



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Barrow Hills Preparatory School

June 2022

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School's Details

School	Barrow Hills School			
DfE number	936/6104			
Registered charity number	311997			
Address	Barrow Hills School Roke Lane Witley Godalming Surrey GU8 5NY			
Telephone number	01428 683639			
Email address	info@barrowhills.org			
Headmaster	Mr Philip Oldroyd			
Chair of governors (Treasurer)	Mrs Justine Voisin			
Age range	2 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	220			
	EYFS	46	Juniors	146
	Seniors	28		
Inspection dates	14 to 17 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Barrow Hills School is an independent co-educational school for day pupils. It was founded as a single-sex boarding school in 1950 by a Josephite community, becoming a co-educational day school in 1990. The school became part of Bridewell Royal Hospital in 2015. Governance is provided by a board of governors, known as the Court of Bridewell.
- 1.2 The school comprises two sections: Pre-Prep, which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for pupils aged 2 to 7 years; and Prep, for pupils aged 7 to 13 years.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has developed the sharing of specialist personnel and facilities with its partner school King Edward's Witley, restructured its senior management team, expanded early years provision and is in the process of relinquishing its Catholic status. The current headmaster took up his position in 2019.
- 1.4 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

- 1.5 The school aims to encourage pupils to work productively in a nurturing and safe environment. It looks to enable pupils to discover what they do best and become even more accomplished, and to contribute actively to the school and wider community. The school seeks to support pupils in developing a strong moral character through living Christian values.

About the pupils

- 1.6 Pupils come from families from a range of professional and business backgrounds. Standardised data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is broadly average, compared with pupils taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 61 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 17 of whom receive additional specialist help. Two pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Six pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), one of whom receives additional support for their English. The school has identified 73 pupils as being the most able in the school's population 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 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 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.
- 2.5 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 have excellent communication skills; they articulate their thoughts clearly and with excellent expression.
- Pupils are very successful within the formal curriculum and beyond.
- Throughout the school, pupils display excellent attitudes to their learning; they are engaged, active learners who devote consistently high levels of application to their work.
- Pupils are highly competent users of information and communication technology (ICT) in their learning.

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

- Pupils have excellent decision-making skills; they make informed decisions based on advice and guidance received and on their own independent research.
- Pupils behave with great courtesy and consideration for others; they have a strong instinct of what is right and wrong.
- Pupils' social development is of the highest quality; they are highly sociable and go out of their way to make visitors welcome.
- Pupils willingly take on roles of responsibility in a wide variety of areas across the school.

Recommendations

3.3 The school should make the following improvements:

- Enable pupils to improve their attainment further by using a tracking system to identify individuals or groups of pupils who would benefit from additional help.
- Enable pupils to improve the standard of their handwriting and presentation by implementing a whole-school approach consistently across all age groups.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Almost all children achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the EYFS. The school's own assessment data indicate that pupils make good progress and that those pupils with EAL make rapid progress from their starting points. There is no significant difference in the overall attainment of

female and male pupils. At the time of the inspection visit, it was not always possible to derive judgements from empirical data because the school has not implemented an integrated system for tracking assessment data across all areas of learning. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and observation of lessons showed that the vast majority of pupils make good progress, and many make excellent progress during their time at the school. Almost all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire agreed that the range of subjects is suitable for their children and that teaching enables their children to make progress. Pupils also confirm, in discussions, that they feel they are making good progress in their learning, overall.

- 3.6 Pupils are consummate communicators in the spoken and written word. Pupils' excellent communication skills are promoted by a curriculum which provides regular opportunities for speaking, listening, reading and writing for practical purposes. They articulate their thoughts, both orally and in writing clearly and with excellent expression, listening carefully and patiently to the views of others in turn and make animated contributions to class discussions. For example, pupils in Year 4 took great pride giving engaging and effective presentations on famous scientists of their choice, which included Ada Lovelace, Alexander Graham Bell and Albert Einstein. Their delivery included questions which engaged their peers and engendered discussion. Scrutiny of work revealed excellent examples of pupil-made revision booklets for final examinations and there were highly competent examples of creative writing in pupils' English work. For example, Pupils in Year 7 produced highly engaging pieces on *A Time I was Brave* and on *How to Survive a Family Holiday*, which used rhetorical questioning, imagery and mood extremely effectively. The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation, however, is variable due to an inconsistency in expectations across the school.
- 3.7 Pupils are very successful within the formal curriculum and beyond. They achieve considerable success in entrance examinations to schools with high standards of entry. A good number of pupils are awarded academic and other competitive scholarships. Pupils participate successfully in a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural activities of both a competitive and a non-competitive nature. They achieve a high number of merits and distinctions in their LAMDA and ABRSM examinations. Organ practice in the school chapel revealed playing of an exceptionally high standard, including self-composed short pieces. Achievement in the UK Maths Challenge includes good numbers of bronze awards in addition to some silver and gold. Almost all parents agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. The school's leadership and governance have been successful in their aim of inspiring in pupils a desire to develop talents and to nurture a diverse range of interests. They are highly supportive of pupils' endeavours and celebrate their wide range of talents and interests in assemblies and other events.
- 3.8 Throughout the school, pupils display excellent attitudes to their learning. They are strongly engaged, active learners who settle quickly and independently in lessons. They demonstrate enjoyment and a consistently strong work ethic in both academic and non-academic work, as well as in extra-curricular activities. This results in excellent outcomes, such as pupils' performances in the highly successful sports day which demanded sustained individual effort to benefit that of the collective house teams. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their enjoyment of the residential trips and the outdoor learning environment as well as intervention and support groups which complement their learning. Excellent collaboration and individual effort were also very evident during an engaging assembly on *Smiling* given by pupils in Year 3 to the whole school. Scrutiny of work revealed effective use of target setting and evaluation by pupils, leading to excellent outcomes in their examination results to senior schools.
- 3.9 Pupils are highly competent users of ICT in their learning. They were observed making frequent and effective use of their laptop computers in a wide variety of lessons, for research, collation of data and presentation of findings. They described how much they enjoyed creating code for producing simple games and how key they feel their access to the school's online learning platform and their devices has been in their learning. Older pupils explained how they used ICT in a recent design-a-theme-park challenge, creating spreadsheets to control their costs and forecasting potential earnings, for example. Pupils in Year 2 made excellent use of their laptops to research the appearance of Cleopatra as they

studied the symbols of power in Egyptian leaders. Although not all pupils make use of touch-typing in their work, they nevertheless develop efficient keyboard skills which enable effective data entry. The governing body has contributed to the successful development of pupils' ICT skills by ensuring that sufficient budgetary priority has been given to facilitating pupils' access to appropriate digital technology.

- 3.10 Leadership has ensured that excellent teaching, high-quality resources and an integrated curriculum provide opportunities for pupils to broaden their wealth of experience and interests. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding develop steadily as they progress through the school, so that by the time they leave, they have a clear knowledge and understanding of how to apply their learning in discrete subjects across the wider spectrum. They are intellectually curious and will challenge their teachers for greater clarity if needed to further their understanding. There is, however, little evidence of pupils' skills in art on display or found in scrutiny of work. Pupils draw successfully on the different skills they have learnt in various subjects. For example, they described how they used their learning in design and technology, science and mathematics when creating their own sausage recipe, learning to fill the casing and twisting the result into professional-looking links. Stimulated by the school sports day into discussing the importance of a healthy lifestyle, pupils in Year 1 used their writing and artistic skills together with their understanding of healthy eating and the need for exercise to make eye-catching and informative posters.
- 3.11 Pupils' numerical competence is of a high standard. From the earliest ages, they develop a clear understanding of cardinal and ordinal number, as seen in a lesson in Reception where the children delighted in avoiding being outwitted by teaching staff as they flashed different number patterns of gingerbread people on the screen. Older pupils keenly compared times for sprint races as they attempted to break school records at sports day and explained how they used quadrats to estimate the number of daisies on the sports field. From understanding, during a Reception outdoor learning session, that butterfly anatomy is symmetrical, to Year 7 pupils' confident mastery of median, mean and manipulation of negative numbers in a mathematics lesson, pupils are confident and at ease with their use of numeracy. Initiatives such as the monthly mathematics challenge and engaging use of innovative teaching promote pupils' excellent outcomes in this area.
- 3.12 Pupils' study skills are well developed as they progress through the school. They make use of a wide range of sources in their work, without an over-reliance on technology. For instance, pupils described reaching instinctively for dictionaries and thesauri when trying to choose the best vocabulary, as these were cited as the most appropriate places to look. Older pupils also explained how they analysed population data for their geography projects, hypothesising why people originally moved to these areas and how a future population might be affected by unforeseen circumstances. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about their ability to predict outcomes, analyse data and evaluate findings in science experiments. Almost all agreed that their teachers know their subjects well and that they know how to help them learn. The school's thinking skills programme has been key to ensuring that pupils are able to develop their higher-order study skills.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have excellent decision-making skills. They understand how the decisions they make can affect their options for achievement. They make informed decisions based on advice and guidance received and on their own independent research. They explained their clear realisation that certain tasks cannot be delayed, especially if they have deadlines, but that other, sometimes more pleasurable distractions, will always be available when the task is complete. They described how guidance from teaching helps them to prioritise their time sensibly and praised the support they receive from the school. They explained, also, that if they do make mistakes, the school's support encourages them to treat these as opportunities to learn.

- 3.15 Throughout all levels of the school, pupils behave with great courtesy and consideration for others. They were observed holding doors open for each other without being asked, offering cheery greetings and showing genuine interest in how each other's day had been. Pupils have a strong instinct for what is right and wrong. They explained that the school both values and expects excellent behaviour and praises them for it. The result is that sanctions are rarely, if ever used. Older pupils discussed personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons where they researched crime and punishment in other countries and prepared individual presentations, for example, on the death penalty in the USA compared to the laws in the UK. Relationships are extremely effective, and a palpable culture of respect and tolerance for others' needs, reflecting the kindly family ethos of the school, pervades all aspects of school life.
- 3.16 Across the entire age range, pupils' social development is of the highest quality. They delight in friendship, working and playing happily together throughout the day. Pupils willingly work together towards common goals both in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are very supportive of each other. This was evident during sports day, where house members across the year groups mixed happily together and were very enthusiastic cheerleaders for their athletes. The youngest pupils were seen to share toys and books willingly with others, without intervention from adults. They are highly sociable and go out of their way to make visitors welcome with a cheerful greeting and a firm handshake. Almost all parents agreed that the school helps their children to develop strong teamwork and social skills. Pupils explained that the school strategy of changing seating positions in class periodically, as well as 'bonding days' where they work with other year groups, helps them to develop successful strategies for working with others.
- 3.17 From the earliest ages, pupils willingly take on roles of responsibility in a wide variety of areas across the school. The youngest pupils gladly offer to count the line to make sure that everyone is present before heading outside for an activity. Older pupils fulfil democratically elected roles in the school council and described their pride that initiative introduced by this group has resulted in tangible change, such as better playground equipment and an increased choice of break-time snacks. The oldest pupils described their excitement at applying for captaincy roles in drama, outdoor learning, sport, music and as heads of school. Others explained their convictions that pupil-led initiatives, such as coat collections for refugees, individual sponsored walks and collections of uniform and stationery for a partner school in Angola, had led directly to improving the lives of others. The school has been successful in its aim of enabling pupils to contribute actively to the school and wider community.
- 3.18 Pupils gain increasingly high levels of self-knowledge and self-esteem as they progress through the school. They explained that they build their self-confidence through grasping opportunities for performing in assemblies and by presenting their work to others. They display an excellent understanding of how to improve their work. In a forest school class, children in Reception were able to consider their achievements using a 'best bit - worst bit', evaluation. Similarly, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were fully aware of their skills and what they needed to do to improve and succeed in a ballet class. Nearly all parents agreed that the school helps their children to be confident and independent. Pupils were effusive in their praise and recognition for teaching which has helped them to believe in themselves and to prepare for their next schools.
- 3.19 Pupils' appreciation of the non-material aspects of life is well developed by the time they leave the school. They explained, in discussions, how they gain a clear understanding that some of the most dear and valuable things, such as friendship, happiness, love and family, as well as seeing beauty in the world around them, cannot be bought. The youngest children were observed marvelling at the myriad colours as the large bubbles they had made at play floated away. Pupils in Year 6 spoke with awe about waking at dawn to watch the sun rise during an outdoor learning campout. Older pupils described with emotion how hearing and singing beautiful music in Arundel Cathedral gave them a feeling of deep joy and fulfilment. The school has been successful in ensuring that pupils are able to take time to reflect and to experience and appreciate the less tangible and more meaningful qualities of life.

- 3.20 Throughout the school, pupils have a strong sense of fair play and were extremely voluble about the importance of tolerance and respect for all. They display excellent understanding and consideration for others, so that relationships are open, productive, and built upon mutual respect. Nearly all parents agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. In their response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils disagreed that pupils in the school are kind and respect each other. Inspectors spoke with large groups during the visit who confirmed that, although there can be occasional disagreements, there is, nevertheless, a culture of kindness and respect in the school. They explained, passionately, that it is not acceptable to judge others on their appearance or their beliefs, but on their personalities and their qualities as human beings. Leadership and governance have ensured that respect and tolerance for diversity are an integral part of life at the school.
- 3.21 Pupils display a clear understanding of the need for exercise, a healthy diet and balance in their daily lives, describing the importance of strong mental as well as physical health. They explained their understanding of what constitutes healthy meal choices clearly as well as how much they appreciated learning, whilst at school, how to create their own healthy snacks at home. They were full of praise for the school's five hours of physical activity in the week and explained that initiatives such as the 'Monday Mile' helped them to perform better during the day. Pupils were also voluble in their support for the 'Happy Hangout' room, to which all are welcome if they feel the need to work through any anxieties. All staff agreed that the leadership promotes the well-being of pupils. The school's recent introduction of the 'Five Steps to Well-being' programme has made a significant impact on helping pupils to learn the skills of self-regulation and in promoting excellent mental health among the school population.

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 a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended chapel. 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 Kerry Lord	Reporting inspector
Mr John Pheasant	Compliance team inspector (Bursar, HMC school)
Mrs Sandra Clements	Team inspector (former deputy head, GDST school)