



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

**TAUNTON PREPARATORY SCHOOL AND TAUNTON SCHOOL
INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL**

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Taunton Preparatory School and Taunton School International Middle School			
DfE number	933/6214			
Registered charity number	1081420			
Address	Taunton Preparatory School Staplegrove Road Taunton Somerset TA2 6AE			
Telephone number	01823 703307			
Email address	tpsenquiries@tauntonschool.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Duncan Sinclair			
Chair of governors	Mr Henry Keeling			
Age range	0 to 14			
Number of pupils on roll	495			
	Boys	281	Girls	214
	Day pupils	422	Boarders	73
	EYFS	142	Juniors	328
	Seniors (Years 9 and 10)	25	TSIMS pupils	49
Inspection dates	1 to 2 March 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.

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 un-met 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 form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, 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 Steven Popper	Reporting inspector
Mr Ian Carter	Accompanying inspector
Mrs Sylvia Chetwood	Team inspector (Former deputy head academic, IAPS school)
Mr Eddy Newton	Team inspector (Principal, IAPS school)
Mrs Ros Ford	Team inspector for EYFS (Former deputy head, IAPS school)
Mr Paul Barlow	Team inspector for boarding (Head of boarding, IAPS school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Taunton Preparatory School was founded in 1994 following the merger of the former girls' and boys' junior schools. Taunton School International Middle School (TSIMS) was established in 2012. Taunton Preparatory School includes Taunton Pre-Prep and Taunton Nursery and caters for boys and girls from birth to 13 years, whilst TSIMS caters for pupils aged 8 to 14 years. Both schools are part of Taunton School, and the trustees of Taunton School educational charity act as governors.
- 1.2 Boarders are accommodated in three boarding houses; one for both boy and girl boarders on the Taunton Preparatory School site, and two single-sex boarding houses on the TSIMS site which is situated about three miles away.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to challenge, inspire and nurture pupils to achieve in a global community and rapidly changing world, and prepare them for life beyond school. It seeks to provide pupils with strong leadership and communication skills, and put their well-being at the heart of all it does.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional, business, military and farming backgrounds, and represent a diverse range of cultures. The school does not use standardised tests, but its own assessments indicate that the ability of pupils is above average. It has identified 56 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 44 of whom receive extra support for a range of conditions including dyslexia. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 10 pupils in Taunton Preparatory School, 5 of whom receive additional support for their English, and for 49 pupils in Taunton School International Middle School, all of whom receive additional support for their English. Data used by the school have identified 51 pupils as the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 57 other pupils as a result of their special talents in music and sport.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in February and March 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Provide a more stimulating range of opportunities for those who are not involved in matches on Wednesday afternoons.
 - In the EYFS, ensure that the success of changes is evaluated in terms of improved outcomes for children.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous full inspection.
- 1.8 The recommendations of the intermediate boarding inspection in October 2014 were:
- Enhance opportunities to determine and reflect the pupils' views within the preparatory school, and to give feedback to them.
 - Evaluate the impact of the new system for recording and tracking systems for boarders' behaviour and attitudes within the preparatory school.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous intermediate boarding inspection.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- All groups of pupils including boarders, international pupils and the younger children, demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' attainment is above and often well above national age-related expectations.
- Pupils including boarders and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children progress rapidly from their starting points. International pupils with EAL make exceptional progress.
- Pupils' academic and non-academic achievements are excellent.
- The preparatory school's system of tracking progress made by different groups of pupils is not sufficiently developed to allow the school to plan its provision as effectively as possible.

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

- Pupils demonstrate outstanding self-confidence.
- Pupils exhibit notably strong moral understanding.
- Pupils are extremely respectful towards others.
- Pupils and particularly international boarders demonstrate an outstanding appreciation and understanding of others from different cultural backgrounds.

Recommendations

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the preparatory school might wish to consider:

- Strengthening the system of tracking the progress of different groups of pupils to allow the school to plan its provision for these groups as effectively as possible.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are highly motivated to learn and succeed. They exhibit a great delight in finding out more, and in doing so advance their skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, the school fully meets its aim to challenge, inspire and nurture pupils to achieve in a global community and rapidly changing world. Pupils' exemplary attitudes towards learning are nourished by the teachers' substantial expectations of them, and due to leaders and governors successfully embedding the school's ethos. In addition, the excellent use of 'pupil planners' enables pupils to plan ahead and set informed targets for their own achievement and development. Pupils understand what types of behaviour constitute positive attitudes to learning, such as always completing homework to a good standard on time and aiming for mastery of their topics. They consistently demonstrate that they put significant value on achievement, including supporting that of others. Such behaviours are a result of leaders and teachers explicitly rewarding and commending achievement and doing one's best. For example TSIMS leaders issue effort sheets and awards for good work and progress, whilst staff on the main site constantly reward good achievement and effort through their dialogue with pupils and use of stars and other rewards.
- 3.3 Pupils demonstrate substantial success in achieving places at their senior school of choice, with the vast majority of pupils choosing to move into the senior school situated on the same central campus with whom the school works in close partnership. The school is entirely successful in meeting its aim to prepare pupils for life beyond school. It does not take part in National Curriculum tests, but the available evidence from work scrutiny, lesson observations and the school's data demonstrates attainment to be above and often well above national age-related expectations. Results in the school's internal assessments of attainment display high numbers of pupils attaining beyond the national expectations for their year groups. In addition, the EYFS outcomes in 2016 were above national age-related expectations, with a very large majority of children attaining a good level of development. This success is due to leaders monitoring individual children's and pupil's achievement systematically and ensuring that staff clearly identify any gaps in particular pupil's learning. Staff use this information to ensure that individual pupils including those who have SEND or EAL receive appropriate and highly effective provision. Similarly, the most able pupils achieve well as a result of additional carefully tailored programmes to advance their learning, such as the challenging activities emanating from the 'Ripples' ('Raising independent pupils' learning skills') group.

- 3.4 All groups of pupils, including the most able and those who have SEND or EAL, typically make rapid progress. Pupils with EAL who attend the TSIMS setting make exceptional progress in English as they are grouped and taught by their ability in English rather than by their age. All pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school provides them the opportunity to learn and make good progress. This was observed in pupils' books, internal school data about pupils' achievements and in lessons observed. Pupils progress swiftly as a result of the teachers' high expectations, clear explanations and effective questioning, dialogue and marking. For example older pupils in a mathematics lesson quickly developed skills in identifying mathematical patterns as a result of the teacher's well-judged questions and prompts, whilst a scrutiny of books demonstrated that pupils in the middle of the school are able to write to a very high standard due to the clear written advice about grammar provided. Pupils develop strong knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of learning. For instance, pupils during a geography lesson demonstrated skilful reasoning about the weather, whilst TSIMS pupils in a mixed-age history lesson were able to articulate very thoughtful and precise ideas about the reliability of information that could be found in different sources of evidence. Pupils' fast progress is also due to considerable and frequent celebration of pupils' success during assemblies and other occasions by leaders and other staff. For example during one morning briefing, leaders presented pupils with certificates in recognition of their academic success.
- 3.5 Pupils demonstrate excellent study skills. For example in an English lesson, older pupils were able to explain how they could research and analyse the text at hand. This is a consequence of staff explicitly drawing attention to such processes and enabling pupils to practice them during their lessons. Older pupils develop a substantial awareness of how to develop their own study skills such as hypothesising, reflecting, analysing and selecting, as a result of staff's excellent use of the Prep School Baccalaureate which targets such skills with precision.
- 3.6 Pupils demonstrate excellent achievement in sporting and music events at local and national level. In sport, amongst many other achievements, a girls' hockey team has reached national finals as have pupils participating in cross-country events. Pupils have won an international biathlon and swum the English Channel, and they reach national athletics finals regularly. In music, the choir has also attained local and national success, and have been chosen to sing in the Vatican. This sustained success is due to the substantial opportunities and support provided to pupils. For example in sport, leaders have introduced the use of professional coaches to develop pupils' skills in rugby, hockey, swimming, netball, cricket and tennis. In music, the choir have developed their skills through regularly performing internationally such as in Paris, Venice and Madrid. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they can be involved in a good range of activities.
- 3.7 Pupils are extremely confident and articulate speakers. They develop excellent communication skills. This is due to the teachers providing pupils very precise advice and guidance about the use of the English language. Pupils' outstanding communication skills also benefit from the considerable opportunities the school provides them to express themselves, and from skilful teaching. For example, younger pupils in an English lesson were able to clearly explain and express ideas about their reading book as a result of the teacher's precise focus on particular words in the text. Similarly, children in the EYFS demonstrated strong use of vocabulary such as 'family', 'aunt', 'uncle' and 'cousin' as a result of staff's clear and accurate use of such terminology. The school fully meets its aim to provide pupils with strong communication skills.

- 3.8 Pupils exhibit outstanding mathematical skills and an excellent ability to use information and communication technology (ICT) to further their learning. Pupils' mathematical abilities advance as a result of teachers' clear explanations and demonstrations that deal with any misconceptions effectively. Children in the EYFS and younger pupils develop secure mathematical knowledge and understanding due to teachers' excellent use of practical resources and activities to engage pupils and make mathematics meaningful to them. For example in a mathematics lesson, younger pupils' understanding of number bonds increased rapidly through their exploration of appropriate physical resources. Pupils' extensive ICT skills result from the substantial opportunities staff provide them to use tablets in research and equipment such as green screens to present their ideas.
- 3.9 Pupils achieve extremely well but the preparatory school's method of tracking the progress made by each different group of pupils, for example the most able and those with SEND or EAL, is not as developed as the school's system of tracking the progress made by individual pupils. The school's system is not sufficiently strong to allow the school to plan its provision for these groups as effectively as possible.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school fully meets its aim to put pupils' well-being at the heart of all it does, as children and pupils demonstrate enormous self-awareness and self-confidence. This is as a result of the excellent relationships between pupils and staff, and the exemplary support and opportunities staff provide to children and pupils of all ages. For example boarders and TSIMS pupils receive an excellent induction programme that develops their substantial self-confidence, and pupils across the school develop their own individual talents extremely well through engaging in activities such as musical and dramatic performances, and reading at chapel services. Children in the EYFS exhibit outstanding levels of self-confidence due to their extremely strong emotional attachments with staff. In interview, pupils including boarders said that their confidence and resilience had developed well as a result of staff encouragement to experiment and try new things without worrying too much if they go wrong.
- 4.3 Pupils evaluate their own skills, learning and progress extremely well, and value the opportunity to talk to teachers about their grades and development. This is due to staff making excellent use of the 'purple polishing pen' written dialogue with pupils to advance their self-reflection. Pupils expressed that the school's use of 'what went well' and 'even better if' marking had led them to become skilled at self-evaluation. Pupils' excellent decision-making skills also develop as a result of the outstanding use of 'pupil planners', as these enable and guide pupils to organise themselves and their priorities for further development skilfully. The school wholly meets its aim to provide pupils with strong leadership skills and prepare them for life beyond school. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development.
- 4.4 Pupils' demonstrate exemplary behaviour and outstanding moral development. Across all age groups, pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. For example, children in the EYFS are very aware of the setting's 'golden rules' and are extremely kind and helpful towards each other, whilst younger pupils exhibit an excellent understanding of the importance of accepting responsibility for one's own actions and finding ways to make things better. Pupils in TSIMS are able to deal with disagreements and other situations extremely well as a result of leaders' consistent promotion of the use of a caring and considerate approach to resolve any concerns that may arise. Older pupils are able to engage in deep and challenging moral questions. For example, pupils in English lessons have explored the historical use of corporal punishment in schools, after reading a particular book. Similarly, pupils have discussed conscientious objection and other moral issues during religious education and philosophy lessons. All pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school encourages them to respect other people. In addition, all pupils and the vast majority of parents who responded agreed that the school encourages pupils to behave well.

- 4.5 Pupils work highly effectively with each other and maintain outstanding social relationships. This is as a result of the clear guidance from teachers and the extremely welcoming, warm and positive daily routines including in the EYFS and all boarding communities. For example in a mixed-age personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) lesson, TSIMS pupils were able to confidently explain strategies for resolving disputes in a respectful way, using compromise and negotiation. Similarly during an assembly in the preparatory school, pupils demonstrated strong support for each other and for those either playing the piano or receiving an award. Pupils displayed substantial friendliness towards each other during break times observed during the inspection. They also demonstrate an outstanding empathy towards other people including those less fortunate than themselves, and strongly understand the need for those in a position of responsibility to have a moral duty towards others. For example whilst learning about the role of wardens during the Second World War, boarders explained how they had duties towards others in the boarding houses and felt that they were wardens to the younger pupils. Similarly, Year 8 junior leaders eagerly support younger pupils in the playground during break times. Pupils actively engage in activities designed to help other people, including much work for military and overseas charities as well as for a charity supporting local refugee families. Pupils' outstanding social development and contributions to others owe much to sustained modelling of compassion and promotion of the importance of caring for others by leaders and staff, as well as to the many opportunities they receive to engage in charitable work and take on positions of responsibility.
- 4.6 Pupils exhibit substantial respect towards each other and value one another extremely highly. Pupils, notably those at TSIMS who represent a vast range of cultural backgrounds, demonstrate superb levels of respect and appreciation of others from different cultures and backgrounds. For example during a World Book Day event, pupils of different ages, cultures and backgrounds mixed and socialised with each other with delight. Leaders and governors ensure that the school is entirely successful in meeting its aim to inspire and nurture pupils to achieve in a global community. This is due to the extremely high expectations and excellent modelling by leaders and staff in this regard, and as a result of British values of tolerance and acceptance permeating the curriculum. All parents and most pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 4.7 Pupils feel extremely safe, well-known and nurtured. They know how to keep safe when online and in other situations, and are able to assess possible risks very well. Pupils also have a very strong awareness of healthy eating and the importance of a balanced lifestyle. This is due to the very well-structured PSHEE schemes of work, the outstanding pastoral care, and the pupil and boarding induction programmes. In interview, younger pupils said that they always feel safe in school and can talk to any teacher if they have any worries, while older pupils expressed that they value the security and safety of their environment. Most pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed they feel safe at school and all said that they know how to keep safe online.