



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

The Old Hall School

June 2023

Contents

School's Details	3
1. Background Information	4
About the school	4
What the school seeks to do	4
About the pupils	4
2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection	5
Preface	5
Key findings	6
PART 1 – Quality of education provided	6
PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	6
PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils	6
PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors	6
PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools	6
PART 6 – Provision of information	7
PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled	7
PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools	7
3. Educational Quality Inspection	8
Preface	8
Key findings	8
Recommendation	8
The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements	8
The quality of the pupils' personal development	10
4. Inspection Evidence	13

School's Details

School	The Old Hall School			
DfE number	894/6000			
Registered charity number	528417			
Address	The Old Hall School Stanley Road Wellington Shropshire TF1 3LB			
Telephone number	01952 223117			
Email address	enq@oldhall.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Anna Karacan			
Chair of governors	Mr Richard Pearson			
Proprietor	The Wrekin Old Hall School Trust Ltd			
Age range	4 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	239			
	EYFS	20	Lower school	68
	Upper school	151		
Inspection dates	20 to 22 June 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 The Old Hall School is an independent co-educational day school. Founded in 1845, it merged with Wrekin College in 2007 with whom it shares its current site in Wellington, near Telford in Shropshire. It is overseen by a governing body which consists of the trustees of the Wrekin Old Hall Trust. The school comprises two sections: the lower school, which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Years 1 to 2; and the upper school, for pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- 1.2 The current headteacher took up her post in September 2022.
- 1.3 Wrekin College is inspected separately by ISI and was not included in this inspection.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to provide an excellent all-round education and a broad and balanced curriculum. It seeks to ensure that every pupil experiences an outstanding educational journey, where they will develop character, intellect, physical and emotional wellbeing and cultural understanding within a supportive environment. The school endeavours to cultivate an ethos in which each pupil is cared for individually, valued equally and where they are enabled to achieve their full potential both in and beyond the classroom.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds representative of the local area. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of pupils on entry to the school is above average compared to those taking similar tests nationally. The school has identified 41 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Of these, 30 receive additional specialist help. Two pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 17 pupils, of whom 12 receive additional support for their English. The school has identified 47 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are 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 FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. 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 standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. 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 standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 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.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is 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 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' 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.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes 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 any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, 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.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 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.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 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 wellbeing of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is 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.

The headline judgements apply 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 excellent.
- Pupils attain highly and make mainly excellent progress from their starting points.
 - Pupils' subject knowledge, skills and understanding are highly developed.
 - Pupils demonstrate advanced communication and mathematical skills.
 - Pupils exhibit excellent attitudes towards learning and achievement.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils demonstrate notably strong self-confidence and self-awareness.
 - Pupils' social skills and ability to work collaboratively are outstanding.
 - Pupils exhibit highly inclusive attitudes and a very strong appreciation of diversity.
 - Pupils demonstrate excellent moral sensibilities when considering ethical issues. However, a very few pupils do not always self-regulate their behaviour well during competitive playground games.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
- Further strengthen older pupils' ability to self-regulate their own behaviour when engaged in competitive playground games.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils' achievement is excellent. The attainment of pupils across the school, including that of children in the EYFS, is above national age-related expectations. Most leavers attain their first choice of places at the linked senior school and at other competitive senior schools. A very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their child to make progress. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own assessment data indicate that all groups of pupils make mainly excellent progress. This includes children in the EYFS, who make better than expected progress from their starting points. Pupils with SEND typically make rapid progress as a result of the carefully tailored support that they receive. Leaders and staff make highly successful use of assessment data to identify whether individual pupils are meeting their potential and provide effective support to enable them to progress well. The school fully meets its aim to cultivate

an ethos in which each pupil is cared for individually, valued equally and where they are enabled to achieve their full potential.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate excellent subject knowledge for their respective ages. For example, the youngest pupils have carefully identified and written about geographical features of particular local areas, while slightly older pupils have compared features of cold and hot landscapes very well. The work of pupils in the middle years of the school demonstrates advanced understanding of aspects of Anglo-Saxon history. In a drama lesson, they showed much imagination when discussing and then starting to compose a short fairy tale play script. They were able to correctly write their script identifying the different characters and who was speaking at each point. In an English lesson, older pupils showed a high level of knowledge and understanding when successfully editing the letter they had written by identifying how it could be strengthened by introducing relative clauses, rhetorical questions and improving the level of vocabulary. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that teachers know how to help them to learn. The high quality of pupils' knowledge and understanding results from the breadth and balance of the academic and extensive co-curriculum programme. It is also underpinned by well-planned lessons and challenging teaching pitched well to meet the needs of individual pupils, including those with SEND. The school fully meets its aim to provide an excellent all-round education.
- 3.7 Pupils throughout the school consistently demonstrate outstanding communication skills. In a literacy lesson, children in the EYFS spoke confidently when recognising and then accurately pronouncing a whole series of words. Writing is well-formed for their age. Young pupils created confident and clear instructions to make mocktails. They used imaginative vocabulary, such as 'sensational' and 'luxurious', and used terms such as 'ingredients' accurately and with understanding. The oldest pupils were able to identify key words in the version of *Romeo and Juliet* that they were using that conveyed something significant about particular characters or plot developments. They articulated intelligent and sophisticated ideas about what the extracts of text conveyed about the main characters. The most able pupils could explain what terms like 'tetchily' and 'insolence' meant. Work scrutiny confirmed that written work is of a consistently high standard. Teaching features high expectations of the quality of reading and listening. Highly effective questioning enables pupils to consider the potential meaning and impact of particular words and phrases.
- 3.8 The standard of pupils' numeracy throughout the school is excellent. Children in the EYFS use terms such 'symmetrical' accurately. Their written work displays a strong understanding of number. Older pupils demonstrated their mathematical understanding through the accuracy seen in their written work, and their clear verbal explanations and understanding in lessons observed. This was demonstrated by older pupils who showed an excellent understanding of multiplication and division when calculating a range of increasingly more difficult multiplication pyramids. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge across the curriculum very well. For example, in an art lesson, pupils in the middle years demonstrated their understanding of scale and proportion when accurately drawing a human head and its key features. Pupils mathematical work is of a high level because they are challenged and stretched by their teachers, who have high expectations of them, while at the same time making the subject interesting, relevant and engaging.
- 3.9 Pupils have an excellent attitude to their learning and are enthusiastic and eager to learn. In all lessons seen, pupils exhibited very high levels of engagement and concentration, focused very well on their tasks and were eager to contribute their ideas and produce the best work that they could. Leaders and staff effectively promote pupils' positive attitudes towards learning. These, in turn, strongly support the development of pupils' independence, initiative and ability to face up to challenges. Pupils talked to the inspectors very positively about the teaching they experienced, saying that staff endeavoured to make their lessons fun and interesting.
- 3.10 Pupils develop excellent information and communications technology (ICT) skills as they move up through the school. For example, younger pupils' digital presentations, such as about electricity, are crafted with care and clarity. The oldest pupils' individual and small group ICT 'Innovation' projects

feature careful research into self-chosen real-world issues. They also include thoughtfully designed products to make a difference, such as helping disabled people drive in challenging circumstances and reducing the amount of litter left on beaches. Their podcasts exhibit a high level of technical ability, such as designing suitable logos and adding appropriate music. Pupils talked enthusiastically about ICT and their use of school devices in other subjects, such as geography, where the pupils researched and then put forward their viewpoint on the advantages of using clean energy sources as against other more traditional resources. The high standard of pupils' ICT capabilities results from leaders' and governors' provision of specialist ICT lessons from an early age, supplemented by additional regular access to devices in a range of subjects.

- 3.11 Pupils' study skills are outstanding. Children in the EYFS were able to select different 3D shapes and other physical construction resources to represent eggs and other features of the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Children carefully thought of and asked pertinent questions of the groups that were presenting their work. Older pupils closely analysed different sources of historical evidence in order to identify whether they were primary or secondary sources, and as such, were or were not reliable. The oldest pupils' independent research projects on topics such as the role of the cook on the Mary Rose, the moon landing, and the English monarchy show considerable ability to construct an argument and much critical thinking. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they are consistently challenged by their teachers to question, investigate and understand data, and then draw reasonable conclusions from this process. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire said that school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 3.12 Pupils' academic and non-academic achievements are outstanding. Leavers attain a large number of academic, music, drama, dance and all-round scholarships. In recent years, entrants to ABRSM and ESB examinations have received a 100% pass rate, with high proportions achieving merits and distinctions. Similarly, all entrants to LAMDA examinations in recent years achieved distinctions and merits. The school choir have competed successfully in competitions such as Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod and the Barnardo's National Choir Competition at the Royal Festival Hall. Pupils achieve highly in annual Maths Challenges. In hockey, pupils have been county champions and represented Shropshire for the last five years. In swimming, pupils have been finalists in IAPS competitions and won at county level. Pupils have been county champions in rugby and represented the local authority in the mixed gender tag rugby county games, coming fourth. Pupils attain a strong level of success in hockey and netball fixtures with other schools. A number of pupils represent the school at cricket at county and district levels, and several pupils have been invited to play football for professional football club academies. The school provides a very wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Pupils hone their skills through the after school 'Old Hall Horizons' programme and the provision of specialist rooms and resources dedicated to art, music, drama, swimming and other sports, several of which are based at the linked senior school, and several of which are in The Old Hall School itself. Governors have invested in specialist teaching in these areas.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have excellent self-understanding. Children in the EYFS very confidently presented to the rest of the class about the achievements of individual groups during their lesson. Older pupils exhibit much self-confidence and appreciation of their strengths and give excellent examples of how their work has improved and explain how they can get help if required. Pupils demonstrated verbally a strong sense of self-knowledge and of being resilient learners. Older pupils who spoke to the inspectors said how much their confidence had grown while at the school. They put much of this down to the practice that leaders and staff ensured that they had in speaking and performing publicly. Pupils are able to self-assess effectively the quality of their work. Pupils explained how useful they found target setting and their teachers' feedback. Leaders promote pupils' positive attitudes towards using any setbacks to

support their future learning and achievement. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school helps their child to be confident and independent.

- 3.15 Pupils' social awareness and collaboration are excellent. They are respectful of each other and work extremely well together, as seen during lesson observations, sports, music and drama and other activities throughout the inspection. They fully understand the need to work as a team to achieve common goals. For example, children in the EYFS worked extremely well in small groups to create representations of the life cycle of a butterfly and then ably presented their work to others. In a personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lesson on respecting themselves and others, older pupils identified things they liked about themselves or felt they were good at, and then openly recognised the various strengths of their peers. They acknowledged that making positive comments about people made them feel good and more confident about themselves. Leaders and staff successfully promote and model positive social interaction, teamwork and collaboration. For example, there are class contracts which pupils sign up to that identify how to be a good friend and have strong relationships with one's peers. Leaders ensure that pupils are given many opportunities to work together.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate outstanding awareness and appreciation of diversity. For example, pupils' proposed playground designs include activities and resources for disabled pupils with careful consideration of access. Older pupils who spoke to the inspectors conveyed articulately why forms of prejudice are harmful, describing racism as 'morally wrong'. They explained the importance of not treating other people badly because of aspects of identity such as their gender, and of not making stereotypical assumptions, such as about the respective strength of males and females. Pupils stated strongly that it was important that all were treated exactly the same, that everybody had equal opportunities, and that nobody was discriminated against in any way. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. The school educates the pupils about people from different religions, cultures, backgrounds and traditions through its broad and inclusive curriculum. The school also increases pupils' awareness through appropriate visiting speakers, focus weeks such as on languages and Black history and special assemblies throughout the year.
- 3.17 Pupils display advanced moral sensibilities when considering ethical issues. For example, pupils who spoke to the inspectors conveyed articulately how they would balance the importance of honesty with the need to care for other people's feelings when determining how to respond to questions about matters such as people's appearance. The oldest pupils' independent research projects include very thoughtful reflections on questions such as whether the violence used by some Suffragettes was justified. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors expressed thoughtfully why fairness mattered and explained the impact of kind behaviour towards others and on oneself. Pupils' behaviour is typically excellent. In lessons, pupils focus very well and exhibit almost entirely positive behaviour towards staff and each other. Pupils' behaviour out of lessons is mainly extremely positive. However, a small minority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire disagreed that pupils are kind and respect each other. Behavioural records show, and pupils who spoke to the inspectors said, that a very small number of older pupils do not always demonstrate a consistently strong ability to self-regulate their own behaviour when engaged in competitive playground games. Leaders are aware of this and have taken effective measures to improve behaviour in this regard.
- 3.18 Pupils develop a deep understanding of their current and future needs and become outstanding decision-makers. In discussion, pupils conveyed an understanding of how decisions they make, whether academically or about friendships or future schools, could have an impact on them now in and in the future. In PSHE, the oldest pupils identified and reflected on who were the biggest influences on them and the decisions they made in their lives. They produced their own 'guides to moral decision-making', reflecting on different scenarios and the choices they would make within them. Staff continually invite pupils to make decisions about their work and how to approach it. For example, pupils had to decide regarding a number of options before starting an ICT podcast project,

such as who they wanted to do the task with, and then between them, the theme they wanted to pursue.

- 3.19 Pupils exhibit strong spiritual development and appreciation of non-material aspects of life. For example, in a religious studies lesson, younger pupils were able to explain in much detail what a Hindu pilgrimage was. They reflected strongly on the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage, identifying that it was a happy, emotional and special event that was probably only to be experienced once in a lifetime. Older pupils in discussion with the inspectors engaged in very thoughtful reflection about whether God was real, whether God could be either a man or a woman, and how one could know. Pupils express deep appreciation of nature and music. They explained passionately how engagement with nature made them feel happier and more refreshed and how music could influence feelings of joy and calm.
- 3.20 Pupils make strong contributions to others both within and beyond the school. Pupils from Reception upwards represent others on the school council, eco-council and other forums. Pupils in each year group take on different roles of responsibility, such as librarians and monitors. The oldest pupils explained with delight how they supported children and younger pupils in the school, saying, 'We know what it was like being younger and how it feels, like for Year 2s going up to Year 3, and it's good to reassure them.' Pupils also spoke about their work supporting charities and fairtrade initiatives with passion. Older pupils have taken the initiative to raise money to buy plants for each classroom. Pupils also support charities which they nominate and choose for themselves, such as those related to cystic fibrosis, animal welfare and a local food bank.
- 3.21 Pupils are extremely aware of why and how to stay safe and healthy. From a very early age the pupils are made aware of the importance of staying safe, eating sensibly and keeping physically and mentally fit and healthy. This awareness develops through the extensive daily physical education and activities programme, health topics within a number of subjects, and the PSHE curriculum. Pupils fully recognise these as a vital factor in their on-going personal wellbeing and individual development. For example, younger pupils' science books exhibit strong understanding of different food groups and healthy eating. In a swimming lesson, pupils collaborated highly effectively to ensure they remained in the correct lanes and maintained suitable and safe gaps between each swimmer. In a relationships and sex education (RSE) lesson, the oldest pupils demonstrated excellent understanding for their age about how babies are made, the need for consent, different types of sexuality, and the importance of securing relationships built on trust. They spoke about these issues with considerable maturity. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that they understand how to stay safe. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors communicated very sensible strategies for staying safe when online. They also discussed articulately strategies they could use to help them manage anxiety or stressful situations. The teaching of RSE and PSHE informs pupils about important safety considerations very well and ensures that pupils' dialogue is respectful and appropriate. The school fully meets its aim to develop character, intellect, physical and emotional wellbeing and cultural understanding within a supportive environment.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions 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. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Steven Popper	Reporting inspector
Mrs Claire Robinson	Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS and ISA school)
Mr Richard Evans	Team inspector (Former headmaster, IAPS school)