



Sancton Wood School
Nurturing academic
excellence for bright futures

ISI Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report April 2018

Background Information

About the school

1.1 Sancton Wood School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between 1 and 16 years. Founded in 1976 as a junior school, it was owned and run by a family. In 2014 it was purchased by Minerva Education, who now operate and oversee it as one of their 5 schools. Minerva's 6 directors act as governors of the school.

1.2 Situated on 3 neighbouring sites in Cambridge, the school is divided into 6 sections: Baby Unicorns (aged 1 to 2½); Rising Three Unicorns (aged 2½ to 3); Pre-School Unicorns (aged 3 to 4); pre-prep (aged 4 to 7); prep (Years 3 to 8); and Upper (Years 9 to 11).

What the school seeks to do

1.3 The school aims to ensure the social, emotional and academic development of each child, with particular emphasis on instilling good manners, reliability, self-discipline and promoting excellent academic outcomes and positive attitudes through a tailored educational programme.

About the pupils

1.4 Pupils come largely from families with professional or business backgrounds in and around Cambridge. The majority have a White British heritage; some pupils come from different ethnic backgrounds. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of pupils is above average. The school has identified 77 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 43 of whom receive specialist help. Also, 5 pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 26 pupils, of whom 4 receive extra help with their English. Data used by the school have identified 31 pupils as the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 16 other pupils due to their special talents in art, drama, music and sport.

Regulatory Compliance Inspection

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. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

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 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.

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 a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as met or as not met. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

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

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

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

Key Findings

2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

2.2 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.

2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.

2.4 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

2.5 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.

2.6 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

2.7 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.

2.8 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

2.9 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.

2.10 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.11 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.12 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.13 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, and its results in public examinations, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.14 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.15 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.16 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.17 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.18 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

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The quality and standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

2.19 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is outstanding.

2.20 The setting provides a very high level of learning and care, which effectively meets the needs of the range of children who attend. All children make rapid progress from their starting points and are very well prepared for the transition to the next stage in their education. Children's personal and emotional development is excellent; the children feel safe and secure, and enjoy coming to the setting. Members of staff have an excellent understanding of safeguarding and welfare requirements, and diligently fulfil their responsibilities for protecting children in their care.

2.21 Strong leadership with a clear vision for the future ensures that the setting demonstrates highly evaluative practice and helps secure continuous improvement of children's life chances.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

2.22 The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding.

2.23 Leaders demonstrate an ambitious vision and have high expectations for children in all aspects of the care and education they provide. Governance is strong and supports leadership and management to ensure that provision is maintained at a very high standard.

2.24 Staff are well qualified and their performance is carefully monitored by annual appraisal, supported by an effective system of supervisions, enabling staff to discuss issues and identify solutions as they arise. All staff attend a wide range of professional development courses which ensures that they regularly update their practice.

2.25 Leaders undertake robust self-evaluation to ascertain the quality of provision and outcomes for the children. Areas for development are identified through a collaborative process and prioritised for implementation.

2.26 In discussion and in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents were extremely positive about the setting, the progress their children make and the prompt way any concerns are responded to. Parents feel welcomed into the school community. They said that they are extremely well informed about the progress their children are making and value the information that is provided to them about their children on a daily basis. Parents expressed that their suggestions are always welcomed and that their children benefit from the excellent standards of individual care and from the highly approachable staff in the setting.

2.27 The curriculum is very well planned and meets the relevant statutory requirements. It takes into consideration the needs and interests of children, and it provides an excellent start to their education. The education programmes provide many opportunities for children to increase their communication and language proficiency, support their personal, social and emotional development, and develop their physical skills. Assessment data are analysed regularly to identify both the progress made by children and gaps in the provision. Any areas that require further attention are quickly identified and addressed.

2.28 Leaders and management promote a consistent and positive approach to behaviour management, which helps guard against bullying and serves to promote equality and tolerance of diversity. Excellent role modelling by staff of the expected norms of behaviour enables children to become confident learners and show respect to one another.

2.29 Arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children are highly effective. Leaders and managers ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities and are well trained in child-protection procedures. Regular update training ensures that all staff are knowledgeable about every aspect of safeguarding, including measures to prevent radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

2.30 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.

2.31 Well-qualified staff have an excellent understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and how young children learn. Detailed individualised planning indicates that staff have high expectations of what each child can achieve in relation to their age and stage of development. Staff plan appropriate activities to enthuse the children and know when to intervene to move the learning on.

2.32 Detailed assessment information, including the likes and dislikes and the daily routine of each child, is gathered on entry to the setting. This is used effectively as a starting point to ensure that children are provided with stimulating activities, enabling them to make progress. Staff make detailed observations during activities and these help them to plan the next steps in a child's learning effectively and to respond to each child's interests.

2.33 Staff readily engage with children during routine activities and take every opportunity to develop language and social skills, such as asking questions about what something is called. They encourage children to work together, while doing actions in response to songs. Positive feedback is given to children through very good use of praise and encouragement, and helps them



acquire the skills and capacity to develop and learn effectively.

2.34 The excellent partnership with parents is a key strength of the setting and it enables them to be fully involved in their children's learning. Parents readily contribute to assessments and feel that they are kept very well informed about the progress their children are making and how they can support learning at home.

2.35 Equality and diversity are promoted effectively through cultural celebrations, appropriate resources and displays. Well-established routines to encourage independence and confidence, and sensitively handled transitions help children to prepare for the next stage in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

2.36 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are outstanding.

2.37 Children feel happy, safe and secure. There is a very strong commitment to developing very warm and caring relationships between staff and children. All staff are very supportive of each child's efforts and achievements, which nurtures a positive environment and enables children to thrive, develop their confidence and become active learners. Children display high levels of curiosity and enthusiasm as they investigate and explore. They are encouraged to invent their own activities, such as using a tunnel to hide in and deciding for themselves what decorations to put on dough cupcakes. Children are eager to choose for themselves what they want to play with. However, they are not always able to access resources for themselves in the outdoor area as they are stored out of their reach. Children are learning to take risks within a safe environment, such as learning to climb up steps and explore in the nature area.

2.38 A carefully considered transition process is in place to prepare children for the move to the next age group and a different room. Staff take time to ensure that each

child is ready for the move and that the new staff get to know as much as possible about each child so that it becomes a seamless transition.

2.39 Physical and emotional health is afforded a high priority. Children readily seek reassurance from staff whenever they need it and staff are very responsive to each child's needs. For example, children are handed a toy on arrival on days when they are perceived to need help to feel secure and to settle quickly. Parents commented that they are very impressed and reassured by the very high standard of care and emotional support provided to their child and that they felt very confident about leaving their child with such caring staff.

2.40 Systems for registration and tracking absence ensure high levels of attendance. Staff ensure that children do not have access to social media, and strict guidelines about the use of photography in the setting are in place.

2.41 Personal hygiene routines are well embedded and carefully followed by everyone. Children are learning how to lead a healthy lifestyle through regular access to the outdoor learning area for exercise. There are clear guidelines about what they may bring into the setting to eat for lunch and snacks.

2.42 Children demonstrate excellent behaviour and respect for one another. They were seen playing together co-operatively and helping one another. One child offered a toy to comfort another who was upset. Staff give gentle reminders about how to behave, such as reminding children not to snatch but to share. Good manners are encouraged at all times. The children's personal development is supported by excellent role modelling by staff which helps them to develop respect for others and prepares them to contribute to wider society and life in Britain.

Outcomes for children

2.43 Outcomes for children are outstanding.

2.44 All children, including those with EAL and those with SEND, make at least good progress from a wide range of starting points, with most making excellent progress. Carefully targeted interventions provide suitable support in order to help narrow any gaps in learning. As a result, most children exceed the level of development expected for their age.

2.45 Children display great enjoyment in their learning and are inquisitive and happy. They are able to select books and respond to stories with enjoyment, often repeating the words. Children join in with songs and copy actions to go with them. They demonstrate an interest in early writing skills, using large chalks and paint to make marks and develop their fine-motor skills. Supported by adults, children are encouraged to count objects and recognise shapes. They enjoy exploring their environment, both indoors and outside, making their own choices about what to play with and trying out things independently, such as finding the correct sized balls to put down a run. They ride trikes, jump and roll balls, which help them to develop their physical skills.

2.46 The setting is highly successful in meeting its aims to instil a love of learning in each child and to help them learn to do things for themselves. The children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Compliance with statutory requirements

2.47 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Recommendation for further improvement
The school is advised to make the following improvement to its provision for children in the early years.

- Ensure that children can independently access resources in the outdoor area.

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“OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN ARE OUTSTANDING.”



Inspection Evidence

3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended form meetings. 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 Paul Spillane - Reporting inspector

Mr Roland Martin - Compliance team inspector (headmaster, HMC and Society of Heads school)

Mrs Ros Ford - Co-ordinating inspector for early years (former head of pre-prep, IAPS school)



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