



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**SIDCOT SCHOOL**

**MARCH 2017**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Sidcot School			
<b>DfE Number</b>	802/6002			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	296491			
<b>Address</b>	Sidcot School Oakridge Lane Winscombe Avon BS25 1PD			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01934 843102			
<b>Email address</b>	info@sidcot.org.uk			
<b>Head</b>	Mr Iain Kilpatrick			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Rosemary Carr			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 19			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	607			
	<b>Boys</b>	310	<b>Girls</b>	297
	<b>Day pupils</b>	432	<b>Boarders</b>	175
	<b>EYFS</b>	28	<b>Juniors</b>	123
	<b>Seniors</b>	298	<b>Sixth Form</b>	158
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15 to 16 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 chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and the weekly Quaker meeting. 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

Mr Ian Carter	Reporting inspector
Mrs Charlotte Johnston	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Craig Jenkinson	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Jean Gray	Team inspector for boarding (Former head of boarding, HMC school)
Mr Mike Brewer	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, ISA school)

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## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Sidcot School is a co-educational independent boarding and day school for pupils aged between 3 and 19 years. It is governed by a board composed of up to eighteen governors, at least half of which are members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The school's Quaker foundation can be traced back to 1699, when the school was established in Sithcott to teach boys of Quaker families. It briefly moved to Yatton, then reopened in 1808 on its present site as a co-educational school. Since the last full inspection there has been a change of head in 2012 and a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- 1.2 The school is divided into a junior day school which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and educates pupils aged 3 to 11 years, and a senior school which provides boarding and day places for pupils aged 11 to 19. The boarding community is accommodated in five boarding houses.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.3 The school has developed its educational provision around the Quaker values of truth and integrity, equality and community, peace, simplicity and sustainability. It seeks to ensure that pupils have all the support they need to grow as individuals with their full range of talents recognised and celebrated.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.4 Day pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds, mostly from White British families living within Somerset. More than 30 countries are represented within the boarding community. The junior school does not use standardised tests, but its own assessment indicates that the ability of pupils is above average. Nationally standardised test data indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 53 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyscalculia, all of whom receive additional specialist help. It has 1 pupil with a statement of special educational needs. A total of 162 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), 98 of whom receive additional support for their English.

- 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>
Third Form	Year 7
Lower Fourth	Year 8
Upper Fourth	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in January and February 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Ensure that existing strong practice in teaching is applied consistently across all the subject areas, particularly in marking and assessment, and providing appropriate challenge for more able pupils.
  - Ensure greater consistency in the implementing and monitoring of academic policy by faculty heads in the senior school.
  - In the EYFS, ensure resources are regularly updated and adequate outdoor storage is provided.
- 1.7 The school has fully met two out of the three recommendations of the previous full inspection. It has partially addressed the recommendation to ensure that existing strong practice in teaching is applied consistently across all the subject areas, and providing appropriate challenge for more able pupils.
- 1.8 The recommendations of the intermediate boarding inspection in April and May 2014 were:
- Centralise records of disciplinary sanctions in order to ensure greater consistency between houses.
  - Ensure that the pupils have been introduced to the independent listener.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous intermediate boarding inspection.

## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

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

- Pupils make good progress overall. Their progress is sometimes not advanced as much as possible by the written feedback they receive.
- Pupils demonstrate substantial subject knowledge and understanding across the full range of subjects.
- Pupils of all ages exhibit very strong communication skills and apply these to other areas of learning.
- Pupils demonstrate very clear research skills and are effective at self-assessment.
- Pupils consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and achieving their best.

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

- Pupils develop outstanding self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and resilience.
- Pupils' decision-making skills are excellent, but their knowledge of potential future educational pathways could be improved further.
- Pupils demonstrate an outstanding spiritual understanding of non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils are very socially aware and work extremely well with others towards common goals.
- Pupils display strong respect for diversity within society, and demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance.

### **Recommendations**

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Develop the existing good practice in the marking of pupils' work in order to help all pupils make rapid progress.
- Enhance the capacity of the subject and career advice available to pupils so that they have a greater understanding of future opportunities.



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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 All pupils display an enthusiastic approach to their learning which is fully supported through the Sidcot Learning Wheel, a successful initiative implemented by school leaders to embed Quaker values of truth and integrity, equality and community, peace, simplicity and sustainability into the classroom. All groups of pupils consistently demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and achievement, and seek to do their very best as young people who know their own minds. They have a willingness to work collaboratively and to take on the leadership of their own learning. This is because pupils are focused for the start of a lesson or activity to engage and do their best in a culture of mutual respect with their teachers and peers.
- 3.3 School progress and attainment data demonstrates that pupils including those with SEND or EAL make good progress overall, with some pupils exceeding expectations. The EYFS profile and phonics screening test results demonstrate that the EYFS children have attainment which exceeds national norms. Pupils maintain a good rate of progress through to Year 6. Results at GCSE and A level have been above average in relation to the national average for maintained schools. Junior school pupils benefit from small class sizes and subject specialists in some areas coupled with access to senior school facilities such as science labs. Effective tracking of individual pupils by departments in the senior school and across the junior school enables teachers to provide additional support to individual pupils who need help when required, which supports pupils' progress, particularly of those who are boarders. Some marking in the school is exceptional, which pupils find extremely supportive in enabling them to improve their work. For example, in art, tracking software which uses voice technology enables the whole department to provide pupils with focused comments at any time and review their progress. The quality of marking is not consistent and so does not always help inform pupils effectively as they move onto the next stage in their learning, an issue that was highlighted in a small minority of pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire responses and in the previous inspection report as a recommendation. Most pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school provides them the opportunity to learn and make good progress.
- 3.4 Pupils demonstrate extensive subject knowledge and understanding across the full range of subjects, and display a particularly well-developed appreciation of the role of creativity in enriching their lives. This is due to the effective differentiation of work for pupils of different abilities, and highly effective teaching in a range of areas such as precise questioning in a junior school geography lesson and a senior school design and technology coursework activity. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is also developed as a result of teachers' high expectations, as exemplified in an English literature lesson where older pupils demonstrated an excellent capacity to analyse challenging texts. Additionally, the Sidcot Learning Wheel initiative provides pupils and teachers with a common vocabulary and approach to learning throughout the school across different subjects.

- 3.5 Pupils speak with confidence, are articulate, and make strong progress in English. This is as a result of the many opportunities that the school provides for discussion and debate, such as the effective use of learning logs as starting points in the junior school. Pupils are keen to ask questions after conscientiously listening to presentations. The needs of pupils with EAL are met by a range of information and communication technology (ICT) resources and effective adult support. For example older pupils with EAL in an English lesson made progress in line with their peers during a writing exercise as they were able to use the school ICT portal to communicate and share ideas. Pupils are very confident and keen to volunteer to stand in front of their peers and make their contribution in a range of contexts; pupils spoke confidently and persuasively to the whole school in the observed Quaker meeting, where silence promotes listening to yourself. Teachers encourage pupils with SEND or EAL to support each other very well, to the benefit of their communication skills. This is particularly apparent in the communication skills of the one-year Pathway GCSE pupils. The school meets its aim to ensure that pupils have all the support that they need to grow as individuals.
- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate strong mathematical subject knowledge. This was exemplified in a mathematics lesson for older pupils with EAL; they all displayed excellent statistical understanding, debating and interpreting perceptively with each other and the teacher. The knowledge of these pupils had been informed by effective prior learning, and pupils benefited from a classroom ethos of mutual respect and the freedom to make suggestions without fear of criticism. Pupils can apply mathematical skills very well across the curriculum; older pupils in a geography lesson applied statistical techniques with ease. The mathematical achievements of pupils are evident through their many successes in a range of external mathematical challenges and competitions. This is because teachers are clear in their explanations, deal with misconceptions quickly and match work to individual pupils' needs well. Good use is made of a range of physical and ICT resources to provide a variety of approaches to suit pupils' different mathematical learning styles.
- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate good ICT skills through using their own devices in an independent self-controlled manner, which is an initiative promoted by school leaders, and utilising the school intranet and its resources for research and presentation across a range of subjects. Exceptional programming of robots was observed in the junior school which demonstrated positional language and provided opportunities for younger pupils to develop their practical ICT skills. Those that are particularly gifted at coding in the junior school are effectively extended through working independently with different programming languages with staff in the senior school. Pupils demonstrate highly impressive aesthetic capability with digital art software due to the availability of software and hardware and a willingness by the teacher to allow exploration in this medium. The overwhelming majority of pupils' questionnaire responses confirmed that they understand how to keep safe online.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate very well-defined research skills and are effective at self-assessment in the vast majority of cases. This is due to the school providing pupils extremely good opportunities to carry out research activities, such as through the Extended Project Qualification and International Baccalaureate approach in the sixth form, and the use of learning logs in the junior school. Teachers promote independent learning and higher-order thinking skills through skilful questioning and extension tasks. Leaders, governors and teachers encourage pupils to be 'curious enquirers', as observed in a junior school mathematics lesson where the teacher's excellent explanation led to pupils' strong perseverance whilst problem solving. Boarders speak highly of the use of 'quiet time' every evening in boarding houses and enjoy independent study when they have access to a wide range of resources including the school library. They feel well equipped to manage their own time. Boarders state that boarding staff, many of whom are teachers, are always willing to help but also allow them to make their own decisions

within reason about when and what to study. Questionnaire responses demonstrate that most boarders feel that boarding has helped them to become more independent and confident in their work.

- 3.9 Pupils' academic achievements are acknowledged in school through a house point system which promotes outstanding work. A wide range of academic competitions are entered, with pupils enjoying success in events such as mathematics challenges. Pupils' non-academic achievements are good and represent the outcomes of their initiative, thoughtfulness and resilience in these areas of school life. This is due to the substantial opportunities that the school provides for participation in sports, music, drama, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and other events, both national and overseas. Of particular note are the pupil-led drama productions at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, pupils working in schools in Africa, and the school's contribution to PeaceJam events where pupils' participation has been influential. The school also promotes its drama productions to local maintained junior schools to establish meaningful activities in partnership with them. The governing body are proactive in providing resources to develop the Centre for Peace and Global Studies, as they see the creation of internationally minded citizens for the world who will want to make their mark as a central school aim. This has enabled pupils to take a leading part in social entrepreneurship programmes which have made a difference to the world through the Ashoka Changemaker and the Peace and Global Studies programmes.

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils have a highly developed sense of self, displaying authentic personal understanding and self-confidence without arrogance. They have the self-discipline to live their lives with a moral purpose within the school. This is particularly exemplified within the very strong boarding community. Most boarders who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school helps them to become more confident and independent. This is due to the underpinning set of Quaker values which are promoted throughout the life of the school and through the developing Sidcot Learning Wheel, which takes the concepts of Quakerism and an international perspective into the classroom in an active and provocative manner. The school's distinctive Quaker ethos drives excellent trusting and respectful relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils and each other. Pupils' personal development is enhanced through a very responsive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme and a strong pastoral support network which is highly responsive to personal need. Underpinning this is an efficient ICT information system which ensures that the information necessary for implementing support is available, coupled with a well-resourced health centre and access to more specialised services. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils have extremely well-developed decision-making skills and are able to determine targets for themselves in academic and extracurricular activities. This is due to leaders' strong promotion of thinking skills particularly in the junior school, the Programme of Activities for Sidcot School (PASS) based on developing skills for life. Pupils are strongly aware of the importance of the application of integrity in their lives, and that doing the right thing requires thought and guidance. Strong pastoral support from tutors encourages pupils to think for themselves and reflect, particularly if they have made an error of judgement. Pupil questionnaire responses indicate that a small minority disagree that they receive good advice about their choice of subject or career, a view also held by a few parents. In discussion, leaders who are currently reviewing this area appreciate that the school needs to reflect a fuller programme to enable pupils to make more informed choices about their futures.
- 4.4 Pupils have a notably strong spiritual understanding of their place in the world and a deep appreciation of non-material aspects of life. This is due to the leaders of the school having successfully established a very strong school ethos of mutual respect based around the Quaker values. Pupils have developed their spiritual understanding through the silence of the reflection time included within the weekly Quaker meeting in each school. During the inspection, several pupils voiced the thought that they could be close to God in the silence of the meeting or anywhere else that they find themselves. The creative opportunities provided through the curriculum and particularly in art also help develop pupils' spiritual understanding.

- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate significant moral understanding of what is right and wrong. They are able to engage in deep moral issues of both a practical and an abstract nature. This is due to leaders' and governors' promotion of Quaker values, in particular truth, integrity and simplicity which promote moral questions that pupils actively engage in. Also, this is enhanced through visits from a range of outside speakers as part of the Let Your Life Speak programme which allows pupils to apply their moral values while participating in discussions. Pupils respond positively to the behaviour policy which has at its core self-regulation, the promotion of the message that actions have consequences and that one has a responsibility to the wider community. Boarding houses have little need of sanctions, and prefects act as excellent role models. In the junior school, staff promote pupils' moral development through the excellent use that they make of the Rainbow Room to help pupils restore friendships which have broken down. Pupils respect the system of school rules and understand the laws of the land. A very large majority of parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire thought that the school promotes and encourages good behaviour.
- 4.6 Pupils socialise with each other extremely well and are skilled at maintaining excellent friendships based on mutual respect. They have a strong voice in the school community which is respected and acted on by staff. This is due to the very clear guidance from teachers, and extremely welcoming and positive routines in the boarding community. The sixth form leadership programme ('SPICE') and ('PASS') are highly effective in providing opportunities for leadership development across the school. This promotes the school's aim 'to Live Adventurously', through identified life skills. The woodland learning environment programme in the junior school provides a focus for collaborative learning from the Nursery to Year 6. For example, excellent collaboration and working together was observed as pupils built mud huts on Kenya Day.
- 4.7 Pupils demonstrate excellent empathy towards others, including those less fortunate than themselves. Older pupils fully embrace the responsibility to look after younger pupils. Pupils view themselves as global citizens who seek opportunities both in the school and in the wider community to take on responsibilities. This is due to staff modelling the acts of compassion and caring for others, and as a result of the multitude of opportunities for pupils to engage in charitable work and activities on behalf of others such as school council, Quaker Elders, the Green Team and serving as reading buddies in the junior school. The curriculum time provided to the 'PASS' coupled with staff and pupil leadership in the school enables pupils to focus on developing their responsibilities and contributing positively to the lives of others.
- 4.8 Pupils demonstrate strong mutual respect towards each other and value each other extremely highly. Likewise, respect pervades the international boarding community where difference is valued, and experienced international staff support a global perspective which promotes respect for difference. Pupils exhibit the Quaker values of equality and community as promoted by the Centre for Peace and Global Studies, which provides a tangible curriculum to promote international citizenship and is strongly backed by governors. Staff modelling of respect for diversity contributes extremely strongly to the multicultural and respectfully calm atmosphere that pervades the school. Pupils engage enthusiastically in the Peace Studies programme which supports their respectful and inclusive international perspective on the world. Pupils display much respect for and appreciation of their own and other cultures through the celebration of a range of festivals such as Chinese New Year, and demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds and traditions. An overwhelming majority of parents and a very large majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

- 4.9 Pupils have a strong awareness of healthy eating and the importance of a balanced lifestyle. They know how to keep safe when online and in other situations due to clear educational programmes and effective monitoring systems applied to the school's ICT system. Pupils benefit from very well-structured and effective PSHE and boarding induction programmes that highlight specific issues targeted at different year groups when most appropriate. For example, older junior school pupils learnt how to clean their hands through an imaginative teaching approach by the school nurse which featured the use of an ultra-violet light, and senior school pupils learnt how to light fires outdoors and demonstrated good awareness of safety measures as well as the ability to take measured risks. Pupils are actively involved in 'mindfulness' activities and benefit from non-judgemental discussions about health and welfare issues that affect their lives, for example through a new mental health awareness initiative. The health centre provides excellent information and advice. As a result, pupils know how to stay safe and understand how to be physically and mentally healthy particularly in terms of diet, exercise and a balanced lifestyle.