



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Ayscoughfee Hall School

September 2021

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School's Details

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| School | Ayscoughfee Hall School |
| DfE number | 925/6020 |
| Registered charity number | 527294 |
| Address | Ayscoughfee Hall School Welland Hall London Road Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 2TE |
| Telephone number | 01775 724733 |
| Email address | admin@ahs.me.uk |
| Headteacher | Mrs Theresa Wright |
| Chair of governors | Mr Hugh Baker |
| Age range | 3 to 11 |
| Number of pupils on roll | 121 |
| Inspection dates | 21 to 24 September 2021 |

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Ayscoughfee Hall School is an independent, non-selective co-educational day school for pupils aged between 3 and 11. The school was founded in 1920 as the kindergarten and later the preparatory department of Spalding Girls' High School, becoming a school in its own right in 1958. The school is a company limited by guarantee and overseen by a board of governors. Since the last inspection the newly refurbished Infant centenary block has been opened. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2021.
- 1.2 During the period March to June 2020, the school remained open only for children of key workers.
- 1.3 During this period of closure the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.4 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.5 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.7 Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.8 Ayscoughfee Hall School aims to provide a caring, supportive family environment where young people are educated to be tolerant, socially responsible and independent of mind, equipping them with the skills to succeed in an ever-changing world. The school aims to provide a broad-based education to the highest standard, achieved by excellent teaching and small class size, so that every child can achieve their full potential. Throughout the school there is a twofold purpose: to enable the children to learn as much as possible according to their individual abilities, and to be happy in an environment of learning.

About the pupils

- 1.9 Pupils are mainly from the local area. Data provided by the school indicates that the ability profile of the pupils is above average. The school has identified eight pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), five of whom receive additional specialist support in school. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupils have been identified as having English as an additional language (EAL) or requiring additional specialist support in school. Children with particular gifts and talents are given opportunities to excel. Data used by the school have identified 14 pupils in this category and interventions are in place to extend these children further.

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 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. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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](#).

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

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and 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. 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> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Kindergarten | Nursery |

Key findings

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

- The attainment of pupils of all ages and abilities is excellent and well above average for their age.
- Pupils throughout the school make rapid progress and show highly developed skills, knowledge and understanding across the full range of their subjects.
- Pupils' communication skills are excellent; they are articulate, listen attentively and write fluently.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding, both when working collaboratively and when working independently.

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

- Pupils display strong self-awareness, perseverance and motivation to improve their learning and performance.
- Behaviour throughout the school is outstanding because pupils respond well to the school's values and ethos founded on respect for, and kindness to, others.
- Pupils mix well across all age groups and are highly supportive of each other as a result of the strong family ethos within the school.
- Pupils have ample opportunities to take on roles of responsibility, making a very positive contribution to their school and the wider community.

Recommendation

3.3 In light of the excellent outcomes for the pupils, the school might wish to consider the following recommendation:

- Create a whole school approach which enables all pupils to develop their ability to think independently and critically.

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, including those with SEND and those who are more able, make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and attainment is well above the average for their ages. Data provided by the school show that the ability of pupils on entry to the school is varied, reflecting the school's non-selective ethos. However, pupils make rapid progress in all skill areas as a result of the small classes and the individual attention given to them by their teachers and assistants. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that teaching enabled their children to make progress.
- 3.6 Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are excellent with almost all achieving, and a large majority exceeding, their early learning goals by the end of their reception year. Year 6 pupils achieve highly in external examinations and the vast majority secure places at their preferred choice of secondary school. Pupils with SEND achieve in line with their peers as they are extremely well supported by teachers who understand their needs well. Pupils commented how well they feel the school prepares them for success in examinations and that they feel confident and excited about progression to their next school.
- 3.7 Pupils in all year groups display highly developed skills, knowledge and understanding across the full range of their subjects as a result of a broad and balanced curriculum, which also includes an extensive outdoor education programme. They are quick to recall information learnt and to apply this to help their understanding in different areas. They respond well to open-ended questioning and activities which require them to think independently and draw their own conclusions. For example older pupils drew on their scientific, mathematical and geographical knowledge to plan and construct models of buildings which could withstand an earthquake. In a Spanish lesson, older pupils made excellent use of their knowledge of cognates and prior learning to understand and translate into English a previously unseen passage of Spanish.
- 3.8 Pupils show particularly well developed scientific skills as they benefit from regular investigative and practical work which challenges them to plan their experiments, predict likely outcomes and analyse results. For example when older pupils planned an experiment to investigate reversible and irreversible change, observing the reaction produced when mixing bicarbonate of soda and vinegar.
- 3.9 Pupils of all ages make excellent progress in artistic skills, as evidenced in the displays of high quality artwork around the school and in pupils' success in national art competitions. Pupils demonstrate good physical skills which are developed through broad sports provision both within and beyond the curriculum. They achieve a good measure of success in individual and team sports in local leagues and competitions.
- 3.10 Pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are extremely well developed. Pupils develop highly effective communication skills, and they express themselves clearly and concisely. They listen attentively to instructions and present confidently to the class, encouraged by the many opportunities provided for them to do so. In all lessons observed, pupils willingly answer questions and are keen to express their views. This is supported by teaching that creates a learning environment in which pupils feel comfortable to take risks without fear of making mistakes. From a very young age, pupils develop confidence in their use of French and Spanish, speaking with authentic accents and showing excellent understanding of written and spoken language.
- 3.11 Pupils become fluent readers from a very early age, encouraged by school leaders' provision of reading challenges and the availability of an extensive range of reading resources in the new infant and junior libraries. This helps pupils to develop a sophisticated vocabulary which they use confidently in their writing. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows the excellent progress they make over time in writing as a consequence of the school-wide initiative to address this area. Younger pupils were seen to use similes very effectively to create vivid descriptions of dinosaurs, writing with increasing accuracy in spelling

and punctuation. Older pupils put forward well considered and carefully researched arguments on why their chosen landmark should be saved. More able pupils extend their skills through opportunities and encouragement to enter their work into national poetry and creative writing competitions.

- 3.12 Pupils develop excellent numeracy skills and apply their mathematics skills effectively and confidently across a range of subjects to analyse and solve problems. For example, in a cookery lesson younger pupils measure liquids and weigh solid ingredients accurately, while older pupils use data-logging equipment to record, compare and evaluate noise, light and temperature levels in classrooms. Pupils enjoy using numbers and are excited by the challenge of learning multiplication and division in order to gain their times table *taekwondo* awards. This helps to develop further their excellent skills. In discussion, pupils spoke of the satisfaction and pride they feel when they manage to complete challenging mathematical problems. This is because teachers set high expectations and challenge pupils in innovative ways in order to develop their mathematical reasoning skills. Older pupils enjoy contributing to the *correction board* on which they spot mistakes in calculations and problem solving and provide their own solution and explanation. All pupils develop their skills when working out solutions to the weekly *brain teaser* which is displayed in the school entrance. Additional challenge is provided for more able mathematicians through the maths extension programme, and many have achieved success in the National Primary Maths Challenge.
- 3.13 Pupils develop excellent proficiency at using a range of technology to extend their learning across all subjects. They build research, presentation and data-handling skills and are strong in using video technology to evaluate and improve their performance. For example, pupils recorded poetry recitals in English and then used QR codes to share and have their peers assess their work. In a Spanish lesson, pupils created animated videos to practise vocabulary for descriptions of people. In a further example one pupil taught his peers how to use and create stop motion animation for use in creating their own short films. Pupils have been supported in the development of their excellent ICT skills by school leaders' and governors' investing in and adopting a forward thinking approach to technology, fulfilling the school's aim of equipping pupils with the skills to succeed in an ever-changing world.
- 3.14 Pupils' attitudes to learning throughout the school are excellent, whether they are working individually, in pairs or in groups. They work purposefully and with great enthusiasm. All pupils are keen, focused and engaged, particularly when the teaching is fast-paced, and they are actively involved in their learning. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for their own learning and they are excited by tasks where they work collaboratively to solve problems, and which require them to think and reason logically and critically. For example, younger pupils draw on their learning about the body in a science lesson to create their own skeletons with materials found in the woodland learning environment, and then apply their knowledge highly effectively to describe to their peers the different body parts and their uses. In a small number of lessons learning is too closely directed by the teacher and, as a result, opportunities for pupils to develop their independent thinking are missed.
- 3.15 Observations of lessons, discussions with pupils and comments in the pre-inspection questionnaires show that pupils acquire excellent study skills because their teachers and assistants set high expectations of them and have a good understanding of each child. In almost all lessons observed, pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding through the teacher's individual questioning targeted to each pupils' needs. This ensures that the school achieves its aim to enable the children to learn as much as possible according to their individual abilities, and to be happy in an environment of learning.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.16 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.17 As they progress through the school pupils develop an excellent awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Individual feedback from their teachers in lessons and in their notebooks, along with regular setting and review of their personal targets, means that pupils are reflective and have an

excellent understanding of what they need to do to improve. This was confirmed in discussion with pupils where they articulate very clearly their targets for each of their subjects.

- 3.18 Pupils show high levels of motivation and resilience when faced with challenges. This was particularly apparent in a maths lesson where older pupils showed great tenacity when faced with complex mathematical problems requiring them to explain their answers when adding and subtracting with decimals. Pupils gain confidence through the praise and encouragement given by their teachers and by their fellow pupils, reassured by knowing that it is acceptable to make mistakes, as stated by a pupil on a classroom display: *Mistakes help me learn. We all make them. It's OK.*
- 3.19 Pupils develop self-confidence, knowing that there is someone to turn to for support if needed. They gain comfort from the school leaders' introduction of the *scoop me up* board in each classroom, and from writing a note on their work if they have struggled with a topic, confident that support will be readily available to them. One pupil commented on how much remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic helped him to become more resilient because he had to work things out for himself without anyone on hand to ask.
- 3.20 From an early age, pupils learn to make decisions determining their own future success and well-being. Children in EYFS settle and apply themselves quickly to their selected activity and cooperate effectively when tidying away resources. Pupils of all ages reflect on their understanding in lessons and then choose the appropriate level of task for their ability. Pupils develop and show high level decision-making skills, as seen when they plan and design their own solutions to tasks set in the outdoor curriculum.
- 3.21 Pupils are mature and reflective and show strong self-discipline in lessons and at play. Led by the excellent example of the older pupils, they take responsibility for maintaining a calm and purposeful atmosphere around school. Pupils said that the school values, represented by the word 'pride', help to guide them in making the right decisions with the letter 'D' standing for 'Do the right thing'. School leaders and governors have succeeded in creating an ethos where pupils try to resolve problems independently, with the safety net of having approachable staff who will listen to them and help work through problems together. This was confirmed in discussion with a group of older pupils who talked very maturely about how they were able to resolve a disagreement by getting together and talking about it with a teacher. Pupils are actively involved in decision making, through school council and eco council, and see the benefits those decisions can have on their fellow pupils. For example they agreed arrangements such as for managing the lunch queue, the introduction of a more practical school bag, and strategies for reducing electricity consumption. Pupils readily put forward their ideas to the 'ideas box' which helps them to understand the importance of participation and of collective decision-making.
- 3.22 Pupils develop an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects of life through exploration of the natural world within the school grounds and beyond. Children in the EYFS respond to changes in nature such as analysing the colours of a rainbow, splashing in puddles after a heavy downpour and examining the morning dew on a spider's web, as a result of teaching that enables such opportunities. Children reflect with maturity and then express their thoughts in their writing and artwork. For example, younger children, inspired by Linda Krantz's book *Only One You*, compiled photographs of the beauty around them, and went on to explore and investigate how ladybirds emerge from larvae, displaying high levels of engagement. Older pupils develop strong spirituality through appreciation of music from different religious festivals and through quiet reflection at the end of assemblies. Pupils commented that timetabled yoga sessions had helped them to relax and reflect, away from their computer, during lockdowns in the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.23 Pupils' behaviour is excellent, underpinned by a strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils nominate their peers weekly for kindness awards in an initiative which was put forward by the pupils themselves; this has enabled an atmosphere of kindness and consideration for others which is palpable throughout the school. Pupils are quick to challenge any unkindness on the rare occasion this occurs. In discussions

pupils were unanimous in singling out kindness as the most important aspect of being a pupil at Ayscoughfee Hall School. This was further confirmed by the pre-inspection questionnaires where a vast majority of parents and pupils who completed the survey agreed that the school promotes positive behaviour.

- 3.24 Pupils show an instinctive tolerance and respect for others, regardless of gender, background, ability or race. Differences are celebrated and the uniqueness of individuals is recognised. Younger pupils learn from the positive example set by older pupils, who fulfil roles as kindness ambassadors, and all the staff who model the respectful and considerate behaviour expected of the whole school community. This reflects the school's aim of developing tolerant, socially responsible young people who are respectful to others. Results of the pre-inspection questionnaires showed that an overwhelming majority of parents and pupils feel that the school promotes the values of respect and tolerance.
- 3.25 Pupils collaborate well and are very supportive of each other in the classroom and at play. They mix extremely well across age groups and there is particularly strong support shown by the older pupils to the younger ones. School leaders' innovative planning of playtimes encourages an ethos of inclusivity and support, with older pupils trusted to support younger ones in the playground, welcoming them into school in the morning and accompanying them to their classroom after lunch. Older pupils have a highly positive impact on the smooth running of the school and are excellent role models for the younger children.
- 3.26 Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff, are exceptionally positive, naturally comfortable, warm and friendly. This has a noticeable impact on creating an environment where the efforts and achievements of all pupils are recognised and celebrated. This was observed in a history lesson where pupils demonstrated excellent collaboration, working in small groups to create models of Indus Valley towns. Pupils listened to each other's ideas, provided support and suggestions, and gave praise and encouragement to other groups.
- 3.27 Pupils enjoy taking on roles of responsibility from a young age. They thrive on the opportunities they are given to take on leadership roles where they can support the school community and promote the ethos of the school, such as kindness ambassadors, prefects, looking after the playground equipment or being members of the *leaf* team who clear the playground of leaves. Pupils readily initiate ideas and take leadership of projects which enhance their own and the wider community. This is because school leaders encourage pupils to put forward their views and contribute. Older pupils' initiatives include visiting residents of local care homes, supporting and working at the local food bank and litter picking in the town. Pupils respond generously to the needs of others, a recent example being one of the youngest pupils leading an assembly to raise awareness and funds to help those affected by the bush fires in Australia. Pupils know that they are listened to and that the school values what they have to offer, fulfilling the aim of developing socially responsible young people.
- 3.28 Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of exercise and diet, and older pupils understand that good mental health is as important as good physical health. This is because school leaders attach high importance to developing healthy bodies and minds and the wellbeing of pupils and staff. The school promotes healthy snacks and provides nutritious lunches alongside allowing pupils to bring their own healthy lunch if they prefer to do so. Pupils benefit from a very well-structured relationships and health education programme which helps them to develop strong awareness of how to keep safe at school and beyond, and what to do if they have any worries about themselves or one of their peers, or if they need support in any way. Almost all pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire said that school is a safe place to be, and this was echoed by parents, many of whom commented on their child feeling happy, safe and valued in school.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff 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. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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|--------------------------|---|
| Mrs Valerie Dunsford MBE | Reporting inspector |
| Mr Ian Martin | Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, ISA school) |
| Mr Andrew Rudkin | Team inspector (Head, ISA school) |