



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

COLFE'S SCHOOL

NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|-----|------------|-----|
| School | Colfe's School | | | |
| DfE number | 203/6293 | | | |
| Registered charity number | 1109650 | | | |
| Address | Colfe's School Horn Park Lane Lee London SE12 8AW | | | |
| Telephone number | 020 88522283 | | | |
| Email address | head@colfes.com | | | |
| Headmaster | Mr Richard Russell | | | |
| Chair of governors | Mr Matthew Pellereau | | | |
| Age range | 11 to 19 | | | |
| Number of pupils | 671 | | | |
| | Boys | 394 | Girls | 277 |
| | Years 7-11 | 491 | Sixth Form | 180 |
| Inspection dates | 30 November to 1 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 unmet 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 group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended tutor group meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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 Graham Sims | Reporting inspector |
| Mrs Anne Griffiths | Team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school) |
| Mrs Denise Hammersley | Team inspector (Deputy principal, ISA school) |
| Mr Stephen Holliday | Team inspector (Head, HMC school) |
| Mr David James | Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school) |
| Dr Ruth Weeks | Team inspector (Head, GSA school) |

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION | |
| About the school | 1 |
| What the school seeks to do | 1 |
| About the pupils | 1 |
| Recommendations from previous inspections | 1 |
| 2 KEY FINDINGS | 2 |
| Recommendations | 2 |
| 3 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS | 3 |
| 4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT | 6 |

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Colfe's School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between 11 and 18. Originally established in 1574, the school is one of the oldest in London. It was entrusted to the Leathersellers' Company in 1652 in the will of Reverend Abraham Colfe, Vicar of Lewisham. The school became independent in 1977, but still retains a close association with the Company. The school became fully co-educational in 1999. Governance is provided by a governing body, the majority of whose members are members of the Leathersellers' Company.
- 1.2 The school is situated on the same site as Colfe's Junior School, which amalgamated the former prep school, pre-prep and nursery in September 2016. Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded facilities for junior school pupils and opened a new centre for the sixth form.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to promote excellence in all areas and to develop each pupil's abilities and character to the full. It seeks to do this by fostering learning and scholarship of the highest quality and providing a wide range of cultural, sporting and extra-curricular activities within a purposeful and disciplined atmosphere. It also strives to nurture an awareness of spiritual and moral values among pupils, encouraging them to use their talents for the greater good of the community and society as a whole.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Of the 671 pupils in the school at the time of the inspection, 180 were in the sixth form. Pupils come from families with a range of professional and business backgrounds, mostly living in the boroughs of Lewisham, Bromley, Bexley and Greenwich.
- 1.5 The school has identified 53 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention deficit disorder, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 86 pupils, although very few of these require and receive additional support. The school does not single out pupils as being particularly gifted or talented, but seeks to develop the gifts and talents of all pupils.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.7 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in November 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
 - Work further on achieving an integrated approach to development planning through all levels of management.
 - Share good practice in teaching so that the excellent standards achieved in some lessons are achieved consistently in all lessons.
 - Encourage more opportunities for independent learning.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils' high levels of motivation, and teaching which goes beyond the confines of the curriculum, enable pupils to make excellent progress in the sixth form.
- Pupils' historic good achievement in GCSE examinations improved in 2016 as a result of a concerted effort to track pupils' progress more closely and the additional support provided for pupils by many staff.
- Pupils attribute their good progress to teaching which is typically, though not always, enthusiastic and challenging and which encourages them to work hard.
- Pupils have excellent communication skills and apply their mathematical skills well. Whilst some pupils have excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills, not all pupils have sufficient opportunity to develop and apply their ICT skills.
- Pupils achieve extremely well in a very wide variety of cultural, sporting and extra-curricular activities.

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

- Pupils make excellent progress in developing resilience, self-discipline and other personal skills as a result of an imaginative, challenging and well-constructed programme of outdoor activities.
- Participation in the extensive extra-curricular programme, a wide range of sports, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), musical and drama productions, and field trips at home and abroad results in pupils who have great self-confidence, work extremely well with others and have an excellent understanding of other cultures.
- Through an imaginatively conceived and comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme and a highly effective tutoring system, pupils develop an excellent awareness of what influences their own academic performance and helps them to develop excellent decision-making skills.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- In the context of improving examination results, identify and then improve the very small minority of teaching that does not fully engage the pupils or provide them with sufficient challenge.
- Provide greater opportunity for all pupils to develop and apply their ICT skills.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils make excellent progress in the sixth form, fulfilling the school's aim to foster learning and scholarship of the highest quality. Results in A-level examinations were well above the national average in 2014 and 2015. When benchmarked against pupils of similar ability in similar schools, pupils make excellent progress, a judgement confirmed during the inspection by discussions with pupils, observation of their progress in lessons, and scrutiny of their work. Strong perceptive leadership has identified ways of helping sixth-form pupils develop the organisational skills required for A-level studies and provided a tutorial programme which helps pupils build their confidence and aim high. With the financial support of the Leathersellers' Company, the governing body has established a scholarship scheme to attract to the school highly able pupils whose parents would not otherwise be able to afford the fees. This group of pupils has added further strength to the highly motivated pupils who have joined the sixth form from Year 11 and who demonstrate an eagerness to build on their knowledge and understanding and apply their skills in new situations. Excellent subject knowledge and teaching which challenges pupils to go beyond the confines of the examination syllabus contribute strongly to pupils' excellent progress. In the previous year, pupils entered 34 different universities to pursue a wide range of degree courses, almost three-quarters entering their first-choice university.
- 3.3 In Years 7 to 11, pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND and EAL and the more able pupils, develop a good range of knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of learning. This is reflected in GCSE results which were above the national average for the years 2013 to 2015, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. These results, and standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that pupils have historically made good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The school's GCSE results improved in 2016, when over 60 per cent of passes were graded A* or A. Although official comparative data are not yet available, this proportion is well above the national average for previous years. This improvement reflects a concerted effort by the school's leadership to introduce more stringent measures to keep track of pupils' progress. Pupils in Year 11 were given fortnightly effort grades and those not making sufficient effort were required to attend 'study club'. The system had a noticeable impact, even though a few pupils said they did not like having to attend, and has been extended to Year 8 for the current academic year. Pupils were also very clear that the many subject-specific clinics, additional lunchtime sessions, individual meetings with tutors, email support and out-of-lesson meetings with their teachers are instrumental in helping them to make progress. Pupils with SEND greatly appreciate the guidance and individual tuition provided by the learning support department, although the teaching in a small minority of lessons does not always heed the guidance provided by this department.
- 3.4 Following recommendations from the previous inspection, the school has taken steps to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the factors which contribute to excellent teaching and learning and to promote independent learning. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of pupils feel they are making good progress. They attribute this to the quality of the teaching and the general ethos of the school which is to 'work hard and play hard'. They appreciate the passion shown by many of their teachers, which is reflected in enthusiastic, challenging teaching. However, they also comment that a small proportion of the teaching is not of the same high quality. These differences were also observed during the inspection. Typically, the teaching is fast paced, involves the pupils in a wide variety of activities, engages their attention and enables them to gain new knowledge, skills and understanding. Occasionally, however, too much talking by the teacher, or tasks which are not particularly demanding or lack interest, lead to lack of engagement on the part of the pupils and result in slower progress.
- 3.5 The pupils have excellent communication skills. They are supportive of each other and keen to listen to and learn from what their peers and teachers have to say. They are enthusiastic, self-confident and

articulate. In lessons, pupils are encouraged to contribute to class discussions and invariably rise to this challenge. Teachers create safe and stimulating working environments that promote active engagement and learning. The lively and supportive atmosphere in the library encourages pupils to develop their reading skills. Additional opportunities, such as poetry competitions, verse reading, debating and essay writing competitions also contribute to the development of these skills. The interactive nature of PSHE lessons provides an excellent forum for the development of speaking skills and also contributes strongly to the development of their mathematical skills as they consider real-life scenarios, working out mortgage rates, salaries, tax and the payment of household bills. They also apply their mathematical skills well in subjects such as science, design and technology and economics.

- 3.6 The pupils have good, and in some areas excellent, information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In subjects which have technology at their core, such as media studies, design and technology and ICT, pupils exhibit confidence and imagination when set stretching tasks. Pupils in Year 7 enjoy learning to code. However, the lack of formal teaching of ICT for most pupils beyond Year 7, and an inconsistent approach to the use of ICT across the curriculum, including the use of pupils' own portable and mobile devices, result in the school missing opportunities to develop pupils' ICT skills to the highest level or to harness their use to enrich learning in every subject.
- 3.7 Pupils' achievements beyond the formal curriculum and public examinations are excellent, reflecting the school's aim to provide a wide range of cultural, sporting and extra-curricular activities. Many inter-house activities and competitions, the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, a wide variety of school trips, the combined cadet force (CCF), the outdoor activities programme and the initiatives of individual departments all contribute strongly to these achievements. In the previous school year, fifty pupils gained certificates in the UK Intermediate Maths Challenge. Almost 200 pupils gained music and drama certificates, most of them achieving merits or distinctions. Every pupil in Years 7, 8 and 9 engaged in some form of competitive sport. Every pupil in Year 7 received free instrumental tuition or took part in a choral scheme. Large numbers participated in the school and house musical and drama productions. The school's sports teams were highly successful, and nearly 70 pupils played at county, regional or national level in rugby, netball, cross-country and football. Many other individuals achieved success in other sporting activities such as kickboxing, BMX, judo, sailing, go-karting, triathlon, cycling, gymnastics and show-jumping.
- 3.8 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. In most lessons, they participate fully and are keen to show their knowledge and understanding of complex concepts. They have a responsible attitude towards learning, which they enjoy when the teaching stretches them. They are keen to contribute their views and are mutually supportive of each other. Occasionally, pupils adopt a passive attitude or find it difficult to concentrate when the teaching is conducted at a slow pace or fails to provide sufficient challenge. Initiatives such as the mentoring programme, in which pupils in Year 13 support new sixth formers as well as pupils in Year 7, and the 'Tougher Minds' programme, which helps pupils in Year 7 reflect on their own learning, have a strong impact on developing positive attitudes to learning.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 As they move through the school, the pupils make rapid progress in developing their self-confidence, resilience, self-discipline, ability to make decisions and other personal skills, thus amply fulfilling the school's overarching aim of developing each pupil's abilities and character to the full. With the support of the governing body and as a result of enthusiastic and determined leadership, a highly varied programme of activities and imaginative and well-considered pastoral support programmes, for which the school has won two innovation awards in recent years, make a significant contribution to pupils' overall development.
- 4.3 From Year 7 upwards, pupils rapidly develop the ability to understand what influences their own academic performance, and how the decisions they make are important determinants of their own success and well-being, help them to improve their academic performance and have an impact on their future. They learn quickly how to work with others, contributing their skills as an individual or working collaboratively as a team member. They take on a wide range of responsibilities willingly, carrying out roles such as peer mentors, form representatives, prefects and team captains and fulfilling them effectively, often making an important contribution to the life of the school. Pupils have an excellent level of moral understanding, an ability to distinguish right from wrong and a clear understanding of the need for rules and an acceptance of what will happen if rules are broken. They value the diversity of the school, demonstrating not only tolerance of but interest in the views, beliefs and customs of others. They show great empathy for those who are less fortunate than themselves, raising substantial sums of money to support many worthy causes, most of which are chosen democratically by the pupils themselves.
- 4.4 In addition to the school's outdoor and extra-curricular activities programme, many other factors, such as the excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the interest shown by staff for those in their care, make major contributions to the pupils' excellent personal development. A vertical tutoring system, whereby tutor groups comprise a mixture of pupils from Years 8 to 11, has been implemented highly effectively and with many benefits to pupils of all ages. Younger pupils say how much they benefit from the advice and help of older pupils, including sixth formers, some of whom have a mentoring role within the tutor groups. During the inspection, for example, sixth-form mentors were observed giving a highly effective presentation on personal safety to a group of pupils in Year 7. Older pupils, recognising how they have benefited from the vertical tutor groups in the past, are keen to contribute their experience, and show genuine care and empathy for others within their group. The system has done much to create a harmonious, friendly environment throughout the school, in which pupils know each other well and form strong bonds of friendship and respect, and in which there are no hierarchies which make life difficult for those at the bottom of the chain.
- 4.5 An extremely well-conceived PSHE programme provides excellent guidance for pupils throughout the school and covers a huge range of topics of relevance to young people. As a result, pupils gain a really good understanding of important issues which affect their well-being, such as the importance of sleep, coping with the pressure of work and work-life balance. Other topics such as consideration of human rights, freedom of speech, equality, and British values help to fulfil the school's aim of nurturing an awareness of moral values and produce well-informed, considerate young people who are keen to discuss and explore different points of view. Parents also have the opportunity to become involved in exploring some of the topics through evening sessions to help them understand highly relevant issues such as the dangers of legal highs, spending too much time in front of a screen, social media, alcohol and mental health. Various pupils said that such sessions had increased the whole family's understanding of such topics. Through the imaginatively conceived Colfe's family programme, pupils in Years 8 to 11 have developed excellent insights into dealing with everyday issues and making decisions which affect family life, whilst at the same time strengthening their ability to apply their mathematical skills. Each week in the previous school year, pupils considered different scenarios facing

a typical family, such as how to manage a weekly budget, what compromises have to be made when money is short, how to deal with income tax and monthly bills, and what to do when household repairs are needed.

- 4.6 A strong belief on the part of the school's leadership in the value of outdoor activity has led to the creation of a dedicated department which oversees a succession of carefully planned outdoor residential activities, starting in the junior school, and increasing in the level of challenge provided by such activities for each year group. Pupils in Year 8, who described how the activities on their visit to the Lake District in Year 7 had taken them out of their comfort zone, challenged them and helped them grow in confidence, went on to describe how their residential visit to the Snowdonia National Park in Year 8 had provided them with even more challenging activities which helped them to become more resilient. They were then told by an older pupil, 'You wait until you are in Year 9 when you have your bush craft experience!' Exuding from the many pupils interviewed during the inspection was a huge sense of achievement and a recognition that these experiences had helped them to discover strengths and abilities they were unaware of, to develop a determination to persevere and above all to grow enormously in confidence and understanding of their own capabilities. Others described how they were able to overcome fear through the encouragement of their peers and, as a result, forge deep friendships through shared experiences.
- 4.7 For some pupils, the route to developing confidence and learning how to work with others lies in the many opportunities to engage in extra-curricular sporting activities or to participate in the rigours of the CCF. For others, it is through the myriad opportunities to take part in musical activities or drama performances. One older pupil described how he and others in his year group had developed important leadership skills and the ability to speak in public through the training provided by the CCF, and they were now having an impact on the development of younger pupils as they passed on their skills to them. Many pupils develop a strong global perspective and an excellent understanding of other cultures through field trips within the UK and abroad, to places such as Dorset and the Lake District, Rome, Bonn, Berlin, Munich, Lille, Madagascar and China. An annual, frequently over-subscribed and much-anticipated, trip for pupils in Year 11 and above to provide practical support for a school and its pupils in The Gambia has left indelible impressions on the minds of the participants who say how much the visit has helped them develop understanding and empathy for others, practical skills as they engage in manual tasks around the school, and a determination to do what they can to help others. The visit has also given them a deep appreciation for the opportunities they receive at their own school. It also becomes a focal point for many other pupils in the school to engage in fundraising activities and to learn about another culture.
- 4.8 The outdoor activities programme, regular physical education (PE) and games lessons and the wide variety of extra-curricular activities make a major contribution to pupils' keen awareness of the importance of developing healthy lifestyles, of how to be physically and mentally healthy and the importance of a balanced lifestyle. Through their active and enthusiastic participation in all that the school has to offer, the large majority of pupils put their understanding into practice. Pupils in Year 7, for example, monitor their intake of food and exercise as they seek to understand how to achieve a healthier lifestyle. Pupils also have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, whether this is heeding health and safety requirements which are made clear in subjects such as design and technology, physical education and science, being aware of the dangers of social media and indiscriminate use of the internet, or of practical issues, such as what to do in the case of fire.
- 4.9 Even though a small minority of pupils did not agree in response to the questionnaire that they receive good advice about their choice of subject or career, the inspection found that the school provides a wealth of written information and support and guidance for individuals through the tutor system and the guidance counsellor. Students interviewed during the inspection felt they had an excellent understanding of the option system at GCSE and A level, received helpful guidance on their applications to university and were well prepared through sessions helping them to develop their study skills. Even though a small minority also felt that staff do not always treat them fairly, for which

the inspection found little evidence, many pupils expressed great appreciation for the way staff treat them like adults, encourage them to answer questions without fear of getting things wrong and help them to set goals and make decisions. As a result, pupils feel, and inspection findings concur, that they are extremely well prepared for the future.