



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

ST SWITHUN'S SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	St Swithun's School			
DfE Number	850/6038			
Registered Charity Number	307335			
Address	St Swithun's School Alresford Road Winchester Hampshire SO21 1HA			
Telephone number	01962 835700			
Email address	office@stswithuns.com			
Headmistress	Ms Jane Gandee			
Chair of Council	Professor Natalie Lee			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	508			
	Boys	0	Girls	508
	Day pupils	291	Boarders	217
	Sixth Form	128		
Inspection dates	1 to 2 February 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 unmet 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, the chair of governors and a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses, together with the learning support and educational resource 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

Dr Christopher Ray	Reporting inspector
Mr Neal Parker	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Dr Millan Sachania	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Louise North	Team inspector for boarding (Senior deputy head, HMC school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
About the school	1
What the school seeks to do	1
About the pupils	1
Recommendations from previous inspections	2
2 KEY FINDINGS	3
Recommendations	3
3 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	6

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 St Swithun's School is an independent day and boarding school for girls aged between 11 and 18 years. The school is a registered charity, overseen by a council of trustees. Members of the council are legally responsible for the governance of the school. Since the previous inspection, the governors have established an education committee, with a broad remit covering co-curricular as well as pastoral and academic matters.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1884 as Winchester High School. After the First World War, the school was re-named as St Swithun's School. The school moved in 1932 to its present site, one mile from the centre of Winchester.
- 1.3 The school admits weekly and full boarders, as well as day pupils. The boarders are accommodated in six residential houses. The school has a linked, but separate, junior school, which is part of the same charitable trust.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims that, by the time a girl leaves St Swithun's, she will be well-educated, courageous, compassionate, committed and self-confident with a love of learning, a moral compass and a sense of humour.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicates that the ability of the pupils is above average. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 67; one pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They require support with dyslexia and other learning difficulties. There are 64 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL); 57 of whom receive support. The more able pupils in the school are encouraged to develop their capacities further through activities such as extended project essays.
- 1.6 The school's boarding pupils come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds both within and beyond the UK; its day pupils are drawn largely from professional and business families within a 45 minute drive of Winchester.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names for year groups differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Lower fourth (L4)	Year 7
Upper fourth (U4)	Year 8
Lower fifth (L5)	Year 9
Middle fifth (M5)	Year 10
Upper fifth (U5)	Year 11
Lower Sixth (L6)	Year 12
Upper Sixth (U6)	Year 13

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.8 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in February 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Monitor the newly agreed policies and procedures to ensure that they are effective across all departments.
 - Ensure that marking, assessment and reporting provide detailed information regarding pupils' current performance and how they might improve.
- 1.9 The recommendation of the ISI intermediate boarding inspection in January 2015 was:
- Strengthen the procedures for communication between the health centre and the boarding houses in relation to the administration of medicine.
- 1.10 The school has successfully met the recommendations of the previous inspections. 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 excellent.

- There is outstanding success in academic examinations and national competitions; in particular, there are high levels of progress for pupils with SEND and EAL.
- There is notable achievement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, with county and national recognition in several sports.
- The pupils have exceptional communication skills and present complex ideas with fluency and self-confidence.
- Pupils make strong progress because teaching usually proceeds at a challenging pace and is supported by a highly effective academic tracking and monitoring system.
- The digital and information and communication technology (ICT) competencies of the pupils are not fully developed due to inconsistent classroom practice.

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

- Collaborative working amongst the pupils is a clear strength of the school.
- The positive commitment shown to others, both within and beyond the school, is considerable, exemplified by the numerous charitable initiatives promoted by the school community.
- Spiritual understanding is especially well-developed amongst the pupils, encouraged by the Christian ethos of the school and the central role played by the chapel in its life.
- The pupils demonstrate a strong sense of moral responsibility.

Recommendations

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Promote the development of digital and ICT skills by providing more opportunities for pupils to use them to support their learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Results at GCSE and A-level are well above national averages. Pupils make good progress at GCSE and excellent progress at A-level when compared with pupils of similar ability. Those with SEND and EAL make particularly strong progress. Tracking and monitoring of both individuals and groups, such as pupils with SEND, are used to great effect by the leadership and management, helping teachers and house staff to identify individual needs and general patterns. This meets a recommendation of the previous inspection. Most teaching proceeds at a challenging pace and engages all the pupils. An overwhelming majority of parents in their pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future. In their questionnaires, almost all pupils said that they are given the opportunity to learn and make good progress.
- 3.3 Pupils enjoy considerable success in academic examinations, as well as in externally accredited examinations in music and in a range of local and national competitions, including the achievement of gold, silver and bronze medals in mathematics, biology and physics competitions. Their success in a wide range of pursuits such as art, music, and sport reflects the extensive range of talents possessed by pupils and the effective coaching and support provided by the school. Many pupils achieve representative sporting honours at county and national levels in sports such as lacrosse, fencing, tennis and cross-country. Pupils typically achieve places at highly selective universities in the UK and overseas, supported by the clear and helpful guidance provided by those involved in university advice.
- 3.4 Pupils of all abilities and ages display outstanding communication skills. They are articulate and listen attentively to the views and opinions of others. They encapsulate their ideas well, as noted in a history lesson where pupils presented complex ideas with fluency: pupils expressed their points cogently, accurately and concisely during a debate on Henry VIII's relationship with Cardinal Wolsey. Their written work is of a very high quality and demonstrates considerable analytical capacities. Well-planned teaching promotes these strong communication skills. In many lessons, all the pupils were involved and teachers are adept at providing opportunities to practise their skills. The positive encouragement that pupils receive enables them to express themselves clearly and confidently.
- 3.5 Pupils demonstrate high levels of knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning. They develop these skills across the curriculum and they are highly effective in applying their skills from one area of learning to another. Excellent awareness of their own prior learning is used by the pupils to build on their achievement, as demonstrated in a gymnastics activity where the pupils were encouraged to develop their skills most effectively. In a music lesson, pupils were able to apply their ideas to new areas of learning when considering the part music plays in elucidating images on the screen. The pupils respond positively to the wide-ranging curriculum, relishing the opportunities available to them. Their learning is enhanced by greater consistency in marking and feedback, in line with a recommendation of the previous inspection. Both governors and leaders communicate clear expectations to both staff and pupils, and take care to ensure that teachers follow the school's policies, ensuring consistently high standards.
- 3.6 Pupils show a strong grasp of mathematical concepts and methods. Their mathematical skills are extremely well developed in all areas of the subject, with many pupils achieving recognition in national competitions. Pupils enjoy using mathematics; they are adventurous mathematicians and are not afraid of exploring new ideas and applying their skills in other parts of the curriculum, such as physics and economics. Enthusiastic and highly skilled teachers encourage both individual development and collaborative learning in mathematics.
- 3.7 Throughout the school, pupils' use of ICT during lessons is not consistently developed. In the lessons observed, despite the wide range of ICT resources available, opportunities to allow pupils to use ICT

to embed their skills were not always exploited. However, as noted in the work scrutinised, pupils do have a secure ICT skills base and there is generally effective use of ICT to support teaching. In the best examples seen, pupils use technology well to substantiate their ideas through project work and in classwork. Some good uses of graphic software were noted, for instance, in the design of a bird table.

- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate high-order thinking skills and have the abilities to analyse complex problems. They successfully employ hypothetical reasoning to explore ideas in English, geography, the sciences and other subjects. They reflect on their learning and focus most effectively upon the connections between different parts of the subjects they study. They relish discussion and debate. Some fine examples of independent learning through extended essays were seen as part of the extended project qualification (EPQ). Teachers provide positive encouragement for the pupils to develop a broad range of study skills.
- 3.9 Pupils are enthusiastic and are often passionate learners. They have great pride in their school, tempered perhaps in their perceptive critical appraisal of its perceived weaknesses as well as its strengths. This was seen in discussions over the use of ICT for learning. Through their co-operative work, they support one another most effectively with ease and enjoyment. They feel that they can express ideas freely: pupils take a keen interest in what their peers say. They are eager to celebrate each other's achievements in and beyond the classroom and are keen to assist other pupils in their learning. They are generally eager to participate in life beyond the classroom, as demonstrated by the wide range of opportunities to participate in sport, music, drama and so much else which are offered by the school. Excellent perseverance was noted in the evident determination when the 'A cappella' choir were learning their parts. Class teachers and tutors promote mutual respect and provide excellent role models for learning in and beyond the classroom.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils derive great enjoyment from working with each other, as noted in a lesson on the American civil rights movement, where pupils displayed a definite eagerness to share their reflections with their peers or when combining their talents to build a set for a drama production. This co-operation is also evident within the boarding houses, where older pupils mentor and guide younger pupils. There are many opportunities available for pupils to hold positions of responsibility – in houses and sports, through work as prefects, through societies and charitable enterprises. Pupils are typically proud when they are given responsibilities and are determined to fulfil them to the best of their capabilities.
- 4.3 Pupils are excellent citizens within their own community and have developed a considerable capacity to make a positive contribution to the wider world. They are passionately involved in charitable fund-raising and initiatives. The school's underlying Christian ethos, together with a responsive awareness of the needs of those less fortunate, play a great part in encouraging this involvement. Day and boarding pupils exhibit great mutual respect and from these strong relationships flows a natural commitment to support external causes. This is exemplified through a wide range of community service activities, such as online mentoring support for children in Kenya.
- 4.4 Pupils have a strong spiritual understanding which can be seen in their appreciation of the musical, aesthetic and philosophical aspects of life. Pupils feel that the arts are a natural and central part of their school lives. Their spiritual confidence is encouraged by the excellent debates in religion and philosophy classes as well as in aesthetic subjects. Pupils think about deep issues drawn from ethics and cosmology. They have a clear awareness of the importance of religion and personal faith, both for themselves and for others within the school community. For many pupils, the chapel occupies a central and calm place in their busy lives.
- 4.5 Pupils are confident and determined to give their best in all situations. They feel positively about themselves and their place in the school community. They have a generally clear understanding of how to improve. In their questionnaire responses, almost all parents maintained that the boarding experience has helped their children's progress and personal development. The pupils show great self-esteem, for example when being filmed in dance and being asked to reflect on the performance and how they might improve: they were able to discuss their own strengths and weaknesses in front of their peers without feeling self-conscious. Empathy for others is marked.
- 4.6 Pupils understand that the decisions they make may reflect both on themselves and upon the community of which they are a part. They make well-informed decisions both in and beyond classes. Pupils demonstrate clear awareness that the decisions they make affect their success in school and for their futures. They readily accept the responsibility for prioritising their many commitments. They understand that they can make mistakes but learn from them and are not afraid to take risks. An effective support structure for personal development is provided by the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, which is enhanced by assemblies and special events, such as citizenship days.
- 4.7 Pupils have a very clear sense of right and wrong and the importance of rules and laws. They demonstrate very real strengths of personal integrity. Pupils respect each other; they give their peers the space to express their own ideas and opinions and then respond positively and supportively. They are determined to take responsibility for their own actions and have a keen awareness of the potential impact of how they behave upon others. When they do things wrong, they readily admit it. Older pupils are regarded as academic and social role models. The supportive pastoral system, within and beyond boarding houses, and thought-provoking assemblies combine to underpin this sense of moral responsibility. The vision of the governors, shared by the leadership and management of the school, plays a clear part in helping to provide the pupils with a moral compass,

with a system of rewards and sanctions promoting the typically good behaviour observed throughout the school. Indeed, the vast majority of parents believe that the school actively promotes good behaviour. The application of the dress code for the school, felt by some pupils to be inconsistent, excites considerable discussion especially amongst sixth formers.

- 4.8 Pupils show tremendous respect for one another whatever their cultural or religious background. The diversity of the school community, including boarders from overseas, helps pupils to regard mutual respect as a very natural part of their life in the school. They feel a part of this community. Almost all parents maintained that the school actively promotes the values of democracy, respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. Relationships between pupils are characterised by kindness and sensitivity, as observed within boarding house life as well as between day and boarding pupils. They see themselves as important members of a cohesive school family which includes not just staff and current pupils but former pupils as well. Pupils have an enormous affection for this family of which they are part.
- 4.9 Pupils understand the importance of staying safe, including when online, as testified by the vast majority of pupils. The strong commitment to safeguarding within the school community has helped to encourage this. Pupils also understand what is needed to maintain health, both physical and mental; this is promoted by the school's well-being programmes and training for staff in this area.