



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Mount House School

October 2019



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School's Details

School	Mount House			
DfE number	302/6014			
Address	Mount House School Camlet Way Hadley Wood Hertfordshire EN4 0NJ			
Telephone number	0208 4496889			
Email address	office@mounthouse.org.uk			
Principal	Mr Toby Mullins			
Chair of directors	Dr Colin Diggory			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	241			
	Seniors	184	Sixth Form	57
Inspection dates	15 to 17 October 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Mount House School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 11 and 18. Established in June 2017 as the successor to St Martha's School for females which was founded in 1903, it is situated in a rural setting in Hadley Wood in the London Borough of Barnet. Male pupils have been admitted since September 2018 and are in Years 7, 8, 12 and 13.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of principal. It is a proprietorial school with a board of directors, who focus on overall governance. Music, drama, the dining hall, the library and the information and communication technology (ICT) facilities have been refurbished.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to support pupils to develop into confident learners through ensuring that every individual is valued and their talents identified and nurtured. The objective is that pupils will grow as able, articulate, balanced, caring, and well-rounded individuals with a genuine love of learning, ready to take on life's challenges and opportunities, aware of others' needs and confident in their ability to make a difference.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come largely from professional or business families in the local and surrounding areas and from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds. Twenty-five pupils have English as an additional language (EAL); all receive support for their English. Three pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 55 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including Asperger's, dyslexia and dyspraxia, of those about half are in need of specialist support. No pupil receives additional specialist help other than those with an EHC plan. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicates that the ability of the pupils up to Year 11 is above average. In Years 12 and 13, the pupils' ability profile is below average for pupils taking A-level courses. The curriculum is modified for the most able and for those with elite sporting talents.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

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. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports 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. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

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 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.

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 a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The 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 regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; 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 full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#)

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 At GCSE in the years 2016 to 2018, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.3 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2016 to 2018 have been in line with the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 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 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 variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include 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. They also include 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.

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 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'.

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 good.
- Pupils of all ages have good attitudes to learning and are hard-working and enthusiastic.
 - The pupils are confident orally and are attentive listeners.
 - Pupils' study skills are good. They are well-focused and effective learners.
 - The systems for monitoring pupil progress do not ensure that all pupils are supported effectively.
 - Pupils with SEND do not receive specialised individual help.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- Pupils are confident, sociable, well-behaved and eager to do their best.
 - Pupils value highly the school's multi-cultural community, respecting diversity and appreciating cultural differences.
 - Pupils understand well how to stay safe, including online. They appreciate the importance of remaining healthy, both physically and mentally.
 - Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are not given enough opportunities to take on responsibility.

Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
- Establish robust systems for assessing, tracking and monitoring pupil progress.
 - Develop the individual support for pupils with SEND.
 - Develop more opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 11 to take on roles of responsibility.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and EAL, achieve well and show commitment to do their best. The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2016 – 2018. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Mount House was established in June 2017 and so these results belong partly to the previously named St Martha's School. Pupils' performance at GCSE has been above the national average for maintained schools. However, in 2019 a majority of results in the sciences were below expectation. Pupils' performance at A level has been similar to the national average for maintained schools. In 2019 a minority of pupils achieved A* and A grades, allowing them to access places on highly competitive degree courses. Data supplied by the school, and in externally standardised tests, indicates that pupils of all ages make suitable progress from their starting points in most subjects during their time at the school. A very large majority of parents and pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that teaching allows pupils to make progress. Inspection evidence gained from lesson observations and work scrutiny concurs with this.
- 3.6 Throughout the school pupils of a wide mix of ability develop good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across most areas of learning. In creative subjects, pupils demonstrate excellent skills, as seen in intricately detailed sketchbooks and displays of a high standard. Pupils' subject knowledge is good, benefiting from their exposure to different styles of teaching, from early Mandarin lessons to healthy debate on stereotypes in physical education GCSE. In A-level business, pupils were able to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise when responding to challenging questions on decision making

processes of stakeholders and suppliers. They enjoy their games lessons, demonstrate good skills, and appreciate the number of opportunities afforded to them, including trampolining and gymnastics, through the school's growing sports programme. This is a result of the directors' support for the provision of more sporting opportunities which successfully addresses the recommendation from the previous inspection. Scientific knowledge, understanding and skills in Years 7 to 9 and at A level is largely good, as evidenced from lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work. However, it appears less good at GCSE. The school has no robust established system to track and monitor the pupils' progress, nor is appropriate specialist individual support provided for pupils with SEND other than those with an EHC plan, and this means that progress is inconsistent across subjects. Standardised early assessment of younger pupils has recently taken place which will provide information for future teacher planning. A small minority of parents in the questionnaire said their child's particular individual needs were not met, and inspectors support this view. With new leadership and management, structures are being developed to ensure that all pupils can achieve their potential.

- 3.7 The pupils are strong communicators. They are confident orally and are attentive listeners. Across the curriculum pupils are given plenty of opportunities to discuss and debate and value the ways in which this helps them to learn and become assured presenters. They are able to use sophisticated technical vocabulary, such as when explaining duration capacity coding in psychology and labelling theory in sociology. In French pupils were able to converse about future aspirations, asking questions and replying confidently using complex vocabulary. In GCSE English, pupils write fluently and read with great feeling and emphasis, demonstrating sensitive understanding of the language. Similarly, in drama, pupils listened and responded to each other's interpretation of a script, signifying a mature appreciation of situation and character motivation.
- 3.8 Numeracy skills are well developed with some evidence of excellence. Most able pupils benefit from additional challenges to ensure they achieve their potential. In mathematics, pupils showed good recall of linear sequencing as they worked together very well to pool knowledge. Pupils are confident in applying their skills in different contexts, such as in chemistry, business, psychology and computer science. The youngest pupils feel that they have become more confident in their use of numeracy through the way in which the teaching targets their needs and encourages them to persevere. The pupils are competent users of ICT, as demonstrated in their ICT lessons. Younger pupils responded enthusiastically to the challenge of basic programming as they were introduced to specialised computer language, and computer science A-level pupils' use of cyber terminology was assured, as was their use of image manipulation in A-level photography. At A-level, pupils become confident users of research tools through their extended project qualification (EPQ) independent research lessons. Classroom displays show some evidence of sound presentation skills in ICT.
- 3.9 Pupils' study skills are good. They are particularly confident and effective learners in the creative and physical subjects. EPQs highlight A-level pupils' ability to use an appropriately wide range of sources, think critically and evaluate. In A-level biology, pupils worked individually with confidence as they analysed material under the microscope. Pupils of all ages enjoy the opportunities for group work and collaborative learning in the classroom and speak assuredly about the importance of time management and of choosing effective ways of studying. They appreciate the recently refurbished library as a useful space in which to work independently whilst suggesting that additional quiet areas for study would be helpful. GCSE pupils benefit from an annual study skills day and in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons pupils learn how to manage their study time effectively. Pupils become proficient independent learners, effectively addressing the recommendation from the previous inspection.

- 3.10 Pupils' achievements across a range of activities are satisfactory with a few individuals doing particularly well, such as playing football at academy level. In the performing arts many pupils are involved in a range of performances and some also achieve significant success in external drama, music and dance competitions. In the ISA National Art Competition 2017 pupils reached the finals in a number of disciplines and in 2019 Year 8 pupils won first prize in the Salters Challenge at the Salters Festival of Chemistry. They speak enthusiastically about their successful participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and achieve well in the National Citizens Service summer programme.
- 3.11 Pupils are enthusiastic learners and aim to do their best. They respond well to challenge, showing real focus and enthusiasm and collaborate willingly with each other as they seek to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. In music, pupils worked together most effectively, appraising each other helpfully whilst preparing for a performance to younger years, whilst a pupil-led rehearsal for the end of term show highlighted excellent focus and leadership in learning. A very large majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that they are encouraged to think and learn for themselves. Inspection evidence concurs with this.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.13 Pupils' levels of self-belief and self-discipline provide them with a good measure of resilience as they learn to cope well with difficulties, both in and out of the classroom. A very large majority of pupils and parents in the questionnaire said that the school helped the pupils to be confident and independent. Inspection evidence supports this view. This strongly reflects the school's aims. Pupils are articulate and speak openly; younger pupils discussed the importance of perseverance and growth mindset, and its relationship with improving performance, when they encounter aspects of learning which they find particularly hard. Older pupils show a well-developed level of self-understanding when discussing the responsibility of being role models to younger pupils. Pupils' self-confidence is strong; they recognise that the friendly atmosphere in school and encouragement from their teachers promotes a sense of self-worth. Younger pupils also mentioned how they value recognition for effort and achievement in school assemblies. All spoke with enthusiasm about the school's PSHE programme, understanding that it supports them to grow in self-knowledge and gives them many opportunities to express their views openly.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages recognise the importance of making well-informed decisions. They appreciate that the decisions they make will impact their success and well-being. Younger pupils spoke thoughtfully about the significance of learning to make appropriate decisions about classroom behaviour and friendship choices to enable them to be their best selves. Pupils are clear about the importance of choosing suitable GCSE options. Sixth form pupils also understand the importance of choosing appropriate academic courses and value the advice given at the school's annual careers fair. They also appreciate the opportunity to apply for and vote on leadership roles within school.
- 3.15 Pupils develop levels of spiritual awareness in line with their age as observed in religious education focusing on theological and scientific truths. Extra-curricular yoga and mindfulness are on offer and pupils enjoy these times of quiet reflection. They display a strong appreciation of non-material aspects of life and a well-developed appreciation of their immediate outdoors, in particular the pond area which they cite as a beautiful, quiet place to cogitate.

- 3.16 Pupils display strong levels of moral understanding and tolerance. They acknowledge that the school encourages pupils to learn from their mistakes by reflecting upon what it means to act responsibly and adapting accordingly. Pupils' behaviour around the school site is excellent and shows that they have a keen respect for school rules and an appropriate consideration for others. They move around the corridors in a calm and purposeful manner. They are welcoming to visitors and, on greeting each other, are supportive and friendly in a manner modelled by their teachers. Most pupils and parents in the questionnaire said that the school actively promotes good behaviour; this is borne out in inspection evidence.
- 3.17 Socially, pupils have excellent levels of development. Those joining the school are welcomed warmly by their peers and integrate quickly. In particular, Year 12 pupils spoke enthusiastically of the merits of the trip to Berlin which they all enjoyed at the beginning of the school year which helped them to integrate as a group. Pupils learn to work well with one another, both in and out of the classroom. In French, younger pupils collaborated well as they solved sentence puzzles whilst, in a tutor period, sixth form pupils were actively and enthusiastically involved in a carousel of team-building exercises, suggesting and evaluating ideas as they tackled logical, memory and reasoning activities.
- 3.18 The pupils' contribution to the school and local community is sound. Sixth form pupil guardians promote the wellbeing of younger pupils as they help them to find their bearings and listen to concerns. Pupils make some contributions to the life of the local community by supporting church events and raising money for the homeless shelter. Older pupils pay weekly visits to a local care home for the elderly and much appreciate this opportunity. Pupils act as sports coaches to the adjacent primary school who use Mount House facilities and enjoy this chance to make a positive difference. Year 11 pupils have organised and delivered a helpful presentation on personal safety to Year 7, focusing on social media, websites and cyber bullying. Pupils of all ages agree that they enjoy the collaborative opportunities that a small school affords; for example, raising funds for house charities. Leadership and management recognise this and are focusing on the development of activities across the year groups within the newly relaunched house system. Nevertheless, pupils in Years 7 to 11 feel that they do not have enough opportunities to take on responsibilities which could positively contribute to the school and community. The inspection team agrees that this energy is not yet appropriately harnessed. The school council is only made up of sixth formers and does not yet provide an effective forum for all pupils' views.
- 3.19 Pupils' respect for diversity and cultural understanding is excellent and reflects the school's ethos of the importance of an inclusive environment in which everyone feels valued. Of the pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire, a very large majority said that the school encourages respect and tolerance towards others. Inspection evidence supports this opinion. Pupils value highly the school's multi-cultural community and also display open-minded attitudes about the wider society through their conversation and behaviour towards others. Demonstrating a willingness to accept into their community pupils newly arrived from around the world, they speak with respect and interest about all faiths and cultures within their school community. They also enjoy the opportunity to bring in food representative of their own cultures on the school's international day.
- 3.20 Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including online. They clearly appreciate the importance of remaining healthy, physically and mentally, and gain pleasure from participating in an increasingly broad choice of physical exercise, reflecting the leadership and management's desire to extend the extra-curricular activities on offer. Pupils recognise that the PSHE programme is instrumental in their understanding of the importance of topics such as wellbeing, managing anxiety, the use of social media, the dangers of binge-drinking and the importance of sleep. These topics are reinforced by themed assemblies.

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 directors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited 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 Sarah Dawson	Reporting inspector
Mrs Jacqueline Shackel	Compliance team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Robert Chatburn	Team inspector (Head of department, Society of Heads school)