



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

St Faith's at Ash School

November 2022

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School's Details

School	St Faith's at Ash School			
DfE number	886/6059			
Address	St Faith's at Ash School 5 The Street Ash Canterbury Kent CT3 2HH			
Telephone number	01304 813 409			
Email address	info@stfaithprep.com			
Headmaster	Mr Lawrence Groves			
Proprietor	Wishford Schools Group			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	232			
	Nursery	34	Lower School	76
	Upper School	122		
Inspection dates	15 to 17 November 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 St Faith's at Ash School is a co-educational day school situated in a village near Canterbury in East Kent. It was founded in 1987. The proprietor of the school is the executive chairman of the Wishford Schools Group, who is supported by an advisory board. The school comprises the nursery for two to four year-olds, the lower school for four to seven year-olds, and the upper school for seven to eleven year-olds. The nursery and Reception children are accommodated in their own buildings, with access to their own outdoor play space.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection the nursery classrooms have been refurbished and two extra rooms have been added. Nursery pupils can also make use of the wellbeing copse and nature garden throughout the week.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide the best possible pastoral care and ensure that pupils are happy and safe within a stimulating environment. It strives to encourage pupils to become responsible and confident young people, who live up to the school motto *I can and I will*.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, mostly from local villages and towns within a 20-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of pupils is above average for those taking similar tests nationally. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and other conditions, 16 of whom receive additional support. Three pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 21 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified 45 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for other pupils because of their special talents in music, sport and art.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key findings

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

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

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

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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

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

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

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

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

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

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

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

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

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

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

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

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

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

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

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

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

Key findings

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

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Pupils exhibit excellent levels of attainment of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Pupils develop strong communication skills, applying and extending them in many areas of learning.

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

- Pupils are relaxed, polite and well-mannered.
- Pupils are socially aware and so are able to work effectively with others.
- Pupils demonstrate a deep respect for others.
- Pupils show excellent confidence and self-esteem.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Enable pupils to develop their higher order thinking skills by ensuring that opportunities to do so are provided in all lessons.

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' achievements are excellent both in and out of school. This is because they are actively encouraged to develop their individual strengths and passions. Both groups and individuals demonstrate strong achievement in the various sports offered by the school and through the extensive programme of inter-school matches which ensures that all pupils can be involved. Pupils' considerable successes are supported by encouraging teaching. Individuals compete at county levels in golf, table tennis, cricket and swimming and at national level in show jumping, fencing, cheerleading and tennis. This year the girls' football team beat 11 local primary schools in a highly competitive annual tournament. Pupils achieve excellent results in music and drama examinations and they use these high-level skills in the many concerts and performances which occur both in and out of school.

This year the chamber choir performed at Canterbury Cathedral and older pupils have taken part in a concert at London's O2 arena.

- 3.6 Pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning. They exhibit a genuine willingness to engage with their teachers and they know that if they have any particular worry, anxiety or weakness, they will be supported to overcome it. Pupils approach their lessons with great enthusiasm and a willingness to work. In the lessons observed, pupils settled to work purposefully and calmly as a result of the positive relationships between the pupils themselves. Their considerable success is a result of the evident ethos of working hard, following clear instructions and having their progress closely monitored by teachers.
- 3.7 Pupils are effective learners and their positive attitudes are actively promoted by senior leaders. Their excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the key areas of learning, as indicated by the evidence from lesson observations, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of work, together with standardised results in mathematics and English, show that pupils make rapid progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make excellent progress; they are extremely well supported in class and by specialist help. In discussion, pupils with SEND spoke highly of the strong support they receive. More able pupils make rapid progress, benefitting from early identification and subsequent additional challenges in most lessons and activities. Pupils achieve highly in their entry examinations to the senior schools of their choice and are successful in gaining scholarships. This reflects the dedicated work of the school to promote the pupils' all-round education. In recent years, by the end of Reception almost all children have achieved the Early Learning Goals. In their pre-inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents who responded agreed that their child's individual educational needs are met effectively.
- 3.8 Pupils develop excellent communication skills, applying and extending them in many areas of learning. Younger children demonstrate a strong knowledge of the sounds that letters make. By the end of their Reception year many are reading simple stories and writing in short sentences. All pupils speak with confidence to their peers and adults alike because they are given many opportunities to make presentations in lessons and to wider audiences. They listen intently and display a genuine interest in the views and opinions of others. Pupils exhibit excellent reading and writing skills because of the effective support for different abilities and the emphasis placed by leadership and management on monitoring individual progress. Upper school pupils benefit highly from the accelerated reading scheme which pupils report fosters a love of reading and exposure to a variety of literature. Upper school pupils studying the *Ice Palace* by Robert Swindell considered the text carefully, making excellent suggestions about what the author was trying to convey. From an early age pupils develop a love of poetry. Highly emotive poems by the oldest pupils about the experiences of soldiers in World War 1 confirmed a mature and empathetic approach to such harrowing times. These pupils also exhibit strong debating skills with a mature understanding of how to promote and oppose views.
- 3.9 Throughout the school pupils achieve a high standard in mathematics. By the end of Reception most children can order numbers up to 100 and can recognise three-dimensional shapes such as a sphere, cone and cuboid. As they move up the school pupils of all abilities show excellent competency in mathematics as a result of the very high expectations set by teachers. Their strong understanding of mathematical processes is aided by the frequent opportunities to consolidate skills taught in previous lessons. Pupils in their final year can master a wide range of mathematical concepts; their calculations are neatly laid out and accurate and involve both numerical and graphical representation. Upper school pupils show an excellent understanding of how to simplify fractions and find ratios and they apply these skills effectively to problem-solving. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge skilfully in other areas of the curriculum, such as art, science and geography. Older pupils successfully develop

their mathematical skills further through online challenges and recently a team of mathematicians took first place in an inter-school maths competition involving five other teams from local schools.

- 3.10 Pupils are highly skilled in using and applying information and communication technology (ICT) as a result of the school's initiative to develop a digital strategy. Pupils in Year 4 and above use their personal tablet computers effectively to develop skills in handling data, number work, the use of presentation software, coding, emailing and research. Pupils understand the difference between ICT as a subject and ICT as a support to their learning and they embrace both readily. For example, pupils in technology club were observed learning about programming using an online coding tool effectively to create complicated games. In an ICT lesson pupils used devices confidently to enhance their learning on stop and go animation.
- 3.11 Strong skills and understanding in the core subjects are developed as pupils progress through the school and they gain a highly-developed fund of knowledge and strong investigative skills. Their understanding is facilitated by thorough teaching and careful planning to provide a range of stimulating activities. They gain confidence from the opportunities to begin learning Mandarin, Latin, French, German and Spanish, and in discussions older pupils expressed their enjoyment in using these languages and discovering their associated cultures. Younger pupils showed real ability in following simple instructions in German and successfully recalled the correct words for family members. Pupils gain a wide body of knowledge in their humanities lessons. For example, Year 3 pupils showed an excellent understanding of different types of rocks using key vocabulary. Pupils show good understanding in science and they develop their practical skills further through the very popular science, technology, engineering, arts, and maths (STEAM) days. Pupils exhibit good skills in art. They demonstrated a strong understanding of proportion in their sculptures based on the work of Giacometti and successfully produced their own surreal collaged landscapes in the style of Hannah Hoch. Pupils achieve highly in music, gaining excellent musical knowledge through their curriculum lessons which include tuition on the violin, trumpet and recorder.
- 3.12 Pupils of all ages develop strong study skills which they apply successfully to all areas of the curriculum. Children in the nursery and Reception classes develop keen observation and questioning skills as they explore the wide range of activities provided within the setting. Pupils work well collaboratively, as seen when groups of mixed age were tasked to design and build a form of water pump in order to make water flow uphill. Older pupils can analyse and hypothesise confidently as was evidenced when the oldest pupils were working together in a focus group to solve how many ways knights could sit round a table. They show good experimental skills, such as when testing different lengths of wire to see whether it makes a difference to the sound a buzzer emits in the circuits they create. When given the opportunity, pupils work well both independently and in groups to gather and present information to their peers. Research tasks and challenges are encouraged through activities in history and geography where tasks which are set in lessons are always carefully structured and advice and support is provided promptly to ensure all members of the group achieve at a high level. Occasionally this support is so readily forthcoming that it can impact negatively on the opportunities for pupils to think independently and make their own decisions.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate an excellent standard of moral development. The strong pastoral care which they receive encourages them to be polite and well-mannered. The prevailing culture within the school is one of mutual respect and tolerance, and pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong. Pupils willingly follow the school rules which encourage them to be safe, kind, honest, the best they can be and to make wise choice. These life habits are embedded from an early age. Pupils subscribe to the school's

sanctions system, which they overwhelmingly confirmed in their questionnaire responses. The oldest pupils acquire a strong understanding of the laws of the land through their work in personal, social and health education [PSHE] and religious studies (RS).

- 3.15 Pupils' decision making is very well developed because they are encouraged to exercise choice in their lessons as they decide which level of challenge might best enhance their learning, which activities to attend on Fab Friday and what to select for lunch. Across the school pupils make informed choices about participation in extra-curricular activities to extend their interests. Pupils understand the democratic process and are effectively involved in key decision making, including the election of pupils to the many positions of responsibility that are available. House captains encourage members of their houses to choose which charities they would like to support. Upper school pupils showed excellent independent choice as they listened to three very different renditions of Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue* and then gave reasons for selecting their favourite. Younger pupils made excellent decisions as they discussed how to improve their plans in a role play of the gunpowder plot.
- 3.16 Pupils have strong social skills so are able to work extremely effectively with others to solve problems and work towards common goals. Children in the nursery and Reception classes move around calmly in their setting, sharing resources and helping one another. Older pupils enjoy working with those lower down the school whether through reading activities, creating collages in the nature garden, by working as playground monitors or sharing their skills on STEAM days. Pupils benefit from further collaborative opportunities through the very many teambuilding activities available on residential trips. Older pupils exhibit the maturity to offer each other constructive advice as seen when they marked each other's work in mathematics and when they demonstrated highly successful teamwork in games. In all group work observed by inspectors, pupils listened to each other and demonstrated strong skills of negotiation and compromise, articulating their opinions with confidence and balanced reasoning. Across the school, pupils exhibit high levels of co-operation in their shared learning.
- 3.17 Pupils develop strong spiritual awareness through the opportunities they are given to appreciate the world around them. The caring nature of the school is promoted consistently in all aspects of school life and in particular by the staff, who act as excellent role models. Assemblies offer time for thinking and often include song and prayer. Time for quiet reflection is provided within the week when pupils can be still and listen to classical music. Such activities enable the pupils to value moments of calm. A whole school Remembrance Service brought the entire community together to show their respect for soldiers' bravery. Even the two year old children stood respectfully for a two minute silence. Younger pupils were asked to consider what spirituality meant to them, responses such as watching the sun setting and seeing a rainbow overhead illustrated their developing understanding. In discussions older pupils reported that mindfulness sessions develop their feelings of spirituality and allow them to consider the non-material aspects of life.
- 3.18 Pupils show a deep respect for others and mix readily with pupils of other nationalities, backgrounds and beliefs. Pupils' strong appreciation and secure understanding of cultural traditions different from their own are gained as a result of their work in PSHE and RS lessons and through cultural events in school. Pupils gain a greater insight into other religions as they enjoy many special events marking the major festivals of world faith and cultures. For example, younger pupils made Diwali lanterns and class pupils who are members of the Hindu religion spoke formally to their peers about their traditions and celebrations. In the questionnaire, all parents who responded agree that the school acts effectively when pupils use unkind or prejudiced language to each other, for example comments about gender, ethnicity or faith.
- 3.19 Pupils understand how to stay safe and healthy. The proprietor and senior leaders place high priority on creating a school environment where pupils feel happy and secure. Pupils have an excellent understanding of online safety, confirmed by their unanimous responses in the questionnaire. Pupils know what constitutes a healthy lunch and they report that they are constantly reminded to keep

hydrated by drinking water. They understand the importance of eating fruit and vegetables. Pupils are aware that regular exercise plays an important role in staying healthy, and the school provides them with many opportunities to take part in physical activities. They appreciate how to remain in good health mentally, supported by the staff's close monitoring.

- 3.20 Pupils take a pride in the means by which they are able to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. The oldest pupils willingly and proudly accept positions of responsibility in the school, carrying out their duties with extreme competence. They actively fundraise for local and worldwide charities and they show a keen understanding of how fortunate they are. This well-developed sense of social responsibility is strengthened through the work of the school council and its members are forthcoming in suggesting changes they would like to see in the school; for example, successfully requesting that the new timings of break due to the building works be reconsidered. Pupils take a strong steer in environmental issues. They appreciate the damage litter can cause and eco-committee members have organised an imminent litter collection in Ash village to address this problem. Older pupils gain responsibility and learn to be considerate and caring through organising various initiatives for the local elderly community such as inviting them into the school for special events and visiting them at their home to sing Christmas carols.
- 3.21 Pupils show excellent confidence and self-esteem which is promoted through a broad curriculum, initiated by school leaders and fully supported by the proprietor. Through this curriculum they are introduced to a wide range of subjects which enables them to sample new experiences. Pupils exhibit strong positivity which is nurtured through the aims of the school's *Language of Learning*. This is an everyday common set of goals for pupils and staff which is embedded within the culture of the school. Pupils of all ages exhibit pride as they receive awards in assembly to acknowledge success. They benefit from the school's promotion of them agreeing their next steps for improvement through discussions, assessments and reports which support their progress. Pupils' excellent resilience and self-discipline are fostered further through an exciting programme of residential trips for upper school pupils, where activities such as abseiling and rope climbing require perseverance and self-belief. In discussions pupils reported that they feel strongly motivated always to try their best and consequently they have the determination to succeed. Pupils exhibit complete commitment to the school motto *I can and I will*, important attitudes which prepare them well for their future.

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 proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended a form meeting. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support area. They 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

Mrs Bridget Windley	Reporting inspector
Mr Michael Clennett	Compliance team inspector (Former acting head, GSA school)
Mr Malcolm Gough	Team inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)