



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Stormont School

March 2022

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School's Details

School	Stormont School			
DfE number	919/6202			
Registered charity number	311079			
Address	Stormont School The Causeway Potters Bar Hertfordshire EN6 5HA			
Telephone number	01707 654037			
Email address	admin@stormontschool.org			
Head	Miss Louise Martin			
Chair of governors	Mr Andrew Newland			
Age range	4 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	136			
	Pre-Prep	50	Prep	86
Inspection dates	8 to 11 March 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Stormont School is an independent day school for female pupils. It was registered as a charitable trust in 1962 and is administered by a board of governors. The school consists of a pre-prep department which incorporates the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for pupils aged between four and seven years, and a prep department for pupils aged between seven and eleven years.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has redeveloped numerous parts of the building and created a first aid room, two learning support rooms and a new library. In addition, new senior leaders have joined the school including the head and deputy, and the governing body has been expanded.
- 1.3 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school seeks to enable all pupils to become happy, confident, ambitious individuals, who are supported as they strive to do their best and achieve success, whether in academic, sporting, creative or expressive aspects of learning.

About the pupils

- 1.5 The majority of the pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds within a five-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly average compared with similar pupils taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 19 pupils as having special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and general speech and language difficulties. Twenty-seven receive additional support and three pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). No pupil at the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 21 pupils as being very able and 43 other pupils because of their specific talents in music, art, and sport.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

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

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

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

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

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

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

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

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

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the 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 good.

- Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND, make good progress.
- Pupils' learning attitudes are excellent.
- Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are good and they develop outstanding aesthetic skills.
- Pupils' study and thinking skills such as hypothesis and synthesis are not fully developed due to limited resources and opportunities which would enable this.

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

- Pupils have excellent behaviour and display outstanding manners.
- Pupils demonstrate strong moral development and distinguish between right and wrong.
- Pupils make positive contributions to others and the wider community through engagement and fundraising.
- Pupils have well-developed communication skills though their capacity to debate and present reasoned arguments for their opinions is limited.
- Pupils are kind and considerate to all members of the school community.

Recommendations

3.3 The school should make the following improvements.

- Ensure pupils develop extended study and higher order thinking skills, using a broad range of resources.
- Enable pupils to debate, discuss and give reasoned arguments for their opinions across the wider curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils reach good levels of attainment and their results in standardised and internal assessments show that they make expected progress as a result of good teaching. Pupils with SEND and EAL also make expected progress throughout the school. The nurturing environment of the school and the teachers'

knowledge of the pupils' strengths and areas for development benefits all pupils and ensures that their learning needs are addressed well. Pupils meet their learning targets because carefully targeted resources are provided and the use of additional adults in the classroom provides opportunities for small-group work and individual support. Increased use of tracking data by the school's senior leadership enables them to monitor the progress of year groups and individuals and pupils benefit from effective planning to meet their needs as a result. This leads to pupils making expected or better than expected progress to close the attainment gap when compared with pupils of the same age nationally, especially in mathematics and literacy.

- 3.6 Pupils develop good skills and knowledge across the curriculum. They develop outstanding aesthetic skills, particularly in music and art. Pupils develop their skills across the curriculum and benefit from teachers' high expectations and subject knowledge. For example, pupils performed a piece of music, which enhanced their learning about the water cycle in geography, enabling them to demonstrate an excellent understanding of the hydrological process. Pupils develop strong subject knowledge in French, where Year 4 pupils were seen developing an excellent understanding of targeted vocabulary. In the responses to the pupil questionnaires, almost all pupils felt their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons and that their teachers know how to help them learn.
- 3.7 Pupils display well-developed communication skills. They speak clearly and articulately, listen well in lessons to adults and their peers, and read age-appropriate materials with confidence. They are keen to answer their teachers' questions, talk to each other and tell visitors about themselves and their school. Pupils learn a joined handwriting script from Reception and as a result, their handwriting is carefully formed, and work is presented to a high standard throughout the school. Pupils use a good range of vocabulary in creative writing lessons. For example, Year 1 pupils writing letters as Cinderella used advanced language, describing how 'frustrated' and 'exhausted' they were having to carry out chores for the ugly sisters and eat cheese every day. Pupils benefit from the many opportunities they experience to practise their communication skills throughout the day and across the curriculum as a result of carefully planned lessons.
- 3.8 Pupils make expected progress in numeracy and apply mathematical skills across the curriculum. More able pupils are challenged with extended tasks. More able Year 2 pupils used kitchen scales to measure the weight of a range of objects, learning to interpret the scale on the dial successfully and count in intervals of 25 to reach 100 grammes. Pupils continue to develop their numeracy skills outside of the mathematics classroom and an integrated numeracy curriculum is starting to be planned across subjects. One example of the benefits of this approach was seen in a science lesson where pupils used measurements to plot height successfully on a line graph. In music, pupils are encouraged to count beats and tap out numerical rhythms with good accuracy.
- 3.9 Pupils develop their ICT skills well through a carefully planned curriculum and by tuition in a dedicated ICT suite given by a subject specialist. Outside these lessons, the use of ICT by younger pupils is limited, although it was used effectively in an English lesson where pupils used tablets to enable them to listen to an anthology of poems. Older pupils acquire ICT skills quickly and this is enhanced through both the planned curriculum and access to ICT clubs as part of the school's strong extra-curricular provision. These pupils used code sequences to develop their own games. For example, they enthusiastically controlled the movement of a character through a maze of objects to collect golden coins as a reward, whilst skilfully avoiding self-designed fire pits and pools. Pupils show good aptitude in the use of ICT and demonstrated good knowledge of various learning platforms that had enabled them to access teaching during the period of school closure and online learning.
- 3.10 Pupils develop study skills and use them across the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, Year 6 pupils applied their knowledge of the internal angles of triangles to work out the unknown angles of a range of polygons by dividing the shapes into triangles. Pupils use their good reading skills to solve problems and help them reason their answers. For example, in Year 3 science, pupils read about the different stages of fossil formation and sorted the captions successfully into chronological order. Pupils' experience in verbal and non-verbal reasoning, taught as part of their study skills programme,

has resulted in pupils achieving good 11+ results and gaining entry into a number of highly selective independent senior schools. Older pupils' skills of hypothesis and synthesis of information are less well developed because there is limited opportunity and resources for them to use such higher-order thinking skills. In responses to the parent questionnaire, almost all parents felt the school provides a range of subjects, including online learning, suitable for their child.

- 3.11 Pupils enjoy success in a variety of academic and other areas, achieving good results. Pupils in Year 6 obtain sporting, academic and music scholarships for entry into a range of selective independent senior schools. Pupils represent the school and achieve success in art exhibitions, music performances and in a range of sporting competitions enabled by specialist teaching and excellent facilities. Pupils have been successful in regional English writing competitions and getting to the finals in a national mathematics competition. More recently, the school netball team were successful in a local competition, reaching the semi-finals with a strong record of goals being scored. In response to the parent questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents felt the school provided a suitable range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are excellent in response to well-planned, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic teaching which contributes to the positive learning culture in the school. Pupils persevere when they find a task challenging, encouraged by their teachers to 'have a go' and do their best. Pupils work well collaboratively both within their year groups and across the school. They engage wholeheartedly in the opportunities that are provided for them but need encouragement to take leadership for their own learning at times, preferring to be guided. Their capacity to debate and present reasoned arguments for their opinions is therefore limited.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.14 Pupils develop good self-understanding. They contribute their ideas enthusiastically to many aspects of school life as a result of being warmly encouraged by staff to participate in lessons, and as a result develop good self-confidence. In a personal, health, social and economic education (PHSEE) lesson for Year 5, pupils talked about an animal they would like to choose to be their best friend and eloquently explained the reason for their choice, explaining the characteristics they appreciated in a best friend. Sensitive questioning by teachers is effective at eliciting thoughtful and considered contributions from pupils to class discussions. In a Year 2 PHSEE lessons, pupils were able to develop a sense of themselves and discuss what makes them happy, how they could relax and how they might handle stress, leading to pupils having high self-esteem. Pupils are reflective and have good self-knowledge as evidenced in the Year 4 mindfulness lesson, where pupils had to work out how to win a race, and during pupil interviews.
- 3.15 Pupils are good at decision making in response to opportunities to make decisions and reflect on them throughout the curriculum. Pupils understand themselves and their own strengths and weaknesses. They are self-disciplined in their studies as evidenced in the pupil discussions. In a Year 6 science lesson, pupils justified their reasoning for selecting measurements for the body height and demonstrated they have the ability to make decisions and justify their choices. Occasionally however, pupils become over-reliant on teachers or other adults for direction and support in their lessons and as a consequent, do not always stretch themselves or reach their full potential.
- 3.16 Pupils develop good spiritual understanding. They have many opportunities throughout the aesthetic curriculum to celebrate and experience the awe and wonder of the animal kingdom through art. Pupils' spiritual understanding is enhanced as a result of imaginatively planned learning. During a whole school assembly, pupils read out letters to a celebrity, making strong emotional responses to the need to protect biodiversity and save the planet from global warming. Through their responses given during interviews and through the well-planned art curriculum, pupils demonstrated strong spiritual understanding and an appreciation for the non-material aspects of life. Spiritual

understanding and tolerance of others is further enhanced by the school's religious education curriculum and by the judicious use of visiting speakers.

- 3.17 Throughout the school, pupils show an excellent understanding of moral issues and outstanding responsibility for their own behaviour. Younger pupils quickly grasp the golden rules. A series of reward systems, matched to the pupils' interests and maturity levels, encourage pupils to develop respect for each other well and accept responsibility for their own actions. Pupils can effectively distinguish right from wrong as evidenced in lessons and work scrutiny. They respect the school systems put in place to support them. Pupils actively accept responsibility and look for opportunities to take leadership roles such as leading assemblies, protest art or the student council. In an ICT lesson they distinguished right from wrong with clarity when looking at rules for online safety. In response to the pupil questionnaire, every pupil felt that they know how to stay safe online and every pupil who responded felt that the school expects them to behave well.
- 3.18 Pupils develop excellent social skills throughout the school. Older pupils respond well to the many planned opportunities for them to develop leadership skills with younger pupils. They help them choose appropriate books at the book fair and make pop-up books in design technology to appeal to a range of interests of the younger reader, having first undertaken pupil research. Pupils are socially aware and have a mutual respect; every pupil who responded to the pupil questionnaire said they were happy at school. They actively participate in school and community events, for example they hold rug sales for local charities. They share common goals and work co-operatively, both inside and outside of the classroom environment to achieve these. Pupils use their social skills to enhance the school council and make suggestions to improve the school for the benefit of all pupils, for example by suggesting improvements to school meals.
- 3.19 Pupils respond well to the many opportunities provided to contribute to the local and wider community. In addition to supporting local festivals and a home for senior citizens, pupils think carefully about which charities to support and are creative in coming up with schemes for sponsorship. As a result, they develop an excellent understanding of how to contribute towards society. Pupils are always looking to support those less fortunate than themselves. They are active participants in raising funds for a range of local and national charities, as well as raising awareness for issues they care about. For example, pupils were involved in making a whole school climate change pledge by promising to make one change to their individual behaviour and created an artwork from the handprints of every child making a promise.
- 3.20 Pupils show a high level of respect to those from other cultures and beliefs and demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance towards different backgrounds and traditions. This is in response to a carefully planned curriculum and a genuine sense of community that pervades the school. Pupils' understanding is enhanced by stimulating opportunities across the curriculum. For example, in art, older pupils made protest posters about issues that concerned them such as racism or prejudice and were encouraged to demonstrate and express their views. Pupils echo the school's culture of acceptance. This can be seen in displays around the school and through the pupils' written work in religious education, where they explored Hinduism in depth. In a science lesson, pupils responded well when asked to reflect on why the palaeologist Mary Anning was an unsung hero due to the attitudes towards women that were prevalent in Victorian society. In responses received to the parent questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents felt the school responds effectively to any prejudiced language used by pupils and that the school treats all pupils fairly regardless of their sex, faith, race or needs.
- 3.21 Pupils know how to stay safe, including online, and understand that healthy choices in terms of diet, exercise and relaxation make a positive contribution to their well-being. Healthy school meals, an extensive sports programme, and the life skills programme for older pupils, where they learn emergency first aid and road safety, ensure pupils develop good all-round understanding of staying safe and keeping healthy.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Keith Morrow	Reporting inspector
Mr Christopher Emmott	Compliance team inspector (Retired headmaster, ISA school)
Mrs Rebecca Glover	Team inspector (Principal, HMC school)