how their self-esteem grows as they are encouraged to participate in events such as poetry readings and the annual carol service. In sport, pupils develop a strong sense of resilience and are generous to the victors should they lose a match. Pupils are enthusiastic about the opportunities they encounter on their annual residential trip, they recognise how they grow in confidence as they meet and succeed in unknown physical challenges such as an assault course. Older pupils are positive about the newly introduced 'growth mindset' programme that teaches them study skills and helps them to understand different ways of learning. Pupils say that as a result of this programme they now have the confidence to apply in order to succeed. They know that they should find strategies to further their own learning before asking for assistance. Pupils have a strong understanding that the decisions they make

are significant determinants of their own success and well-being. For example, older pupils can choose whether or not to take home extra examination practice in their holidays, while children in the EYFS decide on what they wish to learn or play with.

- 4.6 Pupils have a natural spiritual understanding, and respond spontaneously and instinctively to their rural surroundings. The EYFS children's spiritual awareness flourishes as they enjoy the wide variety of learning opportunities in the woodlands. They look up at moving clouds and moving trees, and listen to the wind as they consider what they are feeling. Children learn about relaxation in their yoga class and they watch with awe as chicks hatch from their eggs. Pupils in the pre-prep understand the need for calm and are enthusiastic about the opportunities for quiet reading, meditation and drawing pictures to peaceful music. In the prep school, pupils take good advantage of the many opportunities to reflect and consider the non-material aspects of life. They display a deep appreciation for different religions, and can talk about their similarities and differences with understanding and respect. Pupils consider the sacrifice of others as they celebrate Remembrance Day and appreciate the stillness of the cathedral at the carol service.
- 4.7 Pupils develop a genuine and strong sense of social responsibility as they contribute to the local community. For example, the choir visit local residential homes for the elderly to sing for them at Christmas and also take part in a charity carol service at the cathedral. At harvest, pupils donate food for local charities. Pupils choose local and national charities that they wish to support. They raise money for these through events such as cake sales and a stationery shop. Pupils also develop a sense of the wider community through their active participation in local clubs and events.
- 4.8 Pupils display respect for the diversity in the school and wider community. In their questionnaire responses, all parents and pupils agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with other faiths and beliefs. Pupils gain awareness and respect through RE, PSHE and through topics delivered through assemblies and across the curriculum; they discussed the French and Latin roots of the word 'percentage' in mathematics. Pupils demonstrate an appreciation of their own traditions and culture. For instance, they understand that fasting is a feature of many religions and that the Prime Minister has given up crisps for Lent. Pupils are very clear that intolerance is not acceptable and understand that they should treat everyone else as they would want to be treated.
- 4.9 Throughout the school, pupils act extremely responsibly and recognise that they have a part to play that benefits the whole community. They develop a substantial understanding of and respect for democracy. Older pupils talked with enthusiasm about the recent vote on whether the UK should leave the European Union, demonstrating a good understanding of the issues and the democratic process. The pre-prep and prep both have elected school councils which raise to school management any matter that they feel worthy of attention. The pre-prep school council are proud of having achieved recent changes to playground toys and to their snacks. The prep also has playground monitors and a food committee. At the end of Year 7, pupils may submit an application for a position in Year 8 such as head boy or girl, and house or games captain. All pupils take pride in successfully undertaking any position that they are offered, and act as excellent role models to other pupils. At lunchtimes, pupils in Year 3 in the pre-prep and in Years 7 and 8 in the prep take charge of lunch tables. They serve the food, say grace, allow everyone to start eating, and supervise the clearing away with natural and calm authority. Younger pupils benefit enormously from these examples, and this daily routine contributes greatly to pupils' developed sense of community and substantial respect for others.