

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Cokethorpe School

November 2022

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School's Details

School	Cokethorpe Sch	ool		
DfE number	931/6046			
Registered charity number	309650			
Address	Cokethorpe Scho Witney Oxfordshire OX29 7PU	ool		
Telephone number	01993 703921			
Email address	admin@cokethorpe.org			
Headmaster	Mr Damian Ettinger			
Chair of governors	Mr John Bennett			
Age range	4 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	613			
	EYFS	3	Prep	103
	Seniors	382	Sixth Form	125
Inspection dates	8 to 10 November 2022			

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1. Background Information

About the school

1.1 Cokethorpe School is a co-educational independent day school situated in West Oxfordshire. It is overseen by a board of governors. The school, which was founded in 1957 as a boarding school for male pupils, became co-educational in 1991 and no longer offers boarding. The school consists of a prep school, which includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting, a senior school and a sixth form, which are located on the same site in a rural parkland setting. The current chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection.

What the school seeks to do

1.2 The school aims to provide a liberal education which challenges every pupil to achieve their ambition. It seeks to strengthen pupils' sense of responsibility and to encourage them to develop courage, empathy, judgement, resilience and integrity.

About the pupils

1.3 Pupils come from a range of family backgrounds and mostly live within 20 miles of the school. The school's own assessment data and nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils on entry to the prep school and the senior school is broadly average for those taking similar tests. The school has identified 46 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, autistic spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. All receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for five pupils, all of whom receive additional support. The school identifies those pupils who are more able and aims to provide appropriately challenging educational and enrichment opportunities for this group, as it does for all pupils.

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 <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> <u>Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.</u>

Key findings

2.1 The school does not meet all of the required 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 should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

PART 1 - Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the prep school, 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 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2020 to 2022 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the prep school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, 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.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils do not always pay due regard to current statutory guidance in all areas. In particular, suitable references have not always been obtained for staff before they begin work. Section 128 checks had not been carried out for all in management positions before they start work prior to the inspection. The latter omission was rectified by the end of the inspection.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9-16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but that in paragraph 7 [safeguarding] is not met.

Action point 1

The school must ensure that suitable references are obtained for all staff, and section 128 checks are carried out for all in management positions, before staff commence working at the school [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of proprietors. The school does not use supply staff.
- 2.13 The school carries out the required checks but does not always check the medical fitness of staff before they commence working at the school.
- 2.14 A register is kept as required.
- 2.15 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school in paragraph 20-21 are met, but that in paragraph 18 [suitability of members of staff] is not met.

Action point 2

The school must ensure that staff are checked for medical fitness before they commence working at the school [paragraph 18(3); EYFS 3.9].

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 - Provision of information

- 2.18 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.
- 2.19 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.20 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.
- 2.21 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of school

- 2.22 The proprietor does not ensure 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.
- 2.23 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.

Action point 3

The school must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their roles effectively so that independent school standards are met consistently, and the school actively promotes the wellbeing of pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].

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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

School name	National Curriculum name
First Form	Year 7
Second Form	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10
Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
 - Pupils achieve at high levels; almost all pupils attain grades in external examinations higher than expected for those of their ability.
 - Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning.
 - Pupils are articulate communicators who listen well and express themselves clearly, both orally and in writing.
 - Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) extremely effectively to enhance their learning.
 - Pupils have particularly strong creative skills.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - Pupils have a markedly strong sense of community and are highly supportive of each other.
 - Pupils of all ages, including children in the EYFS, make rapid progress in developing their self-confidence, resilience and ability to make their own decisions.
 - Pupils have excellent social skills and are highly successful in collaborating both inside and outside the classroom.
 - Pupils have a decidedly strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
 - Strengthen still further the pupils' confidence to engage fully in life beyond school, by fulfilling their desire to develop increased understanding of the challenges and pressures prevalent in society.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 During their time at the school pupils develop communication skills of the highest quality. Pupils are articulate, expressing themselves clearly and with purpose, in response to numerous opportunities for discussion in the classroom and beyond. This was evident in sociology when Year 12 pupils engaged in clear and purposeful discussion as they considered how societal attitudes to smoking and seatbelts had changed over time. Pupils' writing skills are very well-developed. This was seen, for example, in the excellent use of adjectives and similes in younger pupils' poetry. It is evident in extensively researched projects for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) which demonstrate refined writing about complex topics such as the comparison of masculinity in *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain*. From the earliest age, pupils have excellent listening skills. Children in the EYFS listened intently to the sounds of letters made by their teacher and then blended the phonemes together successfully to form words. In all of these areas, a strong contributory factor is the commitment of the school's leadership team and the staff to provide pupils with opportunities to develop communication skills. They benefit from being enabled to read widely, engage in discussions, form their own ideas, write creatively and speak in public.
- 3.6 Pupils, including those with SEND, make good progress over time. Their progress in lessons is facilitated by focused teaching and a culture where pupils try to perform to the best of their ability. In the prep school, this progress is confirmed by the high standard of mathematics and reading in lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work and assessment data provided by the school. EYFS profiles show that, over time, a very large majority of children reach a good level of development. In history, Year 9 pupils made demonstrable progress as they analysed and understood a wide range of contemporary and primary first world war sources. Pupils' attainment at GCSE in 2022 was good, with the majority of pupils' results being achieved at the highest three grades. In 2020 and 2021, in centre-assessed and teacher-assessed assessments, over two-thirds of results were graded at the highest three grades. Results at A level in 2022 were strong, with over half of results achieving an A* or A grade. This high level of achievement mirrors the centre-assessed and teacher-assessed results in 2020 and 2021. Data analysed suggest that almost all pupils attain grades higher than expected for those of their ability.
- 3.7 Children acquire and develop excellent numeracy skills in the EYFS and throughout the prep school. This is due to the provision of well-scaffolded and enjoyable learning activities and the focus on number skills. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 1, pupils used fact families extremely successfully to enable them to write a variety of number sentences. Pupils apply their strong mathematical knowledge effectively to other areas of learning. This is because pupils have frequent opportunities to put their mathematical skills into practice to enhance their learning. For example, in history, Year 7 pupils constructing a timeline of the events of the Norman conquest demonstrated decidedly strong numeracy and chronology skills. In a biology lesson, Year 13 pupils used their strong mathematical knowledge effectively when using equations to develop their understanding of population genetics.
- 3.8 Pupils make rapid progress in developing knowledge, skills and understanding as a result of the school's supportive and collaborative learning environment and their own determination. Outstanding creativity was evident in a drama lesson in Year 10 as pupils used soft toys to narrate the story of *Othello*. Year 8 pupils showed good use of scientific language when explaining the

experimental process of separating salt from a mixture of sand, salt and water. More able pupils in Year 5 showed excellent mathematical ability as they moved from the concrete to the abstract with ease. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils did not agree that lessons are interesting. The inspection found that pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement in response to the teaching they receive. They are keen to learn and benefit from the opportunities available to them. For example, in a business studies lesson, Year 12 pupils responded with enthusiasm when prompted to discuss marketing strategies for soft drinks products.

- 3.9 Pupils display excellent attitudes to learning, demonstrating both the motivation and determination to do well. They embrace the wide range of opportunities to discover new interests and skills that the school provides. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school equips their children with the teamworking, collaborative and research skills they need in later life. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are keen and active learners who engage readily in both collaborative and individual work. In discussions, pupils in Year 2 spoke of how they had worked together very effectively on a task to sort human and physical geographical features. In French, more able pupils in Year 10 collaborated extremely effectively with their peers as they helped them to select the correct statement in a listening exercise about Mexican and Chinese food. Pupils in GCSE and at A level take notably strong leadership in their learning. This is evident in art and design portfolios which show great originality, and in EPQ projects on a diverse range of topics.
- 3.10 Pupils are exceptionally confident users of ICT and apply their skills well to support their learning. This has been driven by the initiative of leadership and governance to develop the use of digital technology for learning and teaching. During periods of remote learning, pupils used online video learning platforms very effectively to access lessons and resources, and to collaborate with their peers. These skills continue to be embedded in their learning. As they progress through the school, pupils increasingly use digital technology naturally to support and extend their learning. For example, Year 8 pupils were agile in their application of software packages when researching topics ranging from the history of football to the effect of poverty on access to healthcare. Year 9 pupils demonstrated excellent ICT skills when composing a soundtrack to images of dolphins swimming. Pupils with SEND make excellent use of software to enhance their learning. This enables them to make progress in line with their peers.
- 3.11 Throughout the school pupils achieve strongly in a wide array of co-curricular activities. They regularly gain considerable success in local sporting competitions. Some pupils excel in regional and national competitions in hockey, football, horse riding and sailing. Pupils achieve bronze, silver and gold awards in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and gain success in the UK Maths Challenge, Biology Olympiad and Spelling Bee and Oxford Art competitions. Pupils of all ages achieve strong success in external speech, drama and music examinations. Pupils achieve highly in these areas partly because of their extremely strong independence and collaborative skills, but also because they are encouraged by the school to pursue wide-ranging interests.
- 3.12 Pupils demonstrate well-developed thinking skills and relish the opportunity to form their own hypotheses. This is supported by a curriculum and co-curricular programme that provides many opportunities for pupils to develop such skills. From the youngest years, pupils use these skills with confidence because they are encouraged to extend their understanding through open questions and appropriate tasks. For example, in an English lesson in Year 5, pupils showed a decidedly strong ability to locate features in a non-chronological report. In an A-level politics lesson, pupils displayed excellent higher-order thinking when discussing the competence and authority of the European Union compared to UK parliamentary sovereignty. Pupils display an excellent ability to research effectively by using a wide range of sources for their extended project work. As a result, the majority of pupils are successful in securing places on courses at universities with highly competitive entry requirements. This amply fulfils the school's aim to provide a liberal education which challenges every pupil to achieve their ambition.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 From the moment they join the school, pupils make rapid progress in developing their self-confidence, resilience, self-discipline, and other personal skills. Within the school, pupils show a distinctive degree of self-confidence without any hint of arrogance. Pupils of all ages relish contributing to discussions and conferring with their peers to enhance their learning. Pupils with SEND are very positive about the help they receive because they understand that it supports their self-confidence and self-esteem. In discussions, pupils in Year 9 articulated how they had become increasingly resilient through activities available to them such as climbing and performing on the stage. This is as a result of the determination of leadership and governance to encourage resilience by challenging pupils to try new activities which take them outside of their comfort zone. This fulfils the aim of the school to encourage resilience and courage. In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority of parents said that the school helps their children to be confident. Inspection evidence confirms this view.
- 3.15 Throughout their time at the school, pupils develop an acute awareness of the non-material aspects of life. This is apparent in the obvious pleasure they get from music and art and the awareness they show for the beauty of life and the world around them. For example, in tutor time, Year 10 pupils displayed excellent environmental awareness as they discussed issues surrounding the United Nations Climate Change Conference. Year 8 pupils reflected with maturity on the deeper meaning and relevance of Remembrance Day. During a mini-beast hunt in the school grounds, younger pupils in the prep school responded to different habitats with a sense of amazement. Pupils have a decidedly strong spiritual understanding. In a history lesson about life in the trenches, younger pupils engaged in thoughtful discussions about sacrifice and the value of life. In philosophy, sixth formers discussed academically challenging spiritual matters with maturity, such as the paradox of omnipotence and the notion of infinite time.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate an outstanding sense of community and of the school's corporate identity. They display an excellent level of respect for one another, regardless of any perceived differences. For example, pupils with disabilities speak comfortably about them, including during assemblies. In questionnaire responses, an overwhelming majority of parents said that the school actively promotes the values of democracy, respect, and tolerance of other people. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are extremely accepting and value the right of everyone to be themselves. They work with others completely naturally in lessons and activities. The supportive environment engendered by the school enables pupils with different learning needs to gain social skills and form successful relationships with their peers. Pupils relish the opportunity to gain a better understanding of different cultures. Year 11 pupils showed deep sensitivity when analysing a poem set in Mumbai. They compared their more privileged lives with the plight of people living in the developing world.
- 3.17 Pupils have a good appreciation of the importance of a healthy and balanced lifestyle and of how to stay safe online. Pupils benefit from the strong promotion of their wellbeing through the curriculum. They maintain a positive approach to relationships and to life because the school recognises the possible impact of mental illness and stress on pupils and as a result employs a counsellor to support them. In a wellbeing and integrity lesson in Year 11, pupils displayed a willingness to engage in open discussions and a mature understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships. This resulted from clear teaching and the creation of a safe space for pupils to contribute in class. Pupils of all ages are keen to participate in sporting activities, as they are highly conscious that an active lifestyle is good for their health. In discussions, pupils said that they value the sessions that they have had on topics such as consent. However, some pupils in the senior school have said that they would be keen to learn more about topics such as sexual harassment and how to stay safe beyond school. Inspection evidence confirms that the school covers all required aspects of sexual wellbeing, but there is scope for further exploration of the topics than pupils currently receive.

- 3.18 Pupils have highly developed social skills. Pupils in Year 12 displayed remarkably strong teamwork skills as they worked together to organise an autumn themed dinner for pupils in the year below. Pupils' excellent social awareness is evident in the ease with which they talk to, and interact with adults. They demonstrate positive engagement with each other both in and outside lessons. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors voiced the belief that their school is a community built on kindness and respect. Through the assumption of leadership roles, pupils contribute to the school community in many different ways. They act as prefects, sixth-form mentors, peer mentors, monitors and reading buddies for younger children. Pupils develop a deep sense of responsibility and are extremely active in their community involvement. For example, senior pupils provide sports coaching and a dance club for children from local primary schools. Pupils from the prep school make a strong contribution to the community by donating warm clothing to the homeless and by engaging in picking up litter. Older pupils initiate fundraising events, such as a Ukraine week, which benefit the wider community.
- 3.19 Pupils have a very clear understanding of how the decisions that they make now will influence their own future success and wellbeing. In the EYFS, children make suitable choices of activities which support their development. Pupils of all ages think very carefully when selecting which subjects they will study and the co-curricular activities that they will pursue. Older pupils recognise the importance of their decisions when selecting pathways to their future careers. Pupils display a strong moral understanding which is inherent in the culture of the school. In discussions, pupils display a good grasp of what is right and what is wrong. They understand why it is important to treat people with respect and appreciate the clear code of conduct in the senior school. Although a very small minority of pupils did not agree in questionnaire responses that pupils treat each other with respect, in discussions, pupils said that they are very accepting of each other. This is confirmed by inspection evidence. In the prep school pupils contribute to the class charter and identify ways to resolve conflict through a focus on understanding emotions. In the EYFS, children create and play their own games and self-regulate with their own rules.

Inspection Evidence 14

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 a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. 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 Sue Clarke Reporting inspector

Mr Roland Martin Compliance team inspector (Headmaster, HMC and SofH school)

Mr William Brierly Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC and SofH school)

Mr Lawrence Coen Team inspector (Headmaster, ISA and SofH school)

Mr Shaun Fenton Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)

Mr Andrew Holman Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)

Mrs Sarah Marsh Team inspector (Head of prep, ISA and GSA school)