



Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports  
For Schools with Residential Provision

St John's College School

January 2020



## School's Details

School	St John's College School			
DfE number	873/6004			
Registered charity number	1137428			
Address	St John's College School 73 Grange Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB3 9AB			
Telephone number	01223 353532			
Email address	shoffice@sjcs.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Neil Chippington			
Chair of governors	Professor Ann Louise Kinmonth			
Age range	4 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	466			
	Day pupils	440	Boarders	26
	EYFS	40	Juniors	317
	Seniors	109		
Inspection dates	14 to 16 January 2020			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 St John's College School is an independent co-educational school for pupils aged between 4 and 13 years. It is predominantly a day school, with a small co-educational boarding section, mainly occupied by choristers, in a house almost next door to the main school building. Owned by St John's College, Cambridge, the school was founded in the mid-seventeenth century to provide an education for the college's choristers, who are male pupils only, moving to its present location in the centre of O Td (presen





## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets almost all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and relevant requirements of the statutory





2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in NMS 13 is met but that in paragraph 34 is not met.

### Action point 1

the proprietors must ensure that the choral provision and opportunities offered to male pupils are similarly offered to female pupils [paragraph 34 (1)(a), (b) and (c)]

### 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.

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

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that

## Key findings

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

Pupils are enthusiastic learners, making, on the whole, strong academic and non-academic progress.

Pupils of all abilities achieve success in their entrance examinations to senior schools.

Pupils acquire excellent study skills.

Pupils express themselves maturely and very articulately.

In music, many pupils achieve high standards, with some attaining exceptional levels of accomplishment.

In a very few areas, the more able pupils do not benefit from sufficiently challenging work.

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

Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence and appropriate self-esteem.

From an early age, pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility, both for themselves and for the community around them.

Pupils learn to think for themselves and make well-considered decisions and choices.

Pupils' confidence derives not least from their feeling safe at school and understanding the importance of online safety.

## Recommendation

### 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school is advised to make the following improvement:

Ensure that the more able pupils are suitably stretched in all their academic disciplines.

## 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 achieve high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across an academic curriculum enriched, in accordance with the school's stated aims, by the inclusion of Latin and the opportunity not only to learn French but also to make an initial exploration of Spanish, German and classical Greek. In their questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of parents and pupils approve of the range of subjects. Achievement is particularly high in the arts and humanities. For instance, in Latin and French, pupils mostly know the required vocabulary, understand how to deploy it, and do so adeptly. In music and drama, pupils display excellent skills and understanding, performing with assurance and energy.

3.6 On the whole, pupils make strong, and in some cases rapid, progress, and this is confirmed by the opinion of a very large majority of parents and almost all the pupils who responded to the questionnaire. In the EYFS, almost all children meet or exceed national expectations, with their learning across the curriculum enhanced by an increased amount of outdoor work and play, thus meeting a recommendation of the previous inspection report. All members of Year 8 pass the entrance examinations to the senior schools of their choice, many to schools with demanding entrance requirements and many achieve academic and other awards. As they move up the school, pupils with SEND develop increasingly secure study skills, enabling them to keep up with their peers. They do well in their senior school entrance examinations, including winning scholarships and exhibitions, contributory factors being their subject teachers' understanding of their needs and effective one-to-one and small-group specialist help. Most of the parents who responded to the questionnaire affirmed

that their child's particular needs are met effectively. The more able pupils are identified by the school and are enabled to achieve at an appropriately high level by being challenged by enrichment and extension tasks in most subjects. In a very few areas, however, the more able pupils do not benefit from sufficiently challenging work.

- 3.7 Pupils' powers of communication are excellent. Articulate and confident, they draw on an extensive vocabulary for their age. Their confidence in speaking is fostered by the many opportunities to address an audience, whether in class, in assemblies and on the public stage, not least in the annual Latin play which the pupils themselves write. In modern languages lessons, pupils are unafraid to speak in French. Pupils contribute to lessons with energy and enthusiasm, eagerly engaging in debate and enthusiastically sharing their viewpoints with their teachers and peers. They happily express their views while acknowledging the importance of listening to the opinions of others. Active listening was noted in a Year 6 music lesson in which pupils concentrated on others' singing in order to build a part-song together. Through their reading, pupils not only come to an appreciation of literature but they also broaden their working vocabulary. Pupils declare that 'reading is a habit at this school' and that the library is 'an inspiring place'. Having learnt from Reception onwards to write in a cursive script, pupils throughout the school demonstrate a high standard of literacy, and richness of creative expression across the year groups can be seen in the sustained excellent quality of the poems in the booklet of pupils' work which is published annually.
- 3.8 Pupils are confident mathematicians, comfortably applying aspects of the subject in other disciplines, notably science and technology. Their mathematical knowledge and understanding are enhanced by subject-related clubs and clinics offered by staff. They also make proficient and extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils were observed making effective use of tablets for research and writing across the curriculum. For instance, Year 4 pupils used programming confidently and competently in order to advance their science project.
- 3.9 Pupils develop secure and often sophisticated study skills. They start lessons in a measured and focused manner, with consequent effective learning, as a result of the initial mindfulness exercise which calms them after lively, high-spirited breaks. From the youngest age, pupils take decisions and make choices in order to chart their way forward in their studies and in other areas of their school life. Towards the end of a lesson, individual Reception children confidently presented their work to the rest of the class, before deciding on their own next steps and agreeing them with the teacher and their peers. Pupils adopt an ever-increasing amount of autonomous control over what and how they study: through play-based learning, problem-solving, self-assessment and responding to an emphasis on creativity, most achieve a high level of independence of mind, relative to their age, in their approaches to their studies. The *Challenge by choice* initiative led, for example, to a group opting to go to a mathematics enrichment session rather than an assembly.

heard at evensong in the college chapel on the first day of the inspection. In a school where music is a distinct strength, the large majority of pupils in Year 4 and above learn a musical instrument and many of them achieve high grades in their instrumental examinations, most with merit or distinction. Pupils grow in confidence and gain personal fulfilment from performing in the busy programme of concerts and recitals that take place during the school year. They develop their talents in and derive great pleasure from the creative and performing arts. Those who have taken part in the busy annual programme of plays speak excitedly not only of the pleasure afforded by the experience, but also about what they have learnt in terms of working as members of a company, and their growth in self-confidence. Pupils are confident with paint, and their bold, exuberant artwork is widely displayed around the school. They learn teamwork and hone their skills in a good range of sports: during the inspection, hockey and netball players were observed developing hand and eye co-ordination and specific techniques. Individuals and teams have represented the school at district and county level in athletics, cricket, cross country, hockey, netball, rugby, sailing and swimming. Pupils have the chance to discover a particular aptitude and fulfilment in other sports such as fives and rowing.

- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes to all that they undertake are spirited and positive. They respond enthusiastically to high expectations, briskly paced lessons, judicious questioning, imaginative challenges and warm encouragement. Almost all of the pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they are encouraged to think for themselves and that their



Pupils value their mindfulness exercises and the practice of Tai Chi as strategies for easing anxiety, especially with the onset of entrance examinations. Minutes of governance's meetings on safeguarding and related matters not only meet the recommendation of the previous report that they should be fuller and more detailed, but they also reflect the breadth and depth of governance's interest in pastoral care and pupils' overall well-being. The pupils themselves know how to stay safe and say that their teachers are key members of their individual *Safety circles*. Their understanding is well-developed since in ICT and OTheir

## 4. Inspection Evidence

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

### Inspectors

Mr Paul Spillane	Reporting inspector
Mr Jonathan Egan	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Ms Sophie Green	Compliance Team inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Dr Pamela Edmonds	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)