



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

KNIGHTON HOUSE SCHOOL

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Knighton House School			
DfE number	835/6018			
Registered charity number	306316			
Address	Knighton House School Durweston Blandford Forum Dorset DT11 0PY			
Telephone number	01258 452065			
Email address	enquiries@knightonhouse.co.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Sarah Wicks			
Chair of governors	Dr Camilla Masters			
Age range	3 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	112			
	Boys	11	Girls	101
	Day pupils	73	Boarders	39
	EYFS	19		
Inspection dates	15 to 16 March 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 the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses 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

Mrs Sue Bennett	Reporting inspector
Mrs Sarah Knollys	Team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Dr Robin Harskin	Team inspector for boarding (Academic deputy head, IAPS school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Knighton House School is an independent day school for boys and girls between the ages of three and seven years, and a day and boarding school for girls only between the ages of seven and thirteen years. Established in 1950, the school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors, who act as the trustees.
- 1.2 The school is divided into two sections: the preparatory school and the pre-preparatory school, which is known as the Orchard. Boarders are all accommodated in the main school house. Since the previous inspection the governance structure of the school has changed and sub-committees have been set up to provide oversight of the school's operation. Teaching areas have been reorganised and new resources provided for information and communication technology (ICT). In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), systems for curriculum planning and assessments have been revised.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's aim is to provide an excellent education and to instil a love of learning, a spirit of enquiry and creativity through the provision of a rich and varied range of learning experiences. It seeks to support individual strengths and interests, enabling each pupil to discover their potential. The objective is to create a supportive environment which: nurtures integrity, respect and compassion; promotes the essence of a happy childhood; and encourages pupils to be confident, courageous and considerate in readiness for future life.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of business, military, professional and farming backgrounds. Most are from White British families living within a 15-mile radius of the school, with boarders from further afield in the UK and overseas. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school and the school's own framework for assessment indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly average. The school has identified seventeen pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and attention deficit disorder, fourteen of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupils in the school have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for eight pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers and specialist teaching. Data used by the school have identified seventeen pupils as the most able in the school's population and the curriculum is modified for them, which includes sixteen pupils due to their special talents in sport, music and art.

- 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>
Pears	Nursery
Apples	Reception
Damsons	Year 1
Cherries	Year 2
B3	Year 3
B2	Year 4
B1	Year 5
A2	Year 6
A1	Year 7
Alpha	Year 8

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in October/November 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Ensure that work is always appropriate to pupils’ individual needs, whatever their level of ability.
 - Ensure that all lessons have a brisk pace and provide challenge, and are supported by a good variety of activities.
 - Improve further the already high quality of the EYFS setting by enabling children to have more independent access to information and communication technology (ICT).
- 1.7 The recommendation of the intermediate boarding inspection in March 2013 was:
- Make drinking water more readily available during the day.
- 1.8 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspections. 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 excellent.

- All pupils including children in the EYFS demonstrate outstanding attitudes to learning due to the extremely strong 'can do' ethos which pervades the school.
- Pupils make excellent progress from their individual starting points as a result of the high-quality individualised support and guidance that they receive for their learning.
- Pupils are excellent empathetic communicators and are highly competent in literacy, as communication is valued by the school as a foundation stone to learning.
- Pupils' excellent progress is clearly exemplified in the school's own comprehensive assessment framework, although this system does not link with newly introduced standardised testing to present a clear picture of pupils' overall attainment.

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

- Pupils have an outstanding appreciation of the non-material aspects of life, which matches the aims and ethos of the school.
- Pupils and particularly boarders relish every opportunity to make a positive contribution to the lives of others, and demonstrate a profound sense of belonging to the school due to the high expectations of community responsibility set by leaders and managers.
- Pupils' positive approaches to learning are characterised by their resilience and excellent levels of self-awareness due to the strength of pastoral care systems.

Recommendation

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Ensure that performance tracking systems are fully integrated to provide a clear picture of pupils' progress and attainment over time.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils and children in the EYFS make excellent progress from their individual starting points. As a result, they achieve high levels of attainment by the time they leave the school. This is due to the supportive oversight provided by governance and the strong commitment that leaders and managers demonstrate to ensure the best educational outcomes for each pupil, which matches the school's aims and ethos. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses the overwhelming majority of parents felt that the curriculum suits their children's needs well, and that teaching enables good progress and the development of positive skills for future life. Similarly, a very large majority of pupils commented that they can participate in a good range of activities and that they were afforded ample opportunity to learn and make good progress.
- 3.3 The school does not take part in nationally standardised tests. The school's own data analysis and use of internal standardised tests, supported by inspection evidence from lesson observations, pupils' work and subject interviews, indicates attainment to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. In the EYFS, all children achieve and a good number exceed national expectations by the end of their time in the setting. This is due to staff throughout the school carefully and regularly monitoring pupils' progress and attainment levels. Next steps in learning are clearly identified and shared with pupils and parents to ensure a cohesive approach. The school's own assessment framework is a highly effective tool for tracking pupils' progress, but newly introduced standardised testing is not yet effectively integrated into this framework to enable comprehensive oversight of pupils' overall attainment. Those with SEND or EAL in particular make rapid progress in relation to their attainment levels when they start at the school. Pupils join the school at different points of the school year with varying educational needs, including low levels of confidence in their own ability and performance. In interview, pupils spoke with immense pride about how they feel more confident since joining the school and that they are always encouraged to 'have a go' at learning tasks they might previously have considered too difficult. They report that the marking of their work and individualised feedback from teachers provide them with excellent guidance on how to improve. This evidence does not support pupils' negative questionnaire responses that posed concerns about the quality of marking and progress feedback. Further, pupils comment that teachers are extremely supportive and always willing to provide help and explanations to aid their understanding. Pupils value the intervention sessions that are provided for English and mathematics, and talk openly about how significant this has been in helping them to move forward in their classroom learning. More able pupils make excellent progress due to the highly effective use of challenging activities and questioning that staff use in lessons. Challenging tasks include proof reading text to extend literacy skills, and studying world maps and analysing key facts such as identifying the highest mountain and longest river. These activities encourage pupils to think critically and problem solve. This clearly demonstrates that recommendations from the previous inspection have been successfully addressed.

- 3.4 All pupils develop excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum, but particularly in communication skills. This is due to the school considering literacy as fundamental to accessing the wider curriculum. Pupils' energetic enthusiasm and willingness to learn is nurtured through well-planned lessons, which are delivered at a vibrant pace and provide excellent support for pupils of all abilities. They are highly articulate, as illustrated during geography when pupils competently explained the technical terms of erosion, abrasion and attrition. Active discussion is evident in many areas of learning, providing a wealth of opportunities for pupils to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise. For example, older pupils in a history lesson demonstrated excellent analytical and hypothetical skills when debating the reasons for the abolition of slavery, voicing their opinions with self-assurance but at the same time listening appreciatively to the viewpoints of their peers. Pupils have excellent written skills and try hard to present their work neatly. They write fluently in a wide range of genres, such as using persuasive speech to exemplify the values of friendship and understanding the need to employ a more formal approach when writing a letter to the school's leadership. Pupils enjoy reading, and understand that the daily timetabled slots in which they read have a significant impact on their academic performance. In numeracy, pupils of all ages develop high-level competency which they ably apply to other areas of the curriculum. For example in science, younger pupils skilfully applied estimation skills when calculating magnetic strength. Pupils' academic success is attributed to the high quality of teaching, support for their needs and the exciting breadth of the curriculum.
- 3.5 In the EYFS, children listen attentively and confidently ask questions to clarify understanding, such as a request to repeat actions for the colour purple during a sign language session. The youngest children confidently recognise their names and can write letters with the appropriate formation. They can name two-dimensional shapes such as triangle and circle, and hypothesised whether a triangle could roll. Older children ably read simple text and can write sentences, using their knowledge of sounds accurately to spell words. They count confidently to twenty and have a secure understanding of mathematical language such as heavier and lighter.
- 3.6 Pupils develop strong ICT skills as a result of specialist teaching and the provision of a good range of up-to-date ICT resources. They confidently apply these skills to a wide range of curriculum areas for study and research purposes such as creating fact files for animals living in tropical zones in geography, and studying medicine through the ages in history. In the EYFS, children have good access to ICT resources, such as programmable toys and specialist programs for numeracy and literacy to enhance their learning experiences. The recommendation from the previous inspection has been fully addressed as a result. Creatively, pupils' excellent levels of achievement are exemplified by the colourful displays throughout the school and the high quality of work in the art portfolios of older pupils.

- 3.7 Pupils achieve highly in a wide range of activities due to the excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities provided beyond the classroom. In particular, they develop and attain high level success in their individual talents such as music, art and sport including equestrian eventing. This is due to the leadership and management placing a great focus on nurturing the individual strengths of every child. In interview, boarders commented that they greatly enjoy the enrichment programme which includes team equestrian, philosophy, gardening, chess, sporting, creative and musical activities. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and have notable success in external examinations. Additionally, pupils achieve highly in national and regional sporting and musical competitions; they speak proudly of their successes. At the end of Year 8, a good number of pupils achieve scholarships in their entrance examinations to their first choice of senior schools.
- 3.8 Pupils of all ages including boarders have excellent attitudes to learning. They are keen to take ownership of their learning and make progress. Pupils are extremely resilient and confident in the classroom, keen to embrace all new challenges with positivity and a 'can do' approach. They are highly resourceful, as demonstrated during a discussion with older pupils relating to an enterprise initiative project. Pupils including children in the EYFS demonstrate an immense willingness to work collaboratively, such as sharing ideas during curriculum discussions. Consequently, the school is highly successful in fulfilling its published aims to provide an excellent academic education for all pupils.

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 including boarders commented during discussions that they feel valued and understood as individuals. They feel that this consequently nurtures their self-esteem and self-confidence and instils a self-belief that they can do well in their learning, preparing them extremely well for their next stages in life. Pupils have an excellent understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, and of what is required to ensure personal success; they know that staff have their best interests at heart and want them to do well. In the EYFS, children play happily together and demonstrate high levels of self-confidence when making choices between the activities on offer. They approach staff for help in a self-assured manner and display great pleasure when they receive positive praise for their successes, such as upon completion of a complex jigsaw puzzle. In interview, boarders cited that they always have an adult to turn to who is willing to listen to any concerns they may have, and to provide them with personal and academic support. This results from the strong ethos of openness promoted by the governance, senior leaders and managers, and the positive relationships between the pupils themselves and between pupils and staff.
- 4.3 Pupils have a strong understanding about the significance of making good decisions. They realise that the choices they make can have positive effect on their well-being in terms of achieving future goals in life, such as asking for extra work to aid their preparation for exams. A recent 'Getting it Wrong Day' promoted pupils' understanding that everyone makes errors from time to time. For example, pupils designed a rug depicting a deer with six legs, a deliberate error which led to discussion. Pupils learnt that it is important to react to such errors with resilience, equanimity and understanding. Within the boarding community, boarders have ample opportunity to exercise meaningful choice and take ownership of their lives. Pupils' mature levels of understanding are attributed to the strength of the pastoral framework, which empowers pupils and including boarders to make their own choices within the safety net of the school's environment.
- 4.4 Pupils' spiritual awareness is outstanding, in particular their appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. In interview, pupils enthused about the joys of time spent outside. They felt that they are allowed to enjoy their childhood and appreciate the wonders of nature. Their appreciation of the natural world is exemplified by work in English, when they created descriptive poems motivated by shapes perceived through branches of trees. Assemblies and the personal, social, health and emotional education (PSHE) curriculum, known as 'Floreat' at the school, provide excellent opportunities for pupils to be reflective. Following a staff bereavement, the pupils took the initiative to create a memorial garden which they tend lovingly and thoughtfully to ensure it remains a pleasurable place for quiet reflection. In the EYFS, children enjoy playing in the company of their friends in the outdoor garden. During a story time, they displayed great empathy for the dilemma of a character who had lost his way home. Boarders speak warmly of time spent relaxing and talking with friends within the homely feel of the boarding house and outside in the school grounds. They develop an excellent empathy towards the needs of animals through their care of the school's ponies, goats and rabbits, as observed during a pony tack-cleaning activity. During a philosophy club discussion, pupils demonstrated overwhelming sensitivity when providing reasons for why it might be important for a dog owner to invite people to share a final beach walk before putting the pet down. This strong spiritual understanding is due to the curriculum's breadth and the family feel of the school community, which promotes the essential values of a happy childhood.

- 4.5 Pupils have an excellent understanding of morality. They strive at all times to conduct themselves in a manner that is socially acceptable, and have a thorough understanding of the need to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour. Boarders fully support the need for rules within the boarding house to ensure harmonious relationships, equality and fairness. Socially, pupils demonstrate a mature understanding that collaborative problem solving results in a stronger sense of belonging and makes a significant contribution to the strength of the school's community. In doing so they exemplify the leadership's phrase expressed in assembly that 'it is better working together than pulling apart'. In interview, boarders commented that it is extremely important that older boarders look after younger ones and set a positive example through acting as good role models due to the community resembling a family. Such attitudes are a result of the high expectations that staff set to ensure that pupils develop strong moral and social values. In the EYFS, children's behaviour is excellent and they respond quickly to the positive behavioural guidance from staff. They understand the need to interact positively with one another, and gracefully apologise when they accidentally bump into a friend. Socially, children interact with one another extremely well. They are keen to help their friends, such as helping to find a lost sock following a gym session and holding a friend's hand whilst they negotiate a step. This is due to staff ensuring that children understand behavioural boundaries and develop a strong understanding of the significance of friendship.
- 4.6 Pupils' understanding of the significance of contributing to the lives of others is fully embedded in practice. They embrace opportunities to take responsibility such as membership of the school council and food committee and house captaincy, and demonstrate a sincere commitment to undertaking these roles as they know that they are making a significant contribution to the school community. In the EYFS, children are highly enthusiastic about taking responsibility as the class leader and helping staff to tidy toys. Boarders thrive on contributing to the continuing harmony of boarding life and welcome opportunities to become a 'conflict manager' or 'mini matron'; they know that these experiences encourage them to work in a conciliatory manner and teach them valuable skills for the future life. In interview, pupils spoke enthusiastically about their support for charities, both local and international. They have a profound empathy for those the less fortunate than themselves. For example, during a recent non-uniform day they raised significant funds for homeless people and refugees. Pupils demonstrate strong interest in and tolerance towards the diverse needs of their peers and within the wider community. They develop strong cultural awareness through their studies of world religions in religious education and PSHE lessons, and assembly times. For example, children in the EYFS have recently participated in the celebration of the Chinese New Year. Boarders from differing cultural backgrounds stated that that they feel warmly welcomed into the school community. Pupils' open-mindedness is founded in compassionate teaching and the deeply embedded inclusivity of the school's ethos. In their questionnaire responses, almost all pupils expressed the opinion that the school encourages respect for other people and tolerance towards those with differing faiths and beliefs.

- 4.7 Pupils including the EYFS children have an excellent knowledge of staying safe and keeping healthy. For example, pupils of all ages have a thorough understanding of online danger as associated with the inappropriate use of social media and internet sites, as illustrated in their overwhelmingly positive questionnaire returns. In interview, pupils and boarders explained that acceptable use agreements and technology filters are important in ensuring the safety of the school community. They develop a strong understanding of mental and physical well-being through the taught curriculum, such as work on the importance of a healthy diet in science and cookery. Pupils competently explain the need for a balanced lifestyle and speak passionately about their outdoor opportunities to climb trees and explore the natural world, which they feel enable them to relax and enjoy life. In particular they value their distinctive red dungarees, which they describe both as practical everyday attire and as a visual symbol of the immense pride that they feel to be Knighton House pupils, prepared for the adventures which life has to offer. Their positive attitude towards leading a healthy lifestyle is attributed to the fact that leaders and managers strongly promote the school's overarching vision: to value the individual and nurture pupils' development within a safe, happy and stimulating environment. In their questionnaire responses, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school's success in supporting their children's personal development, promoting the values of democracy, respect and tolerance, and meeting their children's pastoral and welfare needs.