



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

SEATON HOUSE SCHOOL

NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER 2016



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Seaton House School			
DfE number	319/6062			
Registered charity number	800673			
Address	Seaton House School 67 Banstead Road South Sutton Surrey SM2 5LH			
Telephone number	020 86422332			
Email address	office@seatonhouse.sutton.sch.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Debbie Morrison			
Chair of governors	Mrs Judith Evans			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils	150			
	Boys	2	Girls	148
	Day pupils	150	Boarders	0
	Nursery	24		
	Junior House	53	Senior House	73
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 form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Serena Alexander	Reporting inspector
Mrs Jane Crouch	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Christopher Emmott	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Seaton House School is a day preparatory school for girls aged from four to eleven with a co-educational nursery for two- and three-year-olds. The school was founded in 1930. It was bought from the founder's family by parents in the early 1990s and an educational trust was formed. Parents of current or past pupils form the governing body. Since the previous inspection, there has been investment in new information, communication and technology (ICT) equipment, the curriculum has been revised and hot meals have been introduced. The current headmistress was appointed in 2014.
- 1.2 The school is located in a suburban neighbourhood. The three sections of the school, Nursery, Junior House (Reception to Year 2) and Senior House (Years 3 to 6), occupy houses that were built in the 1930s and are in close proximity to each other. The grounds include a playing field, two netball or tennis courts, and playground areas.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school has a broadly Christian ethos, but all major faiths and festivals are recognised and celebrated. The school aims to provide a balanced and enriching learning environment for all pupils. The school aims to encourage every pupil to reach her full potential and succeed in her endeavours. The school seeks to develop good character virtues, tolerance and mutual respect.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from local professional, trade and business families and from a number of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The school has identified 18 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, seven 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 seven pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified 24 pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 20 other pupils because of their special talents in art, music and sport.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Form I	Year 1
Form II	Year 2
Form III	Year 3
Form IV	Year 4
Form V	Year 5

Form VI	Year 6
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Recommendations from previous inspection

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in November 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Develop the role of subject co-ordinators to improve long- and medium-term planning and to include the use of ICT across the curriculum.
 - Work with teachers to develop lesson planning and practice so that it includes varied teaching strategies with appropriate tasks for all abilities and to use the interactive whiteboards to support their teaching.
 - In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), develop the use of ICT to simplify methods of evaluating pupils' progress, to enable the information to be used more effectively.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met the recommendations to develop the role of subject co-ordinators to improve long- and medium-term planning and to work with teachers to develop lesson planning and practice so that it includes varied teaching strategies with appropriate tasks for all abilities, such as the use of interactive whiteboards to support their learning.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- At the end of Year 6, results in national attainment tests are excellent and a large majority of pupils transfer to local grammar schools.
- Pupils' extra-curricular achievements are excellent in a range of activities.
- Strong foundations are laid in the EYFS.
- Pupils have exemplary attitudes to learning.
- Pupils have little opportunity to apply their ICT skills to all areas of the curriculum.

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

- Pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience are well developed from an early age, using a range of approaches.
- Pupils have a very strong moral sense and behave very well.
- Pupils give thoughtful responses to intangible concepts, such as giving the gift of kindness.
- Pupils' personal development is supported by excellent teacher-pupil relationships and strong leadership.
- Pupils have the skills necessary for each stage of transition, including their transfer to senior school, due to the many and varied approaches to the development of their self-awareness and well-being.

Recommendation

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Develop the application of pupils' ICT skills across the whole curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Children in the EYFS acquire strong foundations for learning with a focus on literacy and numeracy, but their ICT skills are also developed using a variety of equipment. In the nursery, children use bags of letters to spell out simple words and then test these out electronically. They know the words for two-dimensional shapes and enjoy learning new ones. Pupils work well in groups but also independently. By the end of Reception, almost all pupils achieve all their Early Learning Goals and many exceed them. Careful monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress ensure all needs are met, using an effective system that meets the recommendation of the previous inspection.
- 3.3 Nationally standardised data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2013 to 2015. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 were well above the national average in 2013 and 2014 and far above the national average in 2015. Pupils enjoy considerable success in their examinations for entrance to senior schools with the great majority transferring to local grammar schools and to selective independent schools. Pupils win academic scholarships and also awards for music, art and sports. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make progress that is excellent in relation to pupils of similar abilities. This high level of progress and attainment is also evident in lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' written work, scrutiny of standardised measures of progress and curriculum interviews. Less able pupils and those with SEND and EAL make excellent progress because they are very well supported by specialist staff and by appropriate work set in lessons. More able pupils successfully meet the academic challenges provided and make excellent progress throughout the school.
- 3.4 As pupils move up the school, their strengths and any areas that need work are identified through a continuing programme of assessment. Their performance against expectations for their age and ability is considered and monitored over time. Teaching staff know their pupils well and appropriate tasks are offered for all abilities, thus meeting the recommendation of the previous inspection. Pupils with SEND are identified and receive specialist help. Pupils with EAL receive extra help when needed. More able pupils enjoy additional challenges in their extension work, such as tackling mathematical puzzles and projects, including composing poetry. Pupils' work is well marked, with helpful comments frequently made to show pupils how they can improve. Pupils commented favourably on the targets they were set. They know what these are and are pleased with the rewards when targets are achieved. In their response to the questionnaire, all pupils agreed that teachers are supportive and helpful if they have any problems with their work. Parents are kept well informed on pupils' academic progress and other achievements through grade cards, at parent-teacher meetings and in annual reports. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, all pupils agreed that the school gives them opportunities to learn and make good progress.
- 3.5 Pupils' communication skills are excellent. Their work is well presented and they use punctuation, grammar and spelling well in a variety of genres and across all subjects. Their verbal skills are particularly strong. They speak clearly, answer questions thoughtfully and debate topics such as 'Should children have a mobile telephone?' with maturity. Reading records are kept well, ensuring that pupils make rapid progress in developing their reading skills and a love of books through carefully chosen texts. Pupils have a wide selection of modern and classic tales from which to choose in the well-run and well-stocked library. They

have strong mathematical skills and enjoy using these to solve problems and puzzles. They apply these well in other subjects, such as using timelines in history, analysing data in science and looking at statistics in geography. Pupils develop programming and other skills in their ICT lessons, but they make little use of ICT in other areas of learning. Despite having more equipment, the lack of broader opportunities to apply ICT skills was confirmed by pupils at interview. The recommendation of the previous inspection has thus not been fully met. Pupils' scientific skills are well developed and applied successfully; for example, pupils enjoyed designing games using their knowledge of magnets.

- 3.6 Pupils achieve great success in a variety of sports. Particularly notable are the many awards won for gymnastics, cross-country running and athletics. Pupils also play netball, and recently benefited from high-quality coaching, delivered by a former Olympic player, to help them improve their game. Pupils are creative both in their writing and in their artwork. More able artists have an additional club and win awards, including a national competition to design a badge that celebrates walking to school. Pupils learn a variety of instruments and pass their grades, many with merit and distinction. They participate in musical and drama performances to a high standard.
- 3.7 Pupils' achievements are supported by a well-balanced curriculum. There is a focus on literacy and numeracy not only in core lessons but embedded across other subjects. All subjects in the National Curriculum are taught with the addition of religious studies. French is taught from Reception and Classics in the latter terms of Year 6. Although based on the National Curriculum, there is an imaginative approach to lessons that are not constrained by examinations. In geography, for example, pupils not only study the local environment but also learn where their lunch comes from. In history, pupils knowledgeably compared modern technology to that of an iron age quern stone. Pupils are encouraged to take part in a variety of local and national competitions, and successfully win awards for mathematical challenges and creative writing, including poetry.
- 3.8 Pupils benefit from knowledgeable subject coordinators whose long- and medium-term planning is detailed and thorough, meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection. Much of the teaching is excellent, suitably paced and very well prepared using a variety of teaching methods and resources. Older pupils, in particular, have many opportunities to develop their study skills. They are encouraged to try for themselves before asking for help, to persevere and to use well-taught strategies when they encounter problems. In science, they form a hypothesis before carrying out an experiment and then test this by analysis of their results. Techniques such as older pupils preparing lessons for younger classes help them to draw on prior knowledge, and activities such as planning a party allow them to use a variety of skills to solve a problem of a complexity to match their ability.
- 3.9 Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are well organised, settle quickly to lessons, listen well and offer sensible responses to questions. They work well individually, in pairs and in small groups, being extremely supportive of one another. The atmosphere in the classroom is one of enjoyable application, with excellent relationships evident between teachers and pupils as well as amongst the pupils themselves. The inspiring attitude of leadership is evident in the bubbling enthusiasm that drives the pupils' aspirations and achievement. Leadership is well supported by governance that has ensured suitable investment in the maintenance of facilities and the provision of suitable learning materials and resources.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience are well developed from an early age, using a range of approaches. In the EYFS, children become increasingly independent, learning to do things for themselves and to share and work with others. As pupils grow up through the school they are encouraged to perform to others in the classroom and then on the stage in assemblies and other activities to boost their self-confidence. They are encouraged to reflect on their own performance and to work on individual targets for improvement. Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) is taught in all classes and the content is frequently reviewed to ensure that pertinent matters are covered, such as mental well-being. Older pupils talk about resilience, using their efforts in sport as an example of how not to be disappointed on losing a match but how they then work hard to improve their skills.
- 4.3 In lessons, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. Within the curriculum, they make choices over which stories to write, which methods to use to solve a problem or what they are to create. They plan and research their own extended project work, such as choosing an endangered species to research in science. They understand that their application helps them to achieve. They also understand that decisions over how they behave toward their friends can have an effect on their relationships. From Year 1, representatives from each form sit on the pupil forum to consider ideas that will be of benefit to the community. These representatives speak proudly of the initiatives that the school has adopted, such as the introduction of more play equipment.
- 4.4 Pupils achieve well in extra-curricular activities and commented extremely favourably about the comprehensive range that they are offered, with sporting, musical, creative and academic opportunities. They are pleased that chess had been reintroduced following a suggestion from the pupil forum. Inspection findings did not agree with the views of a very small minority of parents who felt that the school did not provide a good choice of extra activities. Those on offer after school are well attended and are appropriate to the number of pupils and there is very good provision at lunch time.
- 4.5 In addition, pupils develop independence and a broader educational understanding through a wide variety of opportunities. Their understanding of life in British society is enhanced by a varied programme of trips to local and national places of interest, including art galleries, museums and the houses of parliament. They speak with enthusiasm about new skills learnt in the wide variety of enrichment days, such as a magical mathematician coming to teach them numerical tricks, bicycle training days, a forensic science day and a day spent making hats and handbags for the Queen's birthday. Pupils from Year 3 are particularly positive about how their self-sufficiency is developed in their residential trips and recount their experiences on these with great enthusiasm and appreciation.
- 4.6 From their earliest days in the EYFS, pupils develop self-discipline and perseverance with the encouragement of their teachers. The youngest children change for games and put on their coats without assistance. Older pupils described at interview how they are encouraged to try and try again if work seems hard. They give the example of acting a play: 'It is hard to learn the words and to say the lines and, at first, we were not very good at it, but we tried again and were better.' They are adaptable as they experience new challenges. Pupils explain how, on their residential trips, they have had to learn to persevere in order to succeed at a variety of tasks, such as learning to ski or to solve the problem of how to cross the lava flow.

- 4.7 The pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. They are naturally sensitive to the world around them and give thoughtful responses to intangible concepts such as giving the gift of kindness. In the EYFS, children spontaneously share a hug to fill each other's imaginary buckets with happiness. Pupils discuss their emotions, such as how they feel when they hear the national anthem, with thoughtful maturity. They are sensitive to the feelings of others and value qualities such as being a good friend as well as celebrating academic and other successes. Pupils explore themes such as compassion, patience or tolerance in PSHEE lessons and assemblies.
- 4.8 From the EYFS, pupils work very well with one another, either in paired work in the classroom or in small groups working on projects, productions or problem solving. They share out tasks and collaborate well, ensuring that no one is left out. Pupils take pride in their houses as they collect house points for good work or behaviour. Pupils of all ages act responsibly. They organise themselves well at the start of each day with daily helpers collecting in homework and cleaning the whiteboard. Form captains represent their class at the pupil forum. Older pupils take their roles, such as head girl or house captain, very seriously and consider the welfare of the whole community. They have excellent role models in their teachers whose care for their pupils is evident.
- 4.9 Pupils have a very strong moral sense. They behave very well and readily offer helpful suggestions and encouragement if any behaviour is below expectations. In the questionnaires, all parents agree that the school actively promotes good behaviour and all parents and pupils agree that the school deals effectively with any bullying should it occur. Pupils who were interviewed were positive that there is no bullying. Pupils follow the school rules and are considerate to one another. Under highly committed and competent leadership, including that of the EYFS, all pupils thrive in an atmosphere where their welfare is paramount and individual needs and views are respected.
- 4.10 Pupils of all ages have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and keep healthy, raised through science and PSHEE topics as appropriate to each stage of pupils' development. Pupils in Year 2 are knowledgeable about road safety, those in Year 4 understand the dangers of the internet and pupils in Year 6 understand the law on drugs and alcohol. Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and take an interest in each other's lunchtime choices, enjoying a lively discussion on suitable options for a vegetarian. They appreciate the many opportunities for exercise in the curriculum, in the provision of clubs and at playtime. Pupils are kept safe through strong management that ensures that all staff are suitably trained in safeguarding, health and safety and that any concerns are correctly reported. In the questionnaires, all parents agree that the pupils learn in a safe and healthy environment. Pupils with SEND thrive in a supportive environment and any pupil who is injured or unwell is cared for by suitably trained staff. Any parental concerns are taken seriously, detailed records are kept and, if necessary, adjustments to school procedures are made by leadership.
- 4.11 Pupils thrive in the seamless integration of many cultures and faiths. They respect one another and talk warmly about their similarities and differences. In PSHEE, they discuss if they feel British, regardless of their origins. In religious studies, pupils learn about a variety of religions, about which they speak knowledgeably; for example, they consider how the sense of human spirit in Judaism overcomes the power of the Roman gods of war. They celebrate religious festivals from the variety of faiths within the school community, often with help from parents. Pupils contribute positively to the whole school community through positions of responsibility and the pupil forum. Older pupils regularly help younger ones. In the wider local community, they raise money for charities such as the local hospital, and they perform

at a local residential care home. The sense of community is reinforced by social and fundraising events organised by the parents' association.

- 4.12 Pupils develop the skills necessary for each stage of transition, including their transfer to senior school. Excellent teaching ensures not just the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also the development of self-awareness and well-being. Independence and responsibility are encouraged both in school and through the programme of residential trips. Senior leadership takes a personal interest in each pupil's future and gives clear guidance on the process of school transfer. Pupils in Year 6 talk positively about their experiences and how well prepared they have been through the revision period which, to their surprise, they enjoyed. They reflect on their time at the school with evident pleasure, proudly describing their experiences and achievements.