



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**WREKIN COLLEGE**

**FEBRUARY 2017**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Wrekin College			
<b>DfE number</b>	894/6001			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	528417			
<b>Address</b>	Wrekin College Sutherland Road Wellington Telford Shropshire TF1 3BH			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01952 265600			
<b>Email address</b>	info@wrekincollege.com			
<b>Head</b>	Mr Tim Firth			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Richard Pearson			
<b>Age range</b>	11 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	410			
	<b>Boys</b>	244	<b>Girls</b>	166
	<b>Day pupils</b>	323	<b>Boarders</b>	87
	<b>Seniors</b>	290	<b>Sixth Form</b>	120
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8 to 9 February 2017			

## 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 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 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 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.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. 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'.**

## 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 the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house meetings and chapel. Inspectors visited boarding houses together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting inspector
Mr Stephen Hardy	Team inspector (Teacher, HMC school)
Mrs Catherine Hill	Team inspector (Senior teacher, HMC school)
Mr Christopher King	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)

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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### About the school

- 1.1 Wrekin College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 11 to 18. Founded in 1880 by Sir John Bayley the school still works to his original philosophy of providing individual attention to individual pupils. In 2008, the school created Lancaster House to cater for pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- 1.2 Around a fifth of pupils board in one of three all-age boarding houses, two for boys, Tudor and Bayley, and one for girls, Hadden Hall. The school is a registered charity overseen by a board of governors, who also have responsibility for Old Hall School, a preparatory school on the same site. Since the previous ISI Interim inspection in 2011, a refurbished girls' boarding house and a new business centre have been opened. The head took up office in September 2016.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to add value to the lives of all its pupils and for them to achieve the most they are capable of, in and out the classroom, by stimulating interest, providing excellent and inspiring teaching and making learning exciting. It seeks to prepare them for the competitive world. It aims to enable every child to believe the school is 'their school' and to offer individual care and attention, both to boarders and day pupils; and to ensure that every child has an equal chance to contribute.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come mainly from a range of professional and business family backgrounds, drawn from the Shropshire Borders; around half of boarders come from overseas, from a wide range of countries. The school uses academic tests to determine admission. The ability range of pupils is wide. Information from standardised tests shows the ability profile of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is above average, with around a quarter being of average ability or lower. The ability profile of pupils in the sixth form is broadly average. Around one tenth of pupils are of well above average ability and several in each year group have particular sporting and musical talents. Around one eighth of pupils in Year 11 are new, from overseas, enrolled on a transition year, prior to sixth-form study. There are 100 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 73 receive support for a broad range of needs. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Fifty-one pupils have English as an additional language, of whom 43 require and receive support.
- 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>
First Form	Year 7
Second Form	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10

Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in January 2011. The recommendation from that inspection was:
- Ensure that all work is marked thoroughly in a way that is most helpful to pupils in future improvement.
- 1.7 The school has partially addressed the recommendation. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.
- 1.8 The recommendation of the intermediate boarding inspection in September 2014 was:
- Involve key people in the formulation of the policies and procedures used in boarding to ensure that they are implemented effectively.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met the recommendation of the previous inspection.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils make consistently good progress in response to supportive teaching.
- Pupils work hard and willingly, co-operate very effectively and enjoy their learning.
- More able pupils achieve high standards and fulfil their potential.
- Some pupils reach very high levels in sport, and all pupils engage fully in the school's wide range of sporting activities.
- Pupils' highly developed self-confidence is not fully utilised to take charge of their learning, where teaching does not challenge them to take initiative or think independently.

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

- All pupils develop very strong self-confidence and social skills in response to the school's outstanding care and attention for individuals.
- Pupils' moral awareness is extremely high and evident in high standards of behaviour which reflect the school's ethos.
- A strong community spirit, with boarding at its heart, informs pupils' behaviour and their relationships with others, of all cultures.
- Pupils' decisions in selecting subject options and career paths are not always fully informed by specialist knowledge and guidance.

### Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that teaching challenges pupils to take the initiative and to apply their existing knowledge independently.
- Use planned opportunities for careers advice within the business centre to ensure pupils access specialist knowledge and guidance in making decisions.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 Pupils develop secure knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of learning. Both boys and girls make consistently good progress in lessons and in their written work over time because they receive supportive and well-informed teaching. This represents considerable success in meeting the school's aim to enable pupils to achieve the most of which they are capable. In their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, most pupils agreed that the school enables them to learn and make good progress and most parents agreed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress and develop skills for the future. This is reflected in most marking of pupils' written work, an area of recommendation from the previous inspection. A small minority of pupils disagreed that marking helps them to improve their work. Inspection evidence shows that, although some marking of written work does not include detailed guidance for improvement, the small class sizes and effective oral feedback to pupils, together with the recently instituted 'challenge grade' system, ensure that pupils receive sufficient, helpful guidance on how to improve. Pupils commended the help they receive from additional teaching on Saturdays, such as subject clinics and focused support, which make a significant contribution to many pupils' achievement, particularly those with EAL.
- 3.3 Achievement is consistently good for pupils with SEND or EAL, enabled by systematic identification of their needs, which are effectively communicated to teachers. These needs are met through the provision of suitable work and learning strategies and by monitoring of the resultant achievement. Boarders work fruitfully in prep time assisted by guidance which is informed by any particular needs they may have. More able pupils develop high levels of skill for their age, notably in mathematics where exceptionally gifted pupils are enabled to enter external examinations early. In French, the written work of more able younger pupils shows confident and accurate use of advanced vocabulary and grammar.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2015. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for maintained schools. Pupils' attainment in 2016 maintained this level, with a slight increase in the proportion of grades awarded at A\* or A. Results in IGCSE represent similar levels of success. All these results include those of pupils with EAL undertaking the transition year, who have only received one year's tuition from the school. Comparison of A-level results must be viewed in the light of small groupings in individual subjects in the sixth form allied to variable ability levels within those groups. Results in A-level examinations have been broadly similar to the national average for maintained schools. Taken altogether, these results represent good progress by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils are successful in gaining places at their desired university with around a third gaining places at universities with demanding entry requirements. Pupils' progress is sometimes restricted by limited requirements or expectations in teaching for pupils to develop independent thought. This can also result in a lack of ambition in their aspirations. The school has identified these areas for development and has recently instituted a challenge grade system. This is informed by senior managers' systematic and knowledgeable use of assessment data, and is well designed to enable pupils to understand better their potential targets, and measure their progress against them at regular intervals. Pupils, including those with SEND, identified that they have already found the initiative helpful in formulating their targets for improvement.
- 3.5 Pupils' physical development is strong in response to excellent facilities, which they are given ample opportunities to enjoy both within and outside the curriculum. Throughout most of the

school day groups of pupils are engaged in sporting activities, whether playing competitively in multiple hockey games outdoors or, for example, giving focused attention to guidance on different techniques in badminton. Pupils, including those in Lancaster House, articulate their ideas clearly. By the time they leave the school, many pupils are persuasive and fluent in expression, orally and in writing. Older pupils with leadership roles spoke very confidently and engagingly in giving their views about school life, expressing their thoughts convincingly. Much writing in Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) essays by sixth-form pupils is persuasive and well informed. Pupils listen to each other and to their teachers with care. Pupils are imaginative and creative in musical compositions and art, although some do not always possess the technical skills to realise their ideas fully. They demonstrate good numeracy skills and apply them successfully. In science, GCSE pupils used mathematical skills well in experiments and graphical work. Younger mathematicians achieve highly, for example, a group of Lancaster House pupils were able to factorise quadratic equations successfully. Pupils are competent users of information and communication technology (ICT), and apply their skills effectively in using photographic and music software. They demonstrate effective use of technology in design technology.

- 3.6 Pupils produce a high volume of work, both in individual lessons and over time, demonstrably enjoying their learning. They organise their work well and reflect the substance of material they have read efficiently. Pupils hypothesise and develop individual arguments less than they might because closed questioning in some teaching, or over-structured tasks they are given, inhibit opportunities or stimulus to do so. Senior managers have recognised this area for development through recent review and have instituted initiatives to promote learning skills, including the '6R' approach. This includes the promotion of risk taking in learning. These initiatives are well designed to exploit the highly developed confidence pupils show outside the classroom but which not all currently transfer to their academic studies. Pupils respond very successfully where teaching incorporates imaginative and challenging tasks. Some EPQs, including on complex topics such as multi-verse theory, are logically structured and show outstanding independent research. A wall display demonstrated accurate and well-focused solutions by pupils to a challenge to determine the speed of reaction necessary to return the serve of a top tennis player. Pupils are diligent and committed in their studies. They develop positive relationships with teaching staff and collaborate fruitfully with one another in their learning.
- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate very high achievement in some sports, such as netball, and have maintained this level consistently over a number of years. Individual pupils achieve national representation and regular regional success in a wide range of sports, including hockey, rugby and athletics. All pupils engage fully in the school's wide range of sporting activities, their achievement often enhanced by the opportunities provided by inter-house competitions. Many of these are organised by pupils themselves. Almost all parents and most pupils agreed in their questionnaire responses that the school provides a good range and choice of activities. Inspection evidence supports this view and shows that this provision enables many pupils to realise their full potential. Pupils sing with enthusiasm and skill in choirs, and drama has a high profile. Some more able pupils achieve at high levels in mathematics and science competitions. Pupils achieve at high levels in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE); all enter for the bronze award and a substantial number for the size of the school achieve the gold award before they leave. These achievements demonstrate very successful implementation in activities of the school's aim to ensure that every child has a chance to contribute.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 All pupils develop very strong self-confidence in response to the school's outstanding care and its attention for individuals. In their questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their child's personal development. Inspection evidence firmly supports this view. Pupils commented specifically on the high levels of support they experienced when new to the school. Boarders acknowledge that their confidence has grown through their boarding experience. Pupils develop strong self-esteem through the consistent support they receive from their peers of all ages as well as through the family ethos of a school which is a close-knit community. Pupils know where they need to improve their work and how they can access support to improve. A strong community spirit, promoted by the presence of boarding at its heart, enables all pupils to develop very strong social skills. Pupils form very positive relationships with one another. A characteristic of the school is the easy social interaction between pupils of different ages which is particularly evident in boarding houses and the dining hall. It is enabled by arrangements such as the roles of older pupils as leaders in Lancaster House and peer mentors, and the involvement of pupils of all ages in teams in a multitude of house competitions. The involvement of so many pupils in sporting activities results in frequent and successful collaboration, and this is replicated in charity work. Pupils develop with great success socially because of the excellent role models they perceive in adults in the school, with whom they develop fruitful relationships.
- 4.3 Their self-confidence enables pupils to take effective, well-reasoned decisions. A strong understanding of what constitutes physical and mental health is common to all pupils and they make sensible decisions about their lifestyles as a result. Pupils develop their understanding about health through encouragement and support from the school's focus on these areas, particularly through a well-informed emphasis on mental health in the pastoral care system and the strong personal, social and health education programme. Pupils participate as suitably trained peer mentors, identified by a distinctive yellow badge to encourage pupils to approach them, which they do freely. Pupils acknowledged the guidance they receive from excellent additional systems of support, for example presentations in assemblies and regular emails to all pupils on relevant welfare issues from pastoral staff. In their questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of pupils confirmed that they understand how to keep safe on-line. Their very high level of involvement in sport enables pupils to appreciate physical health, enhanced by enthusiasm for DofE and Combined Cadet Force (CCF) activities.
- 4.4 Pupils similarly make effective decisions about their futures and the actions they need to take to pursue their chosen career path. In their responses to questionnaires, a very small minority of parents and pupils did not agree that pupils receive suitable advice about a choice of subject or career. Inspection evidence partially supports this view. Older pupils acknowledge that good support has assisted them in making successful university applications, particularly the help of their personal tutors. They benefit from a week's residence in the school's 'Our House' project, cooking and cleaning for themselves in preparation for life after school. Pupils feel they understood when in Year 11, which course of study in the sixth form would best suit their strengths. Recent additions to the sixth-form curriculum have provided current Year 11 pupils with a greater range of study options towards vocational goals as well as academic study. Younger pupils commented that they receive less focused guidance, for example in making GCSE choices. For all pupils there are limited opportunities at present to receive one-to-one specialist careers guidance or to be mentored by adults from outside school with relevant experience in the career or vocation they favour. The recently opened business centre,

- strongly promoted by governors in terms of both its ethos of support to enhance pupils' employability and as a new facility, is designed to give a focus to, and venue for, such guidance.
- 4.5 Extremely high levels of moral awareness are characteristic of pupils and this is represented in a high standard of behaviour throughout the school. Pupils are happy, polite and civilized in their demeanour. They are loyal to the school and to one another. Pupils demonstrate a mature view of sanctions, acknowledging their necessity within any society and the need for each to take responsibility for his or her behaviour. This they do with a high degree of success and the need for serious sanctions is rare, as are instances of bullying. Pupils will also express concern to staff if they feel a fellow pupil is placing his or herself in danger through their behaviour, for example by potential misuse of technology. That this is done in a spirit of mutual care and support is an indication of the strength of responsibility that pupils show towards one another. It also illustrates the impact on pupils of the school's outstanding pastoral care and focus on the individual. This encompasses support through the house and tutorial systems, through efficient medical care, and through boarding.
- 4.6 Pupils' moral awareness is closely linked to their experiences in chapel. Pupils commented that they value chapel for its role as a place where the school comes together as one community. Many feel that the regular chapel sessions, on four mornings each week, enable them to share and confirm their values. This spirit was evident in the very strong and committed hymn singing during congregational practice. Pupils develop high levels of spiritual understanding overall. Aesthetic activities result in spiritual fulfilment for many. Others develop their appreciation of the non-material through their experiences in sports, the DofE, charitable work, in boarding and in cultural visits such as to Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 4.7 Pupils make substantial individual contributions to the school and further afield, encouraged by the school's strong community spirit and its promotion of social awareness. Senior pupils with leadership responsibilities have an extremely mature approach to fulfilling them, for example giving a balanced view of school life to a governors' meeting while clearly identifying areas that might be improved. Prefects supervising lunch showed a sense of ownership in fulfilling their task. Pupils volunteer to help in a centre for children with learning disabilities, showing a strong commitment to the task over time. Pupils support a range of charities including continuous support over a number of years for a charity to support the homeless locally. Others are involved in a group to support local regeneration. Older pupils help in Lancaster House, for example in drama productions, while others develop and implement leadership skills through the CCF. Younger pupils take responsibility as team captains in sports and in house events. Pupils of all ages contribute to school life successfully through a wide range of school committees, such as those concerning boarding, food and charities, as well as the school council. They both represent the views of others and give effective feedback to the school on the outcomes of discussion.
- 4.8 Pupils' understanding of and respect for other cultures is a strong aspect of their personal development. It is promoted by the highly successful integration of international boarders within boarding houses and the school as a whole. Boarders from overseas gain positions of responsibility such as heads of boarding houses. They are enabled by strong induction procedures, including integrated rooming arrangements, to share fully in the life of the school; for example, many participate actively in the DofE programme. Pupils commented that they form enduring friendships with those from other countries, visiting them during school holidays. Pupils are very open to different cultures and show sensitivity to others of all backgrounds and faiths. This is enhanced by a number of exchange programmes, for example to South Africa and Australia. Pupils who had experienced these opportunities spoke of how much they had benefitted from meeting those from different and diverse backgrounds, and

specifically commended the way in which the confidence they had developed in school had enabled them to appreciate the experience fully.