



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

SEDBERGH SCHOOL

MAY 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Sedbergh School			
DfE number	909/6026			
Registered charity number	1080672			
Address	Sedbergh School Sedbergh Cumbria LA10 5HG			
Telephone number	01539 620535			
Email address	enquiries@sedberghschool.org			
Headmaster	Mr Andrew Fleck			
Chair of governors	Mr Hugh Blair			
Age range	13 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	528			
	Boys	334	Girls	194
	Day pupils	11	Boarders	517
	Sixth Form	230		
Inspection dates	10 to 11 May 2017			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates on behalf of the DfE, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest report on the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

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

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house meetings and chapel. Inspectors visited boarding houses, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Stephen Fox	Reporting inspector
Mr Stephen Holroyd	Team inspector (Head of department, HMC school)
Mr David Morgan	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Susan Smith	Team inspector (Former deputy head, GSA school)

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Sedbergh School is an independent boarding school for boys and girls between the ages of 13 and 18 years. The school admits day pupils. It is a charity overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection, Sedbergh has merged with Casterton School, which is now occupied by Sedbergh Preparatory School. This has enabled a new girls' house to be built and has increased the proportion of girls in the school. A new sports centre is under construction, and the school has established a joint project with the University of Cumbria and corporate partners to create a Centre for Advanced Technology and Science to support primary and secondary schools in south and western Cumbria.
- 1.2 The school was founded as a chantry school in 1525 by Roger Lupton, while he was Provost of Eton. It is set amongst the Howgill Fells in the Yorkshire Dales, near the Lake District National Park. There are three girls' and six boys' boarding houses, which accommodate pupils across all age groups. Each house has its own library, common rooms and dining room, enabling all meals to be taken in the boarding houses. This is a distinctive feature of the school.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's aim is to identify and develop the potential of its pupils in a variety of areas: academic, artistic, cultural, sporting, personal, social, moral and spiritual. It aspires to help pupils obtain the best possible qualifications and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a wide variety of maintained, preparatory and other independent schools in the north of England, the midlands and the south. About one in eight pupils live abroad and a further nineteen percent are international pupils. Pupils are mainly of White British ethnicity. Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils on entry is average. The school has identified 120 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, approximately half of whom receive additional specialist help. Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 100 pupils, of whom 29 receive specialist English teaching, in addition to support provided by subject specialist teachers. Assessments and data are used by the school to identify the most able pupils, and the curriculum and co-curricular programme are modified to enhance their talents.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils of all abilities realise their potential, achieving a balance between academic success and striving for excellence in co-curricular activities.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning due to the example set by their teachers and the high quality of support and encouragement they receive.
- Pupils' achievements across an exceptional range of activities are outstanding because of excellent coaching and mentoring, high expectations and outstanding facilities.

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

- Pupils have an outstanding sense of teamwork and loyalty, promoted by a distinctively strong house system.
- Pupils are extremely resilient and have the self-confidence to challenge themselves to achieve what they previously thought was not possible.
- Pupils are exceptionally pro-active in choosing healthy lifestyles because of the emphasis placed on this by the school and the extensive range of opportunities for activity.
- Pupils are able to prioritise their commitments and achieve a balance between academic and other activities because of the support they receive from staff.

Recommendation

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that the school's marking policy is consistently applied by all teachers so that pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The school successfully fulfils its aims of identifying and developing the academic, artistic, cultural and sporting potential of its pupils and enabling them to obtain the best possible qualifications, whilst preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. This is achieved through strong leadership and management and a team of governors who undertake a highly effective strategic role in the development of the school, and are well informed about the academic, pastoral and co-curricular aspects of school life.
- 3.3 Assured and inspiring teachers with high expectations and expertise in their subject successfully encourage most pupils to acquire excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum, enabling them to achieve their potential and fulfil their ambitions. Work is tailored to individual needs, either through setting, for example in mathematics and sciences, or through a recognition by teachers of preferred learning styles. A culture of stretching and challenging pupils, both in lessons and through various academic initiatives, encourages, stimulates and validates intellectual development.
- 3.4 In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of parents agreed that teaching enables their child to make good progress and that their child's educational needs are met by the school. In their own responses, most pupils felt that the school gives them the opportunity to learn and make good progress and that teachers are supportive and helpful. These views are fully supported by evidence gathered during the inspection from observing lessons and pupils' work and from discussions with pupils.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for 2012 to 2015, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Across this period, performance at GCSE has been above the national average for maintained schools. At A level, results have been in line with the national average for maintained schools. The past four years have seen a steady improvement in overall pass rates at GCSE, with 91% of candidates achieving grade C or above in 2016, 42% of these at A*-A. A very large majority of sixth form leavers gain entry to their first-choice university, often at institutions with highly competitive entry requirements.
- 3.6 Pupils, including those identified as having SEND, make good and often excellent progress over time with the help of skilled, dedicated and committed teachers and a broad curriculum which is appropriate for the wide ability range of pupils in the school. Almost all parents in the questionnaire agreed that the range of subjects offered by the school is suitable for their child. Pupils identified as having EAL make excellent progress, a significant achievement given their often limited competency in English when they arrive at the school. This is a result of highly effective support, based on an awareness of individual pupils' needs, which not only enables these pupils to make rapid progress in English, but also to access the wider curriculum successfully in mainstream lessons. The school has addressed the recommendation of the previous inspection with regard to providing more consistent support to pupils with individual learning needs and EAL. A strong pastoral system, and the development of robust systems to monitor the performance of all pupils, ensure that tutors and house staff know their pupils very well, so that they identify potential problems and intervene quickly to help maximise their progress.
- 3.7 An exceptional range of social and curriculum-related activities, in addition to sport, drama, music, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), outdoor pursuits and the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), coupled with the school's determination to provide time for pupils to take advantage of this wide choice, encourages them to achieve at the highest level. In the questionnaire, all parents and most pupils agreed that there is a good choice of extra-curricular activities. In interviews, pupils regularly expressed great pride for what they have

been able to achieve outside the classroom, as well as gratitude for the opportunities that highly skilled coaching and mentoring and the school's willingness to cater for individual needs have afforded them. Pupils acknowledge that boarding provides them with the time and opportunity to pursue their ambitions. Individual and team successes abound at county and national level, from rugby, golf, shooting and dressage to notable successes in DofE, debating, the National Schools' Academic Quiz and in gaining university music scholarships and distinctions in external drama qualifications. Pupils say that if they want to pursue a particular activity, the school will do what it can to facilitate this.

- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate excellent learning habits and have extremely positive attitudes to their academic work. There is a common purpose and work ethos to which they willingly subscribe. They respond positively to creatively planned, challenging lessons that have appropriate pace and structure, and to the excellent relationships that result in highly effective teamwork between teachers and pupils. Pupils' response is equally positive to the challenges of collaborative learning, which they undertake productively. They are ambitious in their pursuit of progress and confidently seek further clarification if they are unsure. They are not afraid to challenge teachers, though they are always respectful, and they are focused and interested in lessons. They show respect for their peers' ideas and contributions. A small minority of pupils felt that lessons are not interesting, but inspectors found little evidence of this.
- 3.9 Pupils display a love of learning, as evidenced by senior pupils sharing their enjoyment of intellectual pursuits with their peers in assemblies or student-led societies, pupils' reading recommendations in the library or the way in which Year 9 pupils relish the opportunity to undertake a research project of their own choosing. They are not afraid to make mistakes and understand the importance of learning from them. Guidance from teachers on expectations is always clear and success criteria explicit.
- 3.10 Pupils communicate ideas and opinions with maturity and obvious enjoyment, both orally and in writing. This is because formal discourse is modelled to a high level by teachers, as seen to great effect in a religious studies lesson on Kant, and because pupils are given frequent opportunities to speak in public. They are excellent listeners, articulate and entirely at ease when talking to adults. Senior pupils in particular are skilled in debate and enjoy pitting their wits against each other in the classroom and beyond. Pupils exhibit a thorough grasp of numeracy skills, which they confidently apply to practical situations across the curriculum, as they receive a good grounding through strong teaching and support outside lessons.
- 3.11 Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) competently and confidently to support their learning and progress in a range of subjects. For example, it is used in a highly effective way in BTEC business, modern foreign languages and musical composition. Most teachers encourage pupils to choose their own learning styles, including the use of information and communication technology to organise notes and record class discussions in a way that is helpful to them. Pupils benefit from a robust ICT infrastructure.
- 3.12 Pupils' study skills are excellent. They apply themselves assiduously to their work and are keen to identify where their weaknesses lie. A small minority of pupils in the questionnaire felt that teachers' marking does not indicate how well they are performing or show them how they might improve their work. Inspectors agreed that there is inconsistency in marking. Whilst some is comprehensive and provides constructive feedback, some is cursory and fails to provide adequate guidance. In this regard, the school has not fully addressed the recommendations of the previous inspection. However, teachers provide strong one-to-one feedback and support, which is much appreciated by the pupils.

- 3.13 Pupils are able to choose and synthesise resources and are highly effective in drawing on prior learning. They show high levels of independence in extending their own learning, using teachers' initial stimuli as a springboard for their own lines of thought. They are supported in this by stimulating and relevant resources and by teachers who trust pupils to work independently and make appropriate choices. Regular, supervised study in boarding houses engenders self-discipline, and the mutual availability of pupils and teachers in boarding time contributes to the pupils' high levels of knowledge and understanding.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school successfully achieves its aim of encouraging pupils to challenge themselves and each other to achieve ambitious goals. As a result, pupils' self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience are exceptionally well developed. They have well-rounded personalities for their ages and embrace challenge with great enthusiasm and self-discipline. They accept that making mistakes and the possibility of failure are part of the learning process, because that is what the school's ethos, founded on close teamwork and loyalty to each other, encourages them to do. They know their strengths and their weaknesses and how to improve their performance; if they don't, they are not afraid to ask for clarification.
- 4.3 Boarding provides pupils with a safe, happy and fulfilling platform from which they can pursue their academic and other interests. Guidance and support are always at hand thanks to an effective pastoral framework established both centrally and through a distinctively strong house system, where the staff know individual pupils well and help them to flourish in all areas of their life at school and beyond. Almost all parents in the questionnaire agreed that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development, and meets their pastoral and welfare needs effectively. In the questionnaire, a very large majority of pupils felt that boarding has helped them to become more confident and independent. The co-curricular programme is highly instrumental in developing resilience and self-knowledge; for example, the sense of fulfilment and achievement that so many pupils derive from fell-running, culminating in the legendary 'Wilson Run', a demanding ten-mile race for senior pupils across the Howgill fells, epitomises the Sedbergh spirit.
- 4.4 Pupils develop strong value systems and an excellent ability to distinguish right from wrong. They are mindful of their obligations to the school and respond positively to the clear set of rules and the system of rewards and sanctions that are in place. Strong leadership in houses, with a culture of promoting positive behaviour, ensures that pupils are accountable for their actions, resulting in an extremely well ordered community. A counter-bullying group of pupils champions the cause to great effect throughout the school, raising awareness and providing support for their peers.
- 4.5 Pupils have a well-developed spiritual awareness which is fostered through daily assemblies and in chapel, and the Christian ethos underpins all aspects of the community. A co-curricular programme that affords so many opportunities for pupils to engage with their environment means that pupils appreciate the unique setting of the school and come to understand the transformative effect of its natural beauty. In conversation, they do not take their surroundings for granted, though they are mature enough to acknowledge that they might, and show a sensitivity that extends to a deep appreciation of the spiritual dimension of participating in creative activities such as music and drama.
- 4.6 Pupils are extremely pro-active in adopting healthy lifestyles. They make the most of the excellent facilities, and really value and appreciate the opportunities they are given to develop as young people. They understand the importance of mental well-being and the way in which exercise and immersing themselves in the life of the school contribute to this. The exceptional range of sports and activities enables all pupils to be active throughout the school year. Faced by such a wealth of choice, pupils are extremely well supported by staff in leading balanced lives, and they are able to make mature and independent decisions about priorities so that their academic work does not suffer. The knowledge that they can pursue their own interests to such a high level in their free time helps to instil in pupils a respect for learning as a means of balancing their co-curricular commitments.

- 4.7 Pupils take personal responsibility for their own success and well-being and work hard to achieve their goals because of the encouragement and support of house staff and subject teachers who have a genuine care for their development. Whilst a small minority of pupils and parents felt that the school might give them better advice about their choice of academic subjects or career, most pupils are confident about making decisions for the next stage of their education, and the school is in the process of developing its provision in this area. The initiative and independence that pupils develop whilst at Sedbergh enable them to be well-prepared for the challenges of the future.
- 4.8 Pupils relate extremely well to each other. They appreciate and embrace the wide range of opportunities they have to work collaboratively to achieve common goals, for example in drama productions and concerts. There is much on offer that strengthens teamwork and mutual support, from their life in the boarding house to all manner of collaborative opportunities in academic, sporting, creative and other activities, such as the CCF, as well as a common sense of purpose promoted by the vertical house system. The strong identities and traditions of the nine different boarding houses contribute greatly to the overwhelming sense of belonging that pervades the school. In the boarding houses and across the school, pupils from diverse backgrounds work naturally together. Overseas pupils settle quickly into the school community and pupils are genuinely interested in each other's cultures. Teachers are keen to draw on pupils' varied backgrounds to enhance and extend pupils' cultural awareness and are ably supported by the EAL department in this.
- 4.9 Pupils have a strong commitment to helping others. They support a range of local, national and international charities in aid of those less fortunate than themselves and are generous with both their time and money. Over the last five years, pupils have supported an orphanage in Kenya, not only financing but also providing labour for the construction of a purpose-built nursery. Pupils raised a significant amount of money last year for Phoenix House, a local recovery centre for service personnel, as part of the 'Help for Heroes' project. They enjoy the many opportunities for leadership and service, for example as school or house prefects, and fulfil these roles with pride and commitment. Pupils are extremely active in the local community thanks to a voluntary service programme which is tailored to their interests and abilities. Activities undertaken range from teaching in local primary schools to working in an outdoor centre for the disabled.