



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

MALVERN ST JAMES

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Malvern St James			
DfE number	885/6012			
Registered charity number	527513			
Address	15 Avenue Road Great Malvern Worcestershire WR14 3BA			
Telephone number	01684 892288			
Email address	headspa@malvernstjames.co.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Olivera Raraty			
Chair of governors	Mrs Anne Borrowdale			
Age range	4 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	398			
	Boys	0	Girls	398
	Day pupils	205	Boarders	193
	EYFS	6	Juniors	72
	Seniors	221	Sixth Form	99
Inspection dates	29 to 30 March 2017			

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.

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 following their inspection 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 unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

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.

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 an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting 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.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. 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'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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 extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Bill Burn	Reporting inspector
Miss Margaret Connell	Team inspector for boarding (Former principal, GSA school)
Mrs Claire Hewitt	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Gill Smith	Team inspector (Assistant head, IAPS school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
About the school	1
What the school seeks to do	1
About the pupils	1
Recommendations from previous inspections	1
2 KEY FINDINGS	3
Recommendations	3
3 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	6

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Malvern St James is an independent day and boarding school for girls aged between 4 and 18 years. It is run as an independent charity by a board of trustees. The current headmistress has been in post since September 2016.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 2006 as a result of a merger between two former girls' schools. It comprises a pre-preparatory department, a preparatory department and a senior school, all of which share the same site in the centre of the town of Malvern in Worcestershire. Boarders are accommodated in five houses close to the centre of the school.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school seeks to provide a spiritual context and environment that motivates, challenges, encourages and supports individual girls, and an all-round education that enables them to maximise their potential.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, mostly from White British families but also comprising a minority of international pupils from twenty countries. Nationally standardised data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils in the senior school and in the sixth form is broadly average. The school has identified 27 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including mild dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan (EHC) or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 70 pupils, of whom 55 receive extra support from the school.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in October and November 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
 - Take measures to ensure that heads of subjects understand and accept their accountability for all aspects of the work of their departments.
 - Ensure that the professional review system is rigorous in setting targets for improvement, especially those related to the quality of learning and teaching.
 - Encourage the sharing of good practice in developing the pupils' independent learning and thinking.
 - For the EYFS, develop further the outdoor area in order to promote the children's independent play in all areas of the curriculum.
 - In the EYFS, increase opportunities for child-initiated activities across the curriculum.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection.
- 1.8 The recommendations of the intermediate boarding inspection in March 2013 were:

- Conduct more regular professional development reviews of the practice of staff in each of the houses in order to promote the planned development of boarding.
- Review the procedures for allowing senior pupils to self-medicate in suitable circumstances.

1.9 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils make good progress, achieve good examination results, and have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Pupils excel in response to teaching which is usually effective and sometimes inspirational.
- Pupils develop excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Pupils communicate fluently and persuasively and have highly developed levels of numeracy, literacy and ICT skills.
- Pupils excel in sport, performing and other arts, and a range of extra-curricular activities.

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

- Pupils have high levels of self-confidence and an outstanding capacity for constructive self-criticism.
- Pupils have an excellent sense of personal and moral responsibility, accepting the consequences of their own behaviour.
- Pupils have a highly developed social awareness, enabling them to work well in collaboration with others and make a significant contribution to the wider community.
- Pupils show exemplary levels of respect for others and mutual tolerance of those from different cultures and backgrounds.
- Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle.

Recommendations

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

- That the excellent practice seen in some teaching be shared so that pupils' learning can be extended and supported consistently.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Results at GCSE have been above and A-level results have been well above the national average for maintained schools. Most school leavers gain admission to competitive university courses, including those with the most demanding entry requirements. School assessment data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books show that pupils, including those with English as an additional language (EAL), those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and the most able, make good progress in relation to their starting points. Most parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that their children's educational needs were met effectively by the school and that teaching enabled their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future.
- 3.3 Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to their learning and are highly productive. A substantial volume of systematically organised work presented with a great deal of pride was seen in pupils' books. Pupils are eager to please and prepared to work hard to achieve the targets they set themselves. They seize opportunities to develop their written work with enthusiasm. Teaching ensures that different types of task are set, which enable individuals to develop their writing imaginatively. Pupils take full advantage, for example, of the chance to write at length in continuous prose. This is true throughout the school. Younger pupils bring as much energy to mastering their times tables as oldest pupils to applying to universities.
- 3.4 Pupils develop outstanding knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of subjects at all levels of the school. This equips them for the demands of school life, and establishes a firm foundation for life beyond school. Pupils with EAL develop excellent linguistic skills, and so their examination results are in line with those of other pupils of similar abilities. Similarly, those with SEND achieve in line with their ability. This is because both groups are carefully guided and supported by the school and helped to formulate effective learning strategies. Most pupils study mathematics at A-level, and pupils describe their progress from mystification to low grades and, eventually, to high grades. They attribute this progress to hard work and perseverance. They also acknowledge the role of support from online resources, teacher encouragement and their friends. They are generally sensitive to the academic needs of others, helping those who miss lessons to catch up, for example. In lessons, teaching makes a significant contribution by checking progress and creating a sense of urgency in discussion by adding time constraints. In a debate about how the American Civil War was won, pupils evaluated each suggestion, synthesised the arguments effectively and reached qualified judgements. Pupils routinely attach importance to detailed accuracy in their work, in calculations and in manipulating verb forms. When things go well, pupils take pleasure in what they have achieved, and a sense of fun and laughter is rarely far away.
- 3.5 Pupils acquire these qualities in response to teaching that is generally demanding. At its most effective, it is also based firmly on the pupils' needs. It is adventurous, and models the need to take risks. Pupils respond well to the urgency this brings and make rapid progress as a result. They also mimic the excellent questioning style used by, for example, some teaching-open, fast-paced and skilfully phrased. Here, teaching is inspirational. All the same, the absence of challenge in some lessons reflects the pre-inspection questionnaire findings, where a minority of pupils said that not all lessons were interesting. Inspectors agreed that some teaching was cautious and underestimated the pupils' capacity and desire to handle something more demanding. Sharing of best practice would enable the quality of teaching to extend and support pupils' learning more consistently.

- 3.6 Pupils have excellent communication skills. Their speaking is especially strong, and they are fluent, articulate and persuasive. They use sophisticated vocabulary with confidence. In this they are encouraged by teachers' insistence on accurate use of terminology and subject-specific vocabulary. These values are also promoted by pupils' involvement in the Model United Nations, drama, debating and public speaking. Recently, they have also been encouraged to lead assemblies, which they do to excellent effect. Similarly, the pupils' writing skills are highly developed. Inspectors saw some excellent pieces of extended writing in religious studies (RS), history and English at all ages, as well as admirably succinct summaries of recordings of speeches.
- 3.7 Pupils have well-developed numeracy skills. They choose in large numbers to study science and mathematics at A level. Those who are studying, for example, geography or economics find their skills appropriate for calculating reaction rates or plotting graphs. Similarly, the pupils excel in information and communication technology (ICT) and use the skills that they gain to enhance their learning. These skills benefit from the digital language laboratory and pupils' enjoyment of word processing, which enables them to edit and redraft their work as they go along. They are naturally self-critical and take advantage of teacher involvement, which is available but not controlling. They also take advantage of opportunities to handwrite practice examination answers. Pupils have well-developed research skills and are sensibly cautious about the status of evidence gathered from the internet. For example, pupils in the middle of the school made effective use of the ICT suite to research products for a design project.
- 3.8 Pupils' study skills are excellent. They excel in note-taking, concentration, being punctual and being correctly equipped. They collaborate successfully in pairs and groups on classroom tasks, and many develop insightful questioning techniques to test their own and one another's theories. They begin to nurture these instincts in Year 3 with a period of quiet thinking to begin the day.
- 3.9 Pupils are enabled to make good progress by leaders' successful embedding of a curriculum that is flexible enough to meet the needs of individual pupils, by creating time for extra English lessons or additional study skills support. It also offers a carefully tailored programme, making available subjects such as Greek, Mandarin, BTEC P.E. and the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) for all. The leadership and management of the school have an ambitious vision and monitor the quality of teaching carefully. In this way, the school has met the recommendations of the previous inspection report to allocate greater responsibility to heads of subjects for setting targets for improvement and encouraging pupils to become more independent in their learning and thinking.
- 3.10 Almost all pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school offers a good range of activities. Pupils have achieved notable successes in a range of extra-curricular activities, with representative honours in sport, debating, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the Model United Nations. They show dedication and talent in performing and other arts. They shine in academic enrichment too. The pupils relish pitting their wits against something unfamiliar, like a maths challenge, a science Olympiad, a Latin reading competition or a college essay prize, and they acquit themselves with distinction.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils display high levels of self-confidence from the earliest stage of their careers at the school. Even the youngest pupils are willing to offer a partially correct answer in class rather than remain silent. They are not afraid to make mistakes and know that leaders and teachers ensure that the school is a safe environment in which to do so. Pupils accurately expect that their classmates will be supportive towards them. Likewise, pupils know they can rely on advice and guidance from their teachers, who are always available and approachable. They learn from their first days in the school that they are able to call on others when they are in need of help. First, they try their hardest, then they seek help from classmates and then from teachers, as summed up by some pupils in the preparatory department: for them the process is 'brain, buddy, boss'. Teachers establish pupils' perseverance and resilience through their gentle but firm encouragement. This enables pupils to prepare better for life at university and after school.
- 4.3 Pupils nourish their resilience and trust in one another through an excellent programme of outdoor education and sport, and all pupils value highly the annual residential outward-bound courses. Pupils have a highly developed capacity for constructive self-criticism as a result of the marking policy. It provides formative, summative and oral feedback that encourages them to think about their errors, evaluate and correct them.
- 4.4 Pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of making decisions that act in the best interests of their well-being and success. For example, children in the EYFS were able to make decisions about what they needed to do before they set about a baking task and were unanimous about the need to wash their hands. More senior pupils are able to choose where to sit in the dining room, whether to board and whether to spend free periods in the sixth form working. They view this as good preparation for life beyond school, as although guidance is always available, the choices are always theirs. In the questionnaire, a minority of senior pupils felt that they did not receive good advice about choosing subjects and career paths. In discussion, pupils acknowledged that these decisions are for them to make. They said that the school made strenuous efforts to ensure that all were fully supported and guided as necessary.
- 4.5 Pupils have an excellent sense of personal and moral responsibility that has grown out of the freedom that leaders ensure the school offers. If, for example, a pupil thinks she will not meet a deadline for the submission of a piece of written work, she will be honest and have a conversation with the teacher. Pupils' ability to explain circumstances and request such extensions demonstrate their strong willingness to accept responsibility for their own circumstances. Boarders are especially encouraged to think in this way by the boarding staff, who offer expert help and a sympathetic approach to academic matters. In the preparatory department, the rules are published on classroom walls, and in the senior school they are superseded by clear expectations that pupils understand and share. The school trusts the pupils to behave appropriately as they grow older, and the pupils respond by repaying the trust placed in them. The consistent quality of relationships throughout the school underpins this trust at all stages of a pupil's life at school.
- 4.6 Pupils display a deep and mature appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They take advantage of time set aside for well-being in the preparatory department one afternoon a week. They ponder the religious studies department's question of the week and take advantage of the quiet space offered by the chapel. Many attend 'Quest', a voluntary society exploring ethical and philosophical issues. Pupils speak with warmth of the new pattern of

assemblies in which they are encouraged to take a leading part, as in a recent event to mark National Poetry Day, with readings and reflections from pupils. Pupils spoke of the excitement of singing in the Mozart Requiem the previous weekend, and the spiritual feelings it had inspired.

- 4.7 The pupils behave in a way which shows highly developed social awareness. They excel in teamwork and problem solving, encouraged by abundant opportunities in the classroom and an attitude of positivity which is a central aim of the school's leadership. This is mirrored by pupils' stance in extra-curricular activities, where they value collaboration and a sense of belonging. Loyalty to their boarding house, one of the four Ships to which all pupils belong, and their friends is a guiding force. This spirit is visible in music, drama and other cultural and academic pursuits. It was seen in the singing at a preparatory department assembly. It was notable, too, during an observation of boarding house life. Pupils considering ideas for an EPQ on the question of volunteering overseas consulted other boarders from an international background. The blank page was soon full. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they regard the international dimension of the boarding houses as an opportunity for enrichment.
- 4.8 Pupils excel at contributing to the school and wider community, volunteering in response to the many opportunities to do so that the school creates for them. This is often through working in local libraries and helping in primary schools, but there are also ample avenues within the school. Senior pupils appreciate the beneficial effects they gain from volunteering as well as those gained by the people they help. In addition, each house has a charity link, and pupils embrace school-wide fundraising initiatives, including those for Malvern Special Families. The school has also developed strong links to The Gambia, and senior pupils invest their time and expertise in a biennial visit to the country.
- 4.9 Pupils are naturally respectful and tolerant of different nationalities, religions and cultures. Almost all parents and most pupils, in their responses to the questionnaire, said that this was a strong feature of school life. Pupils' appreciation of diversity infuses their everyday lives as well as their intellectual endeavours. For example, pupils exhibited exemplary levels of open-mindedness in a history lesson on civil liberties. Leaders and teachers make a point of ensuring that, for example, more able pupils take a leading role in discussions at the Somerville Society, a forum for presentations and debate.
- 4.10 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead a safe, healthy lifestyle. They bring an acute awareness of the principles of exercise and eating, and they know how to stay safe when online. Participants in compulsory sixth-form physical education (P.E.) lessons acknowledge the benefits of these and hurry to their favourite piece of fitness equipment.