



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

BEDFORD SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Bedford School			
DfE number	822/6002			
Registered charity number	1066861			
Address	Bedford School De Parys Avenue Bedford Bedfordshire MK40 2TU England			
Telephone number	01234 362200			
Email address	info@bedfordschool.org.uk			
Head master	Mr James Hodgson			
Chair of governors	Professor Stephen Mayson			
Age range	7 to 18			
Number of pupils	1059			
	Boys	1059	Girls	0
	Day pupils	802	Boarders	257
	Prep	389	Upper	670
	Sixth Form	258		
Inspection dates	23 to 24 Nov 2016			

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 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 grade descriptors 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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they 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 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 the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended tutor group meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Dr Christopher Ray	Reporting inspector
Mr Andrew Chicken	Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Susan Clifford	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Catherine Hill	Team inspector (Senior teacher and head of department, HMC school)
Ms Linda Macfarlane	Team inspector (Former deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Phillipa Message	Team inspector (Senior deputy head, HMC school)
Ms Jane Stevens	Team inspector (Former deputy head, ISA school)
Mrs Anne Cox	Team inspector for boarding (Boarding advisor, GSA, HMC and IAPS school)
Mr Christian Kendall-Daw	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, GSA school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Bedford School is an independent day and boarding school for boys aged between 7 and 18 years. The trustees of the Harpur Trust charity, which runs three other schools, have overall responsibility for the school whilst the day-to-day governance is delegated to the Bedford School Committee. Since the previous inspection the school has completed a new theatre building and a recording studio within the music school, and has established a faculty system, academic tracking and monitoring. The current head master was appointed in 2014.
- 1.2 The school was established by Royal Charter in 1552 and moved to its present site in a residential area of Bedford in 1891. It is divided into two sections: the prep school which has its own headmaster and is for boys aged 7 to 13, and the Upper School which educates boys from 13 to 18. The school has seven boarding houses; one for the prep and six for the Upper School. The prep and Upper schools have their own buildings and facilities, but some of these are shared as and when required.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to maintain the Christian ethos which characterised its foundation but admits boys of all faiths and none, aiming to instil four principal qualities within its pupils: integrity, responsibility, curiosity and endeavour. It aims to encourage boys to look beyond what they might feel is possible both academically and outside the classroom. The school also seeks to promote competitiveness within an atmosphere of friendship, collegiality and mutual respect as the pupils prepare for life in the adult world.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a variety of predominantly professional families in Bedford, the UK and overseas. The school has 57 pupils who receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) including physical disabilities and a range of learning difficulties such as dyslexia. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. A total of 139 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and 110 of these receive specialist support.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report 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>
Fourth form	Year 9
Remove	Year 10
Fifth form	Year 11
Lower sixth	Year 12
Upper sixth	Year 13

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in December 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Communicate more effectively to staff the school's strategic vision.
 - Share best practice in teaching and learning across the whole school.
- 1.7 The recommendation of the intermediate boarding inspection in October 2013 was:
- Ensure consistent arrangements for boarders to give their opinions and receive an appropriate response from the school in Upper School houses.
- 1.8 The school has fully met the recommendations of the previous inspections. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- The academic attainment of the pupils is excellent throughout the school.
- Most pupils make rapid progress, promoted by teaching which focuses upon individual needs.
- Pupils develop a wide range of learning skills including independence of thought and the ability to communicate clearly and most effectively.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Pupils with SEND generally achieve well from their individual starting points but a small number makes slightly less progress than the majority.

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

- Pupils have great respect for others, whatever their culture or ethnicity.
- Pupils make a strong contribution to the school and wider community, and demonstrate a clear sense of responsibility for others.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and of the rule of law.
- Pupils work most effectively with each other within and across years, displaying kindness and sensitivity.
- Pupils are assured, self-confident and self-aware.

Recommendation

2.3 In the context of excellent outcomes, the school may wish to consider making the following improvement:

- Develop further the support for pupils with SEND so that their examination performance in relation to other pupils may continue to improve.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 In the prep, pupils achieve high standards as judged by the evidence available. In the senior school at GCSE in the years 2013 to 2015, performance has been well above the national average for maintained schools. Results in International GCSE (IGCSE) examinations during the same period have overall been higher than worldwide norms. In the sixth form for the years 2013 to 2015, A-level results were well above the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools, and results in International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations have been higher than worldwide norms. In 2016 the results for GCSE, IGCSE, A level and IB were in line with the previous three years. The attainment of pupils with EAL is above the school average. Attainment for pupils with SEND is below the school average, but value-added measures indicate steady recent improvements.
- 3.3 Pupils of all abilities and ages achieve highly and make rapid progress, encouraged by the high quality of teaching and the individual attention provided to them by teachers. For example all pupils make excellent progress with their reading during their first year in the school, facilitated by a daily record of their development as readers. Results in GCSE and A-level examinations, and standardised measures of progress that are available indicate that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, almost all parents agreed that the teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future. The vast majority of pupils in their questionnaire responses felt that the school provides them the opportunity to learn and make good progress.
- 3.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning. In a religious education (RE) class for older prep pupils, they demonstrated strong reasoning and deduction skills. Sixth formers were able to make mature comparisons between two literary texts. Pupils have well-developed skills across the curriculum and they are highly effective in applying their skills from one area of learning to another. For example, GCSE pupils displayed a firm grasp of mathematical techniques which they applied most effectively to an analysis of their experimental work on velocity. Pupils respond positively to the wide-ranging curriculum, relishing the opportunities available to them. In their questionnaire responses, most parents maintained that the range of subjects provided is suitable for their children.
- 3.5 Day and boarding pupils throughout the school possess excellent communication skills. They listen attentively to the views and opinions of others through the many opportunities that they have to express their views. These opportunities have developed well in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection. Pupils' written work is of a very high quality and demonstrates considerable analytical capacities. They are articulate in their oral responses to questions and when presenting their own ideas to others. For example, sixth formers were observed leading with great sensitivity, fluency and clarity a discussion about testicular cancer, fully engaging their audience of younger pupils. The high quality of communication skills evident is promoted by the positive encouragement that pupils receive from the teaching to express themselves clearly and confidently.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages show a strong grasp of mathematical concepts and methods, with extremely well-developed mathematical skills. For example, younger prep pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding of reflex, obtuse and acute angles in class, and pupils in a GCSE lesson displayed a good appreciation of the requirements of mathematical proof. They are adventurous mathematicians and they are not afraid of exploring new ideas and applying their skills in other parts of the curriculum. The enthusiastic and highly skilled mathematics teaching throughout the school encourages strong individual development in pupils and most effective collaborative learning amongst the pupils.
- 3.7 Throughout the school most pupils are adept at using information and communication technology (ICT) and they have a wide skills base, and know how to employ these skills successfully across the curriculum. They use technology well to substantiate their ideas through project work, in the classwork and through the work of some societies. Younger prep pupils were observed employing ICT most effectively to support their project work on everyday life in ancient Rome. Exceptional design work using ICT was noted in the portfolios of examination pupils. Recently over 60 members of the sixth form were actively involved in developing sophisticated and instructive ICT presentations to promote awareness of men's health issues. Pupils are encouraged to make excellent use of ICT through the wide range of ICT resources available and its effective use in teaching, even though some pupils do not take full advantage of the opportunities provided.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate excellent thinking skills. They successfully employ hypothetical reasoning to explore ideas in the sciences and other subjects. For example, younger prep pupils were observed analysing electrical circuitry with marked success. All members of the sixth form complete a personal research project and in doing so many demonstrate work of an extremely high quality as they probe their understanding of complex problems and issues. Pupils throughout the school relish discussion and debate without fear of making mistakes; they understand that they may learn all the more effectively by taking risks.
- 3.9 The academic and extra-curricular achievements of pupils throughout the school are of a very high standard. Notable examples in recent years include: numerous gold, silver and bronze awards for national Olympiads and challenges in mathematics and sciences achieved by pupils of all ages; the prep school team reaching the finals of the National Science Quiz in 2014 and the semi-finals in 2016; the school choir, comprising pupils from both schools, performing before the Queen at the 2015 Remembrance service at the Royal Albert Hall; the selection of pupils for Arkwright engineering scholarships and for the National Youth Theatre; the selection of 12 pupils to represent their country across 8 different sports; and school teams reaching 9 national finals in 6 different sports. Members of staff encourage the pupils to participate in all aspects of school life. Through their active involvement, many pupils achieve extremely high levels individually and within teams.

- 3.10 Pupils are often passionate learners. A very large majority of pupils agreed in their questionnaire responses that most lessons are interesting. Pupils are invariably enthusiastic, as noted in the approach displayed by older prep pupils in tackling a carousel of mathematical problems set within a murder mystery context: a sense of great fun and friendly competitiveness was observed. Pupils have great pride in their work and in their school. Through their co-operative work they support one another most effectively. They feel that they can express ideas freely, and they take a keen interest in what their peers say. Pupils frequently take the initiative in leading academic societies, and in promoting scholarship and learning through journals which they write and edit. They are eager to celebrate each other's achievements in and beyond the classroom. Pupils are often scholars as well as effective learners, as observed through sixth form pupils demonstrating an appetite for learning in Latin with a keenness to clarify their understanding of Virgil's *Aeneid* through scholarly discussion. Pupils regularly assist other pupils in their learning, as seen in the work of the oldest prep pupil ambassadors working alongside the youngest ones to strengthen their literacy and numeracy skills. Day and boarding pupils are eager to participate in life beyond the classroom in a variety of activities offered by the school, such as in sport, music and drama. Some very self-aware and high achieving pupils with SEND seek help when they need it, but others can sometimes be passive as learners. Pupils who have EAL are highly motivated. The school atmosphere is conducive to work, with most pupils agreeing in their questionnaire responses that teachers are supportive and helpful when they have concerns regarding their work.
- 3.11 The high achievement levels of pupils across the school have been promoted by collaborations within and beyond subject areas. The introduction by the leadership and management of a faculty system in the Upper School and the sharing of expertise within the prep school have resulted in successful promotion of good practice, thereby enabling the school to respond most effectively to the recommendations of the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy a smooth transition from the prep to the Upper School which is promoted by the strengthening of links between the two parts of the school; whole-school professional development has encouraged a greater and more effective focus upon pupils' progress as they move up through the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages and abilities are self-confident. Day and boarding pupils alike feel positive about themselves and their places in the school community. Boarders expressed in their questionnaire responses that boarding has helped them to become more confident and independent. In a rehearsal for a choir and orchestra concert, prep school pupils sang and played with decided self-assurance. In interview, prep pupils said that they feel inspired by the enthusiasm and energy of their teachers, noting the high degrees of confidence that they gain from the teaching. Pupils maintained that extra-curricular activities help them to develop their confidence and talents. The oral responses of senior pupils in lessons indicate that they have high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, for example when explaining how problematic ideas about body image might cause significant harm. In theatre studies, sixth form pupils demonstrate a great deal of self-confidence and resilience as they respond positively to critical peer assessments of their small group performances.
- 4.3 Pupils have a generally clear understanding of how they might improve in their academic work. This is promoted by the excellent academic and pastoral support provided by the staff to individual pupils. Pupils also have a clear perception of how they might gain more from their activities beyond the classroom. In order to manage the competing demands of academic and extra-curricular commitments which are often extensive, pupils learn how to prioritise and they said in discussions that they value the importance of doing so. They acknowledge the great value to them of the individual academic and pastoral support provided by the staff.
- 4.4 Pupils understand that the decisions they make may affect their future and reflect both on themselves and upon the community of which they are a part. They take their responsibilities seriously; prep pupils in a design technology class prepared themselves without prompting, donning aprons, eye protectors and where appropriate masks and sound muffs. They followed the appropriate procedures for their work without reference to the teacher, referring occasionally to the visual reminder on the board. Pupils demonstrate thorough awareness that the decisions they make affect their success at the school and beyond. A clear structure for personal development provided by personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons and further developed by assemblies and special events such as citizenship days promotes this sense of ownership of the decisions that they make for themselves.
- 4.5 Pupils' behaviour in and around the school reflects the views of parents, almost all of whom agreed in their questionnaire responses that the school promotes good behaviour. As pupils move through the school they develop a strong understanding of the need to behave well. They know that they must cultivate self-discipline in order to achieve all they wish, and they display this quality in abundance. Pupils are resilient when things do not go their way immediately, and persevere when faced with difficulties. They are willing to try new ways of dealing with the problems they face. Pupils in interview acknowledged the excellent pastoral support, which is clear and directed towards the needs of each of them as individuals. They also recognise the support that they are provided by older pupils who work with younger pupils most effectively as mentors and guides, thereby providing excellent role models.

- 4.6 Pupils have strong spiritual understanding, exemplified in particular through their appreciation of the aesthetic and philosophical aspects of life. They have a clear awareness of the significance of religion and of personal faith for themselves and for others within the school community. Pupils are eager to discuss non-material concepts in lessons, as noted during a sixth form English literature class on love and need. Chapel provides a calm place in which pupils take 'time out' from their busy lives. Pupils' strong sense of spirituality is reinforced through the work done in RE and philosophy as well as in aesthetic subjects, and also through the positive messages communicated during assemblies.
- 4.7 Pupils enjoy working with each other. This is evident not only in the classes and activities observed but also when older pupils mentor and guide younger pupils. Boarders emphasise how much they gain from learning to work alongside others, an essential part of house life. Pupils are proud when they are given responsibilities and they are determined to fulfil them to the best of their capabilities. They readily accept the many opportunities to hold positions of responsibility such as: in the day and boarding houses; through pupil-led charitable enterprises and societies; in sporting teams and the school's Combined Cadet Force; in drama and music; and through peer-led PSHE sessions. School monitors carry out their prefectural duties most effectively and are regarded by younger pupils as excellent role models.
- 4.8 Pupils have a very clear sense of right and wrong and of the importance of rules and laws, based in part upon their excellent knowledge of current affairs. In interview, younger pupils readily recalled the principles of endeavour, responsibility, integrity and curiosity which underpin the school's ethos, and sixth formers were able to demonstrate a thoughtful and sensitive awareness of contemporary legal and moral debate on issues of informed consent. Pupils throughout the school demonstrate very real strengths of personal integrity. They have learned to respect others, to provide fellow pupils the space to express their own ideas and opinions, and then to respond positively and supportively to their peers. Pupils are determined to take responsibility for their own actions and have a keen awareness of the potential impact of how they behave upon others which is encouraged by the supportive pastoral system, PSHE lessons, assemblies, the focus upon individual needs and the vision of the leadership and management.
- 4.9 Pupils understand the importance of staying safe. The overwhelming majority of parents said in their questionnaire responses that the school does all it can to ensure that their children learn in a healthy and safe environment. Pupils echoed this view in their responses. They have a keen awareness of how to protect themselves when using the internet, with almost all agreeing in their questionnaire responses that they understand how to keep safe online. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of what is needed to keep themselves healthy both physically and mentally, supported by the school's strong commitment to safeguarding, its well-being programmes and linked training for members of staff. In interview, pupils throughout the school displayed a keen awareness of their shared responsibility to promote the welfare of others through kindness and sensitivity. They recognise the importance of anti-bullying education and know how to respond should any instances arise; they understand that unkind banter disguised as wit is unacceptable.

- 4.10 Pupils display tremendous respect for one another whatever their cultural or religious background. Almost all parents said in their questionnaire responses that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils see this respect as a very natural part of their place in the school. The house system and the diversity within the school community are real strengths of the school and underpin the consideration which pupils show for each other. In interview, boarders said that people from different cultures are seen as an intrinsic part of the school. Pupils engage with all cultures present within the school. Relationships between pupils are characterised by empathy. Pupils see themselves as part of a cohesive school community which includes not just staff and current pupils but former pupils as well. Pupils have an enormous affection for this community of which they are part.
- 4.11 Pupils are excellent citizens within their own community and have developed the capacities to make positive contributions to the wider world. They are involved in extensive charitable fundraising and initiatives. Day and boarding pupils exhibit great mutual respect, and from these strong internal relationships the dedication to external causes flows easily. The underlying Christian ethos together with its responsiveness to the needs of the wider world further supports the commitment to citizenship at the heart of the school.
- 4.12 By the time they leave the school, pupils have developed a mature outlook and they have the necessary skills in place to enjoy successful lives in higher education and in their future careers. Pupils are ambitious as they look to the future, responding well to the school's increasing encouragement to them to set aspirational targets for themselves. They approach the transition with confidence, resilience and a positive attitude which is brought about in part by effective university and careers guidance, the knowledge staff have of individual pupils, and the many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop their independence. The inspection concurs with the responses of almost all the parents who stated a view, and agreed that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports the personal development of their children.