



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

City of London School

October 2021

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School's Details

School	City of London School			
DfE number	201/6007			
Address	City of London School 107 Queen Victoria Street London, EC4V 3AL			
Telephone number	020 3680 6400			
Email address	head@cityoflondonschool.org.uk			
Head	Mr Alan Bird			
Chair of governors	Mr Tim Levene			
Age range	10 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	1023			
	Lower school	436		
	Middle school	305	Sixth Form	282
Inspection dates	5 to 8 October 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 City of London School, first founded in 1442, is an independent day school for male pupils aged between 10 and 18, and is one of the Family of Schools overseen by the City of London Corporation, which appoints most of the school's governors. It occupies modern, purpose-built accommodation in the heart of the City, close to St Paul's Cathedral. The current head took up his post in 2018.
- 1.2 During the period March to August 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers and vulnerable pupils and provided remote education for all pupils.
- 1.3 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.4 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.5 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.6 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades and teacher assessed grades were awarded.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.7 The school sets out to provide an academic education in an atmosphere in which individuality is valued. It aims to help pupils be happy, enabling them to become the very best version of themselves with a keen awareness of their responsibility and capacity to make a difference to society. Its objective is to develop respectful, optimistic and inquisitive pupils. It intends them to be kind, aware and ready for the changing demands of the twenty-first century.

About the pupils

- 1.8 Pupils come from across London and surrounding counties. Their social backgrounds and ethnicities reflect those of the region. Data provided by the school indicate that pupils are of above or well above average ability. There are 140 pupils identified as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), of whom 60 receive additional support in school. There is one pupil with an education, health and care plan (EHCP). English is spoken as an additional language (EAL) by 264 pupils; all are at least competent in English with 12 receiving some additional support. The school caters for pupils identified as being more able or talented through its enrichment programmes and co-curricular activities.

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. 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](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 At GCSE in the years 2020 to 2021, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2020 to 2021 have confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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

2.13 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.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.15 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.17 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 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.

2.20 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. 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>
Old Grammar	Year 6
First Form	Year 7
Second Form	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10
Fifth Form	Year 11
Junior Sixth Form	Year 12
Senior Sixth Form	Year 13

Key findings

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

- Pupils are highly motivated and have outstanding attitudes to learning across the curriculum, enabling them to attain at very high levels in external examinations.
- They are exceptionally good communicators and their mathematical skills are excellent.
- They make consistently excellent progress in lessons but feel that this is not always fully supported by the feedback they receive on their work.

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

- Pupils have high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem but eschew any sense of entitlement or arrogance.
- They treat each other with outstanding respect and kindness, valuing the school's rich diversity.
- They are wholeheartedly committed to charitable and partnership work, taking seriously their responsibility to make a difference by their actions.

Recommendation

In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Ensure that pupils feel fully supported in improving their work by providing consistently high quality marking and feedback.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.3 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve consistently high academic standards. Examination results have been well above the national average and above those of schools with a similar baseline. Consistently over half the examinations at both GCSE and A level are awarded the highest grade. Results across all subjects have been equally excellent. Virtually all Year 13 leavers progress to universities in the UK, America or in Europe which have rigorous entrance requirements. All pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. Those with SEND or EAL attain results in line with those of their peers and extension opportunities ensure challenge for the most able. Pupils' progress was not adversely affected by the time spent in learning remotely, because the school was able to adapt very swiftly to these demands. It continued monitoring and supporting all pupils extremely well. An overwhelming majority of parental responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed great satisfaction with their children's education and progress.
- 3.5 Pupils develop their subject knowledge, skills and understanding rapidly across all areas of learning. In this they were supported during lockdown due to COVID-19 by well-designed lessons and tasks provided via the school's on-line facilities. Pupils' progress is enhanced by the challenging and often inspirational teaching they experience in almost all face-to-face lessons. Pupils are excellent communicators, writing with a stylish maturity and sophisticated vocabulary well above expectations for their age. This facility with words is evident in their written work as well as in class discussion. Whatever their personal academic focus, they take pleasure in using language for different effects. Sixth form pupils embarking on A levels in mathematics and sciences work enthusiastically in collaboration with younger pupils to produce the weekly pupil newspaper, 'The Citizen'. Pupils are orally articulate, whether in English or in foreign languages, for example debating China's two child policy in Mandarin. They listen well to each other and challenge others' opinions with respect, arguing with logic. These communication skills are honed by the many opportunities the school provides, such as leading school assemblies, debating clubs and in drama performances.
- 3.6 Their numeracy skills are outstanding, abundantly evident in mathematics lessons. Younger pupils were confidently able to visualise the vector of a circle moving inside a circle before seeing a video which showed that they were correct. Older pupils quickly developed an expertise in the manipulation of non-linear equations. Pupils of all ages are very confident in applying these numerical skills in other subjects, for example in their measuring for a design technology project and, in music, the accurate grouping of notes as they experimented with clapping rhythms to the school's mantra of 'kind, aware, ready.' Pupils in a chemistry lesson quickly mastered an understanding of how to perform the calculations necessary to choose the correct combination of equations for moles and concentration. In a basketball shooting competition, pupils effortlessly tallied up the scores.
- 3.7 Pupils use ICT with as much ease as they use pencil and paper; utilising a range of computer applications comes completely naturally to them. They are adept in manipulating design software, in coding, in using collaborative software and programs to complete their homework. Their confidence and competence have developed at a very rapid rate in the last two years, because working remotely gave them far more practice than in previous years. In this they were helped by the speed with which the school focused on how best to educate pupils remotely and on training staff in using the resources. Governors took action to ensure that all pupils had access to mobile devices. Pupils are entirely at ease with this way of working. On occasion, their technological competence is underestimated and lessons requiring the use of ICT skills do not always provide appropriate challenge. Pupils have the technological skills required to be ready for the challenges of adult life in the 21st century as stated in the school's aims.
- 3.8 The pupils have excellent study skills and attitudes to their learning, in line with the school's ambition that pupils become the best they can be, academically as well as personally. Their analytical skills are exceptional, encouraged in most lessons by stimulating and vibrant teaching which demands that

pupils think for themselves. In chemistry, pupils reflected carefully on potential problems with equipment in use and errors that might result. They thoughtfully analysed details within images presented in classical civilisation lessons to deduce the stories being represented. They think swiftly and incisively across subjects to suggest connections, for example between events being studied in history and dystopian literature such as '1984'. They think analytically, forming perceptive hypotheses. In a religion and philosophy lesson on the concept of impermanence, they suggested that this view could result in an unwillingness to help those suffering. They use insightful questioning to clarify their own understanding. To them it is not enough to know how to use a formula, they want to know why it works; they said to inspectors that the best way to understand something is to do more than is required. In the questionnaire responses, some pupils said that they do not always find the marking of their work is clear about how they could improve. Inspectors agreed; pupils' ability to extend their thinking and consequent progress is not always being supported by the quality of the marking and comments made. This was an area for improvement at the time of the previous full inspection and remains something for the school to consider.

- 3.9 Their attitude to their learning is excellent. Invariably, levels of concentration in lessons are high. They approach their work with an awareness that their independent views and interpretations are valued, so they are eager to respond to questions and to pose their own. They work together effectively, for example when discussing the types of errors made in a recent piece of French work or in deciding significant dates in the crisis generated by Japan's invasion of Manchuria. Regardless of their individual aptitude in a subject, they work hard and are supported by their peers. They are highly motivated in lessons, although there was a lack of urgency in moving between lessons and unpunctuality was commonplace. In lessons, they are comfortable working independently or in collaboration with others; there is minimal time wasting when embarking on a task. Pupils' excellent team work skills are particularly evident in their co-curricular activities such as working for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF).
- 3.10 Pupils achieve at high levels in academic and other activities. Some pupils embarked on projects for the school's Asquith Award after the summer examinations, producing work of outstanding complexity, range and research. Pupils have been winners in external competitions such as Erasmus competitions, the David Grossel history competition and the John Locke essay award. Debating teams have been successful in a number of competitions. There are numerous annual successes in mathematics, chemistry and biology Olympiads across the age range. More than 100 pupils achieved their DofE bronze award last year, and 19 are completing their gold award. CCF sections were chosen to parade the War Widows' standard at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day and each of the three sections has been successful in national competitions. Sports teams have been successful across many sports in recent years. The First XI football team invariably reaches the later stages of the District, Trinity and London County FA cup competitions and individuals have been selected for the Olympic development programme. The basketball and water-polo teams dominate their fixture list, and former pupils are now playing National League basketball. Last year the U15 water polo team was unbeaten in the London league. More than 60 pupils achieved success in LAMDA exams in 2020 and several pupils have undertaken professional theatre and cinematic work. Many pupils perform music to a standard well above the norm for their age, with numerous orchestras, bands and choirs and some pupils being selected for National Youth orchestras and choirs.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.11 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.12 The pupils demonstrate exceptional self-knowledge. They showed considerable resilience in adapting swiftly to remote learning; they said they felt initially daunted but rapidly realised they were stronger than they thought in managing these new ways of working. They quickly recognised their own responsibility to become actively involved in on-line lessons if they were to make the best of a difficult situation. Now that they are back in school, they enjoy not just the camaraderie of school life but also

its routines and structures. They know how and where they best learn. Pupils speak confidently of their own strengths, for example of being self-disciplined and determined to improve their work. They have a strong awareness of their own personalities and of the importance of being themselves, reflecting the school's success in valuing their individuality.

- 3.13 Pupils are highly conscious that the decisions they make will affect their academic progress and so make choices to prioritise work and avoid other temptations. They have high aspirations for their futures which influence their subject choices, but they also choose simply on the basis of what they enjoy. They respond positively to the school's advice about the value of learning for learning's sake. For example, sixth-form pupils studying only science A levels actively seek out channels to explore and develop their aesthetic creativity in music, design or writing. Pupils are well prepared for the flexibility that the modern world of work requires.
- 3.14 Pupils have a keen sense of spirituality in their understanding of a non-material dimension of existence. The pleasure they take in making music and involvement in an extensive range of bands and orchestras demonstrates their aesthetic awareness. This is nurtured from their early days through the opportunity to take up a musical instrument as part of the curriculum. Choristers are immersed in the rich traditions of sacred music and liturgy. Pupils' awareness of beauty is cultivated in art lessons and clubs and also by the school capitalizing on the opportunities created by its location in a vibrant and culturally rich part of the city.
- 3.15 Some pupils define being spiritual as having a connection with something which is not scientifically provable; for others, as having a religious faith. Pupils value the way in which the school balances its secular basis with strong respect for religious belief. This is evident in the number of religious societies in the school and in the school's practice of regularly running five assemblies simultaneously, each one led by pupils of different religious traditions. Pupils thoroughly enjoy debate on philosophical matters. In lessons, they argued about the idea of worship and whether it is relevant if there is no belief in a deity. Some suggested that forms of worship can be a means of better connecting with oneself. In an overheard conversation in the lunch queue, pupils were debating whether the abhorrent practice of torture becomes morally acceptable if both parties consent to it. While they shy away from the term 'spirituality', pupils undoubtedly explore their personal beliefs and reflect on values other than the purely material.
- 3.16 They base their values on a highly developed sense of right and wrong. Their behaviour in classrooms and corridors is civilised with no rowdiness. Pupils know that bullying is totally unacceptable. The pupils' anti-bullying council meets regularly with senior staff, discussing ways to continue underlining this message. Pupils can be reluctant to report misbehaviour to staff, not wanting to be called a snitch. They do, however, have boundaries; they will take action quickly when seeing behaviour which goes beyond these, for example calmly reporting to an adult the racist abuse aimed at some team members in an inter-school fixture. They have no time for arrogance. They were deeply uncomfortable when asked to talk about their achievements, saying that in this school pupils don't like to go on about what they have done. They are slow to judge others, saying with mature understanding that as adolescents they too make mistakes and say things they realise they shouldn't. They spoke positively of the way the school deals with misbehaviour by imposing a sanction and then supporting the pupil, and his peers, to learn from it.
- 3.17 Pupils are excellent at working together. They are characterised by generosity of time and opinion, and are highly supportive of each other, reflecting the school's ethos of kindness. Players in a losing sports fixture were consoled and complimented for their play, not ridiculed for mistakes. Others struggling with a task they found challenging for personal reasons were helped through it by classmates, who checked on their wellbeing after the lesson ended. In lessons, they collaborate easily, for example in analysing source materials in history or in discussing a French language video about the role of grandparents. They develop their skill in team work especially through the many opportunities the school provides outside the classroom. Members of the three separate pupil parliaments work collaboratively to suggest changes that will be beneficial to their specific age group. Senior cadets in

the CCF sections take responsibility for preparing lessons and organising sessions to teach their juniors new skills. Sixth-form pupils at the time of the inspection were working together to create presentations for a workshop planned with their sister school.

- 3.18 The pupils' engagement in contributing to others in the school and in the community is excellent. It demonstrates the school's success in its aim to teach pupils that they can make a difference. Older pupils take responsibility for leading many of the co-curricular clubs and chairing the various committees. Membership of the charity committee is considered especially important. The only honours board in the school displays the names of the chairs of this committee, an eloquent statement of the emphasis placed on this aspect of the pupils' school lives. Pupils enthusiastically embrace the challenge of raising money for the charity democratically elected as the focus for the year. They show imagination and physical effort, from setting out to visit every tube station in the city to sponsored rowing or runs. They are encouraged by the example of staff who also become involved in sponsored marathons or sky dives. Pupils have worked for a range of charities as part of their DofE, some continuing their involvement once they have completed the award because they find doing so a rewarding experience. They are conscious that they are receiving a privileged education and feel a keen responsibility to give back to society. They instinctively appreciate the link between their personal beliefs, their moral values and their actions, understanding that bringing these together is what will help them develop the best version of themselves.
- 3.19 The pupils have an outstanding level of respect for diversity within society. They highly value the fact that the school has a wide range of ethnicities. This diversity is encouraged by the governors' commitment to a bursary fund which widens access to pupils from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Pupils are respectful of each other, appreciating the opportunity to learn from other cultures and viewpoints. Pupils' response to recent social movements on racial equality has had a direct impact on the decisions made by school. For example, the choice of curricular material and displays now consciously reflects different ethnicities. There is a drive to use racially sensitive language; the chair of the charity committee explained in assembly why they should be talking about non-uniform days, not mufti days. Pupils have been intensely involved in discussions following media coverage of gender issues and are committed to ensuring that all members of the school are respected regardless of orientation. Pupils use gender neutral language in discussion, talking about pupils rather than boys and girls. They have soberly discussed issues of violence against women and the implications for society in well-considered relationships education. Sixth-form pupils find the increased opportunities to work with females from their sister school in enrichment lessons extremely helpful in promoting mutual sensitivity.
- 3.20 Pupils know how to keep themselves safe; having to travel across the city has encouraged their independence and alertness to physical risk. They also know how to keep themselves safe in the digital world, underpinned by the school's constant re-emphasising of this. They have a healthy understanding of the dangers presented by the omnipresence of the digital world. They are learning to be cautious of addiction to their mobile phones. They know the importance of healthy eating and of being physically active. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of preserving good mental health, especially following the limits on social interaction imposed by COVID-19 measures. They have the wisdom to know if talking to a friend is sufficient when feeling overburdened and, if not, that there is no shame in seeking more help from the school's extended pastoral support team. Their choice of the year's charity as one which focuses on preventing young suicides is an indication of their genuine concern for mental health.

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, observed a sample of the co-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Mrs Colette Culligan	Reporting inspector
Mr Matthew Price	Compliance and team inspector (Deputy head academic, HMC school)
Mr Alan Cooper	Team inspector (former senior teacher, HMC school)
Mr James Chatburn	Team inspector (Head of languages and international, SofH school)
Mr Ant Falkus	Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mrs Kate Reynolds	Team inspector (Head, HMC/GSA school)
Mr John Tuson	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Katherine Walters	Team inspector (Head of educational progress, HMC school)