



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**SILCOATES SCHOOL**

**NOVEMBER 2016**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Silcoates School			
<b>DfE number</b>	384/6027			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1158796			
<b>Address</b>	Silcoates School Wrenthorpe Wakefield West Yorkshire WF2 0PD			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01924 291614			
<b>Email address</b>	head@silcoates.org.uk			
<b>Head</b>	Mr Darryl Wideman			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Mary Chippendale			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils</b>	605			
	<b>Boys</b>	326	<b>Girls</b>	279
	<b>Day pupils</b>	605		
	<b>EYFS</b>	38	<b>Juniors</b>	155
	<b>Seniors</b>	297	<b>Sixth Form</b>	115
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23 to 24 November 2016			

## 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 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 grade descriptors 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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they 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 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 chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Mr John Dunston	Reporting inspector
Mrs Lynn Doughton	Team inspector (Head of department, GSA school)
Mrs Helen Higginson	Team inspector for EYFS (Academic Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mr Tom Keenan	Team inspector (Head of sixth form, HMC school)
Mrs Julie Thompson	Team inspector (Former deputy head, Society of Heads school)
Mr David Williams	Team inspector (Head, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Jill Wood	Team inspector (Head of department, IAPS school)

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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### About the school

- 1.1 Silcoates School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between 3 and 18 years. A single board of governors oversees the work of the school, which is a charitable incorporated trust, supported by committees for education, finance and general purposes and health and safety. Since the previous inspection, the Silcoates School Foundation has been consolidated into Silcoates School, operating on one site. A governors' education committee has been established. The management of both the senior and the junior schools has been restructured.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1828 as the Yorkshire Dissenters' Grammar School and re-founded in 1831 for the sons of Congregational ministers and missionaries. It continues to inculcate principles consistent with its Christian foundation, whilst welcoming pupils of all denominations and faiths. It became a day school in 1995 and, after first admitting girls in the 1980s, became fully co-educational in the early 1990s. The pre-school provides for children from age 3; the junior school educates pupils from ages 4 to 11; and the senior school pupils from 11 to 18, including a distinct sixth form.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide an all-round education with an academic focus, and to encourage positive relationships, strong friendships and the core values of tolerance and understanding, arising from its Christian foundation. It seeks to promote the highest standards of learning and a commitment to personal discovery, with an expectation of excellence from pupils and staff. It further strives to celebrate the breadth of talents that pupils and staff bring to the school.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a variety of professional and business backgrounds, mostly within a 20-mile radius of the school. The school has identified 115 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. Two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), neither of whom requires additional specialist support. Data used by the school has identified 77 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them in lessons and other activities.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report 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>
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.6 The previous inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in November 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Link short term development planning to a whole school strategic plan.
  - Monitor all policies and procedures rigorously, including those related to low level risk management, to ensure they are effectively and consistently applied.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress because lessons are usually well planned and offer opportunities for independent thinking. More able pupils respond well to the challenges provided.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make excellent progress as a result of engaging and enthusiastic teaching.
- Pupils achieve excellent standards in sport and music as a result of high-quality teaching and coaching and because of their commitment and enthusiasm.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning, develop strong communication and study skills and collaborate well with each other.
- Pupils with SEND do not always make consistent progress because their needs are not always identified at an early stage and provision for them is not always suitably adapted.
- The development of pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) is limited because of inconsistent opportunities to apply them in all areas of their learning.

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

- Pupils are confident, tolerant, enthusiastic and committed to all aspects of their school life. They recognise how they benefit from belonging to such a balanced community and are proud of their school.
- Pupils develop considerable self-confidence, benefiting from a culture of praise and encouragement.
- Pupils show notable determination and perseverance, responding well to the demanding challenges in many areas of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, both in and out of school.
- Pupils are selfless, generous-hearted and reflective, which can be seen in their support for numerous charitable causes.
- Pupils show positive attitudes and a strong commitment to healthy living.
- Pupils feel they receive highly effective help and support in preparation for the next stage of their lives.
- Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and contribute much to the well-being of the school and wider community.

### Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Develop a strategy to apply and develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all areas of pupils' learning.
- Ensure that monitoring of teaching helps to spread the existing good practice across the curriculum.
- Continue to improve the consistency of provision for pupils with SEND.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 In line with the school's aims, pupils develop a commitment to their learning and to achieving high standards, as well as a desire to think independently and use all their talents. In response to a pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents felt that the teaching enables their child to make good progress and develop skills for the future and that their child's educational needs were met effectively by the school. In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority of pupils felt that the school gives them the opportunity to learn and make good progress, that teachers are supportive and helpful and that they know how well they are doing in their subjects. Evidence during the inspection from observation of lessons and pupils' work and from discussions with pupils strongly supports these views.
- 3.3 Results in the school's own standardised tests and at GCSE indicate that pupils make progress which is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. At A-level, pupils make progress which is appropriate in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Results in GCSE examinations during the period 2013 to 2015, the most recent period for which comparative data is available, have been above the national average for pupils in maintained schools, and sometimes well above. In IGCSE examinations, results have been above worldwide norms in almost all subjects during the same period. Results in A-level examinations during 2013 to 2015 have been in line with the national average. Inspection evidence from the observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with individual pupils supports these judgements.
- 3.4 More able pupils are identified and given suitable challenge in lessons, such as the use of teachers from the senior school to teach the more able pupils in Year 6 in English and mathematics. Pupils with SEND do not always make such good progress because provision is not always appropriately matched to their needs and, in the past, they have not always been identified at an early stage. The school has recognised that such provision is not consistent, and plans are in place to address this situation. In the EYFS, children make excellent progress as a result of teaching which is enthusiastic and shows engagement, offering constant praise and variety. Almost all reach or exceed the level of development appropriate to their age. Within a short space of time in a phonics lesson, for example, children were involved in singing, mathematics and motor skills development.
- 3.5 Pupils achieve notable success in a wide range of sporting and other activities as a result of the extensive opportunities and the high quality of coaching and tuition. They bring determination and resilience to their sport, regularly representing both school and county, particularly in netball and rugby and, on occasion, participating in an England training camp. Pupils show what is affectionately known as the 'minnow spirit' when playing against teams from much larger schools, and benefit from being inspired to achieve their best and to remain loyal to their sport or activity once they have opted for it. Many pupils achieve success at all levels of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- 3.6 Pupils' musical achievements are strong, as a result of the range and quality of provision. They play or sing in numerous ensembles, including brass and ukulele groups, and individual pupils achieve high grades in external examinations. Many pupils take part in drama activities through local clubs. The school encourages individual pupils to record notable achievements outside school, for example being appointed student organist at a nearby cathedral. Pupils have successfully taken part in debating competitions, both within school and locally. Many pupils complete first aid qualifications in the sixth form.

- 3.7 Pupils make good progress because, in most subjects, lessons are well planned and incorporate an appropriate range of activity and variety of pace. Pupils are encouraged to think independently because of careful questioning. They also ask challenging questions themselves, reflecting their successful understanding of work covered. They respond well to their demanding targets. Older pupils showed an ability to develop complex arguments and analyse data in psychology. In a religious studies lesson, they debated maturely the question of whether the concept of holy war could ever be justified. Pupils are eloquent, enjoy sharing ideas and contribute well to class discussions, particularly when expectations are high and teaching allows pupils to speak for most of the time. They express their views confidently and articulately, using a wide range of vocabulary.
- 3.8 Leaders show a clear vision for the future development of the school, and are held to account by the governors. Both are highly committed to meeting the school's aims. However, the monitoring of teaching does not always ensure that good practice is shared across all subjects and areas of the school. The school has introduced a system of data tracking designed to assess pupils' progress, which supports the development of their skills across the curriculum, particularly in the junior school. In a science lesson in the senior school, pupils were able to understand and implement complex procedures when learning about reflection and refraction. Younger pupils expounded articulately on the life cycle of the butterfly, using advanced vocabulary to refer to its emergence from the chrysalis, and conducted lively debates on the morality of pet ownership and on de-forestation.
- 3.9 In the junior school, pupils show a strong facility for numeracy, including in tutor time, where they were involved in a challenging measuring activity. Younger pupils are able to count backwards fluently. In the EYFS, children developed their counting and calculating skills as a result of an imaginative lesson conducted in the forest setting, involving the use of hands, feet and a tape measure for a variety of measuring tasks. In the senior school, pupils made excellent progress in their understanding of rhythm and reading of musical notation as a result of demanding activities set in a practical lesson using keyboards.
- 3.10 Pupils are confident in their use of ICT. Examples of work carried out on computers are displayed in some classrooms. However, limited evidence was seen of pupils' active use of ICT during lessons or in the work scrutiny. Some teaching has a strong impact on the achievement of pupils and on their independent research capability, enhanced by the recent 'Bring Your Own Device' initiative. This is not yet fully developed across the school. In the junior school, effective use of ICT was seen in a Year 6 control technology lesson and children in the pre-school took photos of themselves before successfully using a paint app to turn themselves into animals.
- 3.11 Enthusiasm, commitment, and perseverance can be seen in pupils' approach to study and the use of their skills and this is actively fostered by teachers in many lessons. They perceive clearly how to learn and improve because they are given clear targets and guidance on how to make progress, supported by their 'attitudes to learning' grades. They have a real thirst for learning, especially in the sixth form where they keep well-organised notes, produce large amounts of work and are able to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise, responding to ideas with independence and drawing logical conclusions from technical data. Pupils show a good quality of higher order thinking, for example, in design technology when working out how puppets work, and in an English lesson when analysing how the position of adverbs in a sentence affects its meaning. They use an appropriate range of vocabulary confidently, and they are encouraged to give their own explanations of subject matter covered rather than simply extracting them from the text books.

- 3.12 Pupils participate enthusiastically in their activities, appreciating the recognition they receive whether in the junior school, where pupils are proud to be awarded 'Presentations' for outstanding achievement, or in the senior school, where the Silcoates Diploma encourages breadth of participation, service, leadership, entrepreneurship and wider interests. Pupils enjoy collaborating and show a positive, engaged attitude to learning, listening carefully to the contributions of others. They take a pride in their work and willingly support other pupils through peer assessment which enhances their progress. The more able pupils support others in the class effectively. They respond well to high expectations when these are set and when given the opportunity to carry out research and to think independently.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils are extremely enthusiastic, happy and hard-working. They show a high degree of self-awareness, an understanding of the world and a recognition of what it means to be human. Pupils feel at the centre of all that the school does, reflecting the school's aim to encourage positive relationships, strong friendships, tolerance and understanding. Pupils in the junior school derive considerable self-confidence from a culture which stresses the importance of praise, and gain further confidence from the use of green and pink comments, which encourage them to think further about the work they have done. They feel valued and supported. In the senior school, self-confidence is enhanced further by the one-to-one meetings held by some subject teachers to help pupils to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Senior pupils frequently mentor younger pupils to help with their personal organisation and any problems they might be facing.
- 4.3 Pupils understand the consequences of decisions they make, recognising the importance of making them in the light of research and information available. In English and history, for example, pupils explore issues in depth as a group before coming to joint conclusions. In Year 11, pupils consider carefully the opportunities available to them in the Sixth Form. In the EYFS, children are encouraged to make their own choice of activities, after analysing the opportunities available. Pupils willingly take responsibility for their choices and decisions.
- 4.4 Considerable determination and perseverance can be seen in pupils throughout the school. They are highly motivated to succeed, yet not cowed by the possibility of failure. They take risks and willingly put themselves in challenging situations. They will not give up. They know the mantras of the school, for example: 'fail to prepare – prepare to fail', and put them into practice. Sixth form pupils persevered in a physics lesson in understanding how crumple zones work in a car, applying data effectively to questions on momentum and coming to agreed conclusions. Older pupils responded with vigour to a challenging circuit training routine. Younger pupils concentrated hard on making different words out of a selection of letters. In music, pupils were determined to use all their fingers in learning to play Beethoven's Ode to Joy on the keyboard, collaborating well with their duet partners. Kinetic activity in a German class helped pupils focus on learning to name parts of the body.
- 4.5 Pupils are selfless, generous-hearted and reflective, and aware of those less fortunate than themselves. They actively support charities both local and national or international, through fund-raising and, for example, older pupils working on the renovation and development of a school in rural Tanzania. They contribute to the local community through work experience, for example in a veterinary practice or in local schools, and the community service element of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- 4.6 They respond to opportunities to reflect upon the non-material aspects of life. They understand and appreciate the Christian ethos of the school, yet also learn eagerly about the approach of other faiths to the big questions of life and death. Younger pupils showed a sensitive understanding and empathy with those suffering at present in the world, including Syrian refugees, and spoke eloquently about the plight of the homeless. Younger children experienced a moment of unusual stillness as they sat in silence in the woodland learning environment. The junior school 'reverse Advent calendar' enables pupils to collect food items for distribution to the homeless, as a reminder of how fortunate they are. Pupils discuss openly such challenging concepts as peace, reconciliation and forgiveness.
- 4.7 Pupils throughout the school have well-developed skills of collaborative learning. In the EYFS, they played cheerfully together and shared their toys; in the junior school, they worked well

together as vocalists and musicians, enjoying taking part in the preparation of a song for Christmas; in the senior school, pupils encouraged each other in organising the charity basket. They regularly ask others what they think, rather than focusing only on their own ideas.

- 4.8 Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong, respecting and understanding the rules of the school, and putting them into practice in a natural, relaxed way. At an early stage, pupils learn to be kind to each other, leading to the mutual respect that characterises their relationships. Pupils engage thoughtfully with a variety of moral concepts in philosophy lessons. Through the questionnaires, pupils confirm that they understand the school's sanctions system. A very small minority of parents felt that the school does not deal effectively with bullying. In interviews, however, pupils feel the school has effective measures in place to deal with any incidents that arise, and pupils feel empowered to challenge such behaviour and contribute their own ideas, conscious of the positive impact of their initiatives and the work of the anti-bullying champions.
- 4.9 Pupils know how to stay safe, and they feel that the school is a safe environment for them and recognise the measures taken by the school. Pupils show highly positive attitudes to healthy living, which they derive from the sport, physical education, food technology and personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes, as well as from the healthy range of food served in the dining room. Pupils are conscious of the need for a healthy diet. They are relaxed as they go about their daily lives in school, knowing there is always a safety net provided by experienced and trusted staff to help them if difficulties arise.
- 4.10 Pupils feel they are effectively prepared for the next stage of their lives as a result of the support they receive from the school. This is reflected in the involvement of senior school teachers with Year 6 pupils in Spanish, philosophy, mathematics and English, and strengthened through attending lessons in the senior school. As a result of these initiatives, pupils feel confident and settled in the transition. Older pupils speak appreciatively of the help they receive in preparing their university applications, and in discussions of their future career plans.
- 4.11 Although there is little ethnic or religious diversity within the school, pupils learn about other religions and cultures. Younger pupils study the importance of food and fasting in various religions, clearly enjoying the taste of challah, apples and honey to mark the Jewish New Year, and engaging with the local Sikh community. Sixth formers speak of their own tight-knit and friendly year groups, who welcome all. In their responses to the questionnaire, almost all parents felt that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, and an overwhelming majority reported that the school meets their child's pastoral and welfare needs effectively and actively promotes good behaviour.
- 4.12 The ethos and atmosphere of the school are characterised by a sense of belonging, in which the older pupils help the younger as mentors. Sixth form pupils volunteer to help in Year 1 classes each week, and Year 6 pupils help to look after the EYFS playground. Pupils benefit from the 'buddy bench' system which helps to ensure that no one is left isolated if feeling lonely or upset. In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority reported that the school encourages them to be tolerant of those with different faiths and beliefs; that they feel safe at school and on-line; and that they have somebody at school to talk to if they have a concern or worry.