



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Farnborough Hill

March 2022

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School's Details

School	Farnborough Hill			
DfE number	850/6020			
Registered charity number	1039443			
Address	Farnborough Hill Farnborough Road Farnborough Hampshire GU14 8AT			
Telephone number	01252 545197			
Email address	school@farnborough-hill.org			
Head	Mrs Alexandra Neil			
Chair of governors	Mr Gerry McCormack			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	563			
	Seniors	495	Sixth Form	68
Inspection dates	15 to 19 March 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Farnborough Hill is a Catholic independent day school for female pupils. The school comprises a senior section for pupils aged 11 to 16 years and a sixth form for pupils aged 16 to 18 years. The school was founded in 1889 and is a private limited company with a board of trustees which delegates oversight of the school to a board of governors. It has occupied its present site in Farnborough since 1927.
- 1.2 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

- 1.3 The school seeks to nurture pupils' personal, social and spiritual development, and to promote academic excellence. The ethos of the school is rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition. Its aims include to educate the whole person in a caring Christian community within the school and prepare each pupil to play a full responsible part in the wider world.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of social backgrounds, mostly living within one hour's travel from the school. The ability of pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 63 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include a variety of conditions, of whom three receive additional support. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for one pupil. The school has identified several pupils as having abilities, gifts or talents, 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. 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 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The 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.

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](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2021 have confirmed 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 and sex education, 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 are enthusiastically committed to achieving academic success.
 - Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent.
 - Pupils' communication skills are excellent. They speak accurately and debate confidently.
 - Pupils' achievement in a wide range of curricular and co-curricular activities is excellent.
 - Pupils have excellent knowledge, skills and understanding for their age.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils are extremely confident and show a high degree of self-awareness.
 - Pupils show excellent leadership skills and seek to improve the lives of others.
 - Pupils' ability to reflect and to understand the importance of the non-material in their lives is highly developed.
 - Positive relationships and social development are not equally strong in all year groups.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school should make the following improvement:
- Strengthen pupils' confidence to foster positive relationships, particularly for those in the middle years.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils of all ages and abilities demonstrate excellent academic achievements. Examination results at GCSE and A-level for 2017 to 2019 were above the national average for maintained schools. Most pupils achieved the highest grades of A* or A or equivalent numbered grades in GCSE in all subjects. Centre-assessed and teacher-assessed grades in 2020 and 2021 show results consistent with this attainment. Senior leaders and governors have promoted significant numbers of pupils to participate in project qualifications in Year 9. This particularly enables sixth formers to take Extended Project Qualifications (EPQ), with the majority achieving an A* or A grade. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that teaching, including any online provision, enabled their child to make progress. Pupils with SEND make strong progress from their starting points

in line with that of their peers. This is because of well targeted support through a structured programme of effective teaching matched to their needs. The most able pupils make above average progress compared to classmates as a result of extended learning and high-order thinking sessions in the school's Aff-Hiliation groups. Pupils value teachers' feedback and understand clearly what they need to do to make rapid progress. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- 3.6 Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are highly motivated, keen to do well and delight in others' achievements. Pupils are highly conscientious and display an excellent work ethic. They approach their studies with energy and determination, relishing the opportunities to work collaboratively. They display high levels of independence and the ability to take leadership in their learning, evidenced through articles produced by the junior leadership team (JLT), made up of sixth-form pupils, in the Farnborough Hill weekly e-newsletter. Pupils take immense pride in their work and in the quality of their books or electronically stored subject information. Across the school, they display a thirst for knowledge that is contagious. Pupils aim high and work hard to achieve their ambitions. They know how to improve their learning and are determined to excel. They support each other well.
- 3.7 Sport, music and performing arts are significant strengths of the school. Netball teams have shown success on court at district, regional and national level in 2021 to 2022. Under thirteen and under sixteen pupils took first place in the Independent Schools Association (ISA) national finals. Music is a strong feature of pupils' education, with a very large majority of pupils across all year groups playing instruments, including orchestral instruments. A majority of pupils achieve success in graded examinations, including some at Grade 8 or higher for gifted individuals. The senior choir is the school's flagship ensemble, providing music for all school services. The choir have performed at Salisbury, Winchester and St Paul's cathedrals as well as trips to Prague and Barcelona. Sixth-form members of the choir support whole school hymn practice.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate enthusiasm, courage, conviction and leadership skills within performing arts. At GCSE and A level pupils seize opportunities to develop their skills in script writing, directing, and acting. In addition to the annual school production, all Year 7 pupils take part in summer term musical performances. A large majority of entrants for speech and drama examinations pass with distinction, and the rest achieve merit. In 2019 and 2021, sixth-form pupils gained first place in Cambridge essay writing competitions. Almost a third of older pupils achieve silver or gold in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils have achieved national success in the 2020 science, engineering and mathematics (STEM) Farnborough international conference competition. Individual success was achieved by a Sixth Form pupil in the Young Poets' Network competition, her winning entry to which was read aloud at the Conference of the Parties (COP)26 event in Scotland.
- 3.9 Pupils of all ages demonstrate outstanding communication skills. They are articulate and enjoy communicating with each other and adults. There is a real desire to get involved in lessons, share ideas and listen to the views of others. Public speaking is a strength and pupils seek out opportunities to develop and showcase their abilities. This was exemplified by JLT sixth-form presentations in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) for all year groups regarding child-on-child abuse. During these sessions Year 7 pupils listened carefully to each other. They respected the views of others, and know whom to approach at or outside of school if they have a concern.
- 3.10 Pupils fluently and confidently discuss challenging topics and read with confidence and expression. In a Year 11 English lesson, they were able to describe the zeitgeist of early 19th century Victorian England, with relation to Scrooge's transformation in A Christmas Carol. Pupils' literacy skills are developed extremely well across subjects. They use an impressive vocabulary because teachers encourage them to use new words and explain their meanings. They showed understanding of enjambment and other technical strategies when using poetic tone and colour.
- 3.11 Pupils demonstrate very high knowledge and skills for their age and ability. Across the school, high-quality displays showcase the excellent standard of pupils' work, particularly in art, design technology

and ceramics. Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent application towards their learning and enjoy transferring that knowledge across the curriculum with curiosity and genuine interest. This was shown when pupils created musical portraits of newts and ducklings, elephants and donkeys in their own compositions styled after Saint Saëns.

- 3.12 Pupils enjoy facing challenges and are focused and diligent in their responses. For example, Year 8 history pupils effectively drew on their prior knowledge to examine how government decision-making about feudalism was a way for the Kings and upper nobility to keep control over serfs and peasants. Pupils quickly assimilate a wide range of skills and sophisticated knowledge, such as that observed in Year 13 economics when studying trade export profiles of developed and developing countries.
- 3.13 Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of numeracy and use this to solve problems across the curriculum. They enjoy the challenge of regular investigative and problem-solving activities. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, pupils successfully used a range of methods to solve data handling questions. They used excellent mathematical strategies and terminology, demonstrating outstanding achievement for their age and ability. This has led to some excellent achievements in national UK mathematics challenges. Pupils also display high levels of numeracy in science, business economics and politics. This was apparent in Year 12 politics when calculating the percentage number of seats won by each political party in the 2010 General Election and how this led to the formation of a coalition government. Such high levels of numeracy were also seen when Year 12 pupils carried out complex multistage calculations on equilibria and buffers during chemistry. Pupils further develop numeracy skills outside the formal curriculum by participating in the Year 10 Young Enterprise scheme and the investor challenge in the sixth form.
- 3.14 The digital literacy of pupils is outstanding. It enhances pupil learning, particularly from Year 9 onward when pupils effectively use digital exercise books on their own electronic device to take responsibility for their own progress. Younger pupils acquire highly competent skills in the use of word processing, spreadsheets and publishing during information communication technology lessons. They go on to apply these skills well across the curriculum. For example, pupils used commercial digital audio programmes to compose animal motifs using a variety of instruments very successfully. Year 7 geographers demonstrate confidence using geographic information systems (GIS) software for mapping.
- 3.15 The pupils demonstrate a notably strong range of higher-order learning skills. Many pupils use free time to work in the library on independent research for project qualifications. An overwhelming number of parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need later in life. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils demonstrate high levels of motivation and engagement across a variety of subject areas. This was exemplified in chemistry when Year 10 pupils were able to postulate hypotheses and make accurate predictions. In Year 12 geography pupils demonstrate excellent use of demographic transition skills to analyse the historical shift from high birth rates and high death rates in societies with minimal technology, education and economic development.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.16 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.17 Pupils are highly confident and aware of their strengths, approaching their studies with resilience and self-discipline. Confident and happy, the pupils who spoke to inspectors said they feel supported in their learning by their teachers and well prepared for the next stage of their lives. This is linked to the school's ethos for educating the whole person being based on faith and high expectations of care and individual responsibility. This accurately captures what makes the school so special and places the holistic education of individual pupils at the heart of its work. Pupils develop high levels of self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence through the effective PSHEE provision during tutor time. The pupils took responsibility for their own learning and demonstrated self-confidence in their

approach to the task. The pupils showed excellent understanding of their application of practitioners in their practical work. They demonstrated resilience and personal honesty to improve their skills. Their confidence and understanding as to how they can improve was outstanding and they were keen for criticism to enable improvement.

- 3.18 There is an ethos of kindness and social awareness that percolates through the school. This successfully encourages pupils to respond positively to need, accept and fulfil responsibility, and understand others' needs in society and the wider world. This is shown in the way that they have responded to the recent Ukraine conflict through fund raising events. Pupils develop excellent communication and social skills at school to become rounded individuals. The very active junior leadership team share the same passion and ambition as senior leaders for a connected community in a sustainable and balanced, earth-friendly environment. Pupils make significant contributions towards a wide range of charitable initiatives such as fundraising for the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD). During the inspection, pupils actively planned and prepared for 'Blue and Yellow' events to raise funds for Ukraine and Rape Crisis. Although the pandemic has restricted activities within the local community, examples of pupil involvement include volunteering for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and sixth formers leading a Latin course for young children at a local primary school.
- 3.19 The pupils demonstrate maturity in their decision making and have high personal standards. They demonstrate outstanding understanding for the path to their own futures, recently celebrating the achievements of women through social media articles for international women's day. Pupils also have an excellent grasp of their own responsibility in making the right decisions. The pupils are confident to learn from their mistakes. They exude a highly-developed work ethic within school and are resilient learners who understand how to embrace challenge and how to deal with errors in their academic or non-academic pursuits. Pupils understand the importance of working hard as this will lead to success in the future. They are highly appreciative of what their parents and teachers do for them and fully aware that they need to make good choices in life. The Year 13 pupils were excited to explain their role in the charity week and how they are left to make their own decisions as to the charities chosen and the methods of fund raising.
- 3.20 Pupils have a highly developed appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They enjoy chapel and music as well as discussions about sweat shops and exhibit strong feelings about slavery in contemporary life. They show engagement and enjoyment with the religious aspects of school life and a clear aesthetic awareness as evidenced by their work in art, photography and creative writing. Pupils spoke fondly of their enjoyment of spending time in Chapel and how this gives them time to reflect which they appreciate. Each form's prayer intention shows that the pupils are very aware of those less fortunate than themselves and thankful for the gifts they have in their lives. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they recognise the beauty of the school surroundings and appreciate the large open spaces available to them for recreation at break times. Year 13 philosophy pupils were able to link common themes to construct a dialogue between virtue ethics and Christianity in the context of genetic engineering.
- 3.21 Pupils are highly attuned to fairness and to what is right or wrong in society which they discuss maturely and confidently. Pupils across the school compare wisely current news and prominent individuals and the moral impact of their decisions on others. Pupils who responded to the questionnaire overwhelmingly agreed that the school expects pupils to behave. They are respectful of the school rules. Pupils discuss moral and cultural values in lessons and PSHEE events and this encourages their empathetic approach and their desire to understand and respect others. In Year 10 science, pupils demonstrated strong views about the ethical and moral issues of increasing the use of nuclear fuels to replace fossil fuels.
- 3.22 Pupils show high levels of respect for all members of the school community. They do not make distinctions based on religion, race, culture or sexuality, celebrating diversity throughout the entire school community. Pupils enjoy a variety of celebrations of festivals and cultures, such as Diwali, the

recent virtual stations of the cross or during LGBTQ+ history month. Sixth-form pupils help to organise these activities where pupils show compassion and open-mindedness. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.

- 3.23 The pupils are confident and relaxed with each other and respectful and polite towards adults, including visitors. They socialise well and show respect for staff and each other. Their outstanding behaviour has a very positive impact on pupils' learning and contributes to the mature, studious, yet relaxed and fun environment. A small minority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire disagreed that the school taught them how to build positive relationships and friendships. Inspection evidence confirms that positive relationships and social development are not equally strong in all year groups. This is mainly in middle year groups where friendships have shifted or pupils have fallen out over an outside-of-school issue. Older pupils establish strong social awareness as they demonstrate their maturity and empathy when supporting vulnerable people locally or globally. They work highly collaboratively in their own fundraising events and are quick to react and use their pupil voice to offer immediate support where they believe it is needed.
- 3.24 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and be physically and mentally healthy. The overwhelming majority of pupils responding to the questionnaire agreed they understand how to stay safe when online. They have a good awareness of who to turn to if needed and have a high regard for the contributions of PSHEE and sport in their physical and mental well-being. Pupils are aware a school councillor is available should a pupil need to discuss any aspect of their physical health or well-being. A positive impact of the pandemic has made pupils realise the importance of having and keeping a healthy and happy balanced lifestyle and the need to talk. Pupils acknowledged that mental health has been a recent focus for the school in PSHEE and assembly.

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, the chair of governors and the designated safeguarding governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited 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 Desmond Dunne	Reporting inspector
Mrs Susan Clifford	Compliance team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Mrs Sandra Clements	Team inspector (Former deputy head, GSA school)
Mrs Karen Pickles	Team inspector (Former senior housemistress, HMC school)
Mr Matthew Thornby	Team inspector (Head of boarding, HMC school)