

THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

Senior School ISI Report Highlights

The following text contains edited highlight from the Senior School ISI Integrated Inspection Report for Burgess Hill School for Girls.

A full, unexpurgated copy of the report can be found from the link on the Inspection Reports page on the school's website.

The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.

Pupils are well educated, achieving the school's aim that they should be happy and successful. Pupils of all ages, including those in the sixth form, display excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skill across all subjects and activities.

Standards of literacy are high. Pupils speak, read and write confidently in English, French, German and Spanish. They research at an advanced level, as demonstrated by sixth form pupils working independently and thoughtfully on a personal project. Numeracy skills are strong. Pupils have an advanced understanding of mathematical concepts appropriate to their age and use these to interpret data so that they solve problems logically. They are generally proficient in information and communication technology (ICT) and show high levels of creativity, as seen in the excellent standard of art work displayed around the school and in the productions, plays and concerts. Their physical fitness levels are well developed so that excellence is achieved in a range of sports, including dance. Awards received in speech and drama demonstrate a high level of achievement.

In their extra-curricular activities, pupils have many successes, individually and in teams. Recent noteworthy achievements include the award of an engineering scholarship, a Gold Medal in the World Linguistics Olympiad and success at the highest level in a national mathematics challenge. Pupils with exceptional skills compete at county and national level in a diverse range of events which include athletics, netball, dressage and show-jumping. Results in team sports are excellent. Pupils leave the sixth form well prepared for the next stage of their education. Almost all pupils achieve places at their first choice of university, many with highly competitive entry requirements.

The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to that for girls in maintained selective schools. Results in IGCSE sciences have been higher than worldwide norms. Results at A level have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and above that for girls in maintained selective schools. The results of the most recent examinations in 2014 show that 81 per cent of grades achieved at A level were A* to B, whilst at GCSE, 50 out of 71 pupils gained at least five A* or A grades.

This level of attainment indicates that pupils make progress that is high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Pupils of all backgrounds, including those with EAL, make rapid progress. Pupils with SEND reach excellent levels in academic subjects, whilst those who are able, gifted or talented extend their knowledge and skills well because they are offered sufficient challenge and stimulus. Pupils of all ages have highly positive attitudes to learning. Their excellent achievements stem from a strong desire to succeed

so that they become skilled learners, applying themselves diligently in lessons and participating enthusiastically in the wide range of extra-curricular activities during lunch-times and immediately after school.

The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

The academic curriculum is broad and covers thoroughly all the requisite areas of learning, contributing significantly to the pupils' high levels of achievement. Scientific, creative and expressive subjects are equally represented, meeting well the individual strengths of the pupils. Characterised by flexibility, a wide range of choices are available at GCSE and A level, so that a personalised programme can be tailored to suit widely differing career aspirations. This fully supports the school's aim to provide a quality education that enables pupils to confidently build a foundation for the future.

From Year 7 to Year 9, pupils follow a wide range of subjects well suited to their ages and abilities. The teaching of languages is a strength, with French taught in Year 7 being further supplemented by Spanish and German from Year 8. The broad programme gives pupils linguistic, mathematical, science, technological, creative and physical experience, and provides an effective basis for the choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11, leading to GCSEs. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme successfully contributes to pupils' personal development. Citizenship is an integral part of the programme; provision enables pupils to acquire a deepening understanding of public institutions and services in Britain, whilst learning about traditions and cultures very different to their own.

The sixth form offers a comprehensive choice of subjects and pupils can also choose to study an ancient foreign language as well as Chinese. In addition to examination subjects, the sixth form programme includes an option to complete an extended project, a qualification in ICT, and a life skills course, the latter ranging from cookery to car maintenance. Provision includes comprehensive guidance through the university application process. In this way, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The academic curriculum is well supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Covering such areas as art, theatre, debating, sport, science and mathematics, a wide choice is available during the lunch-time and after school. Opportunities for boarders to pursue additional interests and pursuits in the evening and at the weekend are more limited mainly offering private study. Almost all parents and pupils expressed satisfaction with the range of extra-curricular activities.

Well developed community links benefit the pupils. A wide range of speakers from charities, local businesses and major world religions are regularly invited into the school. Pupils host tea parties annually for local senior citizens and perform musically in a range of local venues.

The contribution of teaching

The contribution of teaching is excellent.

Teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' progress, fully supporting the school's aims. The high quality of the teaching is an important factor in enabling pupils of all abilities to reach their potential and obtain excellent examination results. This represents an improved position since the previous inspection.

Lessons are carefully planned, purposeful and productive. In almost all lessons, teaching engages the pupils' attention and ICT is well used to extend learning.

Learning objectives are clearly stated and outcomes carefully assessed so that effective guidance is given and progress is swift. Marking is carried out to a good standard. In the best examples, constructive comments inform pupils how to improve. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and encouraging. Praise is frequent and a sense of shared purpose is evident in conversations with both staff and pupils. With very few exceptions, pupils agreed that teachers help them to learn and that they are encouraged to think for themselves and to work independently where appropriate. This was clearly evident in lessons across the school, which were characterised by opportunities for reflection and independent study.

Teachers know their subject well. Their enthusiasm is shared by the pupils who enjoy opportunities for research and discussion. Excellent use is made of question and answer to encourage reflection and debate but pupils are not afraid to challenge an assumption or to make a mistake. Time is well managed so that understanding can be assessed at the end of a lesson. A wide range of resources, including articles, newspaper reports, the library and the internet are well used to stimulate interest.

All pupils are carefully assessed when they join the school and progress is monitored carefully thereafter. Teachers are made aware of each pupil's needs and use effective strategies to support their learning in line with suggestions given by the learning support department. In this way, teaching for pupils with SEND or EAL is carefully adapted to meet their varying needs. The school has fully met the recommendation from the previous inspection to support pupils with learning difficulties in all lessons. Pupils are very appreciative of the willingness of teachers to offer additional help outside lessons. Similarly, pupils who are highly able are identified and receive extension or enrichment work, which stimulates their learning and offers greater challenge.

The recently established personal mentor system, which provides each pupil with an allocated a personal mentor who tracks their progress regularly and agrees new targets, is a growing strength of the teaching. In their responses to the questionnaire, almost all parents were pleased with the progress being made by their child and agreed that very able pupils received stimulus which motivates and sets high expectations.