



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**POWNALL HALL SCHOOL**

**MARCH 2017**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	Pownall Hall School			
<b>DfE number</b>	895/6015			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	525929			
<b>Address</b>	Carrwood Road Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5DW			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01625 523141			
<b>Email address</b>	office@pownallhallschool.co.uk			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr David Goulbourn			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Eileen MacAulay			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	226			
	<b>Boys</b>	132	<b>Girls</b>	94
	<b>EYFS</b>	96	<b>Juniors</b>	130
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22 to 23 March 2017			

## PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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.

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

**This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting 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.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

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 house meetings and an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Jane Chesterfield	Reporting inspector
Mrs Elizabeth Harris	Team inspector (Director of music, IAPS school)
Mrs Caroline Tucker	Team inspector (Induction tutor and inspection manager, IAPS school)

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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### About the school

- 1.1 Pownall Hall is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between two and eleven years. The school was founded in 1895 in the centre of Wilmslow as a senior school for boys, and moved to its current location in 1934 as a prep school. It became fully co-educational in 1998. The school is a charitable trust which is administered by a board of governors. It is situated on a nine-acre site around a listed building, with accommodation of varying ages housing classroom and specialist facilities.
- 1.2 Since the previous full inspection in 2011, a new headmaster and chair of governors have taken up post. The amount of specialist teaching throughout the school has increased, and the outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has been extended with the introduction of canopies. The use of technology has been extended to improve the tracking of pupils' progress and communication with parents.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide a caring, disciplined, safe and secure family environment where all pupils are enabled and encouraged to maximise their academic, sporting, musical and creative potential. It seeks to instil traditional values of courtesy, good manners, mutual respect, tolerance and compassion in its pupils, and help them develop self-discipline and good working habits for the future. The all-round personal development of each pupil is at the centre of its work.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional and managerial backgrounds, mostly from White British families living within a ten-mile radius of the school. The school does not enter pupils for national curriculum tests at age seven or eleven, but nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. Ten pupils are identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for twelve pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified twenty pupils as the most able in the school's population or those who have special talents, and the curriculum is modified for them.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Nursery	Nursery (aged two to three years)
Kindergarten	Nursery (aged three to four years)

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in March 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Develop procedures to ensure that assessment is used to inform planning.
  - Review the balance of the day to ensure that the length of lessons enables the pupils to learn as effectively as possible.
  - In the EYFS, plan more challenging activities outdoors for children to develop their investigation, exploration and problem solving skills
  - In the EYFS, improve the balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities during the mornings.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous full inspection.
- 1.8 The recommendation of the intermediate EYFS inspection in March 2014 was:
- Ensure that one-to-one staff supervisions throughout the EYFS are well embedded in practice.
- 1.9 The school has successfully met the recommendation of this inspection.

## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

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

- Pupils of all ages have a great enthusiasm for learning and excellent listening skills.
- Throughout the school, pupils develop strong skills in the different subjects of the curriculum as a result of high-quality specialist teaching.
- Pupils reach above-average standards of attainment across the curriculum, especially in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are highly successful in their extra-curricular activities, particularly art, music and drama.

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

- Pupils' behaviour towards and relationships with others are excellent
- Pupils feel happy and secure at school, and have the confidence to develop as individuals.
- Pupils reflect on their experiences and understand the importance of making decisions for themselves.
- Pupils feel a strong sense of responsibility toward the school community and are keen to play their part in it.

### **Recommendation**

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Building on current improvements in peer and self-assessment and target setting.

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 At all stages of the school, pupils display great enthusiasm for and interest in learning. In the EYFS, children are eager to be independent and explore the wealth of opportunities offered to them. They demonstrated manual dexterity and perseverance as they punched holes in laurel tree leaves and threaded string through the gaps, all the while enjoying the fresh smell of the leaves. Older pupils have excellent listening and study skills due to the high expectations of staff and the consistent development of good work habits, which reflect the school's aim of helping pupils develop self-discipline and good working skills. Younger pupils listened carefully to poetry which was read in an expressive way, and then recreated that mood in reading with a partner.
- 3.3 Pupils are highly attentive and focused in class. They enjoy putting their ideas forward in a supportive environment where they are not afraid of making mistakes. Pupils understand, value and aspire to achieve the skills espoused in the school's learning code known as Pownall Plus, which focuses on communication, collaboration, adaptability, curiosity, initiative, responsibility and reflection. For example, younger pupils displayed initiative in science when they worked independently as apprentice palaeontologists, researching how fossils are formed and sequencing their stages of development. Meanwhile, older pupils demonstrated curiosity and analytical skills in music as they thought through the next steps in their musical performance.
- 3.4 From an early age, pupils develop strong skills in the different subjects of the curriculum and learn how to apply these skills in different situations. They are motivated by whole-school cross-curricular topics, such as the current focus on the universe and space which has captured their imaginations. The school's commitment to specialist teaching means that pupils benefit from the depth of knowledge and enthusiasm conveyed by individuals who are experts in their field, and who are able to inspire similar attitudes in their pupils. Younger pupils also benefit from being taught by their form tutor, which helps develop their confidence and sense of security.
- 3.5 Pupils gain a solid grounding in literacy and numeracy which underpins their studies across the curriculum. They have excellent communication skills, and are clear and articulate speakers. The very youngest children talk to trusted adults and are learning to write their names. Older pupils explained processes in recycling intelligibly and the most senior debated whether or not the moon landings were a hoax. Pupils at all stages read at levels above those expected for their age, and can write fluently and legibly in English and in other subjects of the curriculum. The oldest pupils created graphics to explain the circulatory system, and in all year groups pupils are encouraged to record their achievements and experiences independently in their 'Journey through the year' journals.
- 3.6 Pupils have a thorough understanding of the basics of mathematics which they apply to solve problems. Their books demonstrate that they work at a rapid pace, building upon prior knowledge to reach good levels of attainment. Children in the EYFS were able to identify numbers and then count out corresponding numbers of eggs, while the oldest pupils were able to tackle two-digit multiplication and extend beyond that to three-digit and decimal multiplication. Pupils are confident users of information and communication technology and use tablet computers across the curriculum, including for research, coding, word-processing and mathematical challenges. The youngest children in the EYFS were happy to use tablets independently to look at trains and musical instruments, and copy the sounds they made.

- 3.7 The school does not enter pupils for national curriculum tests but evidence from school data, pupils' books and lesson observations shows that attainment across the school is above national age-related expectations. Small classes and the high ratio of adults to pupils guarantees that pupils are well known to both class and subject teachers, and that work is well matched to their needs. Pupils of all abilities rise to the challenge of doing the best that they can, as staff set different work for different abilities and encourage pupils to strive to tackle ambitious targets. They make rapid progress at all stages of the school, and pupils with SEND or EAL achieve similarly well to their classmates due to the emphasis on individual effort coupled with carefully targeted support where necessary. From the outset, more able pupils embark on more difficult tasks to achieve at the levels of which they are capable. Pupils enter the school with a range of academic starting points as the school does not select by ability, but many ultimately gain places at selective senior schools. Some pupils attain scholarships at such schools and most pupils obtain a place in the senior school of their choice.
- 3.8 A few parents in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses felt that the school does not meet their children's educational needs effectively. The inspection found that pupils' progress is carefully tracked and the needs of individuals are closely matched. A few pupils indicated in their questionnaire responses that they do not know how well they are doing, but all pupil questionnaire respondents expressed that marking helps them improve their work. Inspection evidence found that recent initiatives in school have ensured that pupils respond to teachers' marking, and that steps are underway to involve pupils more closely in setting their own targets and evaluating the work of their classmates.
- 3.9 Pupils achieve highly beyond as well as within the classroom, in line with the school's stated aim of enabling and encouraging pupils to maximise their academic, sporting, musical and creative potential. They enjoy high levels of success in examinations in speech and drama, and in music, and repeat this success in local performing arts festivals. Around the school, excellent-quality work in art and design is evident from pupils of all ages. For example, the youngest pupils' bird models display great imagination in their use of resources and colour, and paintings by the oldest pupils in the style of Clarice Cliff demonstrate clear insight and understanding of the techniques and approach of the artist. Pupils achieve highly in sport, from football and swimming to horse-riding and golf. This is due to the encouragement and support pupils receive from the school in all their ventures, along with the excellent range of opportunities offered by the school to all its pupils.

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils behave exceptionally well in class and around the school, whether supervised or unsupervised. They understand the school's code of conduct which is known as the Pownall Passport, and accept it as a sensible set of rules to follow. Their relationships with one another and with adults are excellent. Pupils arrive at school in the morning eager to tell their form tutors their news and they mix easily across different age groups, as a result of the many opportunities they are offered through clubs, matches and performances. In the school's baking club, older pupils worked alongside younger pupils, patiently helping them to measure and mix ingredients. The younger pupils listened to their elders' advice and did their best to impress them. The quality of relationships in the school reflects the success of the school's leadership and governance in their aim to instil traditional values of courtesy, good manners, mutual respect, tolerance and compassion. Staff act as excellent role models for behaviour and set high expectations for pupils.
- 4.3 Pupils of all ages are confident and settled at school due to the caring and supportive ethos, and are able to develop their talents and interests freely. The youngest children in the EYFS separate happily from their carers, excited about exploring the stimulating environment around them. Older pupils work hard at self-improvement, taking responsibility for their own success. In sport for example, some pupils decided on their own initiative to record their running times so as to have new goals at which to aim.
- 4.4 Pupils reflect on their own experiences and understand the importance of making decisions, promoted by the ethos and expectations of the school. In interview, pupils expressed how much they value having 'feel-good' notebooks to write down private thoughts, and having the opportunity to take time to complete these. Older pupils said that they feel well supported by staff in their choice of senior school, and appreciate the chance to talk through the options they needed to consider. They felt nonetheless that they are free to make their own decisions on this. Pupils display an ability to think beyond their own lives and empathise with others, as observed in a discussion about the survivors of the 2004 Asian tsunami. The oldest pupils demonstrated that they could tackle unlikely philosophical concepts when they discussed what might happen if giraffes ruled the world, while much younger pupils were able to explain how to interpret the mood of others from their body language.
- 4.5 Pupils of all ages are keen to play their part in the school and wider community, and to be involved in making decisions for the benefit of everyone. The school council is very active in representing the pupils' voice, and a number of important decisions affecting the school's daily life have come about as a result, due to the willingness of senior staff to react to pupils' opinions. Lunch hours have been restructured to allow pupils more time to play before lessons resume, and the library has been relocated and redesigned to provide more space. School council members consult closely with their classmates so that the views of all are considered, with staff allowing time for this to be carried out. Pupils are proud of the roles they have for responsibility, and take them very seriously. For example the anti-bullying ambassadors work in the playground every day, promoting positive play and listening to others' concerns. All pupils who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt sure that the school deals effectively with bullying should it occur.

- 4.6 Pupils feel a sense of responsibility towards the local, national and international community. This is demonstrated through their fundraising efforts, many of which are initiated by themselves. For example the most senior pupils set up business enterprises, making items to sell for charity, while the Pownall Wheelers group use bike rides to raise funds for good causes. Money gathered at the harvest festival was used to send a cow to India, and pupils were very pleased that they had been able to do this. Pupils support charities for the disabled and the elderly in the local community, and the Pownall Protectors group highlights the plight of endangered species overseas. The excellent range of opportunities offered by the school enables pupils to demonstrate what they can achieve for others.
- 4.7 Pupils are genuinely interested in the lives and experiences of those from different cultures, and display respect and curiosity for differences. They welcome those of backgrounds other than their own and enjoy finding out about them. For example, Reception children had a memorable Spanish day where they experienced the food and culture of that country. Through the carefully planned religious education curriculum, pupils gain an understanding of different ways of viewing life. They also enjoy music, art and theatre from British traditions through visits and opportunities created by the school.
- 4.8 Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They enjoy being active and happily take advantage of the school's outdoor facilities in all weathers. Supported by guidance in the dining hall and the range of nutritious options available, pupils know how to make sensible choices in their diet, with many preferring to choose fruit for pudding, for instance. They understand what constitutes a healthy diet. In science, younger pupils could identify the components needed in a nutritious meal such as grains, meat and vegetables. By the time they move on to senior school, pupils are well-balanced and well-rounded individuals who are ready to take on new challenges.