



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

University College School

November 2021

Contents

School's Details		3
1. Background Information		4
About the school		4
What the school seeks to do		4
About the pupils		4
2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection		5
Preface		5
Key findings		6
PART 1 – Quality of education provided		6
PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils		6
PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils		6
PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors		6
PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools		7
PART 6 – Provision of information		7
PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled		7
PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools		7
3. Educational Quality Inspection		8
Preface		8
Key findings		8
Recommendation		9
The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements		9
The quality of the pupils' personal development		10
4. Inspection Evidence		13

School's Details

School	University College School			
DfE number	202/6018			
Registered charity number	312748			
Address	University College School Frognaal Hampstead London NW3 6XH			
Telephone number	020 7435 2215			
Email address	hmsec@ucs.org.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Mark Beard			
Chair of governors	Mr Stephen Warshaw			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll				
	Lower School	218	Middle school	359
	Sixth form	354		
Inspection dates	23 to 26 November 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 University College School is an independent day school situated in Hampstead, London. It was founded in 1830 to promote Benthamite principles of liberal scholarship and education. It moved to its current location in 1907. Male pupils are admitted in Years 7 to 11, with female pupils joining the co-educational sixth form. The school is governed by the trustees of the University College School charity. The junior branch of the school and the pre-preparatory school were inspected at the same time, and reported on separately.
- 1.2 During the period March to August 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers. During this period of closure, the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than vulnerable pupils or the children of key workers received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.6 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades and teacher-assessed grades were awarded.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.7 The school was founded on Benthamite principles of liberal education and, in keeping with this ethos, seeks to provide a distinctively kind and respectful environment that values diversity, promotes self-awareness and respects every individual in a safe and supportive community. The aim is to offer an academic education that stimulates, enriches and informs. Preparation for the world beyond school should be built on a foundation of attitudes, attributes, skills and knowledge. The varied experience beyond the classroom is intended to encourage creativity and aspiration and develop the individual talents of every pupil. The school seeks to provide opportunities for all members of the school within the local, national and global communities, of which it is a part, to recognise, and respond to, their own responsibilities.

About the pupils

- 1.8 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds across London. In Years 7 to 11, the pupils' ability is above average. In Years 12 and 13, it is above average for those pupils taking A-level courses. The school has identified 105 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 41 of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 100 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. The school does not identify a group of pupils as being the more able in the school's population, providing enrichment sessions as part of the curriculum for all pupils.

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](#).

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 associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 At GCSE in the years 2019 to 2021, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2019 to 2021 have confirmed 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 and sex education in the 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Entry	Year 7
Shell	Year 8
Lower Remove	Year 9
Remove	Year 10
Upper Remove	Year 11
Transitus	Year 12
Sixth	Year 13

Key findings

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

- Pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding and achieve outstanding examination results at GCSE and A level.
- Pupils have excellent communication skills and collaborate successfully on group projects.
- Pupils are highly skilled learners, with a strong spirit of inquiry.
- Pupils are ambitious to extend their achievements beyond the classroom.
- Pupils have a highly positive approach to their work and to other activities in school.

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

- Pupils take responsibility for their academic attainment and progress, and for their broader intellectual development.
- Pupils' communication is highly effective, and they are respectful of one another's views.
- Pupils have a well-developed social awareness.
- Pupils have a strong moral sense and are passionate about defending what they regard as right.
- Pupils believe strongly in equality of treatment for all and behave accordingly.

Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish
- to consider further ways of promoting excellent behaviour, social cohesion and well-being for pupils in Years 7 and 8.

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 achieve excellent results in public examinations. At GCSE and A level in 2018 and 2019 grades were above the national average, and results in 2020 and 2021 indicate that this level of attainment has been sustained. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve equally strong results, in response to teaching which understands their needs, matching tasks to their learning styles and abilities. Observation of lessons during the inspection, scrutiny of pupils' books and files, and discussions with staff and pupils confirmed that these standards are reflected in current pupils' work. Pupils benefit from demanding yet supportive teaching. Teachers know their pupils well. Much of the school's success, especially in the sixth form, is based on the strong, mutually respectful relationships between teachers and pupils. In addition, pupils have high aspirations and strive for intellectual development in response to the taught curriculum and the challenging provision beyond the classroom.
- 3.6 Pupils display excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across the full range of subjects and age groups. For example, pupils in a Year 7 personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson concerning free speech and identity, were readily able to link this to fundamental British values of individual liberty and democracy. In an A-level chemistry lesson, pupils used increasingly sophisticated terminology and techniques in response to effective questioning. Pupils can confidently apply prior knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts. In a Year 10 physical education lesson, for instance, they were able to recap what they knew of the main muscle groups in the human body, labelling one another and challenging others to recall muscle locations. Pupils also show excellent recall of key concepts, theories and terms, as seen in Year 9 physics, and Year 13 history. The pupils put into daily practice the four Rs of the school's learning values: relationships, resourcefulness, resilience and responsibility. They only consult teachers when they have exhausted other sources of information. They willingly put themselves forward to undertake challenging questions and they are prepared to keep trying when they get it wrong first time, taking responsibility for their learning. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to these outcomes. It is flexible and rich, accommodating those with SEND or EAL by suitable modifications. It also offers an extensive range of subjects including Mandarin and psychology, for example. The enrichment programme, in which all pupils are involved, offers variety and challenge, whether in extending their knowledge or deepening their thinking skills and habits.
- 3.7 Pupils communicate with clarity and fluency, both verbally and on paper. Most write accurately and persuasively in response to open-ended tasks which require continuous prose. Almost all pupils listen to one another attentively and carefully, particularly in the middle and senior schools. As a result, pupils' learning is enhanced effectively by the plentiful opportunities for paired and group work in class. A-level economics pupils, for example, were observed offering nuanced critique of one another's responses to improve their understanding of oligopolies. Pupils know that their views will be respected by their peers. In that context, therefore, sixth-form pupils in a PSHE lesson held challenging but fearless discussions on rape culture and the wider impact on society.
- 3.8 Pupils show excellent mathematical skills across the curriculum. In a GCSE physics lesson, pupils applied mathematical knowledge to rearranging formulae and writing answers in standard form. They select the correct technique and apply it accurately. Likewise, in A-level chemistry, pupils identify and successfully carry out the correct calculations to solve problems related to carbonyl chemistry. In an A-level economics lesson, pupils were able to identify the appropriate complex formulae to analyse responsiveness when considering the elasticity of demand in relation to real-world phenomena such as interest rates.

- 3.9 Pupils show excellent levels of skill when using information and communication technology (ICT) for classroom exercises and as a tool for recording and submitting written work. A GCSE German class used the school's platform quickly and easily to retrieve and complete a vocabulary test. In music, younger pupils successfully use subject-specific technology, for example when creating a twelve-bar blues piece. In an A-level geography lesson, pupils use data effectively to synthesise information and make decisions on natural hazards in the Philippines. The use of ICT enables all pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, to work from a shared file and have detailed notes for each lesson. This in turn enables teachers to have a clear overview of their progress. In lessons, pupils learn effective research skills and how to evaluate different sources.
- 3.10 Throughout the school, pupils develop excellent study skills in response to sharp focus on this area by school leaders. They benefit from formal instruction on critical thinking and philosophical approaches which inform their study habits and techniques for learning. This is helpfully supplemented by informal lunch time sessions led by pupils under the title *Learn Meets*. They develop the capacity to hypothesise and predict in response to skilful questioning by teachers. Teaching habitually pays scrupulous attention to detail in dialogue with pupils, so that pupils' analysis is sophisticated, and they have high expectations of themselves. Year 11 English pupils, for example, offered skilful and perceptive critique of sample examination answers. Pupils are proficient in breaking down complex problems into their component parts, such as when pupils in Year 11 chemistry created their own individual flash cards. They discussed content with classmates, used their own online notes to identify areas of unfamiliarity, and related their thinking to curriculum expectations. In this way they created bespoke revision resources.
- 3.11 Many pupils achieve outstanding success in academic and other activities. Pupils excel in prestigious essay prize competitions across a range of subjects. These include history, classics, politics, geography and natural sciences. Similarly, they are notably successful in linguistics Olympiads and mathematical challenges. They have achieved distinction in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the Model United Nations. Numerous pupils have won representative recognition across a wide range of sports. Pupils have been successful in auditions for the National Youth Theatre and national music competitions.
- 3.12 Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning. They are also aspirational and highly motivated about academic and other achievement. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are occasionally distracted in class and behave without due care for others, failing to listen attentively and speaking out of turn. Most older pupils approach their work with an authentic spirit of inquiry. For example, in a Year 9 history lesson they were enthusiastic to engage with lists of additional reading compiled by the library to support their learning on the Russian Revolution. The independence and initiative which characterise their approach to lessons and enrichment activities often suggest engagement on an undergraduate level. Scrutiny of pupils' work in physical and digital files indicated that pupils are generally well organised and take pride in their presentation.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils display excellent levels of self-confidence in the classroom and elsewhere. They also show strong resilience and self-understanding to improve their own learning and to shape their personal development. Across the curriculum, pupils take responsibility for their academic work and act effectively on feedback and marking from their teachers. In discussion, pupils of all ages confirmed that they know how well they are doing in their lessons, and that they know how to improve their work. They commented on the usefulness of periodic progress reviews and the targets set as a result.
- 3.15 Pupils show notably strong skills in making decisions. Most say they are used to having their collective voice heard by the school, which weighs their opinions carefully. The result is that they feel their views are valued, and that they should therefore speak thoughtfully. Pupils speak warmly about the support

they receive over subject choices for both A-level and GCSE through advice and taster lessons. In a Year 11 form period, pupils showed a keen interest in being as well-informed as possible while considering A-level choices. They were aware that university entry requirements and career aspirations play a central role in these decisions. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small number of pupils felt that they had insufficient support from the school over subject choices and careers advice. In discussions, however, pupils indicated that they had all the information they needed to make effective decisions, and that further conversations were always possible if they were needed.

- 3.16 Pupils have an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. The school is a secular foundation which offers weekly dialectic lessons in Year 7 and PPE in Year 8. Pupils speak very positively of their experience of these lessons, which encourage them to explore the world of ideas in open-forum debate and discussion. In this way, they cautiously adopt a strong system of values as part of their spiritual development. Pupils also have a highly developed appreciation of the creative arts, especially those who take advantage of the numerous opportunities to perform in musical and dramatic events. They express deep satisfaction at sharing the sensation of being creative as part of a team.
- 3.17 Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong. They know that they have responsibilities to themselves and to others and so their behaviour in lessons is consistently supportive of learning. Opportunities to explore moral and ethical issues are common in lessons and society meetings. In a lower school history lesson, for example, pupils understood the moral dimension of Stalin's treatment of the civilian population of Russia. Senior pupils offered sensitivity and balance in a discussion of compulsory vaccination. In a meeting of the Gender Politics Society, pupils showed secure understanding of the reasons why women feel unsafe in society, particularly in relation to needle-spiking. Younger pupils can express well-reasoned arguments, as when Year 8 discussed morality and the concepts of moral relativism and absolutism. Pupils understand the school code of conduct, which is published in every classroom. They accept the need for a system of sanctions and rewards. The school has a strong moral sense, and reminds the pupils that kindness lies at the heart of its philosophy.
- 3.18 Pupils have an excellent level of social awareness, and they collaborate effectively in lessons and in activities. The deme, or house, system and the variety of pupil-led clubs and societies encourage teamwork and a sense of belonging, including pupils in other year groups. In this way, the modelling of respect and social awareness by staff is reflected in senior pupils, to the benefit of all. Pupils in a Year 11 PSHE lesson showed well-developed social awareness when exploring the characteristics of unhealthy relationships and how to avoid them. Similarly, Year 9 pupils attached high value to a session on consent in the relationships and sex education programme, conducted jointly with a girls' school. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small number of pupils did not agree that the school promoted positive relationships, or that pupils treated one another with respect and kindness. Inspectors found that the prevailing school culture was rooted in strong relationships, and that the school is successful in fostering positive interactions.
- 3.19 Pupils' social awareness prompts them to make notable contributions to the school community and to the wider world. Pupils have devised, for example, the *Green Impact* initiative to challenge the school to behave in a more environmentally conscious manner. This has led to the establishment of a website and a programme of events, as well as raising money. Pupils have shown excellent initiative and enterprise in setting up, for example, the *Tortoise* magazine, regular breakfasts with a chemistry theme, and teaching British sign language to other pupils. Pupils are also mentors to younger peers. Their service to the local and international communities has included contributing over three tonnes of food to the Paddington food bank, and a very large sum this year to charity projects in Romania and India.
- 3.20 Pupils have an excellent level of respect for those from different cultures, religions and backgrounds from their own. This respect is in response to the way the school recognises stand-alone events such as Black History Month, celebrates religious festivals such as Diwali, and has a prayer room available

at all times. Pupils have become more aware of the historic roles played by, for instance, black artists who are the focus of art lessons. Their view of the world has also been developed by, for example, a consideration of slavery in lower school Latin. In addition, the school embraces an unambiguous culture of equality, diversity and inclusion. The school's governors have taken an active part in ensuring a positive response to the *Black Lives Matter* movement, for example, and school leaders have been quick to set up a steering group which reports regularly to the governors on progress. Pupils have been closely involved in the process at every stage. They speak clearly and forcefully of a school culture which does not accept any form of bullying or discrimination. The school library, for example, promotes reading lists by diverse authors to all pupils. They are confident that inappropriate language will always be challenged by staff and pupils.

- 3.21 Pupils feel safe in school and know how to stay safe online. Although a small number of pupils indicated in the pre-inspection survey that the school did not teach them to be healthy, it is clear that they appreciate the need to exercise and understand their own dietary needs. Pupils also show a mature sensitivity for their own and others' mental as well as physical health, supported by the co-curricular programme, which includes mindfulness and well-being. During the inspection, a group of sixth-form pupils displayed excellent knowledge and understanding of their theme when leading an influential assembly on eating disorders. Pupils speak highly of the school's system which enables pupils to report pastoral concerns by means of a QR code. This further enhances the sense of a community where its members look after one another and are alert to sources of support as and when the need arises.

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 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 Bill Burn	Reporting inspector
Mrs Fiona McGill	Accompanying inspector
Mrs Karen Wilcock	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school)
Mr Shaun Fenton	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Richard Follett	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Tom Keenan	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Qin Wiseman	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Dr Olwen Wright	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Graham Yates	Team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school)