



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

MOIRA HOUSE SCHOOL

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Moir House School			
DfE Number	845/6015			
Registered charity number	307072			
Address	Upper Carlisle Road Eastbourne East Sussex BN20 7TE			
Telephone number	01323 644 144			
Email address	schooloffice@moirahouse.co.uk			
Acting Principal	Mrs Elodie Vallantine			
Chair of governors	Mrs Jill Jackson-Hill			
Age range	0 to 18 years			
Number of pupils on roll	312			
	Boys	10	Girls	302
	Day pupils	240	Boarders	72
	EYFS	52	Pre-prep	21
	Prep	90	Seniors	94
	Sixth Form	55		
Inspection dates	15 to 16 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 un-met 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 form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils. 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

Mrs Serena Alexander	Reporting inspector
Ms Philippa Gent	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school)
Mr John Aguilar	Team inspector (Principal, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Rosemary Martin	Team inspector (Former head, GSA school)
Miss Emma Neville	Team inspector (Deputy head of junior school, IAPS school)
Mrs Deborah Leek-Bailey	Boarding team inspector (Former head, ISA school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Moira House School is an independent day and boarding school for girls aged from 0 to 18 years. It also educates boys aged up to 4 years in the Nursery. The school is inter-denominational and welcomes pupils of all faiths. It is owned by the governing body known as the School Council. The members of the School Council represent a variety of experience and expertise, and almost all are either former pupils or parents of current pupils in the school.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1875 by Mr Charles Ingham, a pioneer in female education in Victorian England. It was originally based in Surrey and moved to Eastbourne in 1887. Since the previous inspection, the school has been reorganised into sections and now comprises the Nursery for children aged 0 to 4, pre-prep for pupils in Reception to Year 2, Lower Prep for Years 3 to 5, Upper Prep for Year 6 to 8, Seniors for Years 9 to 11, and the sixth form. The school has two boarding houses: School House for pupils in Years 3 to 11; and Boston House for those in Years 11 to 13. The school opened a new equestrian centre in September 2016.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide a happy, safe and supportive boarding community based on Christian values, in which all pupils can strive for excellence. It aspires to enable pupils to discover their true potential and develop intellectual curiosity, independence of mind and the ability to take responsibility for their own learning. The school strives to provide a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom so that pupils can discover individual passions and develop a range of personal characteristics. It endeavours to enable pupils to develop an understanding of democracy, the rule of the law and individual liberty as well as a sense of social responsibility and respect for others.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Day pupils come from a range of professional families living within a 17-mile radius of the school. The vast majority of boarders come from overseas, mostly from Hong Kong or mainland China. Nationally standardised tests indicate the ability profile of the school is above average and that the ability profile of the sixth form is broadly average. The school has identified 17 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist support. Also, 1 pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 77 pupils, 43 of whom receive additional support for their English. Data used by the school have identified 45 pupils as the more able in the school's population; 72 other pupils have special talents in art, dance, drama, sport and music. A programme of events is organised for them to support and develop their gifts and talents.

- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report 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>
Babies	Nursery (0 to 2 years)
Caterpillars	Nursery (2 to 3 years)
Butterflies	Nursery (3 to 4 years)

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in November 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Produce a cohesive and comprehensive whole school development plan to which departmental plans can link appropriately.
 - Offer more consistent levels of challenge and opportunities for independent learning to all pupils.
 - Develop integrated systems to ensure that EAL pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum.
 - Maximise the impact of the school's considerable investment in information and communication technology (ICT), particularly in terms of learning and teaching.
 - In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), ensure that the Nursery children have greater choice of learning environments, by developing the outside area of the Nursery.
 - Ensure that in the Nursery and Reception next steps for learning are more specific and that they clearly identify how children can move on in their learning and development.
- 1.7 The school has fully met all but two of the recommendations above. It has partially addressed the recommendations to maximise the impact of the school's considerable investment in ICT, and to offer more consistent levels of challenge and opportunities for independent learning to all pupils. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.
- 1.8 The recommendation of the intermediate EYFS inspection in March 2013 was:
- Develop the excellent management in the EYFS to ensure that whole-school self-evaluation and development planning involve the early years' team.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met the recommendation of the previous intermediate EYFS inspection.
- 1.10 The recommendations of the intermediate boarding inspection in March 2013 were:
- Implement plans to improve induction procedures for boarders, especially for those arriving after the beginning of term.
 - Conduct rigorous monitoring of its outside areas more regularly for potential hazards.
 - Ensure that fire drills continue to be carried out in boarding time at least once each term and that these are appropriately recorded.
 - Ensure that training and professional development opportunities for boarding staff are linked to a robust review of their boarding practice.
- 1.11 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous intermediate boarding inspection.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils' achievements in the performing and creative arts are outstanding due to the many opportunities on offer both in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils with SEND or EAL make particularly strong progress.
- Pupils of all ages have an extremely positive attitude to learning.
- Not all pupils benefit from the thorough and detailed marking that is provided in some subjects and some age groups.
- At times pupils' progress is limited by insufficient challenge, and for younger pupils by little opportunity to develop their understanding through practical work.
- Pupils have good ICT skills but limited opportunities are available for all pupils to develop these further in the formal curriculum.

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

- Pupils demonstrate excellent social development.
- Pupils have an extremely well-developed moral sense.
- All pupils benefit from the collaborative attitudes of the boarding pupils and the diverse cultural experiences they share.
- Pupils make effective decisions over the options open to them but are limited by lack of a formal structure for careers guidance.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that the marking policy is consistently applied across all subjects and ages to provide helpful comments to guide improvement.
- Ensure sufficient challenge for all pupils and increase the opportunities to develop understanding through practical work.
- Enable pupils' further development of their ICT skills by increasing the formal opportunities for all pupils to use a range of ICT across the curriculum.
- Structure the careers guidance provided to senior school pupils more effectively to enhance their decision making.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 At all ages pupils achieve well. Throughout the pre-prep and prep, pupils develop good knowledge, skills and understanding in all their subjects. All pupils develop communications skills of a high standard. They are articulate and confident, their presentation is excellent and they write well in a variety of genres, using descriptive language well. Children in the EYFS can clearly express their opinions as they make choices. They use phonics knowledge to decode words and many are emerging as fluent readers. Reception children use descriptive language verbally and in writing, and used technical vocabulary confidently when describing daffodils and signs of Spring. Pupils' basic numeracy skills are of a high standard and they can apply these to problem solving. They make rapid progress in lessons that offer them a challenge, and develop a broader understanding when undertaking practical work. For example, pupils in the prep recently took part in an inter-school science challenge as they designed, built and then raced their rocket cars. Such good practice is not a regular feature in lessons and at times the progress of pupils in pre-prep and Lower Prep can be limited by an over reliance on worksheets that are not well matched to pupils' capabilities. Pupils' language skills are well developed in French from Reception, and Spanish and Latin from Year 7.
- 3.3 Pupils in the senior school and the sixth form build on these firm foundations. They apply their strong communication skills across the whole curriculum and use their numerical skills competently in subjects such as science, sport, geography and economics. For example younger senior school pupils efficiently explored the economics of installing home insulation, and sixth formers perceptively interpreted graphs on the balance of payments. In sport, pupils record times and distances, and then effectively analyse and compare statistical data to evaluate their own performance. Senior school and sixth form pupils are highly competent in the use of relevant ICT skills both in lessons and in their independent learning. Few opportunities are available for all pupils to use and develop further a broad range of ICT skills within the formal curriculum. Pupils are well supported in achieving good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding by well-qualified teaching staff. In interview, most pupils expressed that teachers are supportive and helpful if they have any problems with their work, but a small minority of pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire responses disagreed that marking helps them to improve. Work scrutiny indicated that helpful comments to guide improvement are provided in some subjects, but this is not consistent across all ages and subjects.
- 3.4 Children in the EYFS make particularly strong progress, nurtured by staff who know them well. By the end of Reception, all children have achieved the early learning goals and many have exceeded them. Pupils in the prep school do not sit national curriculum tests, but during the inspection attainment was judged to be good using evidence from lessons observed, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of the pupils' books. Using the national comparisons for 2012 to 2015 which are the last three years for which these are available, results in GCSE examinations have been above the national average for maintained schools and results in iGCSE examinations in first language English, English literature and Chinese have been higher than worldwide norms. Results in iGCSE examinations in biology, mathematics and physics have been similar to worldwide norms. Results in A-level examinations have been above the national average, with a steady trend of improvement over the last three years. These levels of attainment indicate progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. This finding is supported by the observation of pupils' work in lessons during the inspection; their successful progression to a range of universities to read subjects such as medicine, mathematics and fine art; and by their successful participation in a wide range of sports and activities.

- 3.5 Pupils with SEND or EAL make particularly strong progress due to the high quality of support provided for them. They are identified by their teachers or through a programme of standardised tests. These pupils are very well supported in class by their teachers, and some have individual sessions with specialist staff. The needs of older pupils with EAL are reflected in the range of appropriate opportunities available at GCSE and in the sixth form which contributes to their overall success. In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority of parents and pupils agreed that the school provides them the opportunity to learn and make good progress.
- 3.6 More able and talented pupils are particularly well catered for through the wide-ranging scholarship and exhibition programme. Pupils from Year 3 with academic gifts and talents in areas such as art, music, performing arts and sport including dance, equestrian, swimming and tennis are identified and then participate in a programme of events that includes personal challenges, trips and visiting speakers in order to support and develop their gifts and talents. In interview, pupils on the programme spoke warmly of the benefits that they had gained from this provision. Their individual skills well developed, and they are provided the self-confidence to apply themselves in order to achieve in their chosen fields. Those in the scholarship programme take pride in their achievements in the optional challenges set, such as writing with great imagination and depth as a 90-year-old Queen at the end of the 21st century reflecting on her achievements over her reign and evaluating what she could have improved.
- 3.7 Pupils' achievement in the performing and creative arts is outstanding; they demonstrate empathetic portrayal of characterisation, understand the importance of group work and have the skills necessary to perform in public. Pupils benefit from the many opportunities to participate in the performing arts provided in the broad curriculum, and this greatly enhances the development of their overall confidence and their communication skills. For example, younger senior school pupils composed music using a variety of different instruments and computer software, and then appraised each other's work successfully and wrote a self-critique. The creative skills of pupils are also developed well through art and design technology in the curriculum, and the extra-curricular programme. Pupils achieve some team and considerable personal successes in sport, with several pupils competing in national squads. They benefit from the strong allocation to sport within the curriculum and the wide range of additional opportunities available on site such as horse riding, tennis and swimming. Such pupils are extremely well supported by the school, working closely with their families in line with school's aims. Pupils' high achievement in the performing arts and sport is very well supported by governance that fully endorses the schools' aim to provide a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom. In their questionnaire responses, almost all parents and pupils expressed their satisfaction with the range of activities on offer.
- 3.8 Pupils develop good study skills as they mature and progress up the school. In the EYFS, children have many opportunities to make choices over their learning and are encouraged to reason out solutions for themselves. Pupils in pre-prep and prep have clear targets in mathematics and English that they work towards, and spoke at interview of their pride when these are achieved. They benefit from opportunities for independent project work, such as when Year 5 pupils researched a European city and considered how the culture impacts on the citizens. Senior school and sixth form pupils are very proficient at note taking; they extrapolate information from a variety of sources which they then analyse, make hypotheses and draw conclusions from.
- 3.9 Pupils of all ages have extremely positive attitudes to learning. From the EYFS onwards, they naturally work collaboratively in pairs and groups. They share ideas fruitfully, listen to one another and offer supportive suggestions. For example, pupils in a sixth form French lesson

presented their research on Camus to each other and noted down any aspects they learnt from others that they could add to their own work. Pupils are most attentive in lessons and apply themselves well, producing a significant volume of work. As they grow older, pupils increasingly develop leadership in their learning. They were very positive about the availability of subject surgeries which they can attend if they choose.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent social development. Children in the EYFS politely greet and listen to each other, and readily take turns. In some lessons and within the comprehensive programme of activities, pre-prep and prep school pupils participate within mixed-age groups, thus younger pupils learn from excellent role models and older pupils help younger ones. Senior school and sixth form pupils co-operate extremely well, understanding and responding to each other's views. Pupils discuss and explore social issues during their lessons in subjects such as personal, social, health, citizenship and economic education (PSHCE) for Year 3 to 5, and well-being lessons for all pupils from Year 6 onwards. In the sixth form, pupils' understanding of matters such as, for example, the danger of stereotyping people is enhanced in subjects such as religious studies (RS), philosophy and psychology. Pupils' confidence and co-operation is advanced through their participation in the performing arts, as observed in a GCSE drama lesson where pupils worked most effectively in small groups demonstrating different expressions, making suggestions and guiding each other. Each pupil and each member of staff is assigned to one of four groupings called Pyramids when they join the school, and successfully participate together in a range of fundraising and competitive events such as a Christmas song competition and a festival of music, drama and dance. At all ages, pupils are very happy to celebrate the achievements and talents of others. The many shared activities help forge a sense of collaboration for the common good between pupils and staff. An atmosphere of mutual respect pervades the school, actively promoted by leadership and management that set clear standards and expectations.
- 4.3 Pupils have an extremely well-developed moral sense. In the EYFS, children demonstrate a clear understanding of the code of conduct. Pre-prep and prep pupils are very well behaved; they respect one another and talk with confidence about how their teachers help them to understand how their actions impact on others should they do something wrong. In PSHCE, history and RS, pupils discuss with maturity issues such as the abolition of slavery and religious dilemmas, for example intolerance of untouchables. Senior school and sixth form pupils have a very clear understanding of what is morally acceptable. They debated the issue of nuclear disarmament sensibly, conducting research to add weight to their views. Pupils speak out readily at house and boarding meetings to express their opinions, encouraging a collaborative approach to finding solutions to what they consider unhelpful behaviour.
- 4.4 At all ages, pupils' awareness of and respect for their own and other cultures is excellent. Pupils from their earliest years are aware that others come from different backgrounds and with different beliefs, and accept them readily into the community. Their cultural understanding is fostered within the curriculum, such as by the study of different countries in geography and learning about the similarities and differences in various religions in RS. Within the diverse school community, every opportunity is taken for pupils to celebrate their own and others' festivals, and such occasions are often led by the pupils themselves. A lesson on Islam in the prep benefited from pupils' first-hand experience, and the Chinese boarders organised a whole-school celebration of Chinese New Year. Older pupils lead some of the activities such as studying Mandarin or Arabic, sharing their cultures with others successfully. Pupils spoke with great enthusiasm about their visits abroad and how much they learnt from, for example, a musical trip to Italy. Older pupils spoke very positively about how learning alongside pupils from other countries has made them more open minded and tolerant. Boarders are most appreciative of the diverse cultural experiences that they share, and this along with their collaborative attitude provides an excellent role model from which pupils in the whole-school community benefit.

- 4.5 Pupils' spiritual awareness is strong. They respond naturally to the many opportunities for quiet reflection such as in chapel, at assemblies or in form time, as well as in the natural surroundings of the school grounds during their breaks. Pupils appreciate the mood that can be set by music of various styles and tempo. For example, they listened to the Elvis Presley song *In The Ghetto* before discussing and considering life in modern ghettos, and then wrote and performed their own compositions, displaying great empathy. Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed further in drama. For example, senior school pupils who discussed the language of *Macbeth* appreciated that emotion can be inferred. Pupils displayed a mature attitude to individual principles in a religion and philosophy lesson as they considered how pacifism allows peace to be achieved through non-violent methods, and discussed the role of women and the sacrifices made by those who stand up for their beliefs.
- 4.6 Pupils at all ages demonstrate considerable leadership through the various positions of responsibility available both within their own age group such as serving as form captain, and within the whole school including sitting on student council. In the sixth form, responsibility roles such as Knights, Standard Bearers, prefects and heads of Pyramids are elected annually. Other pupils successfully fulfil specific responsibilities for sports and music, as well as positions in the boarding houses. Older pupils who take on the role of Guardian Angels to 'spread the light' to younger pupils in need of academic or social guidance take these positions seriously and conduct their duties most conscientiously. Throughout the school, pupils make an active contribution to the local community. Pupils from Year 6 visit local care homes to share news and entertain, and those participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme assist in local Nursery schools and with the local radio. Pupils support local charities such as the nearby hospice by raising money through dressing-up days or house events, and they collect goods for the local food bank. They also support international charities, with the charity and the event selected and run by each Pyramid. Pupils develop their sense of belonging to part of a broader community from a schools' partnership, sharing good practice and resources with pupils from the local maintained sector. Every year, pupils enthusiastically act as hosts to local junior school children as the school transforms into the French town 'Moiraville'.
- 4.7 Pupils are very aware of how to be physically and mentally healthy. In their questionnaire responses, almost all parents and pupils agreed that the school provides a healthy and safe environment. Pupils make healthy choices at lunchtime and recommendations from the student council have recently improved what is on offer. Children in the EYFS know which foods they need to keep healthy and which make them strong. Boarders are positive about the different food choices available to them at weekends and appreciate the healthy options provided. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities for physical exercise available to them with many demonstrating true commitment, such as the swimmers in the boarding houses who rise early every morning for their practice. They appreciate the diversity of activities on offer, from dance to trampoline, which allows everyone to find something that suits them. Pupils learn safety rules in the curriculum. Those in the EYFS confidently use scissors safely and can explain how to stay safe around fireworks. In science, pupils know when to wear safety goggles and understand the laboratory rules. Older pupils learn the importance of mental health through the well-being programme and understand issues such as eating disorders. Pupils understand how to keep safe online, informed by guidance on the dangers of the internet by a visiting professional and discussion of online grooming.
- 4.8 Pupils develop their self-esteem and self-confidence through the range of opportunities on offer in the curriculum and the extra-curricular programme and with the enrichment of the scholars' programme, and for boarders through their positive experience in the boarding houses. The resilience of pupils is developed through the performing arts and on the sports field; pupils understand that they learn through working out what they could do better rather

than dwelling on defeat. In interview, pupils were very positive about the contribution of their personal tutors, who provide them clear guidance over any personal difficulties and help them to talk through their options at important points of transition. In interview, pupils were very clear that they are encouraged to make their own decisions. Opportunities are limited for pre-prep and Lower Prep pupils to make their own decisions, but they make sensible choices about what they eat and what activities they can enrol for. Older pupils make independent choices over the courses that they wish to follow, their academic options and whether they wish to attend academic surgeries or undertake optional projects and challenges. Suitable advice is provided regarding university and career choices, and pupils benefit from the consideration of the more unorthodox options offered by visitors to the school such as a presentation from an equine physiotherapist. The lack of a formally structured careers programme limits the pupils' development of a systematic approach in making future plans. In boarding, there are significant opportunities for corporate decision making and the establishment of community rules. Sixth form pupils spoke with appreciation of the benefits of the many experiences they enjoy. They are excellent ambassadors for the school who are well poised for the next step in their education.