



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Falkner School

October 2021

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School's Details

School	Falkner House School			
DfE number	207/6193			
Address	Falkner House School 19 Brechin Place London SW7 4QB			
Telephone number	0207 3734501			
Email address	office@falknerhouse.co.uk			
Principal	Mrs Anita Griggs			
Proprietor	Mrs Anita Griggs			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	329			
	Boys' School	139	Girls' School	156
	Nursery	34		
Inspection dates	5 to 8 October 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Falkner House is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 3 and 11 years. The school is on two sites with male pupils in one and a co-educational nursery and female pupils in the other. It is owned and governed by members of the principal's family. The two schools are run by the daughters of the principal. The school for male pupils has opened since the previous inspection.
- 1.2 During the period March to June 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers. After 10 June, all year groups returned to school. During this period of closure, the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.3 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.4 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.5 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the nursery children and those of key workers received remote learning provision at home.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.6 The school endeavours to provide an outstanding academic education in a family atmosphere. It seeks to ensure that every pupil is known, nurtured and respected and therefore able to realise their potential, by staff who know them well, and who provide individual help and guidance. The objective is to embed a culture of strong values such as kindness, good manners, and consideration for others, ensuring that at each stage, pupils will be equipped with suitable skills and self-confidence for the next phase of their life.

About the pupils

- 1.7 Pupils come mainly from business and professional families living within a four-mile radius of the school. The social and cultural backgrounds of the pupils reflect that of the local area. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is above average compared to those taking the same test nationally. The school has identified three pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include a range of specific learning difficulties, of whom all receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 92 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. The curriculum is modified for pupils with particular gifts or talents.

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 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](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, 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 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 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.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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

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

- 2.12 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.

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

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 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.

2.19 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.

Key findings

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

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Pupils, including those with EAL and SEND, make excellent progress.
- Pupils are highly articulate and have strong communication skills.
- Pupils confidently and competently use number as a natural tool, and this is used widely across the subject range.

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

- Pupils mix with ease across all age groups and show care and consideration for each other.
- Pupils have high self-esteem, show mature levels of self-discipline and are extremely confident, yet possess not a hint of arrogance.
- Pupils actively support each other in a collaborative atmosphere, respecting and recognising individual difference although pupils could more frequently take the initiative in supporting the wider community.
- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of the difference between right and wrong; they strongly uphold the school's ethos and values.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider the following improvement:

- Enable pupils to initiate and develop their own charity and community projects.

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 attainment of pupils of all ages and abilities is excellent. Pupils are highly successful in competitive entrance examinations for senior schools. Most gain places at the school of their choice, and many are awarded academic, music, sport and drama scholarships. Pupils make excellent progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy, in line with high expectations and with the school's aims which are tailored for the individual. Pupils are eager to learn and their rapid progress, with no significant difference between those with EAL and the small number with SEND, is facilitated by fast-paced

teaching, well planned to meet the needs of all, combined with a clear culture of challenge. Pupils' constant progress is ensured because school leaders use a wide range of data to assess pupils' needs and to put in place appropriate interventions. In responses to the inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents commented that teaching enabled their child to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils speak confidently and eloquently conveying their ideas with great clarity. They have highly developed vocabularies as a result of a language-rich learning environment where they are encouraged to use subject specific key words, cross-curricular links and synonyms as the norm. For example, a younger class writing about feelings in a diary entry, produced a well-constructed piece, utilising clear steps, connectives, first person and adjectives. This progresses to high-quality sophisticated writing as seen in work produced by the oldest pupils, of all abilities, when penning their own conclusion to a chapter of *Smith* by Leon Garfield. Core values of respect and kindness permeate the school, which generates an atmosphere which helps pupils develop excellent listening skills and confidence in speaking out whether answering questions in class, making presentations to their peers, or in activities such as public speaking. This was witnessed on numerous occasions during the inspection, such as when pupils acted out parts with great dramatic effect in the *Firework Maker's Daughter*. Older pupils, who in discussion had some thought-provoking ideas about what it was like to be a goldfish in a bowl, subsequently produced some excellent pieces of creative writing.
- 3.7 Pupils are continually challenged in numeracy and as a result achieve a high standard. They can explain their workings with confidence as seen in a younger pupils' mathematics lesson when working out column addition. The youngest children are provided with strong foundations in numeracy facts and key vocabulary, ensuring that, by the time they are in the older years, they use number competently as a natural tool. Pupils confidently use their numerical skills across the curriculum because authentic examples of numeracy in action are laced throughout the pupils' learning. For example, when younger pupils celebrated the birthday of the class dog, they used their seven times table knowledge to accurately work out his age in human years. Older pupils studying grid references and co-ordinates in geography applied arithmetic fluently to problems, confidently and competently making links to mathematics.
- 3.8 Pupils develop their knowledge effectively across the subject range and acquire skills that help them to apply their understanding, supporting the school's approach which combines high academic standards with patience and kindness. Clear evidence of their skills across the curriculum was seen in the stimulating displays throughout the school and scrutiny of the orderly files and progress journals. These skills are instilled in the younger years with pupils gradually taking on greater responsibility for independence in their studies. For instance, younger pupils demonstrated secure knowledge of numbers to 50 and an effective rapport between adults and pupils ensured they understood the need for accuracy and checking. Older pupils showed an excellent understanding of metric units as seen in a mathematics lesson where pupils challenged the teacher on converting units to correct his 'mistakes' and defended their own correct understanding.
- 3.9 Pupils use computers with ease and competence, as evidenced when younger pupils confidently used software in lessons and older pupils enjoyed the independence of working across the curriculum on their individual tablets. Pupils demonstrated high levels of skill using their tablets in mathematics whilst solving problems on the perimeters of compound shapes. The school's investment both in technology and in training the staff, has ensured that they have fully met the previous inspection recommendation. Pupil progress, as evidence by the school's monitoring and the pupils' own opinions, was not impacted by the period of remote learning, due in part to the speed with which the school set up on-line learning. During discussion pupils explained how much their confidence in ICT had developed during the COVID-19 lockdown, due to the need to use electronic learning.
- 3.10 Pupils display sophisticated study skills for their age, with highly developed collaborative skills enhancing their progress. Pupils are able to read critically, think independently and defend their views in a positive learning environment, in which they are encouraged to engage in new and challenging tasks. Pupils can hypothesise in response to open-ended questioning such as in a history lesson where

younger pupils were asked; 'Why might people have believed in cures for the plague which we would laugh at now?' Pupils' analytical skills are excellent, as demonstrated by older pupils when dissecting Mark Antony's speech and recognising irony in prose.

- 3.11 Although the majority of external competitions and fixtures have not been accessible since March 2020, pupils have responded enthusiastically to those that are available and have continued to enjoy good success. Nearly half the school take individual music lessons and many of them are accomplished musicians passing grades with merit and distinction, including 27 pupils last term. Pupils enjoy success in many local sporting competitions. The school's netball teams reached the regional finals of the Independent Schools Association competition in 2019 and 2020 and the national finals in 2018, and the swimming team reached the regional finals in 2019. Pupils compete in the UK Maths Challenge and, in 2018, five were awarded a gold medal. Pupils who maintain an interest in art go on to enjoy success in a competition for schools across London. These successes reflect the school's commitment to give every pupil the opportunity to shine. Pupils are constantly encouraged to leave their 'comfort zone' and enter the 'learning zone' with a positive mindset.
- 3.12 Throughout the school pupils display decidedly positive attitudes and an enthusiasm for learning as evidenced by their endeavours in all lessons and activities observed during the inspection. They are highly productive when working individually, with their learning partner or in a group. The youngest pupils explore their aesthetic and creative talents through topic themes and stories and demonstrate a love of learning and thirst for knowledge which amplifies and matures into scholarship at the top of the school. Their willingness to take responsibility for their own learning is fostered by their teachers who are well organised and stimulate discussion by asking thought-provoking questions and thereby creating a positive and supportive atmosphere which instils confidence in pupils. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, are acknowledged through the rewarding of positive behaviour through verbal praise, house points and tokens. The school's implicit culture and sense of family that is strongly promoted by the leadership team, underpins the pupils' desire to do their best. The pupils value their community and gain a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction from contributing to the success of the school.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils across all ages have the confidence to share ideas and exhibit high levels of self-esteem in a humble and respectful manner. They are self-reflective and self-disciplined with an excellent understanding of how to improve their own learning. They develop self-knowledge and resilience because leaders and staff reinforce positive attitudes and encourage them to always do their best. Almost all parents in the questionnaire stated that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. This was illustrated in assemblies when pupils, confident in their supportive community, played instruments, put their hands up to ask questions and volunteered information freely. In all areas of the school pupils engage in activity in an uninhibited fashion clearly confident even in areas out of their natural comfort zone. Inspectors witnessed the whole school unite spontaneously to sing in unison with a child playing a Coldplay song on the guitar.
- 3.15 Pupils flourish in a multi-cultural, diverse community in a relaxed and accepting way. Pupils from different cultures blend in as one and celebrate the very British experience that parents appreciate. Pupils form strong friendships and demonstrate mutual respect and kindness to everyone who crosses their path. In a mixed age interview the respect and tolerance showed to the younger pupils was excellent and the pupils themselves attributed this to their personal, social, health, economic education lessons. One of the younger pupils remarked that 'friends are like gold dust but sprinkled everywhere' and all wanted to confirm that their teachers take time out of formal lessons if any concerns arise.

- 3.16 Pupils show a willingness to make their own decisions and a mature awareness that those decisions affect their own success and well-being. The youngest children happily made decisions as to what activity they wanted to complete, guided at all times by staff who ensured through open-ended questioning that they had thought carefully about whether to play with the car, engage in role play or paint, so helping them to understand that their choices had consequences. Choice is a common feature of many lessons as seen in an older class mathematics lesson where pupils were witnessed self-selecting challenges at an appropriate level. In discussions with pupils, they remarked that they enjoy the freedom this provides for them to make decisions about their learning and thus they accept responsibility for their own progress.
- 3.17 Pupils show a keen sense of wanting to do the right thing; they have pride in their good behaviour and respect for one another, taking responsibility for their part in maintaining a friendly and safe space to learn. A family ethos where all pupils display and discuss their inherent values of knowing what is expected and how to be kind and respectful is a strong feature of this school community. In their questionnaire responses, all pupils said that the school deals with bullying effectively. Pupils are rarely unkind because such behaviour is not tolerated, and immediate interventions are put in place to address unfavourable actions or resolve friendship issues. Pupils are encouraged to have a strong moral conscience as witnessed when a younger pupil proudly explained that everyone's opinion is useful to help us improve. Assemblies embolden and help the pupils to explore and adopt important school core values that are constantly reinforced by the school's leadership.
- 3.18 Pupils delight in making a significant contribution to the school through roles such as librarian. They have a strong sense of belonging and they nurture and care for those younger than themselves. The older pupils act as a big brother/sister to the younger children and they meet regularly in formal sessions, and it was clear just how much pride the pupils place on this interaction. The school council enthusiastically discussed aspects of school and suggested initiatives to, in their words, 'make the school an even better place'. These included ideas such as using an overgrown garden belonging to the hotel next door, and the idea of the head boy sitting on the council. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of the need to contribute to the lives of others, raising funds for a number of causes including premature birth, ex-servicemen and refugee charities. However, currently the pupils have limited opportunities to take ideas further as adults tend to take the lead in initiating charity and community projects.
- 3.19 Pupils develop an increasingly refined appreciation for the non-material aspects of life, as seen in their eager contributions to the *News and Views* slot in assembly where they displayed a keen interest in the new malaria vaccine, segregation in America and the reintroduction of the red squirrel to London. The quality of art on display around the school demonstrates the pupils' appreciation of beauty and their capacity to think beyond their own immediate lives. Kindness is embedded into all interactions and in discussion pupils stated how they would gain pleasure from small acts to save the planet. The quality of the pupils' spiritual development is evident throughout the school, and they celebrate a wide variety of religious festivals and demonstrate sensitivity, for example to the health needs, family traditions and religious beliefs of others. This was evidenced in assembly when all pupils were respectful of the prayer and hymn irrespective of their own faith.
- 3.20 Pupils understand how to be physically safe in terms of diet and exercise and show an extraordinarily positive mental attitude towards challenging academic demands. From the very youngest children discussing teeth and oral hygiene whilst learning the sound 'T', to older pupils eloquently talking about what a balanced meal is, all pupils are aware of aspects of being healthy. Pupils describe support systems in place were things to go wrong, showing confidence in the professionalism and caring nature of staff. A very few parents commented that the school did not encourage their child to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Inspection evidence did not support this view. In discussion with pupils all wholeheartedly celebrated and recognised how privileged they are to be working and playing in the school's homely and welcoming environment. Without exception they all felt safe and appreciated within the family environment and culture of warmth and security that pervade the school.

- 3.21 Pupils are naturally self-aware without a hint of arrogance and work effectively with others, meeting the school's aim to encourage an ability to form easy relationships with both peers and adults. Pupils have formed rewarding relationships as they experience different learning styles and opinions through collaborative group work. These skills and abilities are developed from the earliest age, where children move around calmly, sharing resources and helping each other, reinforced at all times by the ethos of the school and modelled on excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Prefects and librarians feel pride in their responsibilities and pupils relish the opportunity to be awarded a kindness 'badge'. Pupils feel most positive about the school community and their place within it.

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 proprietor, 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. 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

Mrs Ruth Loveman	Reporting inspector
Mrs Cathy Braithwaite	Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Lawrence Groves	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)