



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

GEMS SHERFIELD SCHOOL

JANUARY 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	GEMS Sherfield			
DfE number	850/6084			
Address	Reading Road Sherfield-on-Loddon Hook Hampshire RG27 0HU			
Telephone number	01256 884800			
Email address	info@sherfieldschool.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Richard Jaine			
Chairman of governors	Mr Tony Little			
Age range	3 months to 18 years			
Number of pupils on roll	455			
	Boys	258	Girls	197
	Day pupils	408	Boarders	47
	EYFS	102	Prep	185
	Seniors	128	Sixth Form	40
Inspection dates	18 to 19 January 2017			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

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

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a representative governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Robin Lewis	Reporting inspector
Mr Jim Turner	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Dr Sarah Welch	Team inspector (Principal, ISA school)
Miss Patricia Griffin	Team inspector (Former head of pre-prep, IAPS school)
Mr Paul Johnstone	Team inspector (Chaplain, HMC school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 GEMS Sheffield was founded in 2004 and is a co-educational school for pupils from three months to eighteen years of age. It has four sections: Sherfield Nursery for children from three months to three years of age; the pre-prep for pupils in 'pre-Reception' to Year 2; the prep which comprises Years 3 to 8; and the senior school for those in Years 9 to 13. Boarding is available for pupils from Year 5 onwards. The school is part of Global Educational Management Systems (GEMS) who manage a number of schools in Europe and the United Kingdom (UK). The school is overseen by the GEMS governance board which also has oversight of the other GEMS schools in the UK.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection the school's leadership has changed, a new boarding house has been built and the Nursery and teaching facilities have received investment. The school appointed a new headmaster in 2012 and relaunched their sixth form in 2013, reintroducing A levels.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to prepare pupils for life and the challenges of the modern world through enabling them to realise their potential and developing their individual gifts and character. In so doing, the school's aspiration is that its pupils become reflective, engaged, dynamic people who can work individually and collaboratively whilst showing initiative, respecting equality and diversity, and becoming increasingly aware of the needs of others. It is keen to foster pupils' personal development, positive self-image and confidence. Concurrently it sets out to ensure that its pupils imbibe the GEMS core values of innovation, excellence, learning and global citizenship.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils generally come from professional or business family backgrounds, and day pupils especially reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the locality. Many overseas boarders come from the far east.
- 1.5 The school does not use nationally standardised tests. Data supplied by the school indicate that pupils up to Year 11 demonstrate ability that is above average, whilst the ability of the sixth form pupils is broadly average.
- 1.6 The school has identified 70 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom are monitored and many of whom receive specialist support. Data used by the school have identified 59 pupils as the more able in the school's population, with 32 pupils having special talents in areas such as sport, music and drama. Also, 1 pupil has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 52 pupils, who receive support in the classroom.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.8 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an integrated inspection in October 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Strengthen governance by improving monitoring of, and support for, the school from the governing body.
 - Further improve boarding education by extending the range of activities, particularly at weekends and ensuring boarding staff attend suitable training.
 - Provide further opportunities and resources for investigative learning in EYFS, including outdoor facilities.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of this previous inspection.
- 1.10 The recommendations of the intermediate boarding inspection September 2014 were:
- Respond further to boarders' views on the variety of food.
 - Offer older boarders additional independence.
- 1.11 The school has fully met the recommendation to respond further to the boarders' views on the variety of food.
- 1.12 The school has partially addressed the recommendation to offer older boarders additional independence. Further detail is in given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils display good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills. They achieve high standards across all areas of the curriculum and make good progress in their lessons and over time, helped by effective lesson planning and detailed feedback on their work.
- Pupils' communication skills are good, owing to a focus on whole-school literacy. Their mathematical skills are strong due to a particular focus on numeracy in overall lesson planning.
- Pupils do not always exercise their initiative through independent study, as not all teaching provides suitable opportunities.

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

- Pupils display excellent moral responsibility due to the highly effective support that they receive.
- Pupils are particularly tolerant and readily accept diversity, as a result of the school's own diversity and strong tolerance of difference.
- Pupils develop strong sensitivity to the feelings of others and enjoy the company of their schoolfellows.
- Limited time is available in boarding for the development of friendships.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Develop greater opportunities for independent and investigative study across the school.
- Develop further a boarding culture of age-appropriate contact among girls and boys.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, pupils make good progress from their starting points. This supports well GEMS's aim to ensure learning in its schools. In both the prep and senior schools, pupils' progress in reading and literacy is good. This progress is particularly notable for those more senior pupils whose first language is not English. Progress in numeracy in all parts of the school is excellent due to the particular focus in the planning and delivery of lessons on mathematics and related matters. Additionally, pupils' standards are monitored very effectively through regular testing and assessments. This enables targeted support in numeracy for less able pupils and high levels of challenge for the more able. Effective, achievable targets are set for pupils which provide them great satisfaction and help ensure continued progress. In both the junior and senior sections those pupils who require support for SEND make similar, steady progress towards their goals in both literacy and numeracy achieving standards equivalent to their peers in relation to their starting points.
- 3.3 Attainment in GCSE in the years 2012 to 2015, the most recent three years for which comparative data are available, was above the national average. At the time of the inspection and due to the sixth form's relatively recent formation, A-level examinations had only been taken in the summers of 2015 and 2016. The results display a considerable rise in the standards achieved; inspection evidence demonstrates improvement over time for sixth form pupils although the numbers taking the examination are too small to enable comparison with national norms. Those pupils who require SEND or EAL support attain standards equivalent to their peers at all levels.
- 3.4 Pupils are made well aware of areas in which they need to improve as a result of teachers having close knowledge of the pupils, understanding well their strengths, abilities and aspirations. Not all lessons offer consistently high challenge to the different groups within each class, neither are pupils frequently provided chances for investigative research. Pupils as a result have limited experience in exercising their initiative, whether it be individually or corporately in small groups. Similarly, not all lessons consistently engage pupils' attention. This supports the view of a small minority of pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire responses, which expressed that lessons occasionally lack interest.
- 3.5 Pupils display good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across all areas of the curriculum due to the high expectations of their teachers. Pupils in GCSE French gain a good understanding of grammatical concepts in French, and prep age pupils use their mathematical knowledge well to grasp the significance of certain principles in science. Those with EAL or SEND are also well supported in their development of knowledge, skills and understanding which evolve well. Additionally they demonstrate their interest and enthusiasm through the high volume of the work that they produce. The work of pupils of all abilities is encouraged by the good quality of the frequent and informative marking which is provided by staff. A small minority of pupils in their questionnaire answers indicated that the marking of their work does not help them to improve. Inspection evidence from scrutiny of a representative sample of pupils' work does not support this contention.

- 3.6 All pupils respond strongly to the examples of endeavour set for them by staff, and a culture of application pervades pupils' attitudes to the benefit of all. This culture is strongly fostered by the tutor time provided to pupils, which becomes increasingly effective as they grow up. A close-knit bond is established between pupils and adults through tutorial contact twice daily. This enables problems to be anticipated or recognised, and then swiftly addressed. Pupils move seamlessly through their developing studies without undue breaks as they graduate between sections of the school, due to the increasingly integrated curriculum which links the junior to the more senior areas. Pupils' high standards are strongly supported by the school's senior leaders who clearly exemplify the school's expectations. The leadership is in turn provided vigorous support through the provision by governors of the necessary resources, facilities and a well-thought-through programme of capital developments. Inspection evidence does not support the views of a very small minority of parents who disagreed in their questionnaire responses that the school is governed well. Governors have a close understanding of the school's policies and procedures, and a strong working relationship with senior leaders.
- 3.7 Pupils' achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) as the teaching scheme in this area has been carefully thought out to ensure that pupils' interest and attention is engaged appropriately and at all levels. Examples of pupils' work adorn the walls of classrooms, and pupils' success in ICT and other areas is celebrated in assemblies and tutor time. Governors have ensured that the school has generous provision for ICT. This has underwritten the good quality of pupils' ICT skills, which are applied well across various subjects in the curriculum's wide range.
- 3.8 Pupils have excellent attitudes to study, demonstrating keen attention and the ability to work independently and collaboratively when provided the chance to do so. They are enthusiastic in their learning activities, and take decisions readily and confidently. Pupils are well-prepared to lead and take responsibility for their actions.
- 3.9 Pupils achieve highly in a wide range of academic, sporting and creative arts activities. They gain success in writing competitions and in the British Biology Olympiad. Many pupils achieve high standards in music, dance and drama according to their ages and abilities. Pupils' high aspirations are stimulated through the rich diet afforded by the breadth of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities planned and executed by the staff. In addition and where appropriate, modifications are made to an individual pupil's programme of study in order to accommodate the necessary practice and specialised study times.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 From the youngest ages and particularly when they are old enough to enter the pre-prep and prep schools, pupils develop their personalities steadily and to excellent effect. As they mature, pupils develop their individual characteristics and aptitudes strongly as a result of the new experiences offered by the school. These experiences are often linked to pupils' learning styles and personal preferences, due to staff members' knowledge of their charges' needs. Staff are thus able to provide individualised support and advice where pastorally appropriate, to the evident benefit of the pupils. As pupils grow up, they benefit increasingly from the steady introduction of advice across wider areas of school life. A few parents' questionnaire responses indicated dissatisfaction with the careers advice provided by the school, although most sixth form pupils were satisfied. During formal interviews, sixth form pupils made it clear that they are especially pleased with the guidance on university choice which they find adds pertinently to the information that they receive on potential careers. A very large majority of responding parents judged that the school successfully supports their children's personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils' self-knowledge and self-esteem are high due to the careful support that staff offer which ensures that each young person is able to develop significant levels of self-confidence and resilience. In their questionnaire responses, a few parents disagreed that the school meets their children's pastoral and welfare needs effectively. Inspection evidence indicates strong provision in this area and careful attention to the needs of individuals, with the result that pupils are well cared for pastorally and their welfare provided scrupulous attention. Pupils' responses to adults in both formal interviews and informal discussions demonstrate the success of the school's promulgation of its aim to develop its pupils into reflective, engaged and dynamic people, and the genuine effectiveness of the procedures in place to back this up. Pupils at all levels are kind, considerate and courteous to adults, visitors and one another. A few pupils and a small minority of parents expressed in their questionnaire responses that the school does not deal effectively with bullying. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Pupils in interview considered that occasions of misunderstandings do inevitably occur, but that bullying and misbehaviour is not an issue. They also expressed confidence both in the arrangements made to counter bullying and in the school to resolve any such matters were they to occur, with speed and due justice for all. Inspection evidence strongly concurs.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral understanding is high. They understand the school's rules well and, as is appropriate to their age and maturity, apply this to the law of the land. Pupils have a keen sense of fair play. Their behaviour both individually and corporately is excellent and this results in first-class collaborative work, and consequently teams and houses operate enthusiastically and efficiently. Behaviour amongst boarders is equally good, although boarding pupils indicated in formal and informal interviews that they felt time for relaxed, social contact particularly between boys and girls to be unnecessarily restricted. The excellence seen in this area is largely as a result of the consistent example set by all teaching and non-teaching staff, who exemplify the school's ethos and behavioural standards. This exemplification is particularly displayed in the senior school and sixth form levels. Due to the close interaction of prep and senior pupils from time to time throughout the day, a strong aspirational tone is set throughout the school as pupils of all ages can see, come to know by name and befriend others outside of their specific year groups.
- 4.5 Pupils' spiritual understanding is good. They display a strong awareness of non-material aspects of life such as appreciation of the beauty of the school's gardens and estate, and a

grasp of how music can transport and visual art can uplift individuals. This strength is developed through, for example, the opportunities provided by the school to learn an instrument and play and perform at increasingly high levels. It is supported by the encouragement to critically observe paintings and sculptures through the regular exhibitions of artwork by local and up-and-coming artists that the school arranges. Pupils' understanding of religious experience is less strong as a result of the school's specifically non-religious foundational aims and the consequent limited focus on such matters, outside specifically curricular issues.

- 4.6 From the earliest years, pupils learn to value strongly the school's cultural diversity and the variety of background and traditions that are represented in the community. The school works hard in assemblies and in other areas such as in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons to foster this understanding. Pupils report favourably on their appreciation of friends from cultures different from their own.
- 4.7 Pupils' develop especially healthy lifestyles through the many opportunities available to participate in sports, team games and outdoor play. Pupils in interview expressed that such outdoor play, or 'strolling' depending on age, was very popular, particularly in the Summer. All pupils participate in these experiences and receive increasing opportunities as they grow up to represent the school in team games against a variety of opposition. An innovative partnership programme which brings in high-quality coaching in a number of sporting and other disciplines is allied to opportunities for pupils to train for many hours each week alongside their academic studies. This has enabled many athletes and performers to be highly effective role models for those with lower aspirations. Meals are much enjoyed by everyone; a healthy choice is offered and pupils make sensible selections in response. In the small number of questionnaire responses received from boarders, a majority disagreed that food is of sufficient quantity and quality. Inspection evidence does not support this view as food is varied and plentiful. Pupils know well how to stay safe, and understand the potential dangers to their well-being. The strength of the PSHCE programme in this regard was repeatedly emphasised by pupils in interview; especial mention was made of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the information that they receive, and their understanding concerning internet safety.
- 4.8 Pupils contribute strongly to their school and wider society. As a result, the school strongly fulfils its aims to enable the creation of global citizens and for pupils to grow through learning. Pupils gain a strong corporate identification with the needs of those less fortunate through community events such as the runs for cancer care. Such events also benefit pupils in enabling them to gain organisational experience through taking a co-ordinating role. These experiences assist in pupils' development of other personal skills such as confidence in their own decision-making skills. Pupils' confidence is considerable, which is evident in their approach to moving to the next year group and enhanced by help received from the school. Relationships between pupils are excellent at all ages, reflecting the harmonious nature of the school as a whole.