



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Kirkstone House School

December 2021

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 |
| Recommendations | | 8 |
| The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements | | 9 |
| The quality of the pupils' personal development | | 10 |
| 4. Inspection Evidence | | 13 |

School's Details

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|----|----------------------|----|
| School College | Kirkstone House School | | | |
| DfE number | 925/6017 | | | |
| Address | Kirkstone House School 1–6 Main Street Baston Peterborough Lincolnshire PE6 9PA | | | |
| Telephone number | 01778 560 350 | | | |
| Email address | info@kirkstonehouseschool.co.uk | | | |
| Headteacher | Mr Stuart Judge | | | |
| Proprietor | Mr Edward George Wyman | | | |
| Age range | 5 to 18 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 105 | | | |
| | Lower School | 20 | Senior School | 85 |
| Inspection dates | 30 November to 3 December 2021 | | | |

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Kirkstone House School is a co-educational day school situated just outside Peterborough. The school was founded by the mother of the current proprietor. The founder still takes a close interest in the governance of the school. An advisory board provides governance support and guidance. The school comprises two sections: lower school, for pupils aged from five to eleven years; and senior school, for pupils aged from eleven to eighteen years.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed who joined the school in September 2021.
- 1.3 During the period March to August 2020, the school was open for children of key workers, vulnerable pupils and those pupils without access to the internet. For all other pupils, the school provided remote learning materials and online lessons.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, the school remained open to all pupils.
- 1.7 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades (in 2020) and teacher-assessed grades (in 2021) were awarded.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.8 The school's ethos is that 'the individual counts'. The school aims to provide pupils with an education within a caring family environment which promotes kindness, tolerance and support from staff who know them well. Emphasis is placed on building high self-esteem and emotional resilience, in order that pupils achieve to the best of their ability and are prepared for the next stage of their life.

About the pupils

- 1.9 Most pupils come from a range of professional, business and farming backgrounds and travel from the surrounding areas of Bourne, Spalding, Stamford and Peterborough. The school also accepts pupils from further afield such as Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Norfolk. The school is a mainstream school that specialises in educating pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. It has identified 82 pupils as having such needs, of whom 55 have an education, health and care plan. No pupil speaks English as an additional language. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils in both the lower and senior schools is below average.

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.

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](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

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 Pupils take GCSE examinations and complete vocational courses in their final year at the school. Some more able pupils have the opportunity to take examinations early in Year 10. The small numbers involved prevent reliable comparison with national averages for maintained schools.
- 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 in the lower 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.
- 2.5 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 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.

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 sound.

- Pupils enjoy and achieve well in areas beyond the academic, including practical activities such as drama, music and sport.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils do not always know how to improve their work.
- Pupils' progress in some academic subjects is hampered by teaching which does not enable them to collaborate with their peers to solve problems.

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

- Pupils develop positive relationships with each other and the staff.
- Pupils support the school's aims and ethos by displaying a clear commitment to serving the wider community.
- Some pupils are aware of different cultures and religions.
- Pupils do not always develop their understanding about consent, boundaries and how to keep safe to the full.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Strengthen pupils' academic achievement by ensuring teaching captures their interest and provides activities that are set at the correct level, with sufficient challenge to meet their needs.
- Ensure that feedback to pupils on their work identifies clearly the next steps for learning and effective strategies for improving their study skills.
- Enable pupils to collaborate more actively with each other during academic activities in order to solve problems and achieve agreed goals.
- Develop pupils' awareness of different cultures, building upon the experience and heritage of pupils, families and the staff.
- Ensure that pupils understand about consent, boundaries and how to keep safe by implementing fully the school's relationships, sex and education scheme of work.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is sound.
- 3.5 Across the school most pupils, including those with SEND, make sound progress in most year groups and subjects in relation to their individual starting points. They achieve success in their academic studies because staff provide a friendly nurturing environment in which all pupils receive the individual help they need to overcome barriers to their learning. Some pupils begin the school as disaffected learners. Individual levels of success vary but outcomes indicate that most pupils are overcoming their difficulties. The number of pupils in the school is too small for comparison of its GCSE results with national averages to be meaningful, but comparison of the number and range of qualifications shows a trend of increased success in the last two years. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, most parents agreed that teaching enables their children to make progress.
- 3.6 Some pupils demonstrate proficient knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. For example, in an English lesson, senior school pupils were reading *The Hobbit*. Here all pupils were able to recognise the adverb in simple sentences and state whether it was correctly located. In an outdoor education lesson, younger lower school pupils were thoroughly absorbed in classifying leaves which had been foraged from within the school's grounds. All pupils could say whether leaves were the same as or different from one another, applying scientific scrutiny to compare and contrast. Most could identify several different specimens, and some could name all 12. Some pupils observed that the twigs they had collected differed from examples on a 'nature detectives' sheet. They used deduction and hypothesis to explain this was because it was winter, so there were no buds on their twigs.
- 3.7 Pupils' communication skills are sound overall. Across the school, there are pupils who are able to express themselves cogently and articulately, while others struggle to formulate opinions and listen quietly in lessons. In the senior school, some pupils are competent oral communicators who can record their thoughts lucidly on paper in legible handwriting. For example, in a geography lesson senior school pupils were observed constructing questionnaires to sample people's shopping preferences. Here they were also able to discuss the meaning of terms such as bias and reliability. In an English lesson in the lower school, pupils have spent a term studying *Stig of the Dump*, developing their analytical skills, descriptive vocabulary and knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the two boys. Pupils' learning is most effective when they are set activities that require them to research and undertake problem-solving tasks with their peers. Across the curriculum, pre-printed materials are often deployed with the intention of supporting pupils in planning their writing, but over-use of such materials limits opportunities for extended writing.
- 3.8 Some pupils use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively to support their learning. In a mathematics lesson in the lower school, pupils are able to access online learning resources in numeracy that steadily progressed in difficulty, allowing them to work independently at their own level and improve their skills. Senior school pupils in a geography lesson made use of a standard word processing package to create questionnaires for use on a field trip. However, when looking at a sample of pupils' books from the senior school, inspectors found only a few examples of word-processed work.
- 3.9 Across the school, some pupils are proficient in using and applying their numeracy skills in a range of subjects. For example, in the lower school, a small number of pupils were able to recite their ten- and twelve-times tables and could count up by twelve. They knew how to divide large numbers and understood division as a means to share equally. In a senior school mathematics lesson, some more able pupils were able to demonstrate good understanding of the application of square roots and indices and how to relate volume to surface area in similar shapes. Scrutiny of lower school pupils' books in science showed a secure understanding of how to use graphs to represent data collected from experimental work, such as the temperature variation over time when heating water.

- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate sound study skills and listen appropriately in class. They can use information from different sources proficiently, analysing and hypothesising from them. For example, in history more able senior school pupils were able to write cogently and in some depth about the human cost of war. The quality and volume of their work indicated a mature appreciation and understanding of the topic in question. Similarly, those working on the effects of the bubonic plague used imagination and perception to illustrate the grisly symptoms suffered by victims. Awareness of the wider implications of this catastrophic disease in an age of more limited medical skill was again well recorded in an illustrated 'storyboard' format. In other lessons across the school, however, pupils showed limited initiative and were unduly directed by the teaching. Pupils' potential to develop more sophisticated thinking skills is impeded by too many activities led by staff, which provide few opportunities for the young people to work collaboratively. Also, pupils do not always receive precise feedback on how to improve their work and ways in which to study more effectively.
- 3.11 Pupils enjoy success in a range of areas both within and beyond the school. They are keen to push themselves to achieve well in the performing arts, sport and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. In 2021, all pupils who left the school went into further education, training or employment. Specific recent achievements include a few pupils competing at national level in skiing and the modern pentathlon, while a number have played in football, hockey and ice hockey competitions with local teams. Pupils' participation in outdoor learning, including the woodland learning environment, strongly promotes their practical skills, happiness and well-being by connecting with the natural world. Pupils develop new interests and skills by taking part in extra-curricular activities, ranging from the craft, language and mathematics clubs to online gaming. They have been successful in public examinations in music and musical theatre, both before and after a period of national lockdown. In discussion, pupils talked about preparing for next term's production of *Mary Poppins*, involving just over a third of the school. These experiences help them to become more confident and assured when they present themselves in public. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a large majority of parents agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils thoroughly appreciate recognition in assemblies and the annual speech day ceremonies which celebrate their achievements across all aspects of the curriculum. They achieve well in their extra-curricular activities because leaders, teachers and support staff provide a friendly environment where all pupils receive the help they need to support their learning.
- 3.12 Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning both within and beyond the classrooms. They understand that they are at school to learn and that although they may struggle at first with tasks, staff are on hand to ensure they persevere. For example, in the senior school, pupils in an English lesson were thoroughly absorbed in completing a challenging comprehension activity analysing the poem *To Asgard!* by Rachel Piercey. Here, through determination and hard work, they learned to distinguish between fact and opinion. Pupils learn well when teaching activities incorporate their interests and enthusiasms and are set at the correct level for their abilities. Pupils who have quickly grasped the basics, however, are not always challenged sufficiently to achieve their best. In many lessons, pupils listen diligently and make notes or complete exercises assiduously but then remain passive because the lesson lacks pace and is undemanding. Teaching approaches often meet the school's aims and values in building high self-esteem and emotional resilience but do not always enable pupils to reach their full academic potential.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate good levels of self-understanding, taking into account their ages and special needs. This is because they feel valued and supported as individuals and, as a result, react positively in discussions about their feelings and their future aspirations. For example, scrutiny of senior school pupils' work in land and environment studies demonstrated an effective self-analysis of personal strengths and weaknesses, together with research about possible career options linked to their

individual interests. Many pupils are confident and articulate but some struggle with areas of schoolwork or social interaction with others, or both. These experiences are supported by the school's ethos and values, which aim to provide pupils with an education within a caring family environment that promotes kindness, tolerance and support from staff who know them well. Pupils value highly the understanding and support given to them by staff which help them succeed. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that the school encourages their children to be more confident.

- 3.15 Most pupils are able to make positive decisions that have enabled them to attend school, manage their behaviour, and enjoy school life. They understand that key choices made in school will affect their future lives. For example, in interviews with inspectors, senior pupils stated that they had received helpful advice in preparing a curriculum vitae and applications to college. The pre-inspection pupil and parent questionnaires showed that the large majority of respondents believe that the school offers helpful advice about subject choices and careers. In lessons, pupils' contribution to decision making was seen very rarely.
- 3.16 Some pupils appreciate the non-material aspects of life. For example, in an outdoor education lesson, lower-school pupils showed a great appreciation for their environment and a sense of wonder at the size of the field and the number of trees they were able to find in the grounds. Senior pupils stated that they found great comfort in being able to visit the pastoral room whenever they felt anxious because they could reflect and regulate their emotions and feelings in a 'safe space'. In form time, younger pupils practised their performance of all three verses of *Silent Night*, using British Sign Language for the hearing impaired. After rehearsing, pupils performed the carol, speaking the words as they signed them with intense and reverential concentration. They were pleased with their success and evidently found this rendering of the carol a moving experience. Across the curriculum, teaching activities do not always enable pupils to develop their spirituality to the full.
- 3.17 Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. They demonstrate a keen sense of social development and community. They are polite and listen to adults and one another respectfully. Most pupils are well behaved and understand the school's rules and sanctions, which they feel are fair and consistent. They develop positive relationships with one another and with staff. Scrutiny of pupils' work in the senior school showed an excellent understanding of, and appreciation for, the care of animals, with an evident concern for their welfare. In discussion with inspectors, some senior pupils said that they would like to pursue careers with animals when they leave school. In a social skills lesson, younger senior-school pupils were observed creating a storyboard about friendships. All pupils, including those with SEND, were able to empathise with others and predict responses in social situations. Personalised experiences and nurturing support by senior leaders have helped pupils to overcome barriers to learning.
- 3.18 Some pupils have an awareness of different cultures and religions. For example, in a history lesson, senior school pupils confidently considered the cultural and religious tensions that existed between England, Scotland, Spain and the Netherlands during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Within the school community most pupils are very respectful of each other's differences and show support for, and tolerance of, pupils with difficulties or disabilities. Across the curriculum, there are too few examples in which cultural understanding and diversity underpin deep learning. Also, pupils do not have enough opportunities to reflect and appreciate how people from different cultures and backgrounds contribute to life in modern Britain.
- 3.19 Pupils' contribution to others, the school and the community is good. They take great pride in contributing to society by raising money for several charities based in the United Kingdom and overseas, chosen by themselves. Their support for a number of charities demonstrates much thoughtfulness and empathy. They develop a strong sense of duty and service by organising and making cakes and other products for the school's Christmas Market stalls. Pupils willingly take on posts of responsibility, acting as prefects and hospitality ambassadors. They wear a range of badges with

pride, each reflecting a contribution to the school community. Involvement in these activities helps to develop their empathy with others, particularly those less fortunate than themselves.

- 3.20 Pupils have a keen understanding of how to stay safe online. They know not to give out personal details and to tell a trusted adult if they receive either communication from someone they do not know or unkind or bullying messages. This was confirmed in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire in which the vast majority stated that they know how to stay safe online. Senior leaders place a high priority on helping them to stay safe. Some pupils are developing appropriate awareness with regards to adolescence, including, consent, social boundaries and keeping safe in personal relationships.
- 3.21 The large majority of pupils have a good awareness of how to support their mental health. For example, senior pupils stated that they had learned that many people can feel 'down' but that this can be helped with the right kind of support. They also said that wearing yellow clothes during mental health awareness week reminded them that problems in mental health can affect anyone at any time in their lives. In cookery, lower school pupils learn how to cook for themselves, make a balanced meal plan and prepare food hygienically. They also know that, as part of leading a healthy lifestyle, it is important to get enough sleep and regular exercise.

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, the safeguarding governor and with the proprietor 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

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Mr David Scott | Reporting inspector |
| Mr Norman Patterson | Compliance team inspector (Bursar, ISA school) |
| Dr Richard Brookes | Team inspector (Head, HMC and IPS school) |
| Ms Jane Stevens | Team inspector (Former Deputy head, ISA school) |