



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**Haberdashers' Girls' School**

**March 2022**

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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	Haberdashers' Girls' School			
<b>DfE number</b>	919/6222			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	313996			
<b>Address</b>	Haberdashers' Girls' School Aldenham Rd Elstree Borehamwood Hertfordshire WD6 3BT			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 266 2300			
<b>Email address</b>	theschool@habsgirls.org.uk			
<b>Headmistress</b>	Mrs Rose Hardy			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Simon Cartmell			
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1160			
	<b>EYFS</b>	54	<b>Juniors</b>	271
	<b>Seniors</b>	621	<b>Sixth Form</b>	214
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8 to 11 March 2022			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Haberdashers' Girls' School is an independent day school for female pupils. It was founded in 1875 by the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers, one of four schools established at the time by the company. It moved to its current site in 1974, adjacent to the companion school for male pupils. The school comprises an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), junior school and senior school with sixth form, which operate on the same campus and share many facilities. The school is governed by the Haberdashers' Aske's Elstree School Board, which also oversees the Boys' Senior School and the Boys' Preparatory School.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.3 The school seeks to provide an excellent academic education, equipping its pupils to be active citizens in the global community of the 21st century, to take on leadership and be aware of their responsibilities. It aims to enable pupils to fulfil their potential and to be confident in themselves.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.4 Pupils come from an extremely wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds within a very large catchment area. The numbers of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are 23 in the junior school and 82 in the senior school, mainly for cognitive and learning difficulties. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 154 pupils in the junior school and 308 in the senior school who have English as an additional language (EAL), whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. The school integrates its provision for the most able pupils into lessons throughout the curriculum.

## 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. 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. In addition the standards relating to curriculum, including sex and relationships education, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and behaviour are also included. 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 In the junior 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 2018 to 2021 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 junior 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 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.
- 2.10 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**

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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**

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 2.19 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.
- 2.20 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Rainbow	Reception
Lower IV	Year 7
Upper IV	Year 8
Lower V	Year 9
Middle V	Year 10
Upper V	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 are intellectually curious and demonstrate a great thirst for knowledge.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills, which they apply effectively to all areas of their learning.
- Pupils collaborate enthusiastically, working highly effectively together towards common goals.
- Pupils achieve very strong success in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils have excellent study skills and outstanding attitudes to their learning.

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

- Pupils are highly self-aware and reflective young people who exhibit maturity beyond their years.
- Pupils exhibit extremely purposeful and positive behaviour around the school.
- Pupils are highly respectful of each other and enthusiastically celebrate the diversity of the school community.
- Pupils make many valuable contributions to school life and thus contribute greatly to the social cohesion of the school community.



## Recommendations

3.3 The school should make the following improvements:

- Strengthen pupils' ability to engage meaningfully with the world beyond school, both locally and in a wider context.
- Enable pupils' better understanding of how their contributions to the pupil voice system are considered by providing more effective feedback.

## The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 The range and quality of the pupils' achievements both within and beyond the academic curriculum are excellent. These fulfil the school's aim to inspire pupils to achieve academic excellence. In the EYFS, most children meet or exceed their expected levels. Data provided by the junior school from nationally standardised tests and examinations in 2018 to 19 show that attainment is above the national average and the school's own assessment in 2020 and 21 shows that pupils continue to achieve at a similarly high level. Many pupils achieve scholarships to the senior school, or other similar schools, for academic excellence, sport, music, art and drama. Examination results at GCSE and A-level for 2018 to 19 were far above the national average for maintained schools with over three-quarters of pupils achieving the highest grades of A\* and A at A level and almost all pupils achieving grades of 7 to 9 at GCSE. Centre-assessed grades in 2020 and 2021 showed further improvement. Across the school SEND pupils are equally successful in their attainment. A very large majority of pupils proceed to highly selective universities to study disciplines which have very high entry requirements.

3.6 The school's own assessment data, lesson observations, pupil interviews and work scrutiny confirm that the pupils make excellent progress over time. A very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching, including any online provision, enabled their child to make progress. Pupils of all ages are highly proficient in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. The youngest reception children are inquisitive learners who can write correct sentences and enjoy spelling challenging words. Junior school pupils build on prior learning with ease to aid their progress and readily transfer knowledge and skills to other areas of learning. Older junior school pupils used their excellent vocabulary skills to improve their dance performance during a physical education (PE) lesson. Progress is excellent because teaching is highly skilful and often inspirational and because governance and leadership prioritise high-quality resources and an educational environment which emphasises links between subjects and a holistic approach to learning.

3.7 Across the school thinking and learning skills are outstanding. Pupils are actively involved in their learning and make meaningful connections between their subjects. They are prepared to challenge and argue effectively to develop their understanding, thus building up their skills of analysis and critical thinking. Year 7 pupils made insightful comments about gender-blind casting in a Shakespeare play and sixth-form pupils showed a thorough knowledge of how past political movements and ideologies had influenced modern politics. Mathematical and scientific skills are particularly strong, as are those used to analyse literature, create emotionally effective performance in music and drama and explore ideas artistically to produce highly effective visual pieces.

3.8 Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills which they apply effectively to all areas of learning. The youngest pupils write and speak with confidence, including in public, from an early age. Junior school pupils are passionate readers who appreciate recommendations from skilled librarians and who talk enthusiastically about the books they enjoy. They also listen intently and carefully to all views expressed in any discussion and understand how others' opinions can help change their own. Senior pupils exhibit highly developed language skills, including in languages other than their own, and demonstrate these during public speaking when debating and leading assemblies. They also

understand how to express and lead an argument. For example, this was seen while exploring the rationality of love through a poem and linking current events in the world with themes of war in ancient Greece. Pupils of all ages are highly articulate and communicate their opinions to each other and to adults on a wide variety of subjects with passionate enthusiasm. Sixth-form pupils explore and communicate ideas in a co-educational environment when working with male pupils from the linked school. They can also gain foreign language skills by taking courses in languages such as Japanese, Russian and Arabic.

- 3.9 Pupils of all ages have excellent numeracy skills. Their enjoyment of mathematics is a strong feature of the academic life of the school. Junior pupils grasp the rich challenges they are given and the opportunities provided to use their mathematical skills in other subjects. They can scale images up and down in art, code effectively during computing lessons or work out different rhythms and beats with ease in a bar of music. In the senior school the transfer of mathematical skills into other subjects is seamless with pupils applying inference and graphical and data analysis across a wide range of subjects. Pupils' mathematical literacy is a strong factor in their success in STEM subjects at GCSE and A level where their application of numeracy skills is highly effective.
- 3.10 Pupils have very well-developed levels of digital literacy. In the junior school pupils are extremely confident users of information and communication technology (ICT), readily integrating the use of their tablet devices into a wide variety of lessons. They showed a high level of understanding of the required coding language to create their own moving sprites and motorised vehicles. Senior school pupils are adept at using different kinds of ICT to aid their learning, whether it be for presenting work, videoing sessions to improve performance in PE and drama, or carrying out research online. Older senior school pupils studying GCSE computing show sophisticated understanding of solving complex real-life problems by using coding skills. Pupils say that their recent experience of virtual learning further improved their skills of collaboration and presentation when using online platforms.
- 3.11 Pupils have outstanding attitudes to their learning. Their determination to succeed and sense of purpose ensure that they achieve their long-term goals. This applies both academically and in a very wide range of sports and other activities, many of which are initiated and run by them. Junior pupils have highly developed study skills. They independently work through their homework and effectively prepare themselves for different forms of assessment whilst under the guidance of highly supportive teaching staff. They enjoy considering open-ended cerebral challenges where they hypothesise potential outcomes, as seen in a science lesson looking at possible negative health outcomes of eating a pie. In the senior school, pupils embrace all opportunities to extend their learning, refine their ideas and synthesise new viewpoints and interpretations, thus meeting the school's objective to create effective learners. Sixth formers value the challenge of their independent study projects, choose challenging subjects and formulate their own hypotheses to consider. They are not limited in approach, using video, performance and creativity in the visual arts to develop their ideas further. Recent projects have explored issues in society such as isolation in the elderly or ways of influencing public health in innovative and effective ways. Among all the pupils there is a strong sense of the value of learning for its own sake, of enjoyment in making progress and of a desire to find out more by tapping into the experience of other pupils and the expertise of dedicated staff. A few pupils in their questionnaire responses and in conversations with inspectors spoke of the stress they feel to achieve at the highest level and said that they would prefer less homework. School leaders have listened to these views and a review of homework is taking place.
- 3.12 Pupils are extremely proud of their achievements within and beyond school in a very wide range of academic, sporting and other activities. In the junior school pupils celebrate successes in sport, music and drama in weekly assemblies. Senior school pupils have achieved considerable success in a wide variety of sports. Even though team sports have been impacted by the pandemic in recent years, individuals have achieved at national level in lacrosse, netball and gymnastics and at regional and county level in swimming and cricket. Pupils also achieve highly in a wide variety of academic and other competitions, including in science and design and in creative writing. The school debating team

were finalists in the Oxford university debating competition. A very large number of pupils achieve well in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and in the Arts Award. In music pupils achieve very highly, gaining several Grade 8 examination successes and a small number of ABRSM diplomas. Individual pupils are members of the National Youth Orchestra, the National Children's Orchestra and the National Youth Theatre. In their questionnaire responses most parents say that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. The range of opportunities is being enhanced by a forward-thinking approach by governors and senior leaders as the schools for female and male pupils move towards many more joint activities and clubs.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of themselves, are self-reflective and very aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Junior school pupils can identify areas for improvement in their work and say they can rely on the support of teachers who know them well. In PSHE lessons, pupils empathised with each other. They were able to confidently express their feelings of happiness, sadness or anxiety and how they could help each other. Pupils of all ages show high levels of sensitivity to each other, whilst also having the confidence to argue their points of view succinctly and with determination. Younger senior pupils explored the idea of identity with considerable maturity in a PSHE lesson and pupils are very supportive of members of the school community who may be questioning their gender identity or sexuality. Senior schoolwork seen on the role of female leaders in society shows pupils strongly identify with their inspirational lives. They explore recent issues which have affected women in a mature and responsible way, including when in a group containing male pupils from the related school. Pupils recognise that their academic aspirations can sometimes cause high levels of anxiety, but they speak very positively of support received daily from their teachers and tutors.
- 3.15 From the time they arrive in the school pupils develop their decision-making skills to a very high level. EYFS children thrive on the opportunities they are given to choose between different tasks in 'Learn and Explore' sessions. Junior pupils think carefully about how to choose a partner for a shared task or which extension task to select. Decision-making comes naturally to senior school pupils who make well-considered choices about which enrichment and extra-curricular activities to pursue. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they feel effectively informed and guided by staff so that they can make appropriate decisions about GCSE and A-level subjects and their futures beyond school.
- 3.16 Pupils' social development is excellent. They form strong friendships within and across year groups and relish the opportunities they are given to work together from an early age. Many take up positions of responsibility in junior and senior schools, whether in sports, in houses, through work as prefects, or within societies and charitable initiatives. The school fully meets its objective to enable pupils to become effective leaders. Individual pupils and groups such as the LGBTQ+ group and the Afro-Caribbean Society put themselves forward to take thoughtful school assemblies on a subject of their choice. These have a very positive impact on the whole community. Many senior pupils choose to run a club or become a mentor for younger ones, giving of their time freely and helping to expand their own personal experience as well as that of younger pupils.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate a strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life throughout the school. In the junior school they value time for individual reflection in activities such as mindfulness. Younger pupils say that the library is a place where they can experience quiet time in their busy day. Each week a whole school assembly is presented by a faith group of pupils and so everyone's understanding of different faiths, their commonality as well as their distinctiveness, is enhanced. Taking on board each faith's common theme of service to others, pupils engage in many different charitable pursuits, such as raising money annually for Mencap, supporting a local asylum centre and reading to pupils in a school in Bangalore via a virtual platform. Pupils of all ages use creative subjects to enhance their

emotional experience, gaining empathy with characters in plays, exploring personal themes in creative artwork, and responding emotionally to both individual and collective high-quality musical and dramatic performances. Many are strongly invested in initiatives to create a more sustainable world.

- 3.18 Pupils have a very strong sense of right and wrong. They recognise the importance of behaving well to build a thriving and well-ordered community with a strong sense of purpose. They support each other if any unkindness or intolerance is evident and behaviour around both the junior and senior schools is exemplary. For example, EYFS children patiently waited their turn and displayed good manners when discussing points with their teacher. Similarly, junior pupils discussed why rules were necessary when creating their own game. A large majority of parents and pupils believe that the school actively promotes good behaviour. The school's new rewards and sanctions system, which seeks to achieve consistency and clarity in the application of school rules, has excited considerable discussion, especially among sixth formers. Inspectors found that pupils can express their views through a variety of methods including via the school council, form representatives and confidential surveys. They have precipitated change in areas such as dining room menus and the content of PSHE and their views are contributing to a major curriculum review. However, some pupils expressed the view that they have not always fully understood the reasons why some of their suggestions have not been taken up.
- 3.19 Pupils value the diversity of their community very highly. Their generous respect for each other is apparent around the school and in their lessons. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors expressed their appreciation of everyone's common humanity as well as their uniqueness. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils are very aware that not all the challenges people face are visible. Their considerable respect for diversity is inclusive of neurodiversity, gender identity and sexual orientation. In many subjects many pupils demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of issues relating to the role of women and different cultural groups in society. Pupils eagerly take up opportunities to express their strongly held views in debates, assemblies and societies. During the last few years pupils' ability to connect with the world outside school in a meaningful way has been limited to charitable events within school, online talks given by outside speakers and virtual links to projects such as an Indian school and local residential homes. The enthusiasm shown by pupils for their charitable enterprises is clear to see.
- 3.20 Pupils are extremely knowledgeable about how to keep safe and healthy. They understand the importance of diet and exercise to their mental health, well-being and success. Junior pupils make appropriate choices at mealtimes and understand the importance of a balanced diet. Senior school pupils frequently articulated the need to pursue a varied and healthy lifestyle and were confident in discussing the importance of good nutrition. Their whole-hearted participation in the extra-curricular life of the school cements their understanding of the need to stay physically healthy. Long-standing traditions, such as the weekly fun run in conjunction with the companion school for male pupils, known as the 'Habs Dash', are very much enjoyed. In interviews, junior and senior pupils talked about their mental health, the support they receive from friends and teachers and the measures available that help them to strengthen it, such as mindfulness techniques and counselling. Pupils know how to stay safe online and feel well educated about the risks. They understand the necessity to be personally responsible in their online behaviour beyond school.

## 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 Kate McCarey	Reporting inspector
Mr Jason Hyatt	Accompanying inspector
Dr Brendan Stones	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Liam Copley	Team inspector (Deputy head pastoral, HMC school)
Mrs Nichola Haworth	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Philip Humphreys	Team inspector (Head of department, GSA school)
Mrs Vicky Jenkins	Team inspector (Former deputy head, HMC and IAPS school)
Mr Luke Michael	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)