



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

St Nicholas' School

May 2022

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School's Details

School	St Nicholas' School			
DfE number	850/6036			
Registered charity number	307341			
Address	St Nicholas' School Redfields House Redfields Lane Church Crookham Fleet Hampshire GU52 0RF			
Telephone number	01252 850121			
Email address	headspa@st-nicholas.hants.sch.uk			
Headmistress	Dr Olwen Wright			
Chair of governors	Mr Stephen Mellor			
Age range	3 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	311			
	EYFS	33	Infants	25
	Juniors	76	Seniors	177
Inspection dates	10 to 13 May 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St Nicholas' School is an independent day school for male pupils aged between 3 and 7 years, and female pupils aged between 3 and 16 years. The school comprises three departments: infants (including the EYFS), juniors and seniors. The school was founded in 1935 and moved to its present thirty-acre site in 1996. It is overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new headmistress in September 2018 and chair of governors in March 2019.
- 1.2 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

- 1.3 The school aims to encourage each pupil to achieve the highest possible standards in academic work, develop self-esteem, confidence and leadership skills in a caring environment.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from professional and business backgrounds, mostly living within one hour's travel from the school. The ability of pupils is broadly in line with average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 50 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include a variety of conditions, of whom 46 receive additional support. Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for three pupils. The school has identified several pupils as having abilities, gifts or talents, and the curriculum is modified for them.

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 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The 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.

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 In the junior school, 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 At GCSE in the years 2019 to 2021, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

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

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

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

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

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

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

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

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

- Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND, make excellent progress over time, and their level of achievement is high.
- Pupils display excellent attitudes to learning and work well in lessons and activities.
- Pupils are excellent communicators, both orally and in their written work.
- Pupils are highly numerate and use these skills very effectively across the curriculum.

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

- Pupils are very positive and confident individuals, enjoying an excellent relationship with peers and adults alike.
- Pupils display an excellent understanding of behavioural expectations, and right from wrong.
- Pupils care about each other and their respect and tolerance for others is excellent.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual awareness through reflection and an appreciation of the world around them.

Recommendation

3.3 The school should make the following improvement:

- Ensure pupils develop a greater understanding and confidence about who to talk to with regards to their social and emotional well-being.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils of all ages and abilities demonstrate excellent academic achievements. Children in the EYFS get off to an excellent start in their education and by the end of Year 2, most are working well above age-related expectations. In the years 2017 to 2019, the most recent three years for which comparative data are available, results in GCSE examinations were above the national average for maintained schools and in some subjects well above, including mathematics. A large majority of pupils achieved the highest grades of A* or A or equivalent numbered grades in GCSE in all subjects. Centre-assessed and teacher-assessed grades in 2020 and 2021 show results consistent with this attainment. Leaders ensure that pupils can build on the very strong foundations in learning provided in the EYFS, through

the junior school and across subjects in the senior school. The senior leadership team and governance are uncompromising in their efforts to provide the very best education for every pupil in line with the school's aims. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that teaching, including any online provision, enables their child to make progress and a very large majority of pupils agreed that their teachers know their subjects well. Pupils who have SEND make outstanding progress from their starting points. This is because of well targeted support through the use of personalised and tailored support packages to meet these pupils' needs. The most able pupils make above average progress compared to classmates as a result of extended learning and specific subject clinics.

- 3.6 Pupils' attitudes are excellent. Their positive desire to succeed and to show others what they know is a strong feature of the school. Pupils hunger for information from teachers to satisfy their desire for learning. They engage with work set in class promptly and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities which prepare all pupils very well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are highly effective independent learners and display initiative in their work in class and beyond. This collaborative ethos extends across much of their lives at school, as seen through house music and drama productions as well as numerous sports teams.
- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills throughout the curriculum. Children in the EYFS learn to communicate very well; they talk with confidence to adults and can explain what they are doing. For example, they explained the rules of a game and maintained their attention and enjoyment of it for a considerable period of time. They enrich their vocabulary such as after observing tadpoles, using descriptions such as 'wiggly swimming'. Children can identify the first sound in words for example, 's' for sock, sponge and spider and the most able are beginning to read. They use early writing activities very effectively, including mark making and recording, as part of their play. Year 2 pupils incorporate sophisticated literary features into their writing and adapt their style to suit different audiences. This was demonstrated when they wrote letters as Florence Nightingale to her parents, about unclean medical conditions during the Crimean war. Year 5 pupils similarly used a wide range of literary techniques and a strong range of vocabulary, to suggest mood and atmosphere. The junior school production *Treachery at Traitors' Quay*, during the inspection, showed high levels of cooperation and skill in singing, dance and drama, including excellent projection of voice and confident stage presence. Pupils with SEND successfully reinforce their knowledge about grammar through the use of a nouns, adjectives and verbs game. Senior school pupils' reading and writing skills are very well developed across all subjects. They use grammar and punctuation accurately and have an excellent range of vocabulary. In Year 9 pupils read and write Spanish confidently and distinguish the use of verbs in present, past and future.
- 3.8 In the EYFS children develop early mathematical skills very well. They have numerous opportunities to count, for example, when constructing a tower. As a result they confidently count up to 20. Their knowledge of shape is excellent and some can name more complex three-dimensional shapes such as cones and cylinders. Junior school pupils develop an excellent understanding of number and place value in mathematics. This was demonstrated very effectively in Year 5, when pupils used their deep understanding about how to place decimals on a place value chart, including representation of tenths and hundredths as decimals. This competency enables them to understand the connections between, for example, multiplication and division. Senior school pupils use excellent reasoning skills very competently to look at problems from different angles and think outside the box. For example, in Year 8 they skilfully use estimation when they calculate area and volume. Pupils apply numeracy very well to a range of subjects. For example, in Year 10 physics, pupils applied their mathematical understanding successfully in the context of calculating radioactive half-life.
- 3.9 Pupils across the school develop excellent knowledge and understanding through the application of learning gained and practical activities. Children's physical development in the EYFS is excellent due, for example, to the many opportunities they are given to explore with tractors, rollers and big shovels in the large outdoor messy area. They successfully glue small objects accurately on paper to create patterns and designs and effectively learn social skills through imaginative play in the outdoor kitchen

area. Pupils' understanding and skills continue to develop well as they progress through the school. Year 6 scientists explained confidently and in detail that iron nails rust quickly over the weekend whilst galvanised nails do not. Senior school pupils spoke enthusiastically about the model plant and animal cells they make in Year 7 biology. In music pupils adeptly read notation and use correct music terminology to create their own compositions when playing the violin or singing. In Year 9 geography pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding about the measurement of gases and use of seismometers to manage the risk from earthquakes or volcanoes. In Year 10 business studies, pupils showed a very good knowledge of key content and had a strong ability to develop business reasoning skills when they evaluated different routes for business development. Older pupils demonstrate meticulous attention to detail and use of technical skills in creative subjects. For example, they embellished denim jackets using textile techniques and designed brightly coloured and dazzling artwork for a balloon project after researching the style and movement of chosen artists.

- 3.10 Pupils are confident and effective users of information communication technology (ICT) to support their learning across the curriculum. Junior school pupils, for example, showed competence and fluency in their use of ICT to research Norse Gods. They also demonstrated very effectively their ability to create digital codes to move characters or trucks around a map. Pupils have clearly established routines for logging on and working effectively to make the best use of available lesson time. For example, in Year 10 business studies, ICT was used to achieve a high pace of research, collaboration, sending information to their teacher and finally presenting to the whole class.
- 3.11 Pupils develop higher-order skills of analysis and evaluation very effectively. A significant majority are able to think with breadth and depth. They draw on a range of subject-specific and cross-curricular ideas to develop logical chains of reasoning and synthesise arguments successfully. Pupils in junior school music were confident in their application of previous learning and knowledge to tasks. In Year 4, pupils use excellent descriptive writing after analysis of fictional firework inventions and in Year 3 formulate sensible predictions for the effect of light on shadows in science. Senior school pupils use higher order skills very effectively in preparation for upcoming assessments. In Year 10 physics pupils used information from experiments alongside mathematical and scientific skills to evaluate outcomes and synthesise ideas.
- 3.12 Pupils are very successful beyond the classroom. They excel in a wide variety of sports, performing arts and other extra-curricular clubs. Netball and tennis teams have shown success on court at district and regional level. The under 11s won a recent football tournament. Several athletes in both track and field have represented Aldershot in county level championships. Other individual success is achieved in a range of sports including skiing, equestrian, swimming and cross country. Music is a strong feature of pupils' education, with a very large majority of pupils across all year groups playing instruments, including orchestral instruments. Most pupils achieve success in graded examinations, including some at Grade 8. There is a year-on-year increase in numbers entered for LAMDA examinations where the majority achieve distinction and the rest, merit.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils successfully develop a quiet and calm level of high self-esteem, confidence, responsibility and caring attitudes, in line with the school's values. They possess an effective understanding of how they can improve their own learning and performance throughout the curriculum. Pupils know what is expected of them and do not give up easily. Because of this they are confident in, and feel well prepared for, the next stage of their lives. Throughout the inspection, pupils demonstrated high levels of respect, courtesy and consideration for one another. They were keen to achieve well and could articulate their strengths and preferences. Pupils speak in class without fear, and this develops over time and as their self-confidence grows. In Year 7 drama, for example, pupils reflected on their individual performances to gain a deeper understanding of how they could improve in the future.

- 3.15 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of right and wrong. In discussions with inspectors they said that their teachers have high expectations of them and that the school leadership works hard to ensure they are well supported in developing their own moral code. As a result, pupils are respectful of rules and clearly understand the responsibility they have for their own behaviour both in school and wider society. They are considerate when moving about the building, particularly junior school pupils when they walk up and down the narrower stairs in the older parts of the school. Pupils behave well towards one another and they are polite and respectful towards adults and their classmates. They display an excellent and positive attitude to all members of the school community. A small minority of pupils in the questionnaire said that they were not happy at school. Inspectors raised these issues in discussions with pupils; most did not agree with these points of view. Inspection evidence shows that the pupils found lockdown during the pandemic socially and emotionally difficult and it has taken time for some pupils to get back into school routines.
- 3.16 Pupils have an extremely well-developed understanding and tolerance for others who are different from them. They express strongly that they value one another, seeing and appreciating individuals in a natural and unforced way while being mindful of cultural and other differences. The pupils in both the junior and senior school expressed the view that this is a strength of the school and inspection evidence supports this. They are well supported in developing the values and attributes needed to maintain excellent relationships with their classmates. Pupils were keen to explain that they find racism, homophobia and any kind of discrimination unacceptable. Issues of others being different have been considered in many situations and with great care. Pupils across the school learn about different kinds of families and lifestyles. This promotes respect and tolerance well. The positive impact of the diversity group including LGBTQ+ pupils is an example of how pupils educate and support each other on staying safe and promoting equality of opportunity. The diversity group said that they have managed to raise awareness and have thus reduced the potential for prejudicial behaviour.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate an excellent sense of spirituality. They show a very strong level of understanding and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life as well as a well-developed cultural and aesthetic awareness. In Year 10 English, pupils exhibited a real sense of awe and wonder in an excellent discussion about the power of nature in relation to unseen poetry. Pupils of all ages show a mature and reflective understanding of values including care and compassion for one another. They stated that the school leadership promotes a powerful set of values, expecting kindness, service and respect from all, in line with the Christian ethos of the school's foundation, whilst welcoming pupils of all faiths and none. During the inspection pupils showed strong emotions in the final assembly for current Year 11 pupils. There was a compelling and collective sense of joy, happiness and sadness.
- 3.18 In the EYFS, children take responsibility for self-care and making choices as soon as they are ready. Across both junior and senior school pupils choose to handle with great maturity difficult topics such as sex education and relationships. In PSHE they evaluate different real life scenarios with confidence looking for appropriate solutions. Year 10 and 11 pupils have ambitious plans for their futures and are very clear about how to get there. These include finding a love of a subject or extending the scope of a hobby or interest. Older pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding about the career choices they make and how this helps them to select pathways towards medicine or performing arts in sixth form education. They provide helpful workshops for younger pupils about GCSE choices and career pathways.
- 3.19 Pupils collaborate effectively to achieve common goals. There is a sense of strong teamwork both in classwork and on projects that impact on the wider school environment. In the questionnaires almost all pupils said that the school expects them to behave well, and a very large majority of parents said that the school actively promotes good behaviour. Inspection evidence supports these views. Junior school pupils regulate their own behaviour and show high levels of consideration to each other and adults. They play exceptionally well together, talking to each other about what they are doing and use playground equipment safely. Senior pupils are happy to work on projects that help younger pupils. They were enthusiastic in listing the ways that they get involved in larger ventures, sometimes across

age groups, and work to together to achieve success. These include house events in the arts and sports, being members of sports teams, attending clubs and going on residential trips. Pupils were highly collaborative in Year 10 textiles when using Japanese dyeing techniques on self-made kimonos.

- 3.20 Pupils have a very sophisticated understanding of the importance of considering the views of others. They demonstrate excellent contributions to others in their school community. Pupils are very willing to take on roles and responsibilities that serve others, be this as prefects, house and games captains or as sports leaders in the junior and senior school. They enjoy organising and working on charitable activities. St Nicholas's Day, a day devoted to fundraising across the school is seen as a high point in the year by many pupils. Pupils are kind and desire the best for their peers and others. Older pupils appreciate the need to share ideas and be active listeners. They set an excellent example both academically and pastorally. They enthusiastically carry out community service through the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme.
- 3.21 The pupils have an excellent understanding of the requirements for a healthy balanced lifestyle including the need for a good diet, sufficient exercise and getting enough good quality sleep. Children in the EYFS use equipment safely, for example, they explain to each other how to use the climbing equipment by all travelling across it in the same direction to prevent collisions. They know the importance of washing hands to prevent germs spreading. The school makes suitable provision to support pupils' well-being and mental health. However a small minority of pupils in the questionnaire indicated that they could not speak to an adult at school if they were worried about something. In discussion with pupils, they said that identified staff for them to approach are often the same people who manage discipline and sanctions in the school. They showed limited understanding about being able to approach any member of staff or expressed the view that other staff may be too busy to give them the amount of time needed to help them. An overwhelming majority of parents and pupils, in the questionnaire, agree that the school provides a safe environment to learn. Pupils across the school know how to stay safe and have embraced support on internet safety and the importance of exercise.

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 form meetings and 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 Desmond Dunne	Reporting inspector
Mr Stephen Challoner	Compliance team inspector (Former director of staffing, HMC school)
Mrs Shona Colaco	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Stephen Holroyd	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)