



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

NEW HALL SCHOOL

19 TO 20 OCTOBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	New Hall School			
DfE number	881/6001			
Registered charity number	1110286			
Address	New Hall School The Avenue Boreham Chelmsford Essex CM3 3HS			
Telephone number	01245 467588			
Email address	admin@newhallschool.co.uk			
Principal	Mrs Katherine Jeffrey			
Chair of governors	Mrs Clare Kershaw			
Age range	3 to 19			
Number of pupils	1169			
	Boys	582	Girls	587
	Day pupils	929	Boarders	240
	Prep Division: EYFS	76	Prep Division: Years 1 to 6	258
	Senior school: Years 7 to 11	615	Sixth Form: Years 12 & 13	220
Inspection dates	19 to 20 Oct 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 a representative of the governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings, a chapel service and an assembly. Inspectors visited all the boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the library and the refectory. 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 Rodney Fox	Reporting inspector
Mr Graham Malcolm	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mr Martin Watson	Team inspector (Former headmaster, HMC junior and Society of Heads school)
Ms Annie Lee	Team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Mrs Isabel Tobias	Team inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Mr Simon Wilson	Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC and Society of Heads school)
Mr Rupert Blencowe	Team inspector for boarding (Head of boarding, IAPS school)
Mr Philip Humphreys	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, GSA school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 New Hall School is a Catholic day and boarding school for boys and girls between the ages of 3 and 19. Founded by the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre in Liège in 1642, the school is situated on a 70-acre site near Chelmsford, in a palace formerly owned by Henry VIII. In 2005, the school became a separate educational charity, governed by its trustees, and boys were admitted to the senior school, which had previously admitted only girls. Boys and girls are taught together in the prep division, and in Years 12 and 13. In Years 7 to 11, they follow the same curriculum in single-sex classes.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has established two new boarding houses to cater for pupils in Years 3 to 8. Accommodation for boarders comprises six single-sex houses, two for pupils in Years 3 to 8, two for those in Years 9 and 10 and two for those in Years 11 to 13.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide the best start in life for its pupils, equipping them to meet the challenges of the wider world with confidence. It sets out to promote academic excellence in surroundings in which relationships are based on care, trust and respect. The school welcomes pupils from many traditions, seeking to build a Christian community that has at its heart prayer and service to others.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, mostly from professional and business families. Most day pupils are from white British families living within a 30-mile radius of the school. Just under half of the boarders are from overseas. The school has identified 185 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mostly for literacy and/or numeracy, 175 of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 96 pupils, 61 of whom receive additional help. Data used by the school identifies 111 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them. Those with a significant sporting talent are offered, by invitation, additional opportunities and challenge through the elite sports academies.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), nursery-age children are referred to by the school as Pre-Reception.

Recommendations from previous inspections

1.6 The previous full inspections of the school by ISI were separate standard inspections of the senior school and the preparatory school, at that time viewed as two schools, in October 2010. The recommendations from the preparatory school inspection were:

- Extend further the provision for design and technology, particularly accommodation, and consider ways of making more effective use of the laboratory for science lessons.
- Clarify the organisation of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in order to give greater contact and reassurance to parents of younger pupils, in particular.
- Develop the assessment of the children during child-initiated learning to a fuller extent throughout the EYFS.

1.7 The recommendations from the senior school inspection were:

- Bring the overall standard of marking up to that of the best, so that it is fully in accordance with departmental marking policies.
- Ensure that all subject teachers make full use of all the assessment data, both internal and external, to assist in lesson planning and to support individual pupils.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils of all ages achieve high levels of success and make progress that is at least good, and often rapid, in academic subjects.
- Pupils also achieve considerable success in creative and sporting activities, particularly in performing arts.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive.
- Pupils' communication skills are strong, but occasionally these are held back by limited opportunities to discuss their ideas in class.

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

- At all stages, pupils are confident, reflective young people who acquire exceptionally strong skills and values to equip them for the next steps in their lives.
- Pupils show high levels of respect for the cultural diversity represented in the school community.
- Boarders and day pupils contribute widely to school life, further enhancing their personal skills.
- Pupils' sensitive and positive response to the school's distinctive Catholic ethos lies at the root of their excellent spiritual awareness.
- Most pupils show high levels of respect for each other.

Recommendations

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

- Devise ways to ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunity to hone their listening skills even further in lessons.
- Ensure that the high standard of respect that a very large majority of pupils show for each other extends to all.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, from the EYFS onwards, pupils' academic achievement exceeds expectations for their age. The school is highly successful in achieving its aim to provide the best start in life for its pupils by promoting their academic and other achievements. A very large majority of the children in the EYFS achieve a good level of development against the Early Learning Goals, which is well above the national average. This reflects the improved assessment processes in the EYFS, in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection. Results in national tests at age 11 in 2015, the only recent year for which the school's results are able to be compared with national data, were well above the national average for maintained primary schools. This, and the strong performance of children in the prep school in 11+ examinations for entrance to local grammar schools and to the senior school, indicates excellent progress made in the prep school. In 2015, fifteen pupils from Year 6 took a Level 1 GCSE in politics in which all achieved at least a B grade, and a very large majority an A* or an A grade. In the senior school, results at both GCSE and A-level examinations over the three years 2013 to 2015 have been above the national average for maintained schools, confirming the good progress that pupils in the senior school make in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The overwhelming majority of parents, and a very large majority of pupils, who responded to their pre-inspection questionnaires agree that the pupils are making good progress.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve well in relation to their abilities, including those with SEND or EAL and the most able and talented. Pupils with SEND benefit from increased sharing of information with their parents, following a recommendation of the previous inspection. Pupils throughout the school respond positively to the rigorous procedures for tracking pupils' attainment and progress, introduced in both the prep and senior schools following recommendations of the previous inspections, together with carefully planned and clearly focused teaching. In 2016, very able pupils, including some with EAL, were awarded 100% in 158 GCSE modules (39 different pupils) and similarly at A level, 152 modules were awarded maximum marks in eleven different subjects. A large majority of the grades achieved at both GCSE and A level in 2015 and 2016 by pupils with SEND were in the A* to B range.
- 3.4 Pupils benefit from the improvement noted across much of the school in assessment processes and in written marking, in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection. Whilst a little inconsistency in quality remains, the overall positive impact of the marking is evident. In classes at every stage, pupils demonstrate their extensive knowledge, understanding and skills across all areas of learning. Effective teaching has enabled them to acquire a wide range of knowledge, retain it and apply it to a variety of situations. Evidence of the pupils' well-developed communication skills was seen in a variety of situations in and out of lessons. Very young pupils were able to explain the importance of the Lord's Prayer in terms of love and forgiveness in a prep school chapel service; their story-telling was much appreciated at a New Hall Voluntary Service (NHVS) lunch for older people; players on the hockey and rugby fields were able to communicate effectively with each other; and the sensitivity of expression during a spontaneous vocal improvisation in an A-level music lesson was remarkable. Listening skills are sometimes less strongly fostered when the focus of lessons reduces the chance for pupils to discuss and debate ideas.
- 3.5 High levels of numeracy are apparent at all levels of the school, and pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and skills effectively in other areas of learning. Contributory factors in this are the frequent use made of practical tasks by the mathematics and science teachers, making use of the science laboratories, and the project work done in design and technology in the prep school, thereby responding to recommendations of the previous inspection. Pupils at all levels of the school are highly confident and competent users of information and communication technology (ICT); they apply their skills and knowledge well across the curriculum. Recent rapid progress has been stimulated by a significant increase in resources. Pupils are now using ICT as a learning tool across all

areas of learning and their independent learning is being promoted through increased access to the school's virtual learning environment.

- 3.6 Pupils throughout the school are able to draw on a range of sources and bring them to bear on a problem, as when pupils from the prep school drew on their familiarity with the contents of a pet house, their scientific understanding of thermal insulation and their construction skills to design a rabbit hutch. In the senior school, for example in English, theology and mathematics lessons, pupils demonstrate high level reasoning skills. These skills are the result of a well-balanced and challenging curriculum, together with mostly effective lesson planning by teachers, supplemented by the skilful use of open questioning that encourages pupils to think for themselves.
- 3.7 In many co-curricular activities, pupils achieve high standards, especially in the performing arts and in the service activities in which they engage at all levels of the school. Significant numbers of pupils in both the prep and senior schools have achieved awards in music and drama, with a high proportion of them gaining distinctions. In interviews, pupils credited their success in these awards as a significant factor in developing their communication skills. Both prep and senior school sports teams have achieved success in county, regional and national competitions. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme is well supported. The strong support, expertise and commitment of the staff are significant factors in enabling these successes. Parents overwhelmingly agree that the school provides a good range of activities for their children, and most pupils share that view.
- 3.8 Throughout the school, pupils are excellent, eager learners who respond positively to questioning, take pride in their work and work effectively, either independently or as part of a group. Given the opportunity to do so, they readily take responsibility for their own learning and success. The high expectations of the staff and the good classroom relationships that they create contribute significantly to the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. This is also the result of highly effective leadership and management supported by committed and knowledgeable governors, who have created the conditions to enable this success.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' strong personal development is in line with the school's aim to provide them with the best start in life, enabling them to meet the challenges of the wider world with confidence, as a result of being part of a Christian community that has at its heart prayer and service to others. Throughout the school pupils are self-confident, resilient and increasingly self-aware, as demonstrated by the fact that they are open to how they might improve their own learning and development. This is helped by the very positive relationships and the strong pastoral care offered by the staff. Pupils are encouraged by teachers to reflect on their own performance and, if they make a mistake, they are expected to apologise and make a fresh start.
- 4.3 Pupils understand very clearly that taking responsibility for their own actions and decisions is important and, as they develop, they have increasingly frequent opportunities to do so. The strongly supportive pastoral system and the Catholic values that underpin the school's ethos provide pupils of all ages the scope to make confident choices. Pupils are aware of the significance of the choices that they need to make about their future and of their own responsibility to ensure that they are suitably well informed about the options available.
- 4.4 Pupils' keen perseverance is evident in both their attitudes to academic work and in their co-curricular sports and activities. Children in the EYFS are encouraged to initiate and pursue learning opportunities for themselves, as recommended in the previous report. Older pupils develop into adaptable and self-disciplined problem-solvers - the large number of participants in the DofE scheme being an example of where these qualities are evident. The school's high expectations of the pupils, and their own awareness of how fortunate they are to have the opportunities that they have, contribute strongly to the development of these qualities. The supportive ethos experienced in the boarding houses, where boarders' progress and development are frequently monitored, also plays a major role in this.
- 4.5 At all stages of the school, the pupils display exceptionally strong spiritual development that is appropriate to their ages. They are able to appreciate the importance of faith, the power of love and the beauty of inspiration. The school's Catholic ethos is evident in every part of the school's life and relationships. The main chapel is at the centre of the school. It is open at all times and is used by both staff and pupils for quiet reflection. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 benefit from the experience of termly human and spiritual development days.
- 4.6 Pupils of all ages work highly effectively with each other and often work in small groups in class when planning DofE activities or playing together in sports teams. Activities are frequently planned and managed by the pupils themselves, as when members of Years 12 and 13 organised mock interviews with business leaders. Pupil mentors take responsibility for actively listening to and supporting groups of pupils. Pupils respond readily to the ethos of the school, which encourages independence and the taking of initiative, both individually and in collaboration with others, and the wide range of co-curricular activities.
- 4.7 From the EYFS upwards, pupils learn to distinguish between right and wrong and to respect rules and laws. They understand and accept the need for rewards and sanctions. As they develop, they understand and can discuss ethical choices, including fair trading and caring for the environment. By the time that they reach the sixth form, pupils have a well-developed understanding of morality and a strong set of personal values. Most pupils enjoy and are proud about being part of the school community, but a few find it hard to get on together. The very large majority of pupils respond positively to the school's actions to ameliorate any pockets of unhappiness. Relationships among most pupils are positive and mutually supportive.
- 4.8 Pupils in the prep and senior schools know how to stay safe both on the internet and elsewhere. Responding to their questionnaire, an overwhelming majority agreed that they feel safe at school,

whilst the boarders were unanimous that they feel safe in their boarding houses. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and take advantage of the opportunities for taking exercise using the school's excellent sports facilities and extensive grounds.

- 4.9 From an early age, pupils respect and value the cultural diversity represented in the school community. The many different nationalities in the boarding houses richly enhance the experience of all pupils, who learn to live with those from different backgrounds and traditions, showing a high level of acceptance and tolerance. Pupils in the prep school participated enthusiastically in an assembly about Black History Month, recognising pictures of significant figures in the history of the last century. Almost all parents, and most pupils, agree that the school promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance.
- 4.10 Pupils are strongly aware of their responsibility to contribute both to the school community, as prefects, school council members or mentors, and the wider community, through charity fund raising or being members of NHVS. The school provides many opportunities for service, in line with its aims. In accordance with the school's aims, pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives with a strong set of skills and values. They develop a range of skills to make choices for their future through the personal, social, health and economics education (PSHEE) programme provided. The distinctive ethos of the school, founded in Catholic values and clearly proclaimed and sensitively implemented by staff throughout the school, lies at the root of pupils' development. The consistent vision and sense of direction provided by the school's senior leadership has enabled pupils to maintain the high standard of their personal skills since the previous inspection.