



### 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.

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.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. 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'.**

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 engage actively in accessing the wide range of learning opportunities that is made available to them within and beyond the classroom.
- Pupils have high levels of oral communication and presentation skills; they express their ideas and opinions clearly, coherently and with good humour.
- In music, drama, art and sport the pupils show outstanding levels of achievement strongly aided by the multitude of opportunities available to them.
- In some areas of the academic curriculum, the progress of more able pupils is slower when feedback is limited or challenges lack full rigour.

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

- Pupils are reflective, set high expectations of themselves and display confidence and resilience.
- Pupils eagerly and willingly give of their time and energy to help others within the community, especially those younger than themselves.
- Pupils appreciate the needs of others less fortunate than themselves and engage enthusiastically in charitable endeavours, both locally and internationally.
- Pupils display high levels of respect and empathy towards their peers and all members of the school community.

## Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Enable all pupils, particularly the more able, to identify the next steps in their learning by sharing best practice regarding target setting and feedback.'

## THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

3.5 The overall achievement of the pupils is excellent and in most areas represents successful fulfilment of the school's aims that each pupil achieves their personal best. Pupils make good progress in academic work throughout all phases of the school, when compared with pupils of similar ability, strongly assisted by a wide-ranging and thorough support system in the school. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make particularly strong progress. Some pupils make excellent progress because of the cordial relationships across the school community and the outstanding attention to the pastoral care of individuals. Pupils' learning is enhanced by teachers knowing their individual learning needs and making provision for them in terms of appropriate support strategies in class. The provision of clinics and enhanced learning spaces gives weaker pupils ample support and the opportunity to succeed. Well integrated into classes, SEND pupils participate as eagerly and make as much progress as their peers, because of the culture of celebrating abilities and what they can do, while understanding and mitigating the difficulties they have. More able pupils progress through challenges at their own level, such as extension exercises or through national project initiatives. Although most pupils respond to constructive verbal feedback in lessons, this sometimes results in a lack of written feedback and less detailed attention to the more able, thus limiting their progress. In Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the youngest pupils successfully meet their learning targets because of the clear and focused support they receive from staff and the variety of teaching styles allows all the children to access the curriculum. Results in GCSE have been above

the national average for maintained schools with some students achieving excellent grades. Most pupils gain places of their choice for the next stage of their education.

- 3.6 Pupils' knowledge and understanding are good in many areas of the curriculum, and excellent in aesthetic subjects. They have well-developed skills and apply them from one area of learning to another. Participating in the 'MasterChef comes to Ballard' project, pupils showed good combined skills from other areas of the curriculum alongside food and nutrition, such as organisational ability, imagination, technical and numeracy skills all with much enthusiasm. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge in other contexts such as budget setting. Pupils used good humour and literacy techniques including rhetorical questions and metaphors in imaginative descriptive writing about the supposed advantages and challenges of sailing around the world with one's parents. In geography, pupils applied their knowledge of forces and convection currents to explain the movement of tectonic plates.
- 3.7 The school is successful in its aim to provide education that extends beyond the purely academic. The pupils' achievements in a wide range of pursuits such as art, music, drama and sport reflect the extensive range of their talents. Many excellent examples of pupils' artwork are on display around the school, demonstrating high quality skills in drawing, painting, three-dimensional modelling and ceramics. Strong knowledge and skills in drama and music, both choral and instrumental, were evident. For example, senior pupils learning to sing the bass and tenor parts in the chamber choir were sight-reading difficult pieces involving syncopation and jazz chords. The opportunities to participate in sporting activities are extensive and ensures that all pupils achieve personal success, as seen in the numerous successes achieved by school teams and individuals, at local and national level. Pupils who compete in sports such as swimming and skiing for local clubs or at county or higher level are well supported by the school. Individual programmes are provided by the school if extended leave of absence is required to enable high level competition or participation in filming or touring drama performances. The drama and other performing arts productions are valued features of school life and international choir tours also facilitate cultural and spiritual awareness in the pupils.
- 3.8 Pupils of all abilities and ages display strong oral communication skills. They express themselves confidently and effectively. They are articulate and listen attentively to the views and opinions of others. In a Year 9 debating activity, pupils made clear, coherent points about the merits of Donald Trump's presidency. Junior pupils share knowledge and understanding confidently within the classroom and beyond. For example, in science the pupils developed their ideas and hypothesised about the results of an experiment about dissolving. Communication skills are very well developed among the senior pupils. They are confident to offer oral answers without embarrassment in the classroom despite meeting unfamiliar content and are perfectly at ease with guests. They discuss their questions and ideas with each other and with their teachers to elicit the information required for the successful completion of the task in hand. In design technology, pupils effectively communicated their design ideas in sketches, diagrams and in writing. Pupils' learning is enhanced by wall displays of their work in classrooms providing inspiration and reference information. Pupils confidently use their understanding of foreign languages to speak in short sentences, aided in this through skilful teaching. Their confidence is strongly aided through the time provided for reflection and collaboration in class. Pupils' written communication is well developed, with more able senior pupils showing prowess in their written language work, writing lengthy passages using a variety of grammatical structures.
- 3.9 Pupils show a good grasp of mathematical concepts and methods. Strong skills involving mathematical calculations are evident. Pupils are not afraid to explore new ideas and apply their skills in other parts of the curriculum such as lines of best fit in science or in English, when a graph was used most originally as a way of communicating the level of tension in *An Inspector Calls* as the play progressed. In the EYFS children confidently used counting and numbers in an outdoor 'fishing' game. Junior pupils understand denominators and numerators in mathematics and use their mathematical skills with competence when designing chocolate moulds in design technology. Most

pupils attain good numeracy skills. In a statistics lesson on box and whisker graphs, progress was rapid with pupils demonstrating very strong thinking skills. However, a lack of momentum in some lessons limited progress, particularly for the more able.

- 3.10 Throughout the school, the pupils' use of information communication technology (ICT) during lessons is good. They use information technology routinely as an effective aid to learning. In chemistry, pupils deftly manage chemical equations, do calculations and organise their work using their laptops. Senior pupils are confident in their use of presentation packages and word processing, as seen in their approach to coursework tasks in English. They research topics in science for themselves, the task made easier by having their textbooks available online. However, opportunities for more advanced use of computing skills are not yet fully developed across the school.
- 3.11 Pupils' study skills from the youngest children are strong across the school throughout the curriculum. In the EYFS children explain the reasons for their actions in role play, for example when waiting patiently at the 'doctor's surgery'. In humanities junior pupils hypothesised and asked pertinent questions about the objects left by a 'mystery person'. Pupils consider information and ideas from a variety of sources during the design stage of design technology projects. They annotate handouts in English, and other subjects, to aid their understanding. The pupils show good ability at times to hypothesise and analyse situations, for example when considering how characters might act in a later part of the novel 'To Kill a Mockingbird' or when in physics they participated in an activity in which they successfully taught their peers, enhancing their own understanding of the topic at the same time. In art, pupils engage actively and sensitively in analysis of portraits and self-portraits of artists, looking at the feelings portrayed and analysing their own feelings, synthesising them into written notes and expressing them in colour.
- 3.12 Attitudes to their learning are very strong amongst the pupils across all year groups. They exhibit considerable concentration in class, demonstrate good behaviour almost always and eagerly participate in lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic and purposeful, committed to making the most of the opportunities in and beyond the classroom. They feel that they can express themselves freely, and show support and respect to one another. They approach each task readily, settle quickly into their work and show considerable ability to persevere with their tasks and support each other in the pursuit of success. Older pupils are willing volunteers to help mentor younger pupils. Sportsmen in Year 10 help to coach the younger age groups. Similar arrangements were seen for production rehearsals and in the harp ensemble session. They enjoy learning and speak proudly about their own achievements as well as those of the school.

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

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 From the earliest stages of their education at Ballard School, pupils are encouraged to be reflective, set high expectations of themselves and display confidence and resilience. Whatever their starting point, pupils develop confidence and become determined to give their best. They feel positive about themselves and their places within the school community. Pupils are reflective and have high levels of self-esteem and empathy. They are highly successful in displaying these characteristics through academic study as well as the wealth of sporting, performing arts and extra-curricular opportunities in which they participate. In a hockey match, pupils displayed high levels of resilience and positive teamwork when faced by superior opposition. In a debate, each pupil had their own target to improve their contribution to the team or delivery of their argument. Pupils express themselves and advance their ideas in confidence that their peers listen supportively. Pupils evaluate their own and each other's work in art and DT. The school honours achievement through credits, certificates, badges and display of good work, enhancing the pupils' sense of self-worth. Pupils are further developing their self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience very well in a manner appropriate for their age in a variety of ways such as by collaborating as mentors, by participating in choir, orchestra,

sports teams and coaching, through sporting and drama activities which engage those of all abilities and e-programmes which assist pupils in recognising their skills and abilities.

- 3.15 Pupils demonstrate a clear awareness that the decisions they make affect their success at the school and for their futures. Beyond the classroom pupils are presented with a variety of options aimed at helping them make decisions which will affect their future. There are examples of considerable success such as one group being Young Enterprise local winners in 2013. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is run at Bronze and Silver levels and Ballard runs a Challenge Week to help develop leadership skills.
- 3.16 Pupils have a strong appreciation of elements of the non-material aspects of life. They are aware that the arts, and the opportunities they give for personal reflection, are a natural part of their school lives. Pupils help others for little or no reward and, through mentoring programmes and form time, they engage actively in debates and discussion. Nurtured within the ethos of embedded Christian values, pupils are reflective and accept spiritual development as an intrinsic part of school life.
- 3.17 Behaviour is excellent throughout the school and pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. They have a strong sense of justice and fairness. Pupils have a clear understanding of behavioural guidelines due to the consistent use of the Ballard Bees and system of rewards and certificates for good behaviour. The support system provided by the school, for example the use of peer mentors and Lunch Bunch Club, ensures that pupils instantly challenge unkind behaviours. The perception of those interviewed is that there are rare incidents of bullying and that, when they do occur, the school handles them well. The pupils are extremely polite, co-operative and well-behaved. They accept responsibility for their own behaviour and recognise the importance of being truthful. Cordial relationships throughout the community encourage consideration and respect for others. Pupils have learned to give others space to express their own ideas and opinions and then to respond positively and supportively with a deeply kind and caring spirit.
- 3.18 Pupils are very positive about their school. From the EYFS onwards they welcome visitors and newcomers warmly. A system of peer mentoring for new pupils, and the involvement of older pupils with those in the pre-prep, contribute to the relaxed working environment even for the youngest pupils and the positive, friendly atmosphere that characterises the school. The pupils are dedicated to their school and take great pride in the various roles and responsibilities on offer. From the youngest pupils in the school through to the Head Boy and Girl and a very active School Council, pupils of all ages seek out and thrive in contributing to the school community. Pupil representatives from Year 3 upwards participate in School Council, debating together, making common decisions and achieving common goals to make a difference to school life. For example, the dance studio floor now receives improved maintenance following an investigation instigated by School Council. Pupils enjoy working with others. High levels of co-operation are expected and pupils respond to this by contributing well in both group and individual situations. Pupils work together effectively and they are given many opportunities for collaborative work particularly in science or maths as in the 'Fruit Machine' game which pairs pupils randomly before a mathematical problem-solving task is given. Senior pupils set a positive example to the younger pupils. They are excellent at working with one another whether this be their peers in class activities, in being a buddy to new pupils to help them settle in, reading with the Early Years children, as subject mentors, as guides for new parents, or as prefects assisting with order at lunchtime.
- 3.19 Pupils readily give of their time and talents to help others. They are aware of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves and engage enthusiastically in charitable endeavours, both locally in donating provisions for a local food bank and internationally when filling shoeboxes for needy children abroad. Pupils enjoy being involved with fundraising and charitable giving is supported strongly. Within the House system, pupils discuss and vote for which local charities to support. Recently Home-Start, a charity for people with young children, has been such a focus. Cake sales, stalls set out at fireworks night and Christmas fair events, and sponsored cycle rides are examples of the ways in which pupils raise funds for charities. Pupils appreciate that the need is not always

financial. Recently a group of senior pupils offered their skills in support of a drama project at a local primary school. They helped the pupils there with writing the script and performing their final production of *Aladdin Junior* at the Performing Arts Centre at Ballard School. All involved benefited from the endeavour and found it very rewarding.

- 3.20 Pupils show tremendous respect for one another whatever their background. The relationships between pupils and staff are characterised by caring and kindness. Pupils see themselves as part of a cohesive school family and have enormous affection for this family of which they are part. Pupils participate enthusiastically in sport regardless of age, gender, skill or talent. They exhibit maturity in understanding that everyone has needs and worries and actively support those with special needs such as deafness, or dyslexia.
- 3.21 Pupils are secure in their knowledge of what they need to do to stay healthy. Pupils speak highly of the PSHE provision for the way it addresses so many issues such as body image, coping with stress, and relaxation techniques, enhancing their confidence and enabling them to understand how to be mentally healthy as well as physically healthy. Speakers assist in developing pupils' awareness of themselves and learning to become comfortable and accepting of their adolescent self. Pupils know about how to stay safe online and have an awareness of emotional health issues. Most pupils participate in sport or creative pursuits and yet they are aware of the need not to do too much, but rather to balance their activities with time for their studies.

