



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Stanborough Secondary School

October 2022

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School's Details

School	Stanborough Secondary School
DfE number	919/6154
Registered charity number	1044071
Address	Stanborough Secondary School Stanborough Park Cedarwood Drive Watford Hertfordshire WD25 9JT
Telephone number	01923 673268
Email address	info@stanboroughpark.herts.sch.uk
Executive headteacher	Mrs Lorraine McDonald
Operational interim headteacher	Mrs Jeanetta Liburd
Proprietor	British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Age range	11 to 16
Number of pupils on roll	60
Inspection dates	4 to 6 October 2022

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Stanborough Secondary School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years. It is owned by the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Governance is maintained through a board of governors, some of whom are members of the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The school was founded in 1919 and the current complex was completed in 1991. It occupies a 40-acre site in Garston, just outside of Watford.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has ceased to be registered for boarding. In September 2022, leadership of the school transferred to an interim, operational headteacher and an executive headteacher, who is a member of British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide the structure and support each pupil needs to achieve academic success and to cultivate the social skills that will enable them to interact well with members of the wider society. As a Christian school, it seeks to sensitise all pupils to live a life that is pleasing to God.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from all backgrounds and faiths, living within the immediate locality and the wider area. The pupils' ability indicated by the school's assessment data is broadly average when compared to the ability of other pupils taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified ten pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) including dyslexia and specific learning difficulties, all of whom receive additional specialist support. Seven pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Thirty-one pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), some of whom receive additional help in this regard. Seven pupils have been identified as being more able within the school's population, or as having special talents 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. 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 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. 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.

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](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 Pupils take GCSE examinations in their final year at the school. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages, but inspection evidence 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 and sex education, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 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'.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is sound.

- Pupils' non-academic achievements are good because they respond enthusiastically and successfully to the broad extra-curricular programme provided by the school.
- Pupils' communication and numeracy skills are strong in relation to their abilities; they develop proficient writing, speaking and listening skills and apply numeracy skills effectively across subjects.
- Pupils are keen and co-operative in lessons but lack sufficient independence to enable initiative and risk-taking in their learning, which limits their progress.
- Pupils' academic achievement, including in external examinations, is satisfactory in relation to their abilities but is too often constrained by insufficient challenge and expectation from teachers.
- Pupils demonstrate good information and communication technology (ICT) skills but lack of opportunities to apply these skills during lessons limits their academic progress.

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

- Pupils develop strong self-understanding, striving to become the best they can be, motivated by the school's explicit emphasis on core social skills and personal development.
- Pupils of all faiths or no faith display profound respect for and understanding of the spiritual aspects of life, valuing and responding positively to the school's religious character.
- Pupils take full responsibility for behaving well and consequently ensure that the school is a happy, caring and positive community.
- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds demonstrate highly positive and proactive appreciation and understanding of diverse individuals and cultures.
- Pupils demonstrate a strong commitment to serving others, the school and wider community.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable all pupils to develop greater independence in their learning to support initiative and risk-taking so that they make increased progress.
- Enable all pupils to improve their academic performance by providing greater challenge and higher expectations in teaching, informed by accurate analysis of progress and attainment data.

- Enable all pupils to apply their ICT skills more fully in lessons to support increased academic progress.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils' achievement is broadly in line with the school's aims. The small numbers of pupils taking GCSE examinations in 2022 prevents reliable comparison with national averages. The school was unable to provide clear analysis of these examination results in relation to predicted grades or expected progress for the pupils involved. Inspectors' independent analysis of available data indicated that one-eighth of pupils attained the top grades, 7 to 9, whilst the remaining large majority attained lower grades, predominantly 4 to 6. The school's own self-evaluation of pupils' academic outcomes in 2021, according to nationally standardised test data, indicated that across all subjects around one quarter of pupils made progress that exceeded expectations across all subjects, the others meeting expectations. All parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress and that their individual educational needs are met effectively. Pupils commented that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons. However, the lack of usable data at the time of the inspection prevented inspectors from reaching a definitive judgement on the standard of examination performance and of other academic performance relative to the pupils' abilities and individual educational needs. The broad range of other evidence available during the inspection suggested that the school's interpretation of its internal data regarding pupils' progress and attainment may have been over-generous. The predominance of lower grade results in examinations suggests that pupils' performance is in line with expectations but usually no higher.

3.6 Pupils show good knowledge in terms of factual recall and sound understanding and skills across the curriculum. They have carefully developed skills in the presentation of their work by the time they reach Years 10 and 11. They demonstrate good habits in spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is in response to teachers' consistent insistence on high standards in these aspects of learning across subjects, supported by encouraging messages in classroom displays and reminders on desks. Pupils with SEND made good progress ultimately when they could not initially understand the point of questions in a revision test because a teaching assistant was alert to this and provided explanation which enabled them to complete their task independently. Pupils with EAL requiring assistance with their spoken or written English receive appropriate support. In some lessons, pupils find the work they are given too easy because tasks are based on answering closed questions. This limits their responses to a focus on factual information. In these instances, pupils have little opportunity to deepen or broaden their understanding and do not develop a spirit of enquiry. In other lessons, a similar teaching emphasis on pupils confirming their knowledge of facts, often through the use of closed question checklists, causes pupils to lose interest because they have no occasion to explore issues further. Sometimes, teachers prevent pupils from experiencing hands-on learning activities, choosing instead to demonstrate from the front of class. As a result, pupils' understanding and skill development are restricted. Pupils readily engage in and develop good skills in sports and creative activities, both in lessons and through the school's extensive extra-curricular programme.

3.7 Pupils develop proficient communication skills. They write in an accurate, appropriate and persuasive manner, with a strong awareness of how to pitch their writing for different audiences and purposes. They self-correct with rigour and learn from their mistakes, responding positively to the focused feedback they receive from teachers. Pupils speak with clarity and fluency and they listen respectfully to one another in discussion. In an English lesson, Year 9 pupils used sophisticated written language to express complex ideas successfully. They enthusiastically discussed the nuances of vocabulary as used by their adolescent generation, reflecting on its purpose. The teaching was encouraging, full of appropriate praise and facilitated open discussion by enabling pupils to take a lead. When teachers did not allow pupils such opportunities, pupils' communication skills were restricted and they made limited progress.

- 3.8 Younger pupils display good mental arithmetic skills which they apply effectively, for example when balancing equations. Older pupils were observed confidently managing numeracy tasks involving data analysis and interpretation of graphs in chemistry and geography. In biology, they carried out magnification tasks successfully. Pupils needing extra help for GCSE mathematics preparation attend interventions which enable them to deal positively with any challenges they are experiencing and their progress is strengthened as a result.
- 3.9 Pupils demonstrate good competencies in using ICT. In a Year 11 computer science lesson, pupils showed good knowledge of network operation, displayed dextrous keyboard skills and researched terms quickly and efficiently using a range of search engines. This was in response to teaching which was appropriately challenging. Older pupils undertake extended project work successfully which demands independent learning and collaboration using digital equipment, such as a recent Year 11 biology project on sustainability. Electronic devices are not allowed in school until Year 11. Although pupils say they understand the school's intention to inculcate appropriate habits of penmanship prior to GCSE examinations, inspectors judged that this restriction on pupils' use of their own devices inhibits the pace of their learning. It restricts the appropriate development of digitally based study skills such as research, and rapid drafting and redrafting of text by younger pupils.
- 3.10 Some strong examples of pupils using study skills were seen by inspectors during the visit. In their questionnaire responses, pupils agreed that the school enables them to do so. In lessons such as a Year 10 English lesson, pupils showed good ability to apply their thinking skills to the task of writing descriptively for an essay. They worked well in pairs and groups, making effective shared decisions and explaining their choices clearly. They worked collaboratively with success because the teaching addressed and stimulated questions from every pupil in the class and took full account of their individual learning needs. Pupils were passive in response to other teaching which lacked these characteristics
- 3.11 Pupils demonstrate a ready willingness to learn in everything they undertake, academically and in non-academic and extra-curricular pursuits. They have shared success at bronze and silver level in the United Kingdom Mathematics Trust Challenge. They achieved third position in a national technical construction competition through their demonstration of effective hands-on science and technology competencies. Pupils have participated successfully in ISA regional athletics events reaching top competitive levels. Participants in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme have succeeded at bronze standard. Pupils also complete LAMDA qualifications with good results. Within school, pupils have achieved recognition through the Bible project and for public speaking in the debating society. The school's leaders have successfully reinvigorated a rich programme of extra-curricular activities since the pandemic to enable pupils to benefit from an enrichment programme which is extensive in relation to the small size of the school. Parents agree that the school offers a suitable range of extra-curricular activities and pupils say that they have plenty of opportunities to expand their education. Inspection evidence supports these views.
- 3.12 Pupils' positive attitudes towards their education are strong, particularly as a result of the all-embracing support and care provided for their wellbeing and academic achievement by the governors, school leaders and staff. However, although teachers never lack commitment to the best interests of the pupils, pupils become passive in their attitude to learning and then show less initiative and independence when teaching is over directive. This negatively affects pupils' progress.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils develop excellent self-understanding. Pupils have strong self-discipline and self-confidence, which is reflected in their positive attitude to learning. Additionally, they have a well-established sense of purpose, embracing the school's aims to develop a caring attitude, a personal relationship with God, understanding and tolerance and to fulfil their academic potential as best they can. Pupils

develop a strong engagement in self-reflective practice. They keep personal journals regarding their insights into the school's current emphasis on social skills such as friendship, hard work, appreciation, responsibility and gentleness. This enables them to consider their progress in these aspects of life and to seek and attain continued personal growth. Senior leaders and staff provide an explicit and conscientious lead in promoting such values, providing suitable role models and delivering appropriate guidance, including during assemblies. Pupils treat the opening prayer and spiritual objective for each lesson with due reverence.

- 3.15 Pupils understand that the decisions they make determine their own success and wellbeing. They take seriously their subject choices for GCSEs, and carefully consider their next steps in education when they leave the school. They express happiness with the outcomes of their decision making and feel that the school actively supports them in their considerations, respecting them fully as individuals. They listened attentively to an assembly on the importance of letting kindness influence your decisions. In conversation with pupils afterwards they reflected earnestly on the message, presenting a mature and considered attitude.
- 3.16 Around the school, pupils behave in a kind and courteous manner at all times, reflecting the highly successful emphasis on social skills in the school's aims. They make the most of being part of a small school community. They develop good relationships within and across different age groups, the older pupils being ready to help younger ones when needed. The respectful and friendly relationships between pupils and staff serve to promote pupils' sense of wellbeing and purpose on an everyday basis.
- 3.17 Pupils have a highly developed spiritual understanding. They acknowledge the part played by prayer in their daily routine and by the overt spiritual emphasis in lessons and assemblies. Equally, they expressed the thrill of playing in an orchestra, singing in a choir, or discussing the impact of the creative process on their lives in an art lesson. This level of spiritual understanding reflects the unequivocal commitment of governors and senior leaders to the school's mission to honour and glorify God. This permeates the school community.
- 3.18 Pupils speak with passion about the moral aspects of life. In a Year 10 personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson they expressed a mature awareness of the freedoms they enjoy in the United Kingdom which are not always available in other countries. They are knowledgeable about different political regimes overseas and grappled intelligently with the dilemma of denying freedom of expression to those who are illiberal themselves. Pupils hold nuanced views about such matters, but a firm conviction about what is right and wrong. They support the school's disciplinary system, recognising its purpose in maintaining high standards of behaviour, to which they attach high importance. Pupils thrive in this highly supportive and valuing school setting with its emphasis on mutual respect, the rule of law, individual liberty and democracy.
- 3.19 Pupils relish any opportunity to collaborate inside and outside the classroom. They listen carefully to one another when working as a pair or group, clearly evident in languages and practical science lessons. They also work together well to solve problems and to achieve shared aims outside academic work. This is especially evident when pupils share a philanthropic purpose, such as raising funds for a local food bank. All parents agreed, in response to the questionnaire, that the school promotes strong teamwork and social skills and that pupils readily help and support others. Inspection evidence supports this view. It reflects extremely successful fulfilment of school leaders' active encouragement of pupils' social development as a key element in their mission to enable pupils to become good citizens.
- 3.20 Pupils speak warmly about the sense of family within the school. In addition to the formal posts of responsibility to which pupils are elected, such as class president, student council chair, or prefect, all pupils take on an informal role in looking after others. This includes encouraging friends to share any concerns with a trusted adult if they feel this will help. Pupils see service to others as a central part of their life and personal development. They seize opportunities which arise to put this in to practice.

For example, an annual day of community service when pupils go out into the surrounding community, packing bags in supermarkets, litter picking and working in food banks. These actions, underpinned by strongly caring attitudes, represent a heartfelt fulfilment of the school's mission.

- 3.21 Pupils view acceptance of others, respect for diversity and cultural understanding as the norm. This is partly in response to the profile of the school community, which is diverse in terms of race and religion. It is also partly because such values are central to their faith. They develop these views also because the school is insistent on the need for tolerance and appreciation of individuals' characteristics and cultural differences. The school consistently reinforces its stance on respect through assemblies and the manner in which adults model appropriate behaviour. Work scrutiny and lesson observation of religious education showed that pupils study Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism as well as Christianity with equal focus. They know about the sacred texts and other information regarding these faiths and clearly accept others' beliefs as being as important as their own. Pupils feel that everyone in school is accepted and treated equally regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or learning needs. Inspection evidence supports this view. Occasional careless language which might be thought homophobic or misogynist is challenged by teachers and has become rare.
- 3.22 Pupils have a strong awareness and understanding of how to lead a healthy life, including mental as well as physical wellbeing. They pay close attention to the good advice provided in biology, food technology, horticulture, physical education and PSHE lessons regarding the importance of nutrition and exercise. Pupils say that they have no excuse for leading an unhealthy life. They learn to be self-aware regarding their mental health in response to information they receive in PSHE, assemblies and mental health topic events. They also have a high awareness of personal safety, including about safe relationships, through their involvement in relevant PSHE and relationships and sex education programmes. They recognise appropriate interpersonal boundaries and issues of consent. Pupils demonstrate suitable awareness of online social media risks, how to avoid them and what to do if they occur. In developing such high levels of awareness and these attitudes, pupils respond positively to the assiduous work of the school's leaders and staff in promoting the best interests of the welfare of each and every pupil. This was evident in supportive interactions between staff and individual pupils and groups of pupils during the inspection.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Andrew Farren	Reporting inspector
Mr Bill Burn	Accompanying reporting inspector
Mr Andrew Gillespie	Compliance team inspector (Former head, SofH school)