



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**The Portsmouth Grammar School**

**September 2022**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	The Portsmouth Grammar School			
<b>DfE number</b>	851/6004			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1063732			
<b>Address</b>	The Portsmouth Grammar School High Street Portsmouth Hampshire PO1 2LN			
<b>Telephone number</b>	023 9236 0036			
<b>Email address</b>	info@pgs.org.uk			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Wickes			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Walter Cha			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1278			
	<b>EYFS</b>	78	<b>Juniors</b>	278
	<b>Seniors</b>	670	<b>Sixth Form</b>	252
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27 to 29 September 2022			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 The Portsmouth Grammar School is an independent co-educational day school, divided into junior and senior sections. The school was founded in 1732 by William Smith who was determined that the young people of Portsmouth should have access to a transformative education. Female pupils first joined the school in 1976. The Portsmouth Grammar Junior School was formed in September 2000.
- 1.2 The governing body has ultimate responsibility for the school and meets as a full body once a term, with a number of committees. Governors are also directors and trustees of the school which is registered as a company and as a charity.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, there has been a programme of redevelopment of the school site. The school is now jointly registered, reflecting the operation of the junior and senior Schools as one aligned school. A new head of the whole school started in September 2022.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school seeks to inspire and equip its pupils to strive for personal excellence in all their intellectual, physical, creative, cultural, social and moral endeavours. It aims to prepare and empower pupils for the future by providing an atmosphere in which academic curiosity is cultivated, confidence is built, and a balanced, open-minded outlook is nurtured

### About the pupils

- 1.5 Most pupils live either locally or within comfortable travelling distance from the school, although some will travel further. The school has identified 297 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), primarily dyslexia and linked needs, 72 of whom have additional specialist help. Two pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 24 pupils, 14 of whom have additional support with their English. The school's philosophy of teaching and learning provides challenge and enrichment opportunities for all its pupils, including those identified as more able, in order for them to achieve their full potential.

## 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 (EYFS) statutory framework. 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](#).

## 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 In the junior school, 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 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2017 to 2021 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, 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.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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**

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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**

2.13 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.

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

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.15 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.

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

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.17 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.

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

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.19 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.

**2.20 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 make at least good progress throughout the school and, in the senior school especially, there is excellent progress.
- Pupils are highly articulate and effective communicators, both orally and in their written work.
- Pupils are, for the most part, fully engaged in their work and display very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils in the senior school participate fully in the extensive extra-curricular programme and achieve a wide range of success.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils in the senior school show high levels of knowledge across their subjects and make strong use of this in their work

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

- Pupils are highly confident and resilient individuals, who take responsibility for their learning and development as young people.
- Pupils display strong skills of decision-making and understand clearly the importance of working towards their own progress.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong and take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils involve themselves wholeheartedly with life in the senior school and contribute positively to the wider community.
- Pupils are very conscious of the diversity of their school and fully understand the value of being respectful towards everyone around them.

#### Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- The school should ensure that all pupils in the school, particularly in the junior school, make the most of their potential by challenging them fully and consistently in lessons.
- The school should enable pupils to develop a greater sense of those wider issues in life and provide greater opportunities for reflecting on these.



## The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils at the school achieve a high standard of results, exceeding the predictions from standardised assessments. During the years 2017–2019, on average over a half of pupils were awarded A\* or A grades at A level and nearly two-thirds received the highest grades at GCSE. Centre-assessed grades in 2020 and 2021 show results were consistent with this attainment. Provisional indications are that the results in 2022 confirm this continued, high level of achievement. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve above expectations and higher than the main cohort. Almost all of Year 13 leavers go onto university with a large majority going to their first-choice destinations at competitive institutions to study a variety of courses. Data from the junior school also indicate that the vast majority of pupils are working above national expectations. This strength of outcome is reflected throughout the school in lessons and pupils' written work, where they are achieving a high level of success and making strong progress. In response to the questionnaire, pupils commented positively on how the school supports their learning and helps them to be successful.
- 3.6 Overall, pupils display an excellent level of knowledge and skills across the range of their subjects and use this to develop their understanding fully. In their response to the questionnaire, pupils expressed the view that the teaching went above and beyond to help them develop their knowledge and achieve the best possible results. They show strong skills of recall and application in their work, seen in a Latin lesson in Year 7 where pupils made full use of their prior learning to answer questions on Roman society. The children in the EYFS make good progress over time in all the areas of learning, as seen through the data recorded. In the junior school, a large majority of pupils show an excellent level of knowledge and understanding across the different areas of the curriculum, often linking these aspects across subjects. A supportive and encouraging environment means that pupils are not worried about giving wrong answers, and they are very willing to share their knowledge and understanding with the teacher. Sometimes, opportunities for junior pupils to develop their skills further, and therefore deepen knowledge and understanding, are missed due to the comfortable pace of teaching and learning. In the senior school, pupils are notable for their ability to draw on prior learning and use it to support new learning. Pupils develop very good laboratory skills over the years and, by the sixth form, can independently tackle complex practical work.
- 3.7 Pupils are highly confident communicators inside and outside of the classroom. They listen carefully to each other and learn effectively from this process. They then follow this through with excellent written work, especially in subjects where feedback from teaching asks pupils to critically evaluate their work and challenges them to improve still further. The younger pupils show excellent oracy skills, helped by feeling confident and supported when speaking to peers, adults or in front of the class. This is applied across all areas of learning and is due to the supportive, encouraging and accepting ethos within the junior school. Pupils in the senior school show excellent communication skills, seen both in lessons where they frequently answer with clarity and confidence and in discussion where they listen to each other's views and often respond with energy and conviction. Pupils in a physical education lesson were able to engage with their peers and staff in detailed and high-level conversations around the testing of cardiovascular levels and fitness.
- 3.8 Pupils' attitudes to their work are excellent and a very strong feature of the senior school in particular. They clearly want to make progress and display a mature commitment to their learning. From an eagerness to contribute to lessons in the younger years, this becomes, in time, a mature commitment among older pupils to take all the opportunities presented to them. They work as independently as they can within the parameters they are given and persevere in order to reach their goals. In a senior mathematics lesson, pupils showed admirable persistence, adapting their work all the time, to find their way through the multi-stage problems of the task. Pupils in the EYFS and junior school are keen to learn and show very positive attitudes when the pace of the lesson is appropriate, challenging and well planned. They enjoy working collaboratively and taking leadership in their learning when the opportunity arises.

- 3.9 Pupils are actively engaged in the wide range of co-curricular opportunities at school, and the participation is excellent across all different categories of club. They enjoy considerable success in LAMDA and ABRSM examinations up to and including the highest levels. More than half of the pupils learn an instrument, and there are individuals performing in national orchestras and choirs, as well as the choir's involvement with the cathedral. Pupils take part in a wide range of dramatic productions and perform both in local and national venues with great success. Pupils engage fully in sporting opportunities, achieving regular success in regional and national matches and competitions, and individuals are encouraged to develop fully their talents in a variety of arenas. The CCF is a popular activity alongside other opportunities to participate in outdoor pursuits, such as the DofE and John Muir awards, and pupils develop a range of skills in leadership and resilience. Pupils explore a wide range of opportunities in art and achieve success with their work locally and nationally, including pupils' work that features on a website for a national award, combining art with science. In the junior school also, pupils compete successfully in the extra-curricular programme, both as individuals and in teams and groups.
- 3.10 Pupils in many of the lessons observed in the senior school were very effective in the way they analysed their work and then went on to develop their ideas to a high level and reach conclusions that reflected a strong process of thinking. Pupils enjoy completing independent research projects and have the confidence to draw upon a wide range of resources, thus broadening their knowledge and understanding. They demonstrate that they can ask pertinent questions which helps them to develop further their analytical and presentation skills. During a lesson in Year 9 on the use of money, for example, pupils sought information from a wide variety of sources and were able to analyse the impact of varying factors upon real life scenarios. In a sixth-form English lesson, pupils gave an excellent analysis of a poem by John Donne, focusing on his linguistic techniques and explaining at a high level how these were used to express his views on the weakness of human nature. Younger pupils also showed their strong learning skills in lessons, but they did not always have the opportunity to develop these fully.
- 3.11 Pupils develop strong numeracy skills and exercise these across the school in a variety of subject areas. Pupils in the EYFS show good levels of awareness of shape, the concept of more and less and can count confidently up to and beyond 10. They are helped by teaching which makes good use of resources to support their numeracy. Pupils in the junior school confidently used different measuring techniques in food technology and showed accurate measuring and identification of scale in a technology lesson. Something similar was seen in a senior school technology lesson, where pupils were able to use measurements from a 3D image to construct a scaled model. In a sixth-form economics lesson, pupils produced effective graphs to display supply-and-demand curves and to show the point of diminishing marginal returns. Sixth-form pupils in a German lesson were adroitly manipulating statistics on multiculturalism while responding to a comprehension exercise.
- 3.12 Pupils in the senior school display a secure level of knowledge and skill in using information and communication technology (ICT) in their work, based on their curriculum experience, where they acquire the essential tools for learning. They use online platforms effectively to research and present their work and clearly are fully confident in doing so, as seen in a sixth-form history lesson, where pupils were developing their ideas from a number of different historical sources. Pupils in Year 11 had created an excellent piece of digital animation using software to manipulate images in art. Pupils take the use of ICT for granted in the EYFS, where they confidently practised mark-making on an interactive board and painting on tablet devices. Junior pupils clearly know how to use ICT, but their skills were not always as secure in lessons and they would benefit from more lessons that directly integrated the use of ICT, to enhance learning.

## The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have an excellent level of awareness for their personal development, and they are able to be critically constructive about themselves. They are resilient and self-motivated. The vast majority of pupils show excellent levels of self-discipline around their learning and engagement with activity outside the classroom. They are aware of the need to be 'well' both physically and mentally in order to perform at their best. Pupils feel able to take risks with their learning and development where opportunities arise. The regular progress testing and the subsequent reviews with teachers and tutors enable pupils to have an excellent awareness of their strengths, weaknesses and strategies for improvement. In a geography lesson in Year 13, peer-marking and collaborative working enabled pupils to improve their own performances but also enabled a sharing of their knowledge to help others. The EYFS children are confident to talk to visitors about what they are doing and to ask them questions about themselves. Pupils in the junior school are resilient and as a result have an appropriate level of self-esteem. They are confident to participate in their learning and also understand how to improve their performance. This prepares them for the next stage of the school so that they can move forward with confidence and self-understanding. This was echoed in the responses to the questionnaire where parents praised the way the school produces well-rounded individuals with a range of skills and interests.
- 3.15 Pupils show excellent skills in making decisions supported by a full programme of careers guidance. Pupils are appreciative of all the support they receive from the school. Pupils are very strong at making decisions about their learning and recognise the impact they can have on their own level of success. Their skills in making decisions are also apparent throughout their daily work. In a history lesson in Year 7, pupils had to make decisions on the relative merits of the contenders for the throne in 1066 and argue their case, which they did very successfully. Across the junior school, pupils are involved in making decisions about their learning, from the EYFS with their everyday tasks to older pupils deciding on the best focus which will direct the nature of their connected curriculum, though they are not always given this opportunity. Pupils also make sensible choices for themselves in their behaviour and attitudes. They are aware of how to keep healthy and, when given the opportunity, can make decisions for themselves. They apply this both inside and outside the classroom, in their learning and in their broader development as individuals.
- 3.16 Pupils have an excellent awareness of right and wrong. They have a keen sense of fairness and are ready to challenge when they think something is unfair. They are very respectful towards each other and are prepared to take responsibility in looking after themselves and each other. Pupils display a very calm and ordered attitude inside and outside the classroom. Throughout the junior school, behaviour is good. Children in the EYFS sit quietly and cooperatively on the carpet for activities led by adults, raising their hands and taking turns. For the most part, pupils fully understand and respect the school rules and appreciate the need for rewards and sanctions. They understand how their behaviour can affect other people. In the senior school, pupils are aware of the impact of their behaviour on others and welcome opportunities to highlight behaviour that does not meet acceptable standards.
- 3.17 Pupils in the senior school are very conscious of their role in the wider world and take part in a range of activities. Pupils are very enthusiastic about helping both in school and in the wider community. They see it as an important element of their development and how it helps their own sense of responsibility and awareness of others' needs. They see the school as a family community, which builds their confidence and enables them to make the most of their opportunities and potential. In the questionnaire responses, a parent commented that the school was 'a huge family-orientated and close-knit community'. The school enables pupils to take part in a range of projects, to develop this sense of having a purpose in the world. The school raises considerable sums of money for community and charitable projects, such as the school in Uganda which the pupils have supported for some years. Pupils in Year 12 are fully involved in a range of community service projects, and this builds a greater understanding of the local community. Younger pupils value the strong support from peer mentors in

older years and this is of benefit to all, as it develops the broader personal skills of working with people. In the junior school council, members are eager to make an active contribution to the school, and their eco-committee are proud of having done so with the introduction of tablets in the classroom, cutting down on the use of paper. They are conscious that their role is to represent others selflessly, not to promote their personal opinions alone, and they do this successfully.

- 3.18 Pupils are highly sensitive and tolerant towards each other and, for many, it is just the only way to behave. They do not see differences between individuals as anything other than a cause of celebration of their community's diversity. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the different cultures around them but there is scope for this to be celebrated even more overtly around the school as an acknowledgment that they are all proud of their tolerant and culturally sensitive community. In the junior school, pupils take for granted the basic equality for all human beings. In discussion, no pupil suggested that ethnicity might be one of the ways in which people are different, they referred instead to characteristics such as height or sporting ability. In interviews, pupils spoke positively about the work of the diversity and inclusion group, which had been set up by them, enhancing their understanding. Pupils' understanding of these issues was reflected in a sixth-form English lesson, where the group was able to relate the views of sixteenth century society to those of modern times and discuss the implications.
- 3.19 Pupils work effectively to solve common goals and are strong team players. Pupils are excellent at working collaboratively, and these skills become increasingly strong as they progress through the school. In response to the questionnaire, they commented that the school 'makes you feel like you are a part of a team'. They have a keen desire to make their community as good as it can be and generally recognise the constraints under which change can take place. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to work with their peers, which enables them to support each other without the fear of failing. This was the case inside and outside the classroom. In a geography lesson in Year 11, pupils demonstrated excellent collaborative work and very good creativity as they prepared materials in pairs for a project on tropical storms. Pupils in the junior school, work well with each other, they form positive relationships between themselves and their teachers and show appropriately developed social skills. They take care of each other and understand the importance of working as a team in lessons with great success.
- 3.20 Pupils clearly have strong opinions on the wider issues of life and are able to talk through some challenging concepts, learning both from the classroom and from their involvement in areas such as the environment. This is particularly true of the sixth form but, further down the school, there has not been the same emphasis on pupils developing their appreciation of non-material issues and so the opportunities are less pronounced. In a lesson in Year 8, there was an excellent discussion on what the world would be like without religion. Pupils in the junior school were making some good observations about other dimensions in life in their discussions after the Queen's funeral. Pupils showed spiritual understanding when the opportunity was provided, and they understand the importance of kindness and sharing. They took the time to reflect thoughtfully when given the opportunity.
- 3.21 Pupils show very positive attitudes towards their physical health and an appreciation of the importance of strong emotional health. They also understand the importance of online safety and are confident in their knowledge, as shown in interviews. In a senior school lesson on food and nutrition, pupils understood the significance of vitamins in their diet. They participate wholeheartedly in the range of sports on offer and in interview express their appreciation for the school's support for their overall wellbeing. Pupils of all ages display a good grasp of what being healthy means, and the need to stay both physically and mentally healthy. They could identify many of the factors that might cause anxiety when others were having difficulties. Pupils wanted to actively help their peers who might be in distress and in need of support. Pupils' clear understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle is fully in keeping with the school's declared aims of enabling pupils to thrive, enjoying

learning and achieving success, fully prepared for the changing world beyond school and making an active contribution to others.

## 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 a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with 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 Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Mrs Colette Culligan	Accompanying Inspector
Mrs Kate Corbin	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Robert Chatburn	Team inspector (Head of faculty, TSOH school)
Mr Lawrence Coen	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Miss Melanie Eaton	Team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school)
Mr Stephen Hardy	Team inspector (Head of department, HMC school)
Mr Andrew Johnson	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mrs Melanie Pople	Team inspector (Former deputy head HMC school)