



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Braeside School

March 2023

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School's Details

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| School | Braeside School | | | |
| DfE number | 881/6000 | | | |
| Address | Braeside School 130 High Road Buckhurst Hill Essex IG9 5SD | | | |
| Telephone number | 020 85056675 | | | |
| Email address | info@braesideschool.co.uk | | | |
| Headmistress | Mrs Chloe Moon | | | |
| Proprietor | Mr Matthew Hagger | | | |
| Age range | 2 to 16 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 155 | | | |
| | EYFS | 21 | Juniors | 44 |
| | Seniors | 90 | | |
| Inspection dates | 21 to 23 March 2023 | | | |

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Braeside School is an all-through day school from Nursery to Year 11. Founded as a school for female pupils in 1944, it re-registered as a school for both male and female pupils in September 2021. Currently the only male pupils are in Nursery and Reception, but the school will become fully co-educational over time.
- 1.2 Braeside is part of the Oak-Tree Group of Schools, which is family owned. The role of the proprietor is undertaken by one member of the family, who acts as managing principal, overseeing administrative arrangements for all the schools in the group.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new headmistress and consolidated its provision on a single site.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to provide an all-through educational setting that promotes independence, courage, success and friendship. The school aims to encourage openness and honesty and to provide a family-feel where pupils feel supported in taking the next steps in their learning.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Most pupils come from a range of professional families living within a three mile radius of the school. Assessment data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is in line with those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 22 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, three of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for two pupils, neither of whom require additional support. Data used by the school have identified 18 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

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.

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 At GCSE in the years 2019 to 2022, performance has confirmed 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 wellbeing 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 of all ages make rapid progress across all areas of the curriculum, but the most able are not always challenged to take leadership in their learning.
- Pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding, often well in advance of age-related expectations.
- Pupils' communication skills are excellent.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and engaged, displaying excellent attitudes to all aspects of their learning.

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

- Pupils develop excellent self-knowledge and fully understand how to develop their own learning.
- Pupils have strong resilience in many areas but less so when faced with examination pressures.
- Pupils' collaborative skills and behaviour are excellent.
- Pupils show great respect for diversity in all its forms, both within the school and in wider society.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable the most able and talented pupils to pursue their own intellectual interests by providing greater challenge and opportunities beyond the classroom.
- Strengthen pupils' resilience when dealing with the pressures of public examinations or facing the challenges of the world beyond school.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make good and sometimes excellent progress relative to their starting points so that nearly all meet, and a few exceed, their expected level of development. At the end of their time in the junior school, pupils make good progress to achieve scores in tests in literacy and numeracy that are above the average for those taking the same tests nationally. Pupils' GCSE performance in the years 2019 and 2022 is well above national norms for the achievement of top grades 9-7 and above national averages for pupils in maintained schools for "pass grades" 9-4. These almost exactly mirrored the centre-assessed grades for 2020 and teacher-assessed grades for 2021. Pupils in the senior school, including those with EAL and the more able, make

excellent progress across a broad and balanced curriculum so that, by the time they leave, most have exceeded their expected levels in all areas of their learning. Pupils with SEND are well-supported in the classroom, so that they make progress in line with their peers. As a result of their excellent levels of achievement in their GCSE examinations, pupils are highly successful in gaining places to study their selected post-16 programmes at the schools and colleges of their choice.

- 3.6 At all stages, pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding and often well in advance of age-related expectations. In Year 1, pupils showed an exceptional understanding of grammar, including the accurate use of capitals, punctuation and conjunctions, indicating the success of a whole school initiative to improve literacy. Junior school pupils demonstrated the skill to tune their own ukeleles in music and the knowledge to classify the invertebrates that they had collected in the school grounds in science. In the senior school, pupils preparing for their GCSE chemistry examination showed an excellent knowledge of endothermic and exothermic reactions when designing and marketing a self-heating beverage. Pupils' development of excellent knowledge, skills and understanding is supported in all areas of the curriculum by well-planned teaching that sets high expectations and provides differentiated tasks to challenge pupils of all abilities to be the best they can be. In lessons, pupils develop their ability and confidence during targeted questioning and discussion. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows a variety of helpful self, peer and teacher-led assessment mechanisms to promote their excellent understanding.
- 3.7 Pupils' outstanding oral and written communication skills are nurtured by the many opportunities provided to discuss or debate issues in lessons and by the high priority given by teachers to develop vocabulary or encourage the use of sophisticated subject terminology. Pupils' excellent verbal communication is confirmed by the high grades achieved in Spoken English and London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) examinations, taken by the majority of pupils. In many lessons, pupils thoughtful and articulate contributions are the result of a heightened ability to listen and reflect before freely offering ideas. Pupils, including those with SEND, are confident and uninhibited communicators and read and write fluently as a result of the positive encouragement of their peers and teachers. Year 4 pupils used highly persuasive language and argued cogently whether *Jemmy Buttons* should leave or stay on his South American island while Year 1 wrote excellent precursive scripts when preparing questions about *Anna Hibiscus*. In a senior school lesson, pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding of technical language such as iambic pentameter, existentialism or deconstructionist theory when identifying explicit and implicit meaning in *The Prelude* by Wordsworth.
- 3.8 Most pupils develop good mathematical and numerical skills in relation to their age as they progress through the school. In the early years and junior school, pupils' secure numeracy skills are encouraged by the setting of clear targets for improvement. In individual lessons, more able pupils' progress is constrained by a lack of appropriate challenge. Lessons observed showed that the youngest children can count securely and by Year 2 they had a good understanding of multiplication and division including the inverse concept when working with the ten times table. Pupils' mathematical competence develops rapidly in the senior school so that their achievement in relation to ability at GCSE is excellent and many are confident enough to take part in mathematical Olympiads or when taking additional qualifications such as statistics or further mathematics. Pupils apply their mathematical skills well in a number of curricular areas including science, technology and geography.
- 3.9 Pupils develop excellent core information and communication technology (ICT) skills from an early age and employ them purposefully in a wide range of subjects. Pupils have achieved very high standards in the digital art curriculum including success in national competitions. Pupils in Reception were adept in using school devices to scan a QR code to access an application before orchestrating sound loops combining beats and tunes. In the senior school, pupils use devices to research and organise their independent or group tasks and are able to fully assess the reliability of the internet sites that they access. Pupils' excellent ICT skills are enhanced by the provision of computing lessons at all levels and stimulated beyond the curriculum in the mixed-age coding club.

- 3.10 Pupils develop strong study skills from an early age and, when presented with opportunities are excellent independent learners. In a number of lessons, pupils demonstrated excellent higher order study skills including the ability to assimilate information from a range of sources, hypothesise, analyse data and draw secure conclusions. For example, in a science lesson pupils worked well independently to interpret data and predict the passage of light through a concave lens. In a history lesson, pupils analysed sources effectively to produce top grade GCSE answers on the impact of technology on naval warfare in the 16th century. In English, pupils displayed outstanding subject skills when analysing the use of symbolism in *Alice in Wonderland*. Whilst almost all teaching observed enabled pupils to achieve the highest grades, in a few lessons over-structured or conservative planning limited opportunities to develop some of the higher order thinking and reasoning skills. This is reflected in the questionnaires, where a small minority of pupils disagreed that most lessons were interesting.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve well in a growing number of activities to support the curriculum and in extra-curricular activity. Pupils achieve growing success in a range of team or individual sports and opportunities have increased as a result of collaboration within the Oak Tree Group of schools and entry to Independent School Association (ISA) competitions. Pupils have performed well in swimming, cross-country, rugby, netball, athletics, football, tennis and cricket teams. Individuals have achieved national recognition in tennis, cheerleading and show-jumping, well supported by adjustments to their curriculum. A large number of pupils participate with enthusiasm and considerable talent in the performing arts. Recent examples include performances of *Cinderella Rockerfella*, a junior music concert featuring ensembles and soloists on a range of instruments, and choristers participating in the 'largest school choir in the world' at the O2 in London. Pupils enjoy good and occasionally excellent levels of success in drama and music grades, art and young writers' competitions. In their questionnaire responses, parents and pupils appreciate the efforts of proprietors and leaders to increase the breadth of the extra-curricular programme but feel that there is scope for additional opportunities for pupils to pursue their skills and talents in other areas linked to the curriculum.
- 3.12 Pupils of all ages show excellent attitudes to their learning. They are enthusiastic and fully engaged in the classroom and highly positive in their approach to extra-curricular activity. They work collaboratively extremely well, show great initiative and relish opportunities to take leadership in their learning. Pupils are highly attentive and listen carefully to the instructions given in lessons and they are highly respectful of each other's contributions during class discussions or group work. Pupils' work is generally presented and organised to a very high standard indicating that they take pride in all they do and constantly seek ways to improve.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils' excellent personal development represents the highly successful fulfilment of the schools aims to encourage openness and honesty and to provide a family-feel where pupils feel supported in taking the next steps in their learning. Pupils develop excellent self-knowledge as they progress through the school. They fully understand how to develop their own learning and what is required to realise their potential. In a Year 11 chemistry lesson, pupils, including those with SEND, demonstrated excellent self-knowledge of what they required to challenge themselves through their choice of extension activity. Pupils rapidly build their self-confidence and self-esteem, understanding that in a small school, staff know them well and that they have a chance to shine. Pupils develop good levels of resilience to overcome personal obstacles. For example, Year 9 tackling a high ropes adventure trail or senior pupils summoning the courage to make applications for positions of responsibility. In their questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Pupils progressing from Early Years, Year 6 or leaving to take up places at sixth form are well-prepared academically for the transition but, in discussion, a number expressed anxiety about forthcoming examinations or about their move to a larger school.

- 3.15 Pupils of all ages make informed and carefully considered decisions about their learning, relationships and life-style. They seek advice where required, feel empowered to pursue their interests, and make excellent decisions to support their future success and wellbeing. This was demonstrated by the confident self-selection of tasks by children in the Early Years. Junior school pupils enjoy the freedom to choose how to complete their work most effectively or select the clubs and activities to support their interests. In the senior school, pupils' excellent decision-making skills are applied carefully to their choice of GCSE options and post-16 programmes as well as to the revision and work-schedules required to achieve their goals. They are assisted in this by a well-structured careers programme that focuses on the identification of each pupil's interests, aspirations, skills and talents. Pupils express their opinions clearly about the trips, visits and clubs that they wish to engage in and have instigated a number of activities such as 'Cricketfest' and the Battlefields trip.
- 3.16 Pupils show an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects that enrich their lives and this is exhibited clearly in their thought-provoking art and creative writing as well as their enjoyment of music, dance and drama. Pupils fully appreciate the beauty and wonder of nature and the need to protect and conserve the diversity of environments. In their topic about Spring, children in Reception learned how caterpillars grow into butterflies by dressing up as the different stages of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to celebrate World Book Day. Younger pupils accurately identify trees, shrubs and animals during their walks in Epping Forest and understand the requirements for a healthy ecosystem. Older pupils have cleared pots and planted bulbs in the school's own garden. Pupils show great sensitivity when studying the impacts of conflicts. For example, Year 6 pupils created thought-provoking films during a trip to the Imperial War Museum and Year 11 displayed great empathy when discussing the impact of Hitler's foreign policy on people and cultures in the 1930s. Pupils show an excellent understanding of the different religions represented in the school. They are eager to learn about the nature of beliefs in religious studies lessons, form time or assemblies. During inspection, Year 1 pupils gave a spontaneous lecture on Ramadan to celebrate the first day of the festival.
- 3.17 Pupils show a great respect for the systems and rules that are in place to ensure an orderly society and they readily accept responsibility for their own excellent behaviour. Pupils of all ages can clearly distinguish right from wrong and their behaviour towards each other and adults is warm, supportive and genuine. Pupils who responded to the questionnaire overwhelmingly agreed that the school expects pupils to behave well. Occasional friendship issues are generally resolved quickly without the need for intervention, though strong pastoral support is there if needed. Older pupils model exemplary behaviours, and records show that rewards far outnumber sanctions. Pupils have a strong moral compass and debate ethical issues with great maturity. In form time, Year 7 recognised the importance of personal choice and the need to resist peer pressure when considering the dangers of illegal or potentially harmful legal substances.
- 3.18 Pupils' collaboration with each other, and their teachers, is excellent. The high quality of pupils' social and teamworking skills is a great strength of the school and a product of the "family atmosphere" promoted by leaders and proprietors. Pupils display outstanding social skills when working together in class activities, sports teams or with other year groups in house events and performing arts productions. Almost all pupils complete the bronze level of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) and develop their teamwork further alongside pupils from other schools in the Oak Tree Challenge. During the inspection, junior school pupils exhibited refined social skills when working together to improve the book chapters that they were writing. Each pupil was able to balance supportive praise with helpful suggestions for improvement. The same heightened social awareness was employed by senior pupils to assess netball skills in a team practice and develop their tactics accordingly. Almost all parents responding to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their child to develop strong teamwork and social skills.
- 3.19 Pupils make an excellent contribution to the creation and running of a vibrant and friendly school society. Pupil committees including the Green Team, house leaders, prefects and the school council actively devise and organise events and have a strong influence on bringing about positive change.

Pupil representatives on the school council conducted lunch surveys to modify menus and were instrumental in the design of the new school uniform as well as producing a logo for the PTA. Pupils acknowledge that the staff leadership team places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils' views are listened to and acted upon, including clear explanations if a change is not possible. Senior pupils and those with elected positions of responsibility are highly respected by their peers and younger children and support many activities. For example, senior school pupils assisted Year 1 and Reception children on a trip to Waltham Abbey and, of their own volition, organised a collection for a foodbank following the Harvest Festival. Pupils' contribution to the local community and to wider society is substantial in relation to the numbers in the school. Pupils devise and run numerous charitable fundraising initiatives ranging from cake sales to non-uniform days and volunteer in, for example, charity shops, litter picks, sports clubs as well as accepting positions on county youth councils or working with the disabled.

- 3.20 Pupils show great respect for diversity in all its forms within school or in wider society to the extent that, to be different is not an issue. In the classroom environment, pupils of differing abilities and individual needs support each other well and are extremely happy to celebrate each other's successes as well as share personal challenges. Year 7 pupils were able to recognise and celebrate the positive aspects of neurodiversity when considering achievements of famous people with SEND such as Einstein. Pupils show great sensitivity towards those who are less fortunate in society, illustrated by a discussion in form time about the dilemmas faced by parents when considering the possibility that their child may have Down's Syndrome. In discussions, pupils spoke positively of the many opportunities to learn about world religions and beliefs provided within the curriculum and re-enforced by trips and visits or in assemblies. Pupils beginning their fast for Ramadan readily tell others and feel well-supported by their peers.
- 3.21 As they progress through the school pupils develop an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe and physically and mentally healthy. They fully appreciate the negative aspects of social media or online activity and have been well-advised through the curriculum of strategies to minimise risk. They enjoy and appreciate the opportunities to stay fit and healthy through sport and recreation, even understanding the benefits of compulsory events such as house cross country. Pupils understand the dangers of substance misuse or an unbalanced diet and appreciate the dialogue with the kitchen about menu choices. Children in the Early Years marked healthy eating week by making posters of fruit for the kitchen staff so that they could indicate their choice of delicious and healthy snacks for their lunch boxes. Pupils are able to articulate and discuss the mental health challenges faced by young people in today's society particularly since the pandemic. Proprietors and leaders have fully recognised this need through the appointment of a wellbeing lead and the provision of the 'Hub' as a safe space where pupils can go to share their concerns.

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 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. 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

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|-------------------|---|
| Mr Roger Tapping | Reporting inspector |
| Mrs Julie Lerbech | Compliance team inspector (Bursar, GSA school) |
| Mr Andrew Gough | Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school) |
| Mr Timothy Kirk | Team inspector (Former deputy head, HMC school) |