



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**NORWICH LOWER SCHOOL**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Norwich Lower School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	<b>Norwich Lower School</b>
DfE Number	<b>926/6124</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>2940688</b>
Address	<b>Norwich Lower School Bishopgate Norwich NR1 4AA</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01603 728 423</b>
Fax Number	<b>01603 629 679</b>
Email Address	<b>jingham@norwich-school.org.uk</b>
Master	<b>Mr John Ingham</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Geoffrey Copeman</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>169</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (119 boys; 50 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	7-11: <b>169</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>169</b>
Inspection dates	<b>12 Oct 2010 to 13 Oct 2010 08 Nov 2010 to 10 Nov 2010</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Norwich Lower School caters for pupils between the ages of 7 and 11. Established in 1874, it is situated adjacent to the cathedral and beside the River Wensum, occupying premises rebuilt in 1991 after a major fire. Norwich School itself had its inception in the eleventh century, when it was founded as an Episcopal grammar school attached to a Benedictine priory. The majority of the cathedral choristers are educated at the Lower School and the choir sings evensong at the cathedral most days during term time.
- 1.2 The school ethos combines learning and scholarship with Christian values. It aims to produce scholarly, reflective young people who are capable of handling difficult concepts and profound thoughts. To this end it seeks to provide a broad education which equips pupils for leadership and service.
- 1.3 The Council of Management is the governing body for the whole of Norwich School. The Head Master has overall responsibility for both parts of the school, but delegates the day to day leadership and management of the Lower School to the Master. Since the previous inspection in 2004 the school has become a member of IAPS. The current Master was appointed in 2007 and the school became co-educational in 2008. At the time of the inspection 169 pupils were on the school roll, of whom 50 were girls. The main point of admission is by competitive assessment at the age of 7, although further assessments may be held at the ages of 8, 9 or 10 if vacancies arise. Almost all pupils transfer to the senior school at the age of 11. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. No pupil has a statement of special educational need; however, the school identifies four pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD). Pupils are drawn from a variety of backgrounds, with many coming from professional families. Although a small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, all pupils speak English as their first language.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Lower 1	Year 3
Form 1	Year 4
Form 2	Year 5
Form 3	Year 6

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The overall achievement of the pupils is good. Pupils attain good standards and in a number of areas, including music, sport, and the creative arts, their achievements are outstanding. They work hard and enjoy their school life, benefiting immensely from the breadth of the curriculum and the extensive extra-curricular programme. Teaching is good overall, with a significant proportion being outstanding. The system for identification and support for the small number of pupils with LDD is in the process of development, although it is not yet fully effective. Good progress has been made with the assessment of pupils' progress and achievement, but its use by teachers in their planning is not yet consistent.
- 2.2 The personal development of the pupils is outstanding. It has improved from the already high standard noted at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils are tolerant and caring young people who are confident in their approach to their peers and to adults. They show a well-developed moral code and play a full part in fundraising and charitable involvement. Their development is enhanced by the positive relationships existing at every level. The guidance and care they receive from teaching and non-teaching staff are outstanding. The school has a rigorous and methodical approach to risk management which underpins all its work, leading to a safe environment in which the welfare of the pupils is paramount.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are all good and have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Governors have clear appreciation of their responsibilities and implement effectively systems designed to fulfil their obligations, particularly towards safeguarding children. The successful move to co-education demonstrates the effectiveness of the collaboration between governors and management. The leadership of the school is good and the formation of the new senior management team this academic year, with its wider brief for self-evaluation, is well-considered. The school acted with determination after the previous inspection to address the issues raised and has made outstanding progress. All procedures have been formalised and tightened, and co-ordinators now give a strong lead in their subjects. The school has built an excellent partnership with its parents, who are most appreciative of the standard of care offered to their children. They support its aims and welcome the breadth of education offered to their children.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Refine and clarify the system of support, and associated resourcing, for pupils with LDD.
  2. Continue to develop the use of assessment data to inform teachers' planning.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills**

- 3.1 The overall achievements of the pupils are good, and the school achieves its aim of encouraging its pupils to become reflective young people. The high standard of achievement has been maintained since the time of the previous inspection.
- 3.2 Standards of literacy are good overall and pupils are articulate. The pupils read fluently and use the library effectively as a resource for reading and research. They are attentive listeners and express themselves well when writing. In mathematics pupils acquire a good knowledge of the basic concepts and can use them efficiently. Their organisational skills are well-developed. They demonstrate clear understanding in information and communication technology (ICT) and can use their skills flexibly. For example, Year 6 pupils, in a project linking design and technology (DT) and ICT, designed calendars which incorporated their own photographs as well as edited pictures taken from websites.
- 3.3 Achievement in sport is excellent, with pupils gaining considerably from the input of specialist sports teachers shared with the senior school. For the last two years, seven pupils have played county cricket, and outstanding performances have been recorded in swimming, hockey, tennis, athletics and squash. The recent extension of the programme of match fixtures has enabled more pupils to represent their school and increased their enjoyment in competitive sport.
- 3.4 Cathedral choristers achieve exceptionally high standards of singing, and the overall standard of musical achievement in the school is outstanding. Assemblies are notable for the musicality and enthusiasm with which hymns are sung. Pupils are encouraged to play instruments and most do so. Results in music examinations are strong. Other aspects of the pupils' creativity are also well-developed, with impressive performances in drama, art and DT.
- 3.5 The school does not enter pupils for public examinations at the age of 11 but, on the evidence available, the pupils' attainments are judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, with almost all of them transferring to the senior school at the age of eleven.
- 3.6 Pupils make good progress overall and they make outstanding progress in oral work. On the whole, pupils with LDD make sound progress in writing, whilst higher achieving pupils make rapid progress, enjoying the extension challenges provided by their teachers. For example, in a Russian lesson in Year 4, pupils made rapid progress learning and saying numbers in Russian. However, in a few lessons, the work is not pitched appropriately for those with LDD or for higher attainers.
- 3.7 Pupils are well-motivated learners and show initiative. They are attentive in lessons and keen to ask and answer questions. They collaborate very well. For example, in a DT lesson they showed exceptional application to their task when working in pairs, and in drama, Year 5 pupils co-operated closely in acting out a story line, taking care that all members of the group were appreciated and involved. The outstanding range of clubs and activities available to pupils both during and after the school day enables them to pursue interests in depth. They are keen to participate and to demonstrate their achievements.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)**

- 3.8 The curriculum is good and meets the school's stated aim of providing breadth of experience. It has been significantly revised since the previous inspection to provide effective coverage of the required areas of learning. Changes have been made to the timetabling of core subjects so that they now have a suitable allocation. A broad range of modern foreign languages is offered, with pupils having some knowledge of Russian, Japanese, French and Italian by the time they leave. The *meno* programme, encompassing drama, critical thinking, and a range of creative opportunities, is an innovative feature of the educational provision, which is complemented further by the extensive extra-curricular programme.
- 3.9 On the whole, the curriculum is suitable for all ages, abilities and needs. All pupils are assessed shortly after entry in order to identify any who have LDD. Recommendations for extra support are drawn up, but at present no clear oversight of the delivery of any such provision occurs. As a result, some pupils' needs go unsatisfied in a few lessons. Teachers offer booster classes from time to time to address the needs of any pupil who is having difficulty in a particular subject.
- 3.10 The provision for pupils' musical development is outstanding. More than two-thirds of the pupils play an instrument, and in addition to class music lessons many musical activities take place. Opportunities are provided, during and after the school day, for the wind band, choir, recorder group and rehearsals for musical productions.
- 3.11 The wide range of academic, creative and sporting activities available through the extra-curricular programme makes an outstanding contribution to the pupils' education. This is complemented by the extensive programme of trips, with residential stays offered to every age group. At the time of the first inspection visit, all pupils from Year 6 were in the Peak District on a geography field trip. Pupils visit museums, galleries and other places of interest. They have good opportunities to interact with the local and wider communities through their work for charities such as the Red Cross, Nelson's Journey (helping bereaved children across Norfolk), and the Alzheimer's Society.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.12 Teaching is good overall, and a significant proportion of it is outstanding. This high standard of teaching, which has been maintained since the previous inspection, ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. It meets the aim of the school to aid their development as scholarly young people.
- 3.13 Teachers know their pupils well, and the strong relationships between teachers and pupils ensure a harmonious working environment. This is particularly evident in lessons where question and answer sessions take place; these are lively and open. This positive atmosphere encourages the pupils' confident participation. In a discussion of Ted Hughes' *The Iron Man*, Year 6 pupils engaged in mature dialogue, expressing and arguing their insights and interpretations with clarity and cogency. Year 3 pupils were able accurately to explain the concept of fair testing in science, and to collaborate in groups to devise an investigation into heat loss.
- 3.14 Lessons are planned to give good subject coverage and have clear objectives. Time is used well and teachers provide positive reinforcement for pupils' good behaviour. In most lessons, teachers use information from previous assessments to ensure a

suitable level of challenge. However, occasionally tasks are not well matched to the needs of all, with less able pupils struggling and higher achieving pupils repeating work they have already mastered. Teachers use ICT in other subjects and encourage the pupils to do so for research. They have access to a good bank of resources, including interactive whiteboards in all classes.

- 3.15 Marking is prompt and positive, and the best examples give helpful guidance for improvement. The school has made good progress on formalising the system of assessment, and the newly established management team is now reviewing it as they recognise that not all teachers are using these data to best effect in their planning.
- 3.16 Specialist teaching, in subjects such as sport and music, offers a high standard of knowledge to enable pupils to acquire advanced skills. Pupils in Year 6 experienced great delight in creating and recording a 'Fright at Midnight' sound story. The use made of both teaching staff and facilities shared with the senior school is outstanding. The emphasis on creativity is enhanced by teaching of high quality in music, DT, art and drama.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The personal development and awareness of pupils are outstanding. Standards have improved further from the previous inspection, when they were judged to be very good. Pupils build strong relationships with their peers and with adults, and show care and consideration for others. They become confident members of the community, and have started on the path towards leadership and service to which the school aspires. The recent incorporation of more form periods in the timetable enables teachers to give even better guidance to pupils than at the time of the previous inspection.
- 4.2 Pupils develop a strong spiritual awareness, which is enhanced by the location of the school within the precinct of the cathedral and by the extensive links between the two. Choristers practise for and sing evensong most days during term time, as well as on Sundays, and the school holds many special services, such as harvest festival and the carol service, in the cathedral. Pupils' spiritual development is fostered further through the active involvement of the school chaplain in assemblies and in the teaching of religious education (RE). Daily assemblies reinforce the close sense of community and spirituality.
- 4.3 A strong moral code prevails. Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and recognise the need to protect and help those less fortunate than themselves. New pupils are supported by older pupils, who act as mentors. They accept the need for a code of good behaviour and are polite and helpful. The system of rewards and sanctions is seen as fair. In an assembly on perseverance, pupils were able to give good examples of how they had persevered in school work and in their home lives. Bullying is recognised as unacceptable and pupils are confident that the school would deal properly with any incident that might occur.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate outstanding social awareness. They identify charities that they wish to support and immerse themselves wholeheartedly in fundraising. Recent collections have contributed to Operation Christmas Child and Jeans for Genes, and pupils create colourful, innovative calendars which they sell for charity funds at the Christmas Fair. Through events such as carol singing and performances by the choir or choristers they engage well with the local community. The school council, with representatives elected from each class, has proposed a number of initiatives which have been adopted by the school, including a tuck shop run entirely by the pupils. Suggestion lists in classrooms ensure that all pupils can participate. These opportunities help pupils to develop the skills of leadership and service enshrined in the school's vision.
- 4.5 The cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. It is enriched through their participation in the extensive programme of outings and visits. Pupils learn to respect faiths and cultures other than their own. They support international charities and study a range of faiths, and in art and music they learn to appreciate the variety of cultural styles. In discussions pupils of non-Christian faiths provide valuable insights and experiences for their classmates. Cultural awareness is further enriched by visits, from, for example, Tibetan monks and a Zimbabwean music and dance troupe.

**4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.6 The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Relationships at all levels are outstanding and staff give strong support and guidance. In discussion, pupils were clear that the good will and belief in them shown by all the staff were at the heart of their enjoyment of school life. The school aims to ensure the right of pupils to pursue their studies undistracted and untroubled, and sets a secure framework in which this can be achieved.
- 4.7 Procedures for promoting good behaviour and guarding against unacceptable behaviour are well considered and effectively implemented. Pupils know that bullying will not be tolerated and that any concerns they may have will be dealt with sympathetically. They recognise that the system of rewards and sanctions is fair and enjoy the competitive nature of the house competitions based on these rewards. In an assembly, pupils could identify school rules and explain why they were necessary.
- 4.8 The safeguarding arrangements made by the school are thorough; detailed policies are in place and they are implemented conscientiously. Staff receive regular training in child protection. All necessary measures have been taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards, and to ensure the health and safety of pupils. Qualified first aiders attend to any pupil who is unwell and the medical room is suitably equipped. An appropriate plan is in place to improve access for any pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. Admission and attendance registers are kept and stored correctly.
- 4.9 The lower school shares the refectory with the senior school, and pupils have access to a wide and nutritious choice of lunches. Good guidance on healthy eating is given and pupils benefit from plenty of exercise, particularly in the wide range of sports lessons. Pupils were keen to expound on the delights of school lunches.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good. The large council of management includes members with a wide range of skills and experience, and the committee structure is well considered. The new education committee has been established to ensure even better oversight of the provision. Financial planning is good, and has facilitated a number of improvements and refurbishments since the previous inspection. It has improved markedly since that time. The successful introduction of co-education in 2008 is testament to governors' good planning. Governors have been most successful in encouraging close liaison between the two parts of Norwich School.
- 5.2 One governor has specific responsibility for the Lower School, and makes regular visits to meet the staff and pupils. A number of other governors also attend school functions and visit the school during the working day, and one governor runs the gardening club. This involvement, together with detailed reports from the Master at every full meeting of the governors, ensures good oversight and support. The recent enhancement of school facilities, such as the library and the outside quiet area, demonstrate governors' commitment to improvement.
- 5.3 Excellent systems ensure that governors discharge their legal responsibilities effectively. All aspects of child protection, welfare, health and safety have been carefully considered, with outside specialists employed as necessary to review policy and practice. Nominated governors oversee the arrangements for child protection and health and safety, reporting back in detail to the full council. Governors regularly attend training sessions, and these, together with the comprehensive induction programme, ensure that governors are well informed and kept up to date.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the Lower School are good, and are strengthened through the excellent relationships and liaison between the Lower School and the Senior School. Leadership is dynamic and responsive, and provides a clear vision for the future. The broad education offered provides well for pupils' future development. The leadership and management team has developed a strong framework for the work of the school and for safeguarding pupils, and all policies are implemented effectively.
- 5.5 Since the previous inspection, a clearly defined senior management team for the Lower School has been appointed to oversee all aspects of the curriculum and provision. This strong team approaches every challenge with enthusiasm, energy and an outstanding degree of openness and desire for improvement. The Master is a member of the senior management team for the whole of Norwich School, ensuring that the needs of the Lower School are represented at every stage.
- 5.6 Careful planning and implementation of the move to co-education have ensured a seamless transition. The timetable is now well balanced. The provision for extra-curricular activities has been expanded and the library has been transformed. The allocation of classrooms has been altered, and some additional space created. In all these ways the leadership and management team have been effective and systems have been strengthened and formalised. Arrangements for the pastoral care of the

pupils are outstanding, representing an improvement on the already high standards noted at the time of the previous inspection.

- 5.7 A committed start to self-evaluation has been made, and the management team is identifying priorities for further development. Co-ordinators now have scheduled time for observing lessons and this facilitates the sharing of good practice. Annual subject reviews have been initiated, but these are not yet linked to the school development plan. The process of gathering and analysing data on the pupils' achievement and progress has been strengthened, but the use of these data is inconsistent. Procedures for identifying pupils with LDD have been formalised, but oversight of the system of support is under-developed and it is insufficiently resourced.
- 5.8 The school has been successful in recruiting and retaining teaching and non-teaching staff who are fully committed to the school. They are enthusiastic, bringing to their roles a special degree of warmth and humour, which makes the school a happy working environment for all. They are dedicated to ensuring the pupils' welfare, health and safety, and their training for this, and for the safeguarding of children, is timely and appropriate. The system of annual appraisal for teachers ensures regular review, and a good programme of professional development has been instituted.
- 5.9 The school is well cared for and attractive, both indoors and outside. The vegetable garden offers pupils the opportunity of linking production to healthy eating initiatives, as well as giving them great pride in growing their own food. Office and support staff play an important role in the smooth running of the school, and parents value the efficient communication and liaison.
- 5.10 Thorough and effective arrangements have been made for checking the suitability of all those who come into contact with children, and detailed assessments are made of any potential hazards.

### **5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.11 The school has forged outstanding relationships with its parents, who are most appreciative of the breadth and quality of the education provided by the school. It fulfils its aim of communicating effectively with parents, who consider that the school shows great attention to detail in all areas of its operation.
- 5.12 In their questionnaire responses, parents appreciate the range of opportunities available to their children. The many sporting, musical, dramatic and other activities on offer are seen as strengths of the school. Parents expressed admiration for the teachers' enthusiasm, and for the commitment shown by the whole staff team. They consider that the school communicates with them effectively, and they praise the system of consultations as well as the readiness of the staff to listen and respond to any concerns they may have.
- 5.13 Parents recognise that the transition to co-education was handled effectively, and that girls are treated as equal partners with equal opportunities in all areas of school life. They appreciate the outstanding quality of care and support provided by all the staff, and feel that teachers devote time to getting to know all the pupils well.
- 5.14 The school produces an informative handbook for parents and the website gives detailed information, as required. Regular newsletters, introduced since the previous inspection, are seen as helpful, and reports about the work and progress of

their children are detailed and helpful. Although the school has received no complaints from parents, it has a suitable complaints policy and procedures have been established.

- 5.15 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire parents expressed particular appreciation for the trips, clubs and activities which take place during and after the school day, and for the balance of academic, sporting, musical and creative opportunities.
- 5.16 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, and parental support for concerts, assemblies, matches and fundraising, and for the many events organised by the Parent Teacher Association, is excellent.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Elisabeth Mimpriss

Reporting Inspector

Mr Dominic Crehan

Head, IAPS School