



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

OUR LADY OF SION SCHOOL

30th NOVEMBER TO 1st DECEMBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

Full name of School	Our Lady of Sion School			
DfE number	938/6030			
Registered charity number	1121398			
Address	Our Lady of Sion School Gratwicke Road Worthing West Sussex BN11 4BL England			
Telephone number	01903 204063			
Email address	enquiries@sionschool.org.uk			
Headmaster	Dr Simon Orchard			
Chair of governors	Mrs Katy Henwood			
Age range	3 to 19			
Number of pupils	423			
	Boys	226	Girls	197
	Day pupils	423	Boarders	0
	EYFS	27	Juniors	117
	Seniors	239	Sixth Form	40
Inspection dates	20 th November to 1 st December 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 form meetings, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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 Richard Mannix	Reporting inspector
Mr Ian Davies	Team inspector (Head, HMC School)
Mr Richard Lynn	Team inspector (Head, ISA School)
Mrs Maxine Shaw	Team inspector (Head, IAPS School)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Our Lady of Sion School is an interdenominational independent day school with a Catholic foundation, for boys and girls between 3 and 19 years. The school is a registered charity and is overseen by a board of governors who, as trustees, are legally responsible for the management and control of both the junior and senior schools, which includes sixth form provision. The school was founded in Worthing in 1862 and the senior school is situated on its original site in the centre of the town. The school is one of a worldwide network of schools and colleges, founded by the Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion, whose aims are to foster tolerance and understanding, and pupils are encouraged to embrace the motto 'Consideration always'.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has a new head, appointed in September 2015. The school has a revised set of school aims which were adopted in January 2016, and it has undertaken a restructuring of its senior leadership team, its website provision and its pupil assessment data tracking systems. The junior school is situated on a separate site, a three-minute walk from the senior school and both are a short distance from the sea front. The junior school shares the facilities in the senior school on a regular basis. The school has an all-weather outdoor area, sports hall and purpose built drama studio. The school's central location enables the school to make use of additional local sporting and leisure facilities.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 Every member of the school community is encouraged to respect the motto 'Consideration always' and, in accordance with the school's charter, it seeks to lead the pupils to a deeper knowledge of themselves and of the world around them. The pupils are encouraged to work together to recognise and value cultural diversity, to thrive in a dynamic working environment, to contribute and take pride in school life, to be selective and self-critical and understand that risk taking and making mistakes is part of learning, and to develop a sense of self discipline, responsibility and resilience. In this way, it is hoped that the pupils will gain the integrity and resourcefulness to pursue their goals through life after school, whilst making a positive contribution to society.

About the pupils

- 1.4 The pupils come from a great variety of backgrounds which are typical of the area surrounding the school. The school has identified 57 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) including dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist support. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for one pupil, who is supported by specialist help and the classroom teachers. Data used by the school has identified 76 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and their curriculum is modified in a number of ways, including the use of 'More able personal accommodation records', which aids in the targeting of appropriate opportunities for those pupils. Pupils with special talents, particularly in sport, are similarly accommodated wherever possible.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspection

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in November 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- To ensure that departmental development planning reflects, clearly, the whole school planning priorities and that progress towards plans at all levels is monitored in a timely manner.
 - To make better and more consistent use of assessment, tracking and target setting procedures so that all pupils, including those with SEND, are supported effectively.
 - To use regular peer observations and discussions within and across departments to share best practice in all sections of the school, including the EYFS.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met the recommendations from the previous inspection.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils show very positive and effective learning attitudes. They enjoy challenging and extending their own learning and they collaborate well to enhance their learning.
- Pupils across the whole school show good study skills. They enjoy the challenge of drawing on a range of sources and are at ease using high-order skills such as analysing and hypothesising. These skills are developed from a young age in the school.
- Pupils are confident and articulate communicators and they enjoy applying this skill to greatly enhance their progress and learning, through asking perceptive questions and initiating insightful discussions.
- Support for pupils with SEND, EAL and the more able pupils is on the most part very good, although the more able younger pupils are insufficiently challenged mathematically.

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

- Pupils' self-knowledge, self-confidence and emotional resilience are highly developed throughout the school.
- Pupils show a strong awareness of their own well-being, enabling them to make good decisions in areas such as behaviour, health and how to stay safe.
- Pupils collaborate very effectively inside and outside the classroom and are very positive in their support and contribution to the lives of others around them, including showing great respect for theirs and other cultures.
- Pupils enjoy a fully balanced lifestyle and feel confident and enthusiastic about moving on to the next stage in their lives, after school.

Recommendations

2.3 In the context of the positive outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Providing more consistent challenge in the development of numeracy skills in the more able junior school pupils.
- Further enhancing the excellent initiative in assessing, monitoring and tracking pupils' progress.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 The pupils take pride in both their academic achievements and their achievements in activities; their skills for learning are secure in most areas and pupils understand that risk taking and making mistakes is a positive part of learning. Individual pupils' achievements, both inside and outside the classroom, are celebrated by the school, which effectively supports and encourages the pupils' development. In this way, the school is successful in achieving its stated aims. Many pupils are successful in gaining places at universities of their choice, for the next stage of their education.
- 3.3 Across all ability groups, pupils throughout the school have excellent attitudes to their own learning, and show maturity and independence as they progress and develop. Pupils are engaged and are active participants in the classroom, enjoying each other's company as they learn. This enables them to achieve and make good progress. Pupils' progress is enhanced by the well-resourced teaching which encourages a collaborative and practical approach to learning. In interviews, pupils often viewed their learning as a collaboration between their teachers and themselves and they felt they were learning to take a mature and responsible approach to their own learning.
- 3.4 The pupils are confident and articulate communicators, who listen well to advice and direction. Good study skills, such as planning and organising their own work and reflecting on the knowledge gained, enable pupils to enjoy an active engagement in their own learning. These study skills are enhanced by teachers showing a belief in the abilities of pupils, and the pupils trusting their teachers. Relationships between the staff and pupils are very productive and positive.
- 3.5 The pupils enjoy the challenge of drawing upon a suitably wide range of sources and are at ease using their ability to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise. These higher order skills, often in advance of their years, are developed from a young age and continue to develop throughout the school. These very positive and effective learning attitudes amongst the pupils are a real strength of the school. Good leadership and management of the teaching provision ensures that the teachers are well qualified and have a passion for their subjects. This supports and develops the pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. The teaching makes good use of open-ended questions to develop pupils' thinking, alongside well-structured and carefully devised practical, investigative and independent tasks, and this provides opportunities for pupils of all abilities to enjoy and achieve success in their learning and make good progress.
- 3.6 The good progress made by pupils is maintained throughout the school across all abilities, because teachers understand and are sensitive to their pupils' needs; in addition, they have high expectations, both for encouraging pupils' engagement and in their standards of behaviour. Small classes allow the teachers to provide more individual attention, and the great variety of teaching approaches satisfies the varied needs of the pupils.
- 3.7 Throughout the school, pupils show good numeracy skills and excellent reading skills. In the junior school, challenging texts, which presented children with unfamiliar vocabulary, succeeded in developing pupils' excellent reading from an early age. This helps support pupils in their future learning as they subsequently move through the school. The pupils written presentation is very good throughout the school and this effectively supports their learning and progress. The school's generally good ICT provision, and the teachers' approach to its use, enables pupils to develop their skills appropriately in this area across a wide variety of subjects.

- 3.8 The ability profile of the pupils is above the national average in all sections of the school. The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2013-2015. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. The results at national tests in the junior school, at GCSE and at A-level have been above the national average for maintained schools. Results at IGCSE have been similar to, and sometimes higher than, worldwide norms. Throughout the school, pupils make academic progress which is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. This is confirmed by the observation of pupils' work in lessons, where their short-term progress is often good and sometimes excellent.
- 3.9 The achievement of pupils with SEND, EAL and the more able is commensurate with their peers of similar ability. The support for these pupils is very effective, and sensitive to individual needs. There is no significant difference in progress between SEND, EAL and the more able pupils, as demonstrated by the school's own assessment and tracking data, and the scrutiny of pupils' work. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a vast majority of the parents agreed their child was making good progress in developing skills for the future, and that their child's educational needs are met effectively by the school.
- 3.10 Pupils understand the standard they are currently achieving, and how to improve. In the work scrutinised during the inspection, as well as in the work seen in lessons, the marking and assessment of pupils' work ensures that they understand clearly what they need to do to improve and make progress. A new and much enhanced monitoring of assessment, tracking and analysis of attainment data, although not yet fully embedded across the curriculum, ensures that the progress of each pupil is now much more clearly understood and this is conveyed effectively to the pupils and parents through informative reports and feedback on regular assessments. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of pupils agreed that they were given the opportunity to learn and make progress, and a large majority of pupils felt that the marking helped them to improve their work and they know how well they are doing in their subjects.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve notable success in a wide range of sporting extra-curricular activities, with individual success, such as in athletics, and team success such as in swimming, athletics and netball. Pupils enjoy contributing at a high standard to the performing arts, including drama and music. The staff's high expectations, together with their supportive and understanding approach, enable most pupils to successfully develop their extra-curricular skills. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of parents, and a large majority of pupils agreed that the school provides a good choice of extra-curricular activities, although a minority of pupils in the questionnaire did express concern over the range of activities available. After examining evidence from interviews with pupils and staff and the observation of a range of activities during the inspection visit, the inspection judgement is that the range of activities is appropriate for the size of school and is appreciated by the pupils.
- 3.12 More able and gifted pupils concentrate well and are supported, both in the classroom and in pursuing their own interests outside the classroom. In most teaching, the more able were encouraged and supported in their higher thinking skills and in making links with other areas of study. In the junior school, the more able were not always encouraged by high expectations when developing their numeracy skills. In activities, talented pupils are very much encouraged to pursue and develop their talents, both when time is available in the school day and outside the school, in their own time.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils are self-reflective and show an understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. They understand that the decisions they make are influential in determining their own future success and well-being. Half the pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concern over the advice they were given about the choice of their subjects and career. Evidence from interviews with staff and pupils, together with the scrutiny of documentation, showed that the current careers provision, particularly for pupils in Years 7 to 11, is well organised, very supportive and effective. In the sixth form, there is very good support for those seeking places at university, and adequate support for those preferring non-university higher education or other career opportunities.
- 4.3 The pupils' personalities are very well developed for their age, and they show appropriately high levels of self-esteem in all areas of school life. Pupils enjoyed being challenged intellectually, and the engaging tasks they are set engender in pupils the desire to succeed. The teachers' sensitive understanding of the pupils' individual needs ensures that they are supported very well, and encouraged to persevere both in curricular and extra-curricular tasks. The aims of the school, supported particularly well by the example set by the staff, play a key role in enthusing pupils with the confidence needed to develop these characteristics.
- 4.4 Pupils are self-disciplined; they understand how to stay safe, and they are happy to assess risk informally without being over-fearful in everyday life. They know how to be physically and mentally healthy and understand fully the benefits of diet, exercise and a balanced lifestyle. Pupils are self-confident, show good levels of resilience and can adapt very easily to new situations, whilst readily seeking advice or support if needed. The school's pastoral support framework, including its leadership and management, is very effective in contributing towards the pupils' excellent personal traits. This support greatly benefits from the excellent staff-pupil relationships, and communication by pupils with staff or friends when in need, is very much the accepted norm. A minority of pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concern over the fairness of staff. After examining evidence from interviews with pupils and staff and from scrutinising the record of sanctions, the inspection judgement is that the staff are fair in their approach to the pupils.
- 4.5 From a young age, pupils are comfortable with whom they are, already appreciate many of the non-material aspects of life, and show good aesthetic and cultural awareness. This awareness successfully develops and progresses as they move through the school, and they develop a deeper meaning and purpose to life. The chapel, and many other school buildings, provide an environment which is calm and conducive to quiet reflective thought. The opportunities presented by a variety of visiting speakers, assemblies, cultural debates and discussions enable a range of religious traditions and cultures to be embraced.
- 4.6 Pupils have excellent communication skills and are comfortable discussing the values they hold and espouse them well, with enthusiastic arguments in the classroom and in interviews. They have enquiring minds and listen well to the views and arguments of others, showing a maturity beyond their age. The school, through sympathetic and sensitive staff, very much encourages pupils to form opinions and to respond appropriately when these opinions are challenged.
- 4.7 The pupils' standards of behaviour throughout the school are excellent. They understand and respect systems of rules and laws, and they accept responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils are thoughtful and inclusive of others and they challenge misbehaviour and unkindness when they occasionally encounter them. Excellent communication between staff

and pupils fosters a harmonious environment. Pupils work well together and enjoy the experience, as a result of the school promoting a collaborative approach whenever it is appropriate. An overwhelming majority of parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire felt the school actively promotes good behaviour, and a very large majority of the pupils in the questionnaire agreed that the school encouraged them to behave well.

- 4.8 The school's 'zero tolerance' approach to misbehaviour and bullying, if and when they might occur, is fully supported by the pupils and very effectively implemented. A very large majority of the parents felt that the school deals effectively with all types of bullying. However, a small minority of pupils expressed concern that bullying was not dealt with effectively. After examining evidence from interviews with pupils and staff and the scrutiny of the behaviour records, the inspection judgement is that bullying, if and when it occurs, is dealt with appropriately through a secure and effective school pastoral support system. Recent school initiatives, such as anti-bullying week and related assemblies have successfully raised awareness and reinforced the school's effective approach.
- 4.9 From a young age, pupils are naturally inclusive of those from backgrounds different to their own and they mix easily with pupils of other backgrounds and beliefs. Pupils are very aware of fundamental British values and freely promote understanding of their own and other cultures. They understand fully the dangers to themselves and democracy posed by others who seek to stifle healthy debate. The school strongly promotes these values, and their understanding, through the PSHE curriculum, assemblies and form periods.
- 4.10 Pupils understand and support very well those in their school community with particular needs and characteristics. The school's strong promotion of its ethos and aims effectively encourages the pupils to adopt an inclusive and supportive approach, and the pupils respond well to this encouragement. Those pupils with particular talents or gifts, both academically and in extra-curricular activities, are very much encouraged through high expectations, and the school community happily celebrates their achievements.
- 4.11 Pupils appreciate the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves and are very active in supporting them. They understand the importance of charity work in society, and the numerous charity fund raising events and community outreach support activities take place on a regular basis. Many of these are initiated by the pupils and require little adult support. The school, particularly through individual members of staff leading by example, supports and encourages the pupils to consider others in this way, through assemblies, form periods and charity days.
- 4.12 In the pre-inspection questionnaires, an overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their child's personal development, and effectively meets their child's pastoral and welfare needs. In the questionnaire, a very large majority of pupils agreed that teachers were supportive and helpful if they have any problems with their work.
- 4.13 By the time they leave the school, pupils have developed the skills necessary for the next stage of their career. The school promotion of resilience, adaptability and high levels of emotional maturity in the pupils, has enabled them to be economically, environmentally and socially aware as they make the transition to life after school.