



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Red House School

May 2019



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School's Details

School College	Red House School			
DfE number	808/6000			
Registered charity number	527377			
Address	Red House School 36 The Green Norton Stockton-on-Tees TS20 1DX			
Telephone number	01642 553370			
Email address	office@redhouseschool.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Ken James			
Chair of the School Council	Miss Victoria L Duncan			
Age range	3 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	349			
	Boys	203	Girls	146
	EYFS	40	Juniors	82
	Seniors	227		
Inspection dates	8 to 10 May 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Red House School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged from three to sixteen years. The school was set up in 1929 by parents as a charitable trust. The school is located on two nearby sites in Norton near Stockton-on-Tees: the junior school building for pupils up to Year 4, and the senior school building for those in Years 5 to 11. Its governing body, the School Council, is comprised entirely of parent members.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection in April 2016, the school has appointed a new headmaster and a new chair of the School Council and it has introduced a mindfulness programme aimed to promote the well-being of pupils.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to promote academic excellence and intellectual growth, challenging its pupils as individuals from the day they join both within and beyond the classroom. It seeks to broaden pupils' horizons within a rich educational experience which is supported by a warm family-orientated environment where difference is celebrated and everyone is respected.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils are drawn predominantly from professional and business families in the Teesside area. National standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the senior pupils is above average. The school has identified 54 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) with specialist support provided for dyslexia, emotional needs, visual impairment and other disabilities. There are no pupils with education, health and care plans. There are two pupils for whom English is an additional language both supported within normal classroom teaching. Pupils identified as more able or as having specific talents are provided with a modified curriculum and co-curriculum, including sports, music and the creative and performing arts.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

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 may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [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 In the junior part of the school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2015 to 2017, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 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 variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any pupils with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, 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 well-being 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

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

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- The pupils make exceptional progress, with all subjects adding value at GCSE, including for pupils with SEND.
 - The pupils achieve notable success in sports with many individuals and teams achieving county and national honours.
 - The pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills from the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) onwards.
 - Pupils demonstrate their numeracy most effectively in mathematics and in many other subject areas.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- The social collaboration of pupils in and beyond the curriculum is extremely well-developed.
 - Pupils have a mature sense of responsibility for their own actions.
 - Pupils demonstrate considerable self-understanding aided by the recently developed mindfulness programme.
 - Pupils readily show respect and support for those with different backgrounds and characteristics.

Recommendations

- 3.3 In the context of excellent outcomes, the school is advised to make the following improvement:
- Further promote the mental and physical well-being of pupils by continuing to develop the school's mindfulness initiative.

The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils enjoy much academic and exceptional extra-curricular success. In the three-year period 2015 to 2017, which are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available, results in GSCE examinations have been above the national average for maintained schools. The results for 2018 indicate that the GCSE examination success of the pupils is steadily improving. Nationally standardised measures of progress indicate that pupils make excellent progress in all subjects in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Almost all parents in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses agreed that the teaching enables their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future. In their questionnaire responses, the vast majority of pupils said that the teachers help them to learn and make progress. Pupils with SEND perform well above expectations for their abilities and generally in line with their peers. The provision for learning support plays a central role in laying down firm foundations for the development of individual needs from the EYFS onwards, and an overwhelming majority of parents maintained that such needs were met effectively.

- 3.6 Pupils, including boys and girls, individuals and teams, gain county and national representative honours in football, swimming, netball, cricket, hockey, dressage, athletics and cross-country. They also exhibit great strengths in the performing and creative arts, with pupils gaining local and national success in ballet, many achievements in externally accredited music examinations in both singing and instrumental, and over twenty distinctions in drama and speaking examinations since the previous inspection. Many pupils demonstrate a firm commitment to drama and the performing arts, welcoming the opportunity to perform in public or to support productions behind the scenes. Over fifty pupils have achieved bronze awards in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Following leaders' and governors' decision to enter pupils for the national Physics Olympiad in 2019, seven pupils won commendations, bronze or silver awards. In 2018 the school team was the regional winner and a national finalist in the annual Royal Society of Chemistry experimental analysis competition. School teams have been also extremely successful in a number of regional and national engineering challenges. The leadership and governance of the school maintains a strong focus upon holistic education, aiming to develop the whole child. The academic and extra-curricular success of the school indicates that the school meets this aim.
- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills, as observed in many contexts. Reception children in the EYFS most effectively and enthusiastically explained how to perform set tasks to the younger children from the nursery in a combined lesson. Pupils provided during an assembly clear and illuminating accounts of their experiences at camps. During modern language lessons, pupils spoke confidently in French. Pupils are happy to read quietly during form time and to discuss their choices of books. Some writing of exceptional quality was noted, including in the stories written by younger pupils about master-slave relationships in ancient China and through winning submissions by older pupils to a national essay writing competition. Listening skills are very strong as demonstrated in practical science and physical education lessons when pupils carefully listen to the guidance given to them. Pupils explain their own thinking articulately and with great clarity as was noted in a history class on Hadrian's Wall and in a pupil presentation on chemical analysis.
- 3.8 High levels of knowledge, skills and understanding were observed in lessons and the pupil work examined. Excellent practical skills noted included the design and creation of a Viking tunic for a junior fashion show, the use of textiles and acrylic paint noted in GCSE art portfolios, and the use of paper plates to model planets by EYFS children. Pupils, including those with SEND, show excellent understanding from the EYFS onwards. This is demonstrated to excellent effect in English when pupils mark the work of their peers, using their own understanding of horror fiction to reflect on that of others. Expert knowledge was noted in subjects across the curriculum, for example an excellent knowledge of anatomy was observed in physical education as younger pupils warmed up for a lesson and a clear awareness of the history of World War One enabled older pupils most effectively to interpret stories about that conflict. Highly committed teaching and strong encouragement from the leadership and governance of the school underpins the excellence of this area.
- 3.9 Pupils enjoy mathematics and numeracy and achieve much and sometimes exceptional success in their lessons and in examinations and external competitions. During the last three years, pupils have won five gold, eleven silver and twenty-two bronze awards in the UK Intermediate Mathematics Challenge. Examples of first-rate individual work seen include sophisticated Year 11 work on A-level pure mathematics problems. Pupils demonstrated an excellent facility with mathematics both in specialist lessons, for example when dealing with historical currency calculations and when they correctly identified incorrect answers in a mock GCSE examination paper, and in other subjects such as physics when pupils determined the energy use per person in different countries.

- 3.10 Pupils are confident in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) and many have developed accomplished programming skills, promoted by the excellent provision of ICT throughout the school. Pupils in a physics class made most effective use of ICT to research the Internet for information about renewable and non-renewable energy sources. Older pupils employed music software to produce complex musical compositions. Younger pupils created comic strips telling the story of the Great Fire of London using tablet technology.
- 3.11 Pupils demonstrate typically excellent study skills. For example, excellent hypothesising and reasoning skills on the flow of immigrants from Mexico to the USA were noted in geography, and higher order analysis of food webs was observed in biology. Pupils exhibited complex thinking when dealing with probability calculations in mathematics. However, sometimes opportunities were lost to allow the pupils to work things out for themselves, with a few teachers of younger pupils providing more direction than required by the pupils in literacy. Even so, almost all pupils agreed in their questionnaire responses that they are encouraged to think and learn for themselves.
- 3.12 Pupils throughout the school say they are ready to tackle anything and to give one hundred percent in all they do. In most cases observed, pupils fully and productively engaged with the lesson. However, in a few lessons observed, they are not engaged and they are not encouraged to focus their attention by the teachers. Pupils very much enjoy working in pairs or in larger groups: they are eager to learn collaboratively. Great enthusiasm for learning was observed from the vast majority of pupils who are self-motivated in their wish to learn. These commendable attitudes are encouraged by the teachers and by the pastoral team who collectively focus on accentuating the positive. The house system too produces a positive and competitive environment which also encourages pupils' entirely positive attitudes.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 The care and respect pupils have for each other is strongly evident in the life of the school, within and across year groups. Pupils say that the school feels like an extended family which binds them together in friendship. During discussions pupils said how much they welcomed and valued cross-year friendships, explaining that these friendships played a central role in promoting excellent behaviour. Pupils of all ages, abilities and needs are highly self-confident and self-assured without a trace of arrogance, as was shown when they spoke in assembly and in class presentations. Children in the EYFS demonstrated high levels of self-discipline when working in small groups, exhibiting a ready willingness to look after each other and to share toys. During an assembly, pupils reflected with humour and honesty on the impact upon them of the time they spent at camp under canvas. Pupils do not give up easily, as was observed during a performing arts activity, with pupils eager to get their dance steps absolutely right through practice, and in a physical education lesson involving a relay race with pupils supporting each other enthusiastically.
- 3.15 Pupils said during discussions that they felt they had been given skills to be confident, to challenge right and wrong, to speak out, and to develop their maturity. The mindfulness lessons which underpin the school day provide an ideal opportunity for pupils to develop their self-confidence and pupils agreed that they benefit hugely in this regard from this recent innovation including with regard to the impact of improved time management. Even so, a very small minority of pupils disagreed in their questionnaire responses that the school helps them to be confident and independent. In almost all cases, the lessons observed and the work examined indicated that pupils demonstrated independence in their studies. Pupils are determined to improve, and they reflect positively upon their marked work, adding their own comments to those of their teachers.

- 3.16 Pupils explained how they have become effective decision makers, with regard to changes in the school and to their own futures. Pupils said that they believed they had made a difference to decisions taken by the school: they had argued passionately in the school council for the refurbishment of changing rooms and during an assembly for the retention of the Latin club; and they were delighted when the school acceded to their requests. Many pupils find time management a problem, and so welcome the mindfulness programme which they said has helped them make better decisions about how they plan their work to avoid any overload. Because the school does not have a sixth form, the older pupils must choose not only the subjects they will go on to study but also the school or college they will join. They are keenly aware of the importance of these decisions which they make with an informed understanding of their consequences.
- 3.17 The younger pupils are completely at ease with listening to and reflecting upon prayers during assemblies. They sing hymns and uplifting songs with enthusiasm. Older pupils were observed to share that enthusiasm in a rousing rendition of *Jubilate* at the close of a senior school assembly. The school's Christian ethos quietly but effectively permeates the life of the school. Pupils are able to celebrate key Christian festivals through the close links with the adjacent local church. They also enhance their understanding of other spiritual traditions through visits to a range of places of worship including mosques and Quaker meeting places, the latter providing an introduction to the idea of silent worship. Excellent essays written on different views of the creation of the Earth were also noted. Pupils also explore most effectively spirituality through their artistic work and creative writing through which they demonstrate high levels of non-material reflection.
- 3.18 There are excellent relationships between pupils in different year groups, demonstrated for example through support for younger pupils shown by older pupils in sporting and musical endeavours. Pupils are eager to celebrate the success of others, both in classes and through assemblies. The behaviour of pupils observed was exemplary and the consideration shown for pupils in other year groups was marked. Pupils said during discussions that any quarrels are usually sorted out quickly and agreed wholeheartedly with school's zero tolerance approach to bullying. The understanding of mindfulness towards others plays a key part in the thinking of the pupils. The honesty policy in the junior part of school has the consequence that pupils are quick to own up when they make mistakes. There is a strong focus throughout the school upon taking responsibility for one's own actions by the leadership, backed at classroom level by teachers with all pupils providing questionnaire responses agreeing that the school expects them to behave well.
- 3.19 The sense of family within the school is clearly evident when pupils work together in pairs, groups or teams. Some excellent examples were noted: in a religious studies lesson for older pupils when with great consideration for each other's views the implications of pacifism, in a group performing arts activity for younger pupils preparing for a musical theatre performance, and with children in the EYFS collecting materials for composting in the dedicated outdoor area. Also notable was the example of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics club, with pupils collaborating and achieving great success in regional and national competitions for their work on joint design technology projects.
- 3.20 Pupils are supportive of religious diversity and the different points of view which arise through this, demonstrating an informed awareness of the range of religions and cultures within and beyond the school. They exhibit great sensitivity to those with physical disabilities. Pupils are proud of their achievements, especially when challenging stereotypes: during discussions the boys said that they read books and write essays too. During a personal, social, health and economic education lesson, senior pupils considered intelligently and perceptively the importance of fundamental British values and the range of views within the general population. Almost all parents and most pupils who responded to the questionnaire said the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.

- 3.21 Pupils are keen to look outwards from the school to the local community and beyond. They support several charities each year, actively raising funds for local and national charitable organisations. The school choir sings at a local residential home for the elderly. Older pupils engage positively in work experience. There is a palpable pride in the school, seen clearly when pupils meet and greet visitors at open events. The school's leadership trusts its pupils on such public occasions and the pupils do not disappoint them.
- 3.22 The vast majority of pupils enjoy physical activity: many pupils appear to be very enthusiastic about sports and most relish the opportunities provided for exercise. During discussions pupils said they understood the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. In biology lessons senior pupils effectively analyse their nutritional intakes in food diaries. Practical and experimental work proceeds safely as a matter of routine. Pupils providing technical assistance to theatre productions emphasised the importance of safe practice in their work. Pupils said that they felt, as a result of the mindfulness programme, and the application of new skills and strategies to themselves, that their mental health was improving. Almost all pupils agreed in their questionnaire responses that they know how to keep safe online and in discussions pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of how this may be achieved.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and 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, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Dr Christopher Ray	Reporting inspector
Ms Adrienne Richmond	Compliance team inspector (Principal, GSA school)
Mrs Sarah Fisher	Team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS and ISA school)
Mrs Caroline Wood	Team inspector (Deputy head, GSA school)