



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Burgess Hill Girls Preparatory School and Nursery

February 2023

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School's Details

School	Burgess Hill Girls Preparatory School and Nursery			
DfE number	938/6201			
Registered charity number	307001			
Address	Burgess Hill Girls Preparatory School Keymer Road Burgess Hill West Sussex RH15 0EG			
Telephone number	01444 233167			
Email address	reception@burgesshillgirls.com			
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Cavanagh			
Chair of Governors	Dr Alison Smith			
Proprietor	Burgess Hill School for Girls Company			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	132			
	EYFS	12	Juniors	120
Inspection dates	7 to 9 February 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Burgess Hill Girls Preparatory School is an independent day school which shares grounds and facilities with its senior school. It is registered as a single-sex school for female pupils aged from 2 to 11 but has a co-educational Nursery. The school is a charitable trust whose board of governors has oversight of both the preparatory and senior schools. The preparatory school is administered by its own head, under the leadership of the head of the senior school. Since the previous inspection, a new head of school has been appointed. Changes to the senior leadership structure mean the head of the preparatory school is now deputy head of the whole school and also responsible for pastoral care in Years 7 and 8.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to provide an outstanding academic education which inspires every pupil to excel. It seeks to empower pupils to become confident, successful students within a happy, supportive community which develops an intellectual curiosity that will create the leaders of the future.

About the pupils

- 1.3 The majority of pupils come from professional families living within a 10-mile radius of the school. Standardised test data indicate that the overall ability profile of pupils is above average. The school has identified 16 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, 11 of whom receive additional support for a range of difficulties. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Eight pupils have English as an additional language, but none require additional support. Pupils that the school has identified as the most able, are provided with extension work in lessons.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

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

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. 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 demonstrate excellent learning across the curriculum and have a well-developed understanding of the skills they need to learn successfully.
- Pupils make good and often rapid progress and their work in English and mathematics is of a high standard.
- Pupils achieve excellent individual and group success outside of the academic curriculum, including in sport and music.
- Extremely positive attitudes to learning underpin pupils' overall success.

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

- As they progress through the school, pupils develop self-confidence and self-awareness which promotes their resilience.
- Pupils make confident decisions in both their learning and behaviour; they are keen to address any difficulties for themselves but confident of adult support when they need it.
- Pupils display excellent social skills that enable them to work and play together harmoniously. They are mutually supportive and keen to contribute to the school and wider community.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay physically and mentally healthy.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Strengthen pupils' appreciation of the non-material through greater opportunities for reflection and fully embedding the philosophical aspects of the new religious education (RE) scheme.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Nationally standardised data show that pupils attain well compared to those taking the same tests nationally. Children in the EYFS progress well from their various starting points, so that over the past three years nearly all have achieved the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of ability but overall make good and often rapid progress as shown in standardised tests of English and mathematics, as confirmed in their work and observation in lessons.

Progress is tracked carefully, and school leaders ensure that steps are taken to address any emerging issues. Pupils confirm that support in class enables them to gain confidence in their ability to work independently and teaching is carefully planned to take account of individual learning needs, reflecting how well teachers know their pupils. Intervention groups are set up where necessary, to give a short-term boost. As a result, pupils with SEND or EAL make good progress according to their abilities. More able pupils make the excellent progress of which they are capable as the result of being given work that is more challenging. Consequently, attainment for many is high by the end of Year 6. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that their child's individual learning needs are met, that the range of subjects is suitable and that their children are well prepared for senior school.

- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate excellent learning across the curriculum due to informative teaching which engages their interest and utilises a wide range of strategies and activities. For example, pupils in Year 2 successfully conducted an investigation into materials. They used prediction, stated their methodology, results and what they had learned, aided by a template which helped them organise their recording. In many lessons, pupils quickly recall prior learning and apply this to their reasoning, such as when children in Reception used facts recently acquired about penguins to volunteer additional information which linked to an investigation on freezing liquids. Pupils are productive in class and complete a good volume of well-presented work. They demonstrate high standards in the creative arts. Artwork displayed around the school, such as Year 3's attractive and distinctive clay models, shows considerable flair and creativity. Standards in music across the school are excellent. These were observed in controlled but enthusiastic percussion work in Reception, the maintenance of tuneful intonation when singing in several parts in Year 5, and in the advanced string players group where pupils demonstrated a sense of ensemble as well as individual competence. Many pupils demonstrate very strong physical skills and enjoy honing these in physical education and games sessions. In the questionnaire, all the pupils agreed that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons, that teachers know their subjects well and that they give them helpful feedback.
- 3.7 By the time they leave the prep school, pupils achieve high standards in communication and literacy. They understand the need to listen carefully and are co-operative and productive in sharing their ideas. As they move through the school, they become highly articulate communicators who understand and use sophisticated vocabulary. This begins in Nursery, where younger children are encouraged to describe their experiences, such as identifying the difference between hard and squidgy when exploring gingerbread men. Older children in Nursery develop competent recognition of individual letter sounds and are beginning to blend them in preparation for reading. Due to the priority given to establishing good reading habits, such as through daily reading times, pupils quickly develop fluency and an enjoyment of reading. As a result of systematic teaching of grammar and punctuation, pupils develop strong technical capability. Handwriting across the school is of a high standard. Many pupils show a strong love of writing which enables them to produce excellent work across a wide range of genres. For example, when writing odes, pupils in Year 4 demonstrated extremely capable understanding of the language used in poetry, such as alliteration and onomatopoeia. Pupils' enthusiasm for writing is promoted most successfully through the use of planning sheets to support differing abilities, which enable them to express and organise their ideas.
- 3.8 From counting to ten using many different resources in Nursery, to proficient work with fractions and decimals in Years 5 and 6, pupils develop strong numerical competence. Many successfully apply their arithmetical learning in extension tasks which require problem solving, enabling them to solve questions accurately. For example, pupils in Year 1 successfully reasoned how to share balloons between party bags whilst Year 2 investigated how many ways they could combine dominoes to make the same total. Following analysis of assessment data, senior leaders identified that solving two and three stage problems was generally less strong. The school has therefore introduced a new scheme of work to strengthen pupils' basic understanding using a wide range of practical resources. Pupils of all ages appreciate the resources that are now available and also that they can choose the level of challenge with which they feel most comfortable since, they say, this boosts their confidence and

productivity. Whilst in its first year of implementation, pupils' work and their confidence in relation to mathematics indicates this is having a positive impact. Pupils apply mathematical skills in other subjects such as in science, where those in Year 5 were able to use their numerical ability to apply the law of the lever to calculate balances.

- 3.9 The pupils systematically develop high levels of competence with computing skills and use information and communication technology capably across the curriculum for a variety of purposes. Children in Nursery independently use tablet computers for pre-reading practice whilst children in Reception reinforce their counting skills using number software. By Year 2, pupils can create and debug programs and in Year 4 are developing good capability with website design. Older pupils use their knowledge to design and create robotic hands. Pupils conduct research from the internet capably, such as Year 2 on Malala Yousafzai and confidently present their work using a variety of presentation software.
- 3.10 Pupils are reflective about their learning and consult their targets regularly. They consequently have an excellent understanding of the skills they need to learn successfully. This is because teaching includes regular opportunities for independent research and offers useful resources to support the development of these skills, as well as encouragement to ask pertinent questions. In art, pupils in Year 3 show sharp observational skills in preparation for representational drawing, whilst children in Nursery learn to use magnifying glasses to find insects under tree trunks. Older pupils develop higher order thinking skills and can hypothesise, analyse and synthesise information that they gather from research in projects such as the role of dogs in WW1. Pupils are developing capable debating skills such as when Year 6 thoughtfully considered the ethical dilemma of cutting the rope in the book, *Touching the Void*.
- 3.11 Pupils are successful in a wide range of pursuits outside of the classroom. The school ensures that pupils are recognised and valued for all their achievements in accordance with its aims and ethos and supports pupils in balancing their commitments so that they can pursue their individual talents. For the size of the school, a breadth of opportunities is available, and governors are keen to support the school in becoming a centre of excellence for sport. The school's netball, hockey, cricket, tennis and cross-country teams compete successfully against other schools. Individual pupils compete at county and national level in swimming, athletics and tennis. Six pupils have been selected for the karate world cup and members of the equestrian team have performed well in regional show jumping finals. Beyond sport, individual pupils achieve highly in ballet, dance and drama as well as in music. During the inspection, the whole school community was excited that the choir has reached the finals in a national choral competition to raise funds for a charity's work in supporting children.
- 3.12 Extremely positive attitudes to learning underpin pupils' achievements. Children in the EYFS build secure relationships with the adults in their rooms and approach their learning with curiosity and determination. Behaviour in class throughout the school is excellent, and the concentration of older pupils focused, so that the atmosphere is conducive to learning. This is promoted very effectively by the setting of well-paced tasks and provision of attentive support when required. Relationships with staff are warm and bolstered by encouragement and focused praise. Most pupils show independence and initiative and work collaboratively very successfully. They take a pride in both their own and their peers' efforts. Pupils are highly engaged with their learning and obviously happy in school, in successful fulfilment of the school's aims.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 As pupils progress through the school, they develop an excellent understanding of themselves, their motivations and their strengths. This is promoted by ready affirmation and celebration of achievement at every level and constructive feedback on their work from staff. Opportunities to shine are frequent, such as in the recent pantomime by pupils in Years 3 and 4. As a result of such experiences many pupils are self-confident when speaking in public. Children in Nursery develop self-reliance with their self-

care and become ready for greater independence. By Year 1, pupils understand the need for perseverance in achieving their goals which they suggested in PSHE might be reading well or playing the piano beautifully. Whilst pupils articulate their strengths in a humble way, they are also aware of areas they want to improve. Pupils become resilient and display a positive attitude to making mistakes, viewing them as a means of improvement. Since most move to the senior school, they are well prepared for transition by a programme that enables them to meet teachers and older pupils. Pupils' strong self-development is the consequence of the consistent encouragement they receive from staff within a well-organised pastoral system which leaders have ensured enables pupils to receive individualised care and support.

- 3.15 Pupils are confident about making choices in their learning and assert that they have regular opportunities to do so. They are given regular opportunities to decide how to present their work, such as in a poster or in writing, as well as the level of difficulty they wish to attempt in mathematics. Decision making is systematically introduced from Nursery. For example, on occasion children may be presented with an empty table to decide exactly what they want to play with. Prompted by an adult, they then choose additional resources to stimulate and extend their play. Pupils embrace the acronym *THINK*, (true, helpful, inspiring, necessary, kind), in their commitment to speaking positively and sorting out problems for themselves. In making decisions about their behaviour, many are perceptive, understanding that they can cause hurt by thoughtless words. In this they show mature self-awareness, and this is reflected in the very small number of sanctions necessary. Staff support pupils in maintaining a good balance between their academic and extra-curricular activities so that they learn to prioritise their time efficiently. The governing board, whose members visit classes to gain first-hand knowledge, is keen to support pupils in their decisions about how to pursue their individual interests and success.
- 3.16 Pupils have a strong respect and appreciation for the natural world and are well aware of how to protect it together with threats such as global warming. They derive much pleasure from literature and engaging in art and music. Older pupils show a mature understanding of some non-material aspects of life, for example, identifying the importance of values such as kindness, friendship, loyalty, gratitude and generosity. These are frequently visited in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and as assembly themes. They explain that trying to communicate these benefits both the giver and receiver. Some older pupils are able to engage in a deeper discussion such as about how the world might be improved, suggesting through gender equality and treating animals well, clearly articulating their reasoning with one another. Ethical discussion is encouraged, such as when pupils in Year 5 RE conveyed and argued logically for the maintenance of human rights. Whilst pupils have some factual knowledge about world religions, they display less understanding about how they influence and enhance adherents' world view and values. Having identified this as an area for improvement, leaders have researched and recently adopted a new scheme of work for RE. This is at an early stage in its implementation, but evidence suggests it provides opportunities for pupils to consider the impact of faith more deeply, such as whether the teachings of Buddhism can make the world a better place.
- 3.17 Pupils' outstanding moral understanding is evident in all their interactions. They show great respect for the school's behavioural code which they view as fair, and they want to conform to it saying that they feel happy when they do. They display a mature sense of right and wrong and understand that their actions can make others unhappy. They are also clear that they must be willing to apologise if they fall short of the standards that they expect of themselves. They can show impeccable self-restraint, such as when the instrumentalists waited patiently and quietly whilst everyone tuned up. Good behaviour and respect are taught and discussed in PSHE where there is often a focus on values, and pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations for them to make the right moral choices. In the questionnaire all the parents and pupils agreed that expectations for good behaviour are high.
- 3.18 Pupils display excellent social skills due to frequent opportunities for partner and small group work across the curriculum and consistent encouragement and role modelling from staff. Nursery children develop the ability to take turns and follow instructions through playing absorbing games supported

by adults who sensitively question them to focus their understanding. Pupils in Year 6 were observed collaborating well in mathematics, using algebra to solve the perimeter of a rectangle. In netball, pupils adopt a good balance between co-operation whilst maintaining their competitiveness. Pupils throughout the school understand the meaning of bullying and are adamant it is not at all prevalent, a view particularly emphasised by those who have more recently joined the school and have previous negative experiences for comparison. As they grow older, pupils show a keen awareness of how to maintain co-operative relationships, adopting sound strategies to resolve difficulties. They understand the key elements of successful team working as planning, offering ideas, listening and not arguing. Whilst they know they can seek support from a teacher, older pupils are keen to resolve problems themselves.

- 3.19 Pupils have a strong sense of pride in their school community and want to help ensure it is a happy place. They are very supportive of one another and keen to help wherever they can. They identify with their houses which enable them to work with those in different age groups in a spirit of healthy competition. They gain an understanding of democracy through voting for their class representatives on the school council and are confident that their ideas are given careful consideration in this forum. For example, they cite some which have been adopted, such as incorporating a cheerleading activity and ideas to improve the climbing equipment. Pupils take their responsibilities as form and house captains and eco-warriors seriously and by Year 6 are reliable prefects. Within their houses, pupils take a caring and responsible attitude to the wider community. They support a wide range of charities, many of them local, organising termly fund-raising events such as an elf run for a local hospice. They also maintain contact with care homes in the neighbourhood, visiting residents to sing to them.
- 3.20 Pupils have an exceptionally kind and inclusive attitude towards their peers. They are interested in finding out about other cultures and are tolerant and respectful of any differences. For example, they are keen to help one another, such as the pupils from Ukraine, and to ensure all are included both in and out of class. The pupils say that all pupils in the school are equally valued. All the parents agreed in the questionnaire that tolerance and respect are promoted, and most pupils agreed that pupils are kind and respect each other. Whilst the pupil population is relatively monocultural, teaching includes a wide range of inspirational people from differing backgrounds and pupils are knowledgeable about current affairs. Visual materials, books and displays strongly promote this awareness.
- 3.21 Pupils display an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy relevant to their age, since these topics are introduced and re-visited as they progress through the school. Younger pupils can explain what constitutes a healthy diet. All pupils are aware of the benefits of exercise due to the multiple opportunities in a wide range of sports for them to explore what they enjoy most. As they grow older, they understand the need to be mentally healthy, explaining that without this they cannot be happy. This topic is explored in PSHE, and pupils are confident they have a range of people in school that they trust to talk to should they have a problem. The school has introduced various activities beneficial to well-being which are appreciated and used by many pupils. Pupils are regularly reminded about ways to stay safe online so that they have a good awareness of both internet and personal safety. Every parent responding to the questionnaire agreed that their children learn in a safe environment. The pupils all agreed that school is safe and that they learn how to keep themselves safe.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and governor with oversight of safeguarding, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form times. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Jan Preece	Reporting inspector
Mr Richard Metcalfe	Compliance team inspector (Former bursar, HMC school)
Mr Andrew Gough	Team inspector (Former headmaster, IAPS school)