



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**FOCUSED COMPLIANCE AND EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION REPORTS
FOR SCHOOLS WITH RESIDENTIAL PROVISION**

STAMFORD HIGH SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Stamford High School			
DfE number	925/6027			
Registered charity number	527618			
Address	Stamford High School St Martin's Street Stamford Lincolnshire PE9 2LL			
Telephone number	01780 484200			
Email address	headshs@ses.lincs.sch.uk			
Head	Mrs Vicky Buckman			
Chair of governors	Dr Michael Dronfield			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	607			
	Boys	0	Girls	607
	Day pupils	544	Boarders	63
	Seniors	409	Sixth Form	198
Inspection dates	19 to 21 September 2017			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Stamford High School is an independent day and boarding school for pupils aged between 11 and 18 years. It is owned and governed by a charitable trust, Stamford Endowed Schools. The school was founded in 1877 and in 2001 it formed much closer links with Stamford School, and Stamford Junior School. Sixth-form teaching is coeducational, utilising both senior school sites.
- 1.2 The head has been in post for two years, and there has been a restructuring of the senior leadership team since the previous inspection. Boarders are accommodated in four houses, one of which is a recent addition. All houses are located a short walk from the centre of the school.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's aim is to create a happy, exciting and supportive environment in which learning is the priority, and where young people are inspired to achieve their best in all aspects of school life, to develop their intellectual curiosity, and to have a caring and respectful attitude towards each member of a diverse and welcoming community.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional, military and farming backgrounds, mostly from white British families living within a 40-mile radius of the school. Many of the boarders come from overseas. Nationally standardised data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils in the senior school and the sixth form is broadly average. The school has identified 28 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and other difficulties, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 17 pupils, whose needs are supported by their class room teachers.

2. 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. 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.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

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, including the boarding NMS, 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 FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. 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. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management, together with the NMS covering the same areas. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.](#)

Key Findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 At GCSE in the years 2014 to 2016, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.3 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2014 to 2016 have been above the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.7 **The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.10 **The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2–4, 6–12, 15 and 16 are met.**

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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.13 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. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.15 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. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and statement of boarding principles [NMS 1] are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.17 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, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.19 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. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.**

3. EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports 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.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. 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'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key Findings

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

- Almost all pupils achieve examination results at least in line with their abilities, and often better.
- Younger pupils do not always have a strong understanding of how to improve their work to ensure they make good progress.
- Pupils' achievement in non-academic activities is excellent.
- Pupils develop strong numerical, linguistic and communication skills.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive

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

- Pupils have excellent levels of self-confidence and resilience.
- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and among pupils, is notably strong.
- Pupils are prepared to speak and act to promote the safety and well-being of others.
- Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to ensure their own physical and mental health and safety.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that all pupils develop an equally strong understanding of how to improve their work so that they can make more rapid progress.

THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 Almost all pupils and parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire thought that the school enabled pupils to make good progress and develop skills for the future. Inspection evidence as assessed in lesson observation, pupils' work and in discussions with them, supports this view. The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2014 to 2016. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE and A-level have been above in relation to the national average for maintained schools. Results in IGCSE biology, chemistry, maths, physics, science double award, first language English, food and nutrition, geography, and English literature have been higher than worldwide norms. Results in IGCSE German and Spanish have been similar to worldwide norms. Pupils achieve places at a range of universities, almost all in the United Kingdom, including those with the most demanding entry requirements. Almost all pupils achieve results at least in line with their ability, including those with SEND and EAL.
- 3.6 Pupils benefit from teaching which encourages them to have high expectations. Different groups of pupils make good progress in lessons as a result of effective screening and diagnosis. The needs of all pupils are often met by lesson planning which shows a good awareness of different strategies, although this is not yet consistently the case. Pupils are drawn into the learning process where teaching is urgent and challenging. Pupils develop excellent speaking skills in discussions, especially in the sixth form. This is brought about in part by skilful questioning which invites speculation and hypothesis. Particularly in Years 7-11, pupils are not always enabled to think for themselves, and their learning and progress are sometimes limited by teaching which is less adventurous. The school has made some progress in addressing the recommendation of the previous inspection to increase the level of pace and challenge in teaching.
- 3.7 Pupils make good progress in part as a result of the curriculum in the senior school. It has been sensitively adapted to match the needs and aptitudes of the pupils, and they confirm in discussion that they welcome the changes. For example, computing has been recently introduced as a taught subject. There is also now flexibility so that not all pupils are required to study two modern foreign languages on entry, although they can pursue two to GCSE. Pupils are able to choose a wider variety of subjects at A level because they teach A level in conjunction with Stamford School.
- 3.8 Pupils perform well in a wide range of academic activities, achieving good results in mathematics challenges, science Olympiads, Arkwright scholarships and language competitions and exchanges.
- 3.9 Some pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that they did not know how well they were doing in their academic work. A similar proportion said that marking did not help them to make progress. Pupils sometimes receive careful and detailed guidance which enables them to make good progress, but sometimes their progress is restricted by less helpful and less regular comments.
- 3.10 Pupils' achievements in non-academic activities are excellent in quality. Pupils are enthusiastic and successful across a range of sports, ranging from national recognition in, for example, equestrianism and gymnastics, to highly competitive teams in netball and hockey. Over 130 pupils are active in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF); a similar number pursue different levels of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Pupils have auditioned successfully for the National Youth Orchestra while others lead ensembles within the school. As in lessons, pupils excel when they have the chance to act or speak in public, with the St Martin's Society encouraging debate for all age groups. A large minority achieve well in national drama examinations.

- 3.11 Pupils have strong knowledge, skills and understanding in creative activities, especially art and music. They show good practical skills in technology and science. In the sixth form, pupils debate and discuss their subjects with passion and a sharp eye for the evidence. Senior pupils also display a good ability to apply prior learning in fresh contexts and to make connections between different parts of the curriculum. Pupils develop proficiency in mathematical and linguistic skills and apply these to different subjects. They handle mathematical data in geography, for example, confidently and successfully.
- 3.12 Pupils have an excellent range of communication skills. They speak with clarity and confidence in class and in informal discussion. They listen attentively and respectfully to teachers and to one another. The high quality of the relationships in the school makes a significant contribution to pupils' success. As they move through the school many develop excellent writing skills, with both pen and keyboard. They are effective note-takers. Older pupils write at length with polish and sophistication. This is especially true when they are set open-ended tasks which demand continuous prose. Pupils also make excellent contributions to a school blog.
- 3.13 Pupils have good numeracy skills and are expert problem-solvers, especially in mathematics. They use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively for research, as seen in a physical education lesson on sports injuries. Pupils are able to share and analyse their work in a newly refurbished interactive classroom, and by using their own devices. The school has made excellent progress in addressing the recommendation of the previous inspection report to make more effective use of ICT.
- 3.14 Pupils develop strong analytical skills by the time they reach A level. They were seen to analyse character in English and chords in music with equally high levels of success. They showed good ability in investigation and calculation in response to a hypothesis in a junior mathematics lesson. They were invited to imagine how to calculate the volume of a football, prompted by open-ended questions. As they move into the sixth form, pupils develop a strong understanding of how they can improve their work, encouraged to take responsibility for this process by the new marking systems.
- 3.15 Pupils' attitudes to their work are exceptionally positive. They are eager to please and to do their best, thus fulfilling one of the school's stated aims. They bring organisation and pride to the appearance of their work, and collaborate naturally and effectively to tackle a task or to solve a problem. In a drama lesson, pupils made excellent use of their combined resources to depict a silent wardrobe on the move. Pupils work effectively in pairs and groups across a range of subjects.
- 3.16 Boarders have a structured routine which encourages good habits and creates a desire to make the most of what the school offers. Pupils aspire to achieve their best and develop their intellectual curiosity in line with the school's aims.

THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 3.17 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.18 Pupils have very high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, and their self-reliance and resilience are extremely strong. Pupils are socially and academically poised and self-possessed. This means that they see making mistakes as a natural and valuable part of the learning process. Pupils are very confident to speak up in class and think aloud while they explore every aspect of a question. They develop excellent resilience through the challenges of sport, outdoor education and the CCF. They are encouraged by assemblies on the theme of stretching themselves and going beyond the familiar and comfortable.
- 3.19 Pupils receive strong support and advice from their teachers about major decisions such as subject choices and university application. This enables pupils to think confidently for themselves and ensure they are fully informed before reaching mature choices. They speak with enthusiasm of the habits they develop through the choices they face in their everyday lives, such as how to apportion their time as boarders in the evenings and at weekends. They are given increasing responsibility for their behaviour as they move through the school, over attendance at extra academic support sessions or taking leave to go into the town.
- 3.20 Pupils show an excellent appreciation of the quality of their environment, from the fresh, welcoming appearance of the classrooms to the Georgian splendour of the town in which they are studying. Pupils value highly the quiet zones around the school, or the opportunity for reflection offered by the walk to classes at their partner school. The high levels of cultural and creative activity, from music to the art on display throughout the buildings, make a distinctive contribution to their understanding of the non-material aspects of life.
- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong. This was seen in the discussion of a moral dilemma in the novel *Atonement* in a senior English lesson, and another in a junior history lesson on the Treaty of Versailles and its impact on the rise of Hitler. Equally, a Year 11 assembly considered how to exercise the privilege of town leave, and pupils were conscious of the need to represent the school appropriately in the public eye.
- 3.22 The quality of collaborative work is excellent, as seen in junior language lessons, where pupils worked in pairs and supported each other's learning effectively. Pupils are supportive and respectful of one another, and also pleased when others are successful. This was seen in discussion lessons and the lunchtime discussion group. It was also seen in a mathematics class where problems were being addressed by pupils writing on a surface visible to all, creating an atmosphere of mutual support where suggestions for improvement were always welcome.
- 3.23 Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities to serve the school community in different ways. Prefects and captains play an important part in organising activities and competitions on behalf of others. Peer mentors also have a beneficial impact on others. Older pupils, too, act as buddies to new entrants to the school through the FISH (Friends in Stamford High) scheme. Pupils recognise that they have learned a great deal about themselves and derived benefit from looking after other people. Likewise, the two school councils, elected by pupils, have been positive agents of change. The sixth form council has argued successfully for an extension to the study space available to them. The senior council has suggested that they might have access to an adjoining parkland since the school has limited outdoor space. The school has acted on the suggestion to the benefit of all. The house system creates further scope for pupils to help with the range of competitions and activities, as well as developing loyalty and a sense of belonging.
- 3.24 All pupils show concern for others. It is common for pupils to express concern for a classmate who seems unhappy, or even for someone they do not know at all. Pupils form a community which cares about well-being and safety for all. The school's excellent pastoral care system sets the tone and encourages and enables pupils to speak up if they or their counterparts need support or guidance.

- 3.25 Pupils make excellent efforts to support the wider community, chiefly through charity fund-raising. Each year they choose two charities to support and organise a range of events for that purpose.
- 3.26 Pupils in discussion said that mutual tolerance and respect for those with different faiths and backgrounds form a natural part of how pupils treat one another. This was confirmed by almost all respondent to the questionnaire among both pupils and parents, and by observation during the inspection. Those who live overseas are fully integrated and boarders hold popular theme nights celebrating diversity including, for example, Chinese New Year.
- 3.27 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. They take a full part in physical activities of all kinds, from competitive team games to yoga. They also ensure they are fully informed about such matters as sexual health, drugs and alcohol, and how to stay safe on line. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed satisfaction with the school's work to promote pupils' personal development.

4. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 4.1 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 chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and 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 Bill Burn	Reporting inspector
Mrs Sarah-Elizabeth Rees	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school)
Mrs Jacqueline Davies	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr David Forster	Team inspector (Director of studies, HMC school)
Mrs Hilary Moriarty	Team inspector (Former head, GSA school)
Mrs Deborah Newman	Team inspector for boarding (Principal, Society of Heads school)