



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Croydon High School GDST

October 2022

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School's Details

School	Croydon High School GDST			
DfE number	306/6081			
Registered charity number	306983			
Address	Croydon High School GDST Old Farleigh Road South Croydon Surrey CR2 8YB			
Telephone number	020 8260 7500			
Email address	seniors@cry.gdst.net			
Head	Ms Annabel Davies			
Proprietor	Girls' Day School Trust			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	750			
	EYFS	47	Juniors	201
	Seniors	418	Sixth Form	84
Inspection dates	11 to 13 October 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Croydon High School is an independent single-sex day school registered for female pupils. It was founded in the centre of Croydon in 1874 and moved to its present site in 1966. The school consists of a junior school, which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and a senior school. It is a member of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), whose council provides governance and retains legal responsibility. A local governing body supplies advice and support. The current head and chair of governors have been appointed since the previous inspection.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school seeks to provide a vibrant curriculum and diverse co-curricular activities, designed to prepare pupils to face the challenges and embrace the opportunities presented by a rapidly evolving world. It aims to offer pupils a balance between challenge and individual support, underpinned by the school's mantra *every girl, every day*.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from a wide range of family backgrounds and mostly live within 15 miles of the school. Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils on entry to the junior school and the senior school is above average for those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 91 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder and autism spectrum condition, of whom 54 receive additional specialist support. There are no pupils in the school with an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 23 pupils, 4 of whom receive additional support for their English. The school aims to provide appropriately challenging educational and enrichment opportunities to all pupils through varied teaching and learning approaches.

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 **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. 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 2019 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 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'.

Key findings

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

- Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils are highly articulate communicators who listen well and express themselves clearly, both orally and in writing.
- Pupils' critical thinking skills are extremely well-developed and are utilised very effectively to enhance and extend their learning.
- Pupils are highly motivated, have extremely positive attitudes to learning and are determined to make the most of all the many and varied opportunities available to them at the school.

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

- Pupils of all ages, including children in the EYFS, make rapid progress in developing their self-confidence, resilience and the ability to make their own decisions.
- Pupils of all ages work with notably high levels of collaboration to reach common goals.
- Pupils embrace the many opportunities to improve the lives of others and make an outstanding contribution to the community within and beyond school.
- Pupils display a mature insight regarding diversity and articulate their ideas with great conviction.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable all pupils to consistently make excellent progress with their learning by extending opportunities for the creative application of information and communication technology (ICT).

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils make rapid progress in developing knowledge, skills and understanding as a result of well-prepared teaching and their own determination and curiosity. They explore ideas in depth and make use of concepts acquired in previous lessons. For example, A-level pupils displayed outstanding linguistic skills as they spoke with flair and confidence in the target language about the impact of the Spanish Civil War. Pupils in Year 3 made excellent progress as they developed their diving skills and refined their freestyle and backstroke techniques. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a few pupils did not agree that lessons are interesting. The inspection found, however, that pupils

demonstrated high levels of engagement in the lessons observed and were keen to learn and benefit from the opportunities available to them. For example, pupils in Year 9 responded with enthusiasm when they were challenged to deduce the culprit of a crime using chromatography.

- 3.6 Pupils make excellent progress over time, as evidenced by comprehensive assessment data. Their progress in lessons is facilitated by teaching which shows a high level of subject knowledge, alongside a culture where pupils are determined to make the best use of their time. In the junior school, this progress is confirmed by the standard of mathematics and reading in lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work and assessment data provided by the school. Early Years Foundation Stage profiles show that a large majority of children reach a good level of development. In the scrutiny of pupils' work, excellent progress was seen in English with pupils, including those with SEND, using more direct speech and a greater variety of adjectives in their Year 6 work compared to their Year 5 work. Pupils' attainment at GCSE in 2022 was strong, with the majority of the results at the highest two grades. In 2020 and 2021, in centre- and teacher-assessed assessments, three-fifths of results were graded at the very highest level. Results at A level in 2022 were equally strong, with almost three-quarters of results achieving an A* or A. This high level of achievement mirrors the centre-assessed results in 2020 with a large majority of results achieving A* or A, and the teacher-assessed results in 2021 with most results achieving A* or A. Data analysed suggest that almost all pupils attain grades higher than expected for those of their ability.
- 3.7 Pupils' acquisition of numeracy skills is excellent. This is due to the provision of well-scaffolded and enjoyable learning activities and the focus on number skills and problem-solving throughout the junior school. In discussions, pupils of all ages asserted with confidence that they are extremely good at using their mathematical expertise in other areas of the curriculum; this was confirmed by inspection evidence. For example, in a music lesson in Year 2, pupils displayed their strong numerical skills when counting beats and rhythms in multiples of seven. In an economics lesson in Year 12, pupils used their strong mathematical knowledge when they applied mathematical principles to work out the impact of pricing and demand on key products.
- 3.8 Pupils develop communication skills of the highest quality. Pupils are extremely articulate, and their love of reading is evident in their ability to converse eloquently and write with flair and depth. This was evident in a Latin lesson in Year 9 where pupils debated with great confidence defending the story of Aeneas as a more plausible myth than that of Romulus and Remus. Pupils' writing skills are very well-developed as seen through, for example, the excellent use of similes and alliteration in younger pupils' stories and extensively researched projects for the Extended Project Qualification. From the earliest age, pupils have excellent listening skills. In an EYFS phonics lesson, children listened intently to the sounds of letters made by their teacher and then blended the phonemes together 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 every opportunity to read widely, engage in discussions, form their own ideas, write creatively and speak in public.
- 3.9 Pupils display excellent attitudes towards their learning demonstrating an intrinsic motivation and determination to do well. They embrace the large range of opportunities that the school provides to discover new interests and skills. Pupils are keen and active learners who engage readily in both collaborative and individual work. For example, in a history lesson in Year 7, pupils collaborated enthusiastically as they interrogated sources which gave details of the impact of the First World War. In a drama lesson in Year 10, pupils displayed excellent independence and confidence as they blocked and directed a dance rehearsal for a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. GCSE and A-level pupils demonstrate remarkably strong leadership in their learning in, for example, art and design portfolios and in extended projects on a diverse range of topics. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of parents agreed that the school equips their children with the teamworking, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 3.10 Pupils are competent in using ICT to support their learning. For example, during periods of remote learning pupils used online video learning platforms very effectively to access lessons. In some lessons

observed by inspectors, pupils' progress was enhanced through innovative teaching methods using ICT. In a Year 12 religion, ethics and philosophy lesson, pupils used a virtual continuum and virtual sticky notes to explain to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the question that there are more similarities than differences between Aristotle and Plato's philosophies. In discussions with inspectors, however, pupils said that in the majority of subjects they do not use ICT to creatively enrich their learning.

- 3.11 As they progress through the school, pupils strive to be their own sources of learning and have outstanding critical thinking skills. In a mathematics lesson in Year 2, higher ability pupils displayed excellent thinking skills as they interpreted and solved worded problems. The pupils' particularly strong ability to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise was evident through tasks such as analysing whether an individual is likely to be homozygous or heterozygous in a GCSE biology lesson, and forming hypotheses when solving problems in the competitive coding club. Pupils display an excellent understanding of how to research effectively when using a wide range of sources for their extended project work on topics ranging from artificial intelligence to women's freedoms. This ability to research is supported by leaders' promotion of an environment of academic endeavour and curiosity, and by a curriculum and co-curricular programme that provides many opportunities to develop such skills. This amply fulfils the school's aim to provide a curriculum and co-curricular activities, designed to prepare pupils to face the challenges presented by a rapidly evolving world.
- 3.12 Throughout the school, pupils achieve excellent standards in a wide array of co-curricular activities and pursuits. This is partly because school leaders, governors and staff encourage them to pursue their interests to the highest level. Pupils have gained success in local, regional and national competitions in a variety of sports including athletics, swimming, netball, cross country, water polo and biathlon. Pupils of all ages gain considerable success in external speech, drama and music examinations and competitions. Large numbers embark on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, with many achieving bronze, silver and gold awards. Pupils excel in the UK Maths Challenge, robotics and STEM competitions, and outstanding artistic achievement is evident in the quality of the artwork on display throughout the school. Pupils achieve highly in all of these areas not only because the timetable is carefully designed to enable pupils to participate in a wide range of activities but also as a result of the support and encouragement of school leaders and staff.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have a decidedly strong understanding of who they are and what they believe. They are reflective and insightful about how to improve their own learning. In the scrutiny of pupils' work, pupils in Year 2 reflected on key pieces of work in English and self-corrected, adding capital letters and extra adjectives. This is as a result of the school's focus from the earliest years on making mistakes being an essential part of the learning process. Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of self-confidence and resilience. Singers had the vocal confidence to practise some of their solo repertoire in a public space during break time. This is as a result of the school's culture which offers a variety of safe spaces for experimentation and practice. In discussions with inspectors, sixth-form pupils articulated how their self-awareness and self-confidence have strengthened through the neuro-diversity and mental health groups which encourage open discussion. 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 Pupils display an excellent ability to make well-considered decisions and take responsibility for their choices. They have an excellent understanding of rules and laws. They can discuss issues of morality with confidence and can distinguish right from wrong. In a PSHE lesson in Year 5, pupils articulated clearly why they should not throw away a living plant that they had finished with in science, as it was part of the environment and should be nurtured and protected. In discussions, older pupils explained

eloquently and honestly how they learned to understand individualism, very much appreciating that the school community teaches them better ways to deal with problems. Pupils feel strongly that they are not defined by poor choices they may have made in the past. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how the decisions they make now will influence their own future success and well-being. In the EYFS, children make suitable choices of activities which support their development, and in the junior school pupils choose the difficulty level of tasks in mathematics to suit their stage of learning. Pupils think very carefully when selecting the subjects that they will pursue. In discussions with inspectors, sixth-form pupils spoke of how they feel very well prepared for the academic and personal challenges of university.

- 3.16 Pupils have highly developed social skills, and their ability to work effectively with others is excellent. For example, in the EYFS, children worked extremely well with each other to build a multi-storey enclosure for animals out of wooden bricks of varying shapes. Pupils have decidedly strong teamwork skills and have the ability to be present for each other and work conscientiously towards a shared goal. For example, sixth-form pupils display outstanding leadership and collaborative skills when they organise the annual charity fashion show, involving pupils from a local school as performers. Pupils work effectively with each other in lessons, and the supportive environment enables pupils with SEND to gain social skills and form successful relationships with their peers. Pupils display remarkably strong social awareness during current affairs discussions in Love The Week Club.
- 3.17 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of diversity and display a kind and respectful approach to each other, mixing very naturally together regardless of any differences. For example, pupils frequently choose to attend groups and clubs which explore identity or different religious beliefs. In the scrutiny of work, younger pupils demonstrated a strong awareness of different cultures when they compared the life of a child from the Masai Mara to their own. In an English lesson in Year 12, pupils engaged in a perceptive discussion of the discourse of prejudice around race and religion in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. In the questionnaire responses, most parents said that the school actively promotes the values of democracy, respect, and tolerance of other people, although a very small minority of pupils did not agree that pupils treat each other with respect. In discussions with inspectors, it was clear that pupils have strong feelings about issues related to discrimination and equal rights. They are very accepting of each other and welcome discussions with their peers and with staff to understand alternative viewpoints and thus continue to deepen the school community's understanding of the backgrounds and cultures it embraces.
- 3.18 Pupils show a strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life through the obvious pleasure they get from their learning and the awareness they show for the environment. For example, pupils in Year 4 spoke passionately about how they learnt to keep and care for bees, and of the importance of providing a natural environment for pollination. Pupils in the climate change elective displayed excellent environmental awareness when they initiated a no-mow policy within the school. Pupils have an acute awareness of the benefits of finding time for personal reflection, such as in the mindfulness colouring club or relaxing with a book in the library. Pupils actively seek out opportunities to share their own spirituality through leading assemblies or speaking about their faith in smaller groups. For example, pupils showed a deep sense of spirituality when they participated in a celebration of Iftar, led by older pupils, for Muslim and non-Muslim members of the community.
- 3.19 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and are aware of the need to establish a balance in all they do to stay physically and emotionally healthy. In discussions, pupils in Year 3 could articulate clearly why it is good to have a healthy snack and exercise at break time, and children in the EYFS can explain why it is important to clean their teeth. Pupils of all ages are keen to participate in the many sporting activities available, as they are highly conscious that an active lifestyle is good for their well-being. Older pupils display an excellent understanding of how to stay sexually safe. In a PSHE lesson in Year 11, pupils displayed a willingness to engage in open discussions and a mature understanding of consent. This is as a result of clear teaching and the creation of a safe space for pupils

to contribute, in class, or online. In questionnaire responses, almost all pupils agreed that they understand how to stay safe online. Inspection evidence supports this view.

- 3.20 Pupils are extremely good at working collaboratively to benefit others, and to make a very positive contribution to both the life of the school community and to wider society. Through the assumption of leadership roles, pupils contribute to the school community in many different ways, for example as prefects, house captains, sports captains and form and school council representatives. In discussions, pupils expressed the satisfaction they gain from helping younger pupils. For example, senior school pupils lead a reading club for junior school pupils, and community angels in the junior school ensure that younger children have someone to play with at break and lunchtimes. Pupils develop a deep sense of responsibility and are extremely active in their community involvement, for example, by acting as sports coaches for their peers and for pupils from local schools and by performing for residents of a local day centre. The strong support for the annual Writes for Rights campaign, which is promoted by the Amnesty International club, shows that pupils have an excellent understanding that charity is not just a money-raising exercise. Further afield, pupils involved in outreach work in Zanzibar will have gained a perspective on the world that they could never have gained sitting in a classroom.

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 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
Mrs Danielle Clarke	Compliance team inspector (Principal, SofH school)
Ms Charlotte Avery	Team inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Mrs Jo Taylor	Team inspector (Former senior deputy, GSA/HMC school)
Mr Chris Wardle	Team inspector (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school)