



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

RIDDLESWORTH HALL SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Riddlesworth Hall School			
DfE number	926/6000			
Address	Riddlesworth Hall Hall Lane Diss Norfolk IP22 2TA			
Telephone number	01953 681246			
Email address	hmsec@riddlesworthhall.com			
Principal	Mrs. Susan Hayes			
Proprietor	Col. Keith Boulter			
Age range	2 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	77			
	Boys	38	Girls	39
	Day pupils	61	Boarders	16
	EYFS	24	Pre-Prep	13
	Prep	40	Sixth Form	
Inspection dates	01 to 02 March 2017			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

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

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Diane Gardiner

Reporting inspector

Mr Michael Higham

Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Founded in 1946 the school occupies a large Victorian house on a site of approximately 30 acres ten miles from Diss, in Norfolk. In 2016, the ownership of the school transferred to the Confucius International Education Group, who currently devolve day to day responsibility for governance to a local proprietor.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new head in January 2017 and split the role of deputy head into academic and pastoral roles. The staff has been further extended by the addition of a specialist EAL teacher. The school has been re-branded and a programme of refurbishment put in place including the addition of a new ICT suite with fibre-optic link. A woodland garden has been created for the EYFS, and the curriculum now includes Mandarin and outdoor learning for all pupils. Boarders are accommodated on the upper floors of the main house.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to offer a stimulating, secure and happy environment. It aims to nurture every pupil as an individual to enable them to find their niche strength and to help them to develop firm foundations for the future.
- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds. The majority are from white British families living within a 15-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly average. The school has identified seven pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, autistic spectrum disorder and Downs syndrome, all of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for sixteen pupils, whose needs are supported by a full-time specialist teacher, both in the classroom and during one- to-one teaching sessions. Data used by the school have identified three 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 sport, music and drama.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a Standard Inspection in February 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
 - Consider ways to enable staff, both in the EYFS and in the main school, to receive more training, including in the use of ICT and teaching approaches for pupils with LDD, and to have time for peer review and the sharing of good practice.
 - Develop an overall strategic plan through collaboration between senior management and the principal.
 - Extend and improve the website, as a more effective means of communication with parents and others.

- When funds are available, complete the refurbishment of the school's boarding accommodation and the necessary work to incorporate the woodland garden and its access in the EYFS secure area.
- 1.7 The school has fully met the recommendations to develop an overall collaborative strategic plan. It has developed the website and is now in the process of improving it further. It has undertaken a significant refurbishment programme of the boarding house and has completed the woodland garden with access to the EYFS secure area. The school has partially addressed the recommendation to allow more time for staff to share good practice and undertake more training.
- 1.8 The recommendations of the intermediate boarding inspection in January 2013 were:
- Review the evaluation of boarding practice by all parties involved, considering how this can be formalised, linking targets identified to the boarding development plan.
 - Improve the electronic communication arrangements for boarders to contact their families.
- 1.9 The school has fully met the recommendation to improve the electronic communication arrangements for boarders to contact their families through providing a secure fibre optic link to the school. It has partially addressed the recommendations to review the evaluation of boarding practice by all parties concerned, linking any targets identified to the boarding development plan.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Across the school pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning, are independent, work well collaboratively and show initiative to take their learning forward.
- The pupils' progress in mathematics across the age range is a strength of the school. From an early stage pupils develop a strong understanding of number and calculation and can apply their skills across other areas of learning.
- From an early age, pupils develop strong skills for investigation, prediction and research.
- Pupils with different learning needs do not always achieve at the highest levels due to an inconsistent application of appropriate approaches to learning.

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

- Pupils self-esteem is high. They are resilient and understand that making mistakes is positive in relation to their own self-improvement.
- Pupils have a strong sense of responsibility for their own behaviour and a collective responsibility which enables them to reflect effectively on how their behaviour impacts on others.
- Pupils of all nationalities and ages support each other, work together effectively to achieve common goals and respect differences in cultures and faith.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Develop a coordinated process of systematic assessment and use the resulting data and observations to inform planning.
- Develop opportunities for the sharing of good practice within the school and further professional development.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team to ensure they have the time to carry out their roles effectively.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 The school is successful in meeting its aim to enable pupils to achieve well and make good progress in relation to those of similar ability.
- 3.3 Children in EYFS make good progress from their particular starting points. Their individual interests and aptitudes are recognised at an early stage and used to develop a programme of interesting and engaging activities to personalise their learning as well as showing flexibility when children show interest in particular areas. This was exemplified as children in Reception independently developed an art session into a science exploration of how water flows. They worked together effectively to design their own experiments, organised the equipment and moved their understanding forward as a result of the adaptability and understanding of the staff. Their progress is carefully tracked and where appropriate, interventions put in place to support and reduce any gaps that are evident. Children enjoy their learning and quickly develop skills that help them understand that they can make their own decisions, as was seen in a session in the woodland classroom where they decided which resources to use for the particular activities they had chosen.
- 3.4 The results of standardised tests, lesson observations and scrutiny of books indicate that older pupils make good progress from their individual starting points over time. They are well supported in class to personalise learning, as demonstrated as they prepare for examinations in mathematics. They are being given specific tasks to address any gaps or areas for improvement. Pupils have all gained places at senior schools of their choice, some with awards for drama, sport and music.
- 3.5 Pupils with SEND and EAL make at least good progress in relation to their starting points. Progress for pupils with SEND is supported by interventions such as extra group work with a specialist teacher and through targeted activities in class. Pupils with EAL make good progress due to the newly introduced EAL department, which offers support both in the classroom and in individual and group sessions outside the classroom. In some lessons, more able pupils extend their learning through the opportunities provided through individually targeted activities such as investigating the external angles of irregular polygons and through research projects such as investigative work on famous scientists. However, a fully co-ordinated and systematic approach to tracking pupils' progress across all areas of the curriculum is not yet in place. The school has gone some way to meet the recommendation from the previous inspection to enable staff to receive more training, including in the use of ICT and teaching approaches for pupils with SEND. However, consistency in the use of appropriate strategies is not securely embedded due to the limited time available for the sharing of good practice and senior leaders having insufficient time for effective monitoring and support.
- 3.6 From the EYFS onwards, pupils develop strong skills for investigation, prediction and research which is achieved through careful lesson planning, focused on providing opportunities for independent learning. This was observed in an EYFS lesson where pupils were enthusiastically exploring the effects of rain on their painting and where older pupils were researching the limiting factors for life on Mars and were able to predict solutions to these problems.
- 3.7 Throughout the school pupils consistently apply their particular skills for communication to the best of their ability. In EYFS children demonstrate good acquisition of phonic knowledge and skill, which supports their development as confident readers and writers across all subjects. Older pupils successfully demonstrated well-developed skills for writing for a range of purposes, including story writing, acrostic poetry, factual descriptions and persuasive writing. They show that they are able to edit and re-draft their work seeing this as a way of improving

the outcome for the reader. Their success is a consequence of a planned, systematic approach to learning basic skills for reading and writing.

- 3.8 The pupils' excellent skills and progress in mathematics across the age range is a strength of the school. From an early stage pupils enjoy their lessons and develop a strong understanding of number and calculation and can apply their skills across other areas of learning; moving easily from the practical to an abstract understanding of particular concepts. Pupils worked together to calculate the mean from a group of numbers using money, and used their mental arithmetic skills to work out the length of time between different historical events. Pupils show great resilience when problem solving, for example when using Venn diagrams to calculate highest common factors and lowest common multiples.
- 3.9 Pupils are competent in their use of ICT across a range of subjects. In lessons where ICT is regularly used, the pace of pupils' learning is increased and they confidently use a range of applications which they apply across the subject range. This was evident as pupils created a website for the school including sections on boarding, activities and general news and as older pupils printed off a design for screen printing onto a T-shirt. Increased use of ICT has been enabled through the provision of a secure internet connection, improved hardware and good curriculum planning which includes the use of ICT in an integrated manner; this is not yet consistently applied across all subject areas.
- 3.10 Pupils develop good study skills as they move through the school. They understand that failing is a good way of learning more and that this is a positive skill for the future. Good strategies are in place in some subject areas to encourage pupils to have high expectations of themselves and evaluate their own progress. Pupils develop good skills for hypothesis and can analyse data to come up with solutions to problems, using a range of sources to extend their learning and develop their research skills. In the EYFS, children were able to hypothesise confidently about the effect of water on paper, and older pupils used a wide range of sources to explore the role of parliament now and in the time of Charles I.
- 3.11 Pupils are particularly successful in the performing arts, undertaking challenging productions in which every child from the age of seven is actively involved, either as performers or working backstage to manage the practical elements of such an undertaking. Their enjoyment and enthusiasm for performance was clearly evident as they rehearsed for a production of *The Lion King*. The three school choirs perform regularly in school, in local churches and on local and national festivals. Pupils enthusiastically participate in drama activities including when preparing for external examinations for which some pupils are working towards their bronze, silver and gold awards.
- 3.12 As they mature, pupils develop their sporting ability to an increasingly strong level. Increased opportunities to develop their skills for a range of sports has resulted in the school teams achieving good results in local matches and tournaments. The sport and fixture programme is strong for boys and girls, and the extensive grounds and facilities such as the woodland school give them many opportunities to develop team building and physical skills. Pupils develop their own particular sporting interests through opportunities to take part in a good range of individual sports such as swimming and trampolining. The pupils for whom team sports are less attractive have developed strong self-esteem through the good range of extra-curricular activities available. Pupils' individual talents are supported outside the activities programme through opportunities for extra practice or coaching. A broad range of activities for boarders in the evenings and at weekends contributes positively to their overall experience.
- 3.13 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. Across all age groups pupils show great enthusiasm for their learning, are keen to take an active part in lessons and are diligent in each task or

activity. From an early stage, they are willing to take the initiative and demonstrate very good levels of independence for their age. As a result, they demonstrate a well-developed ability to organise, reflect upon and take their own learning forward. This was seen as the nursery children took responsibility for their own activities, shared out the responsibilities and developed their skill in making mud cakes in the woodland school. Pupils of all ages work extremely well together as they offer suggestions for improvement to the school production and help younger pupils find their place on stage. Mutual support between pupils and between staff and pupils is a strong feature of the school.

- 3.14 The vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were particularly satisfied with the range of subjects provided within the curriculum, the high levels of teaching throughout the school and the information they received about their child's performance and progress. A very small minority of parents felt that there was not a good choice of extra-curricular activities available. The inspection team reviewed the availability of activities and concluded that the number and range was appropriate for the size of the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils develop high levels of self-esteem as they move through the school. They are resilient and develop an excellent range of strategies which allow them to manage their own emotions and academic success. The warm and welcoming day and boarding environment provides a home from home in which boarders and day pupils can thrive. They develop high levels of independence and a collective responsibility for all members of the school community. The excellent structure for pastoral care in the school ensures that pupils are seen as individuals, and when they get things wrong, they receive support that is personal to them. Pupils develop confidence and flexibility through the well-structured personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, a good assembly programme and a wide range of opportunities for them to take on responsibilities within the school community.
- 4.3 From the EYFS onwards, pupils have a strong sense of responsibility for their own behaviour and pupils support each other in a mature way for their age. They are able to reflect effectively on how their behaviour will impact upon others, which allows them to manage their friendships successfully. Pupils organise themselves extremely well from an early age. Older pupils are keen to mentor and support younger pupils, and naturally provide help and advice at play times and when organising numerous house events. They show a mature sense of fairness as they choose who will perform in house concerts, general knowledge quizzes or musical performances, organising and leading rehearsals and the final events themselves. As school council representatives, they gather the ideas of their peers to present to the whole group. This leads to decisions being taken which result in practical improvements to the school community, such as when they requested more waste bins in the play areas and a wider range of resources for the woodland classroom.
- 4.4 An ethos of care between pupils and staff prevails throughout the school. From the EYFS onwards, pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the non-material aspects of life as they enjoy identifying different plants and birdsong in the woodland classroom, or as they reflect upon and articulate their thoughts on spirituality in its broadest sense in interview. Pupils appreciate music and drama and are naturally considerate of the feelings of others including those from different parts of the world. They have a strong awareness of the difference they can make to the natural world and reflect effectively upon various facets of the world in which they live.
- 4.5 From an early age, pupils develop a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Their behaviour is excellent as they have a high regard for the schools' expectations for behaviour and feel that the system of rewards and sanctions, based around the strong house system, is always fairly applied. As a result, they are happy to work within the code of behaviour, even when occasionally they make the wrong decisions. The boarders benefit greatly from the warm family atmosphere of the boarding house, where they learn how to live with others from different parts the world and share their experiences in a safe and supportive community.
- 4.6 Pupils of all nationalities and ages work effectively together, support each other and successfully achieve common goals. The importance of the house system to the pupils and the easy and positive relationships between pupils of all ages and staff are significant factors which actively support the social development of every pupil. The many opportunities they have to play together, solve problems in the woodland classroom in groups or organise charitable fund raising events, ensure that they understand how working as a team results in the best

outcomes. The genuinely caring sense of community within the school and in the boarding house underpins the pupils' social development and understanding of the world.

- 4.7 Across the age range, pupils relish taking on roles and responsibilities within the school community. They embrace opportunities to help develop their self confidence and self-esteem through organising charitable fund raising events and strong links with the local community. Older pupils take on a wide range of practical roles in the school including organising pupils as they enter assembly, monitoring of aspects of lunch and supporting the staff at break times. Older boarders also take on different responsibilities in the boarding house. The pupils have an excellent understanding of the needs of those who are less fortunate than themselves, and animatedly explained which charities they have supported over the year and how they managed to raise money for each of them. Events such as a skipathon and bake sales are common events which the pupils enjoy helping to organise. Pupils have a good understanding of the needs of people in other countries through their work in raising funds for a charity which supplies artificial limbs for young amputees in India to enable them to attend school, and the school's sponsorship of a child in Africa. Pupils enjoy listening about the difference their contributions can make after visits by the local vicar. Pupils also contribute to the wider community by visiting local care homes and singing to the residents and undertaking performances in the local church.
- 4.8 Pupils demonstrate an excellent positive attitude to diversity, integrate well and understand and respect difference in cultures and faith. As they move through the school they develop an increasing awareness of their own culture and that of other world faiths. They enjoy sharing each other's customs and traditions, such as the celebrations for Chinese New Year. Pupils show an excellent awareness of the need to support their new friends from different backgrounds, and take pride in helping them to settle into their new environment as well as ensuring that they are confident and happy.
- 4.9 Pupils develop a secure understanding for what elements are necessary for a balanced lifestyle. An increasing range of strategies are employed by staff to teach pupils how to manage their emotions and deal with periods of stress in their lives. Pupils are keen to show that they make good choices at lunchtime, and understand the need to eat a balanced diet. They make the most of the wide range of opportunities for physical exercise to develop their fitness and use their time in a balanced way to develop a healthy way of life. This is strongly supported by the provision of a well-balanced programme of activities for day and boarding pupils. All staff are responsible for the pastoral needs of the pupils and are supported well to ensure that pupils' individual social, emotional and physical needs are understood and well met.
- 4.10 A vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of the way that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development, and meets their pastoral and welfare needs. They appreciate the way that the school actively promotes good behaviour and promotes the values of democracy, tolerance and respect for those with different faiths or beliefs. A very small minority of parents felt that the school premises and accommodation were not well maintained. The inspectors found that the on-going programme of refurbishment was addressing this concern successfully.
- 4.11 Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. As they leave the school, they are confident and capable young people who are ready to meet their next set of challenges.