



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

St. Helen's College, Uxbridge

November 2021

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School's Details

School	St. Helen's College	
DfE number	312/6058	
Address	St Helen's College Parkway Hillingdon Uxbridge Middlesex UB10 9JX	
Telephone number	01895 234371	
Email address	admin@sthelenscollege.com	
Headteacher	Mrs Shirley Drummond	
Proprietors	Mr Dominic Crehan and Mrs Jill Crehan	
Age range	2 to 11	
Number of pupils on roll	379	
	EYFS 111	Juniors 268
Inspection dates	16 to 19 November 2021	

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St. Helen's College is an independent co-educational day school. Founded in 1924 as a school for female pupils aged 4 to 16, it moved to its present site in 1948, when it became co-educational and restricted the maximum age of pupils to 11. The school is owned and governed by the proprietors.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has opened a kindergarten on a separate site for children aged 2 and above, replaced the nursery and reception buildings at lower school, and added a Zen garden.
- 1.3 During the period March to June 2020, the school and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting remained open only for children of key workers. During this period of closure the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.4 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.5 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than kindergarten and nursery children, vulnerable pupils or the children of key workers received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.7 Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.8 The school seeks to inspire academic excellence, mindful self-awareness and creative self-development in pupils. It aims to be an inclusive, happy, vibrant community of pupils, staff and families, where love, respect, teamwork and teaching by example prevail.

About the pupils

- 1.9 Pupils come predominantly from local professional and business families and a range of cultural backgrounds. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 26 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 29 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified 27 pupils as being the more able in the school's population and the curriculum is modified for them.

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 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](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

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's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

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

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

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical 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.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

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

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

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

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

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

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

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

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

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.

- Pupils' motivation to learn and achieve their potential is extremely high and they achieve strongly across the curriculum.
- Pupils are highly articulate and listen to the views of others respectfully.
- Pupils' study skills are at an advanced stage for their age by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils are highly proficient users of mathematics and can apply their numeracy skills with great competence.

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

- Pupils demonstrate outstanding respect towards, and interest in, each other's beliefs, values and cultures.
- Pupils have a highly developed appreciation of the non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils display outstanding moral understanding from the earliest age. They can clearly distinguish right from wrong and attain excellent standards of behaviour.
- Pupils undertake roles of responsibility extremely willingly and perform these with great pride and success.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Enabling pupils to achieve consistently through a common application of teaching strategies in all subject areas.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 The attainment of pupils across the school is high, with all of the youngest children achieving the expected level of development by the time they leave the early years setting. The attainment of pupils in the upper school maintains this excellent start, with standardised scores in English, mathematics and reading all above national age-related expectations. Pupils of all ages make progress at least in line with and in many cases exceeding national age- and ability-related expectations. Nationally standardised data provided by the school show that pupils make excellent short- and long-term progress across all age groups. Evidence from scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of lessons

confirms this picture. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the range of subjects, including for online learning, is suitable for their child and a similarly high proportion also agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum due to the reflective learning strategies they are taught from an early age. This includes pupils' highly proficient use of learning logs which enable them to review progress and to identify next steps to extend their understanding. Pupils apply newly acquired skills with aplomb and demonstrate a high degree of understanding across a wide range of subject areas. Younger children displayed excellent knowledge and understanding of relative quantities in a Pudsey bear-related activity. Older pupils showed outstanding knowledge and understanding of the water cycle, using correct terminology, in a sea shanty they composed and sang online during a period of remote learning. In a Spanish lesson, the oldest pupils identified and took opportunities to practise their syllable pronunciation, resulting in rapid improvement. Pupils are supported in the development of their knowledge, skills and understanding by highly skilled teaching, attention to their needs, effective feedback and target-setting and highly stimulating, well-planned lessons. However, on the very few occasions when lessons are more teacher-centric, learning is limited and consequently pupils' progress is less rapid.
- 3.7 Pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills develop to particularly high levels as they move through the school. Pupils can communicate their ideas to a high standard. The very youngest pupils negotiated successfully with each other over shared turns of a digital camera. Younger pupils spoke extremely fluently and with great clarity without notes during an assembly for *BBC Children in Need* day. Older pupils communicated their ideas for a body rhythm sequence effectively during a music lesson and the oldest were highly articulate when undertaking peer assessment of each other's writing during an English lesson, utilising high-level vocabulary to identify and explain areas for improvement. Pupils speak confidently in class and listen actively to each other's comments. Scrutiny of their written work indicates a rich vocabulary, which was heard in much classroom discussion, and in their responses to open questioning by staff, as well as a confidence to express their opinions in interview. Leadership has been highly successful at embedding opportunities for pupils' communication skills to be developed to the full.
- 3.8 Across all ages, pupils' numeracy competencies develop to high levels, so that by the time they leave the school, they are both confident and proficient users of mathematics. From successful counting games at the very youngest ages to accurate group analysis of COVID vaccine data to determine efficacy by the oldest pupils, enjoyment and excitement in using numbers are inculcated in pupils. This is due to thorough, detailed planning and implementation of an innovative skills- and application-based programme of study. Older pupils demonstrated excellent understanding of factorisation using exponential notation. Pupils successfully use a rich variety of methods to apply mathematical knowledge, both inside and outside the classroom, for example when younger pupils used chalk on the playground to consolidate direction and turning skills.
- 3.9 Pupils are able to make highly efficient and assured use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for their learning. Their ICT skills are of a noticeably proficient level and examples of their excellent attainment are to be found throughout the school. These successful outcomes are due to a computing-rich curriculum, alongside high expectations and excellent teaching. This supports pupils' desire to achieve excellent outcomes in ICT. The youngest children expressed sheer delight when using digital cameras with confidence, to take photographs of each other's wellington boots. During a computing class, older pupils carried out collaborative internet research in order to design an eye-catching team website. Older pupils animatedly described how they were able to use their notebooks to undertake research in their humanities lessons, analyse and present data using spreadsheets in science and mathematics, as well as produce graphic art designs and code their own games. They were particularly effusive in their praise of the school's digital curriculum provision which, as they explained, meant that lockdown lessons involved very little change to routine. Pupils can confidently conduct online research, demonstrating assured and reliable methods to check the validity

of their findings. They expressed their views on whose responsibility it is to keep the internet a safe place, which resulted in insightful pupil comments about the tensions between large social media corporations and their business needs versus users who upload content which may not be suitable for younger audiences.

- 3.10 Pupils' study skills are advanced for their age by the time they leave the school, due to the school's careful planning and skilled implementation of effective teaching and learning strategies. Pupils have a clear understanding of how dynamic thinking supports their ongoing learning and personal development. They successfully use a wide range of resources, physical and online, to research independently, collaborate and critically analyse. They take initiative and then demonstrate a high standard of learning which addresses their personal targets. For example, younger pupils analysed text carefully to extract relevant instructional content for inclusion in their instruction booklets on how to build vivaria for bearded dragons. Older pupils explained that by learning how to 'magpie', they are able to select the best ideas and build upon these in their learning to synthesise new work. For example a poem on decay using figurative language, based on a description of a house found in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Pupils' excellent development of independent study skills helps them to achieve strong outcomes in the projects they produce. Continued growth and development of these skills is supported and encouraged by regular verbal and written feedback, as well as celebratory displays of pupils' work.
- 3.11 Pupils are highly successful within the formal curriculum and beyond. They achieve considerable success in entrance examinations to schools with high standards of entry. A high number of pupils are awarded academic and other competitive scholarships. Pupils participate successfully in a diverse range of academic, sporting, cultural activities of both a competitive and a non-competitive nature. The school's leadership and governance have been successful in their aim of inspiring in pupils a desire to develop talents and to nurture the widest possible range of interests. They are highly supportive of pupils' endeavours and celebrate their wide range of talents and interests in assemblies and other events.
- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. They are very enthusiastic learners who relish opportunities for effective collaboration, but whose ability to work to great effect independently develops from an early age. Pupils apply themselves during their lessons with gusto and maturity. The very youngest children were just as happy to mark-make on their own as they were to join others on a bug hunt with magnifying glasses. The oldest pupils collaborated to a high standard in groups when role-playing strategies to de-escalate conflict during a PSHE lesson. In a geography lesson, younger pupils worked first independently and then collaboratively to enhance their knowledge and understanding of contour mapping. In a mathematics lesson, older pupils were encouraged to lead their learning and work at a high pace tackling challenging questions on fractions, reinforcing new knowledge and applying their skills with confidence. Pupils demonstrate high academic prowess with a real sense of pride in the level at which they work. This is due to teaching which empowers them to assess their level of confidence and then choose their own level of task difficulty. Their enthusiasm to apply new skills is encouraged by staff reinforcing a productive work ethic and a positive 'can-do' approach. Vibrant classroom displays encourage pupils to 'Aim High', incorporating effective mnemonics to support positive attitudes.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are highly self-aware, confident young people. In all aspects of school life, they display elevated levels of self-discipline and resilience. They explain that failure is part of growing and only stands for a 'first attempt in learning'. They described, in great detail, the strategies they can adopt to improve their own learning and how they have used these effectively to do so. Pupils consistently exhibit high standards of self-esteem and self-confidence at school and almost all parents who responded to the

questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Younger pupils mix easily with their older peers due to their high self-confidence.

- 3.15 Pupils develop highly practised abilities in their decision-making skills. They explained with great clarity how the use of positive psychology helps them to grow, develop and make the best decisions. They show excellent awareness that the choices they make impact on their progress in learning and in the quality of their personal relationships. Pupils demonstrate a highly effective understanding of self-regulation and strategies for minimising conflict. This was demonstrated in a PSHE lesson in which the oldest pupils devised a short role-play using the newly learnt conflict-resolution technique. Their peers' critique demonstrated self-assurance and the process of peer-assessment an open mind on the part of those assessed to improving their learning. During discussions, pupils cited the manner in which their teachers reinforce the importance of relationships in their lives and the importance of decisions which they make, such as when they 'fall out' with each other, as being instrumental to cementing firm friendships.
- 3.16 Pupils develop an extremely mature spiritual awareness and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life by the time they leave the school. The oldest pupils explained, with great clarity, the difference between value and worth; qualities such as love, friendship, trust, and learning were cited as being of the greatest value. The school's core values of spirituality, self-awareness and growth support the pupils' advanced understanding of these aspects. Pupils animatedly described a religious education lesson in which the concept of the soul was discussed and clearly explained all they had learnt from listening to their peers about what their religion teaches them about life after death.
- 3.17 Pupils display outstanding moral understanding from the earliest age. The youngest pupils share toys with eager willingness. The oldest pupils explained the importance of honesty above all else when a mistake is made, so that the trust of others is maintained and not eroded. The school has been highly effective at promoting high moral expectations. Pupils can clearly distinguish right from wrong and attain excellent standards of behaviour as a result. They can describe, clearly, how to deal with difficult moral dilemmas. They attribute their skills in this to empathetic guidance from staff. Pupils clearly accept responsibility for their own behaviour. This was echoed by younger children during discussions, who confidently offered numerous examples of how their positive behaviour had a direct impact upon their school environment, which they all recognised as an important and worthy consequence.
- 3.18 Pupils show high levels of social awareness. They are able to work together extremely effectively and apply jointly-agreed strategies to solve problems. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills. Teaching encourages and enables joint enterprise, supporting pupils' success in this area. The oldest pupils collaborated very effectively when portraying different Shakespearean characters in a drama lesson. This was supported by excellent relationships between children and the outstanding teaching guidance, including challenging expectations. Excellent examples of social development and collaboration are evident throughout the school. Younger pupils collaborated very effectively in pairs when discussing potions they might make during discussions prompted by Roald Dahl's *The BFG*; pupils organised themselves effectively to choose their own learning partners and teaching skilfully drew out contributions from all participants. Pupils collaborate effectively to improve the shared goals of the school with pride and zeal, as confirmed by all staff who responded to the questionnaire agreeing that pupils readily help and support others.
- 3.19 Pupils take great care and pride in fulfilling positions of responsibility in the school, whether in connection with the democratically-elected school council, or performing such roles as sports and subject captains, or eco-prefects. They explain extremely clearly the importance of these roles in ensuring the smooth running of the school and the respect which they hold for the hierarchy of responsibility. Pupils are active in raising awareness of issues such as climate change and work enthusiastically through the school council to support local, regional, national and international charity initiatives. A strong culture of service both towards one another and different communities is evident throughout the school. Pupils spoke passionately about the impact of Junior Travel

Ambassadors who campaign for improvements in safety on local roads, which resulted in the council agreeing to install a pedestrian crossing for children moving between the school's sites. The active promotion, by school staff, of different groups that serve the school and local community instils in pupils an excellent sense of responsibility towards the needs of others. Pupils were eager to explain how initiatives such as their *BBC Children in Need* fund-raising effort, in operation during the inspection visit, would improve the lives of children less fortunate than themselves.

- 3.20 Throughout the school, pupils from a wide range of cultural backgrounds display highly developed and effective understanding of each other. They described their attitude of zero tolerance of any form of racism or prejudice and explained how each person is of far greater consequence than their background or beliefs. The twin school values of love and harmony are thoroughly embedded in the fabric of school life. Pupils show a high level of interest in cultures and beliefs other than their own. Younger pupils demonstrated excellent sensitivity and tolerance towards other faiths when discussing the celebration of Eid and Diwali. Inclusive, non-judgemental teaching contributes towards the respect shown by pupils to peers holding different beliefs and values. Pupils were observed confidently sharing their differences with pride during religious education lessons. In discussions, older pupils reflected upon how their learning about Rosa Parks' experience had helped them to appreciate an equal and fair relationship with one another, irrespective of the colour of their skin. They added that recent learning during Black History Month had had a direct influence on how they respect their peers.
- 3.21 Pupils are highly knowledgeable about how to stay safe and healthy. Their understanding of safety, including when online, is extremely well embedded. All parents and very nearly all pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils demonstrate their excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles through conversation and in the choices they make regarding clubs which they attend. This is reinforced through wide-ranging curriculum content: for example, pupils gain first aid qualifications during PE lessons, and were able to describe very clearly their understanding of the effect of sugar on tooth decay during discussions. Their awareness of the need for a healthy mental state is excellent. They are able to describe highly effective strategies to ensure a calm mind and can explain the importance of balance in their lives. Pupils understand the importance of mindfulness and practise it effectively because it is modelled to a high standard by pupils and staff in assemblies. The school's senior leadership has been instrumental in promoting an appropriately high profile for mindfulness as an everyday part of school life.

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 a group of governors, 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. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Kerry Lord	Reporting inspector
Mr Patrick Wenham	Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Nisha Kaura	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)