



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Westminster Under School

October 2021

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School's Details

School	Westminster Under School			
DfE number	213/6182			
Registered charity number	312728			
Address	Westminster Under School Vincent House 27 Audley Square London SW1P 2NN			
Telephone number	020 7821 5788			
Email address	alycia.lee@westminster.org.uk			
Master	Mrs Kate Jefferson			
Chair of governors	Mr Mark Batten			
Age range	7 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	292			
	Years 3 to 6	155	Years 7 to 8	137
Inspection dates	5 to 8 October 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Westminster Under School opened in 1942 to allow male pupils aged 7 to 13 to benefit from the Westminster School ethos and principles. The Under School has occupied its current premises in the heart of Westminster since 1951, near to Westminster School. It is an independent preparatory school. The school is a registered charity and shares governance arrangements with Westminster School. The proprietor is the governing body of Westminster School. The Master has been in post since September 2021 and there have been other recent changes within the school management team. A new chair of governors was appointed in December 2020.
- 1.2 During the period March to August 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers. During this period of closure, the school provided remote learning materials for all other 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 children of key workers or vulnerable pupils received remote learning provision at home.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.6 The school sets out to provide an ethos that is enquiring yet altruistic. The school wants pupils to be stimulated by learning, to feel empowered to think for themselves, to be inquisitive, and to use the understanding and ideas they gain to help others. The school places an equal focus on providing a rounded education including sports, arts and community outreach.

About the pupils

- 1.7 The school's own data on pupils' performance indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils have conditions including dyslexia, dyscalculia or autism spectrum disorder and receive additional, specialist help. One pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan. Over 70% of pupils have English as an additional language spoken at home. The school provides support for these pupils so that they can access the curriculum.

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, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. 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 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. 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.

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](#).

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 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 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.
- 2.5 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. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 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' highly effective communication skills are evident across all aspects of school life.
 - All pupils exhibit high levels of progress enabling them to gain places in destinations of their choice.
 - Pupils have outstanding attitudes towards their learning.
 - Pupils demonstrate high levels of achievement in the wide-ranging extra-curricular programme, including sporting, creative and academic activities.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils show extremely high levels of self-awareness and self-confidence.
 - Pupils demonstrate strong commitment to the school's core values: integrity, compassion, diligence and service.
 - Pupils show great respect for each other's cultures and backgrounds in this diverse school community.
 - Pupils increasingly demonstrate high levels of engagement with and service to the local community and the wider world as they move through the school.

Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:
- Enable all pupils to develop the ability to use their initiative and acquire independent learning habits and skills, by ensuring the teaching provides sufficient open-ended and self-directed learning opportunities across the curriculum.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils of all ages display excellent knowledge, skills and understanding as they progress through the school. They make rapid progress in all subjects because they work hard in lessons, listen carefully to teachers' guidance and use a dynamic range of resources to find things out for themselves. Pupils demonstrate high levels of achievement in the range of assessment tests they undertake. The performance of younger pupils in externally moderated standardised tests is well above average.

Older pupils exhibit exceptionally high levels of achievement in internal assessment tests and when they take assessments for scholarships and exhibitions.

- 3.6 The school's own self-evaluation shows that there are no differences in the rates of progress made by different groups. Pupils who have SEND make rapid progress because they respond so positively to the carefully planned interventions designed by skilful teachers, for example to improve reading. Those who come from homes where English is not the first language, make excellent progress in speaking and listening so that they enjoy very high levels of achievement. Pupils who join the school in the older year groups make very good use of learning opportunities presented in extra, catch-up lessons. They swiftly accrue knowledge and understanding and, ultimately, their achievements match all others. Pupils demonstrate deep understanding of topics when they prepare presentations in lessons, or in their written work, both of which are very carefully monitored through effective marking and precise, individual tracking. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching enables their children to make progress and almost all pupils agreed that they learn a lot in lessons.
- 3.7 Pupils in all year groups are articulate, expressive, confident communicators. They respond very positively to the school's overt priority of learning through dialogue and questioning. Pupils in Year 3, for example, provided considered responses when asked about the attributes of a bully. Older pupils in Year 7 summarised the plot of a famous American novel, illustrating deep comprehension of motive and context. Other pupils listened intently and offered articulate critiques including alternative points of view. In history, pupils in Year 8 analysed different sources precisely, to differentiate between a viewpoint and a fact. Pupils write imaginatively whether composing a letter or completing a project on suitable environments where diverse industries might flourish. Pupils make very good use of their knowledge of one language to improve achievement in others, for example, by drawing on English skills to converse assuredly, given their ages, in French. Pupils skilfully switched between English and Latin to identify accurately subjects and objects in a text. Pupils who are still isolating at home maintain their participation in lessons by means of digital connections.
- 3.8 Pupils develop exceptionally strong mathematical skills as they progress through the school. They apply these skills successfully in other lessons, in extra-curricular activities and in assemblies, where they set mathematical challenges for each other. All pupils enter primary or junior national mathematics challenge competitions every year, with a high proportion gaining gold or silver awards. Pupils in Year 3 have developed secure computational skills, and they employed these to good effect when measuring distances or creating shapes. Pupils in Year 6 built on their understanding of shape and symmetry when they graphically replicated shapes accurately as mirror images. Older pupils carried out increasingly complex algebraic calculations, correctly identifying whether to use linear or non-linear simultaneous equations to solve problems. All pupils are able to attend mathematics clubs to practise problem solving, code breaking and other mathematical techniques. They are thus provided with further opportunities to apply mathematical skills and knowledge to everyday problems. Pupils whose progress slows attend mathematics booster classes, with the desired impact on their performance.
- 3.9 Pupils demonstrate excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In ICT lessons, pupils learn important competencies such as word processing, program development, data interpretation, presentation and display. They use this learning for personal research in other subjects. Pupils learn how to secure their own online safety. In music, pupils enthusiastically used software proficiently to create their own compositions which were well received by others. Pupils learn to debug scripts using appropriate software; as a result, they create safe, informative documents. Pupils who have SEND make particularly good use of software to enhance reading or calculation. Pupils' work seen in books demonstrates how they have used ICT to create stimulating presentations about visits and residential trips, for example, their visit to Pompeii.
- 3.10 Pupils show excellent attitudes towards learning in all year groups and subjects. They participate eagerly in class dialogue and answer teachers' questions accurately. Teachers build effectively on

pupils' answers to probe their thinking even further; as a result, pupils have many opportunities to show how well they have understood a topic. A good example of this is when older pupils demonstrated excellent understanding of health and safety routines in the science laboratory, by identifying risks and setting out how they would mitigate them. Pupils show clear recognition of how they need to improve further because they pay close attention to teachers' incisive feedback on their work, for example, when interpreting the results of a scientific experiment. Pupils work equally well as individuals and in small groups. They collaborate successfully with others to find solutions to problems and to suggest answers, whether discussing types of letters they have written or decoding a familiar acronym. In a very few lessons, pupils lack opportunities for self-directed learning, where they can think and find out things for themselves, because teachers' planning allows little space for pupils to explore and experiment.

- 3.11 Pupils insightfully relate their classroom, club and societies activities to their aspirations for future success in life. They explain how the resilience they demonstrate in board games could help in their chosen careers. All pupils appreciate the excellent range of extra-curricular activities available; parents too recognise the significant contribution such experiences make to their children's overall achievement. Pupils willingly participate in sporting activities, artistic enterprises and the intellectual challenges delivered in chess and other games. Pupils enjoy noteworthy successes at local and national levels, but they speak too of the thrill of participation and the friendships and skills they develop in the different activities. They take pride in their own and other pupils' achievements in competitions, such as winning first prize in a Royal College Young Artists Competition and performing well in the national inter-schools science quiz.
- 3.12 Pupils' enthusiastic appreciation of their school is apparent at all times; they have excellent attitudes towards learning. Pupils respond very well to their teachers' encouragement to work hard and succeed, and most show well-formed, compassionate attitudes towards others. Pupils are highly self-motivated, but they demonstrate acute understanding of the school's rewards and sanctions programmes. They enjoy having their successes recognised by teachers and by their peers. Pupils work together enthusiastically, for example, when composing music for the jazz band. They regularly take on leadership roles, as seen when they advocate for a cause in debates. Pupils know what to do to improve their achievements and readily rise to the challenge to work hard.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils exhibit strong self-belief and are incredibly self-confident. They enjoy having their voices heard in class, in house meetings and at the school council. Occasionally, their natural exuberance gets in the way of learning because, in classes for younger children, teachers do not always quickly curb their chatter or reset boundaries successfully. Pupils are resilient, they understand how to improve performance in academic and leisure settings. Pupils persist until they perfect a technique in art to their own satisfaction, drawing on the work of a variety of artists for inspiration. A number of older pupils readily take on rigorous scholarship examinations exhibiting ambition, determination and confidence in their abilities. Pupils greatly enjoy questioning visitors about their roles in society, using the information gained to make informed choices about the next steps in their educational journeys. Because they are determined to succeed, they are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- 3.15 Pupils make age-appropriate decisions. Pupils work with the librarian to select books and other resources. They have made decisions about types of materials they wish to use in art lessons. Pupils carefully scrutinise the additional clubs and activities available at school, by questioning others in form-tutor time and house meetings, before making choices. Pupils feel confident that they are able to influence decisions about wider school strategy, citing as an example recent changes to the house system to promote friendships across age groups. Pupils demonstrate insight into the lives of others when they make decisions about which charitable and community ventures to support. They decide

on fund-raising strategies and how their time and money will be used to improve lives. Pupils make informed decisions about environmental improvement, most recently using recycled materials to create seating spaces in the outside square.

- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate deep appreciation of non-material aspects of life alongside a sound recognition of their own spiritual and philosophical development. They understand the school's core values and use them as guides when considering what is the right way to behave in different situations. Younger pupils contribute to wall displays about those values, including compassion and service. Older pupils articulate strong opinions in class debates about people's private lives remaining private, but they listen respectfully to forcefully expressed opposing views. Pupils are respectful and dignified when attending church. They listen to the choir and participate willingly in prayer and response. Pupils say that their understanding of the religious beliefs of others is greatly enhanced as a result of what they learn in school and the friendships they develop.
- 3.17 Pupils are almost always kind and respectful. They follow the school rules because they understand them and have contributed to their construction; for example, they understand why mobile phones are not permitted in school. They enjoy gaining awards and rewards for achievements in class and outside, and they celebrate the successes of their classmates. Very occasionally, pupils are disrespectful, for example, laughing when someone is slow to answer. All pupils appreciate the spirit of teamwork which prevails, whether through collaboration in classwork or taking care of each other in challenging activities such as climbing. Pupils demonstrate acute, age-appropriate understanding of the rules and values which govern life in modern Britain. They thoughtfully contrast what they read in historical novels with what they consider acceptable today and offer considered opinions on why values have changed. They comment on why they prefer modern lifestyles and modes of behaviour.
- 3.18 Pupils' social development and their collaboration skills are particular strengths of the school. Each year, pupils reflect on co-operation and sharing during organised team-building days. As a result, pupils regularly and routinely work together in class to create shared solutions through discussion, hypothesising, recording and forming conclusions. They bring these same approaches to the varied activities they engage in in the extra-curricular activities. A particularly good example is seen in the work that goes into editing and distributing their own lively and informative school magazine. Each member of the team understands his role and performs it in a way so that the entire enterprise runs smoothly. Pupils make the most of opportunities for self-organisation, they display conspicuously high levels of self-reliance. Pupils especially value the friendships they make and retain through the school's house system. Most contributed with equal force to a house discussion on 'the best moment of the year so far', whatever their age.
- 3.19 Pupils make very significant and well-received contributions to school life and to others in the wider community. In school, pupils take on responsible roles as prefects, school council members and 'doctors' – their term for aiding others to improve achievement. Pupils have turned an area of the school grounds into a vegetable garden, whose produce is sold to raise funds which are reinvested in the environment or donated to the charities they support. Pupils work alongside their peers in other schools, helping them to make better progress in reading. Pupils have developed meaningful friendships with residents of a local community home, which they managed to maintain by innovative means during COVID lockdowns. Pupils have used their understanding of lifestyles of people in other parts of the world to raise funds for scarce resources. They displayed enterprise and good business acumen when raising large sums of money to establish a library on an island in the Philippines.
- 3.20 Pupils express great pride in the diverse community which makes up the school. Almost all pupils and their parents agree that everyone gets on very well together and that they respect each other's traditions and values. For example, a Muslim pupil said that teachers and his friends support him to cope with fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Pupils enjoy listening to and questioning their many visitors when they describe their beliefs and lifestyles. Pupils have a sharp understanding of current affairs, well-illustrated by the lively debates in which aspects of Black Lives Matter were discussed, including discussion of 'taking the knee' before a school football match. Further evidence

of pupils' eagerness to understand other traditions can be seen in the novels and poetry they have helped to choose for the library.

- 3.21 Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and to keep healthy. Pupils learn about balanced diets in lessons and the large majority make healthy choices at lunch and snack times. Their understanding of topical news stories was noted in a PSHE lesson in Year 5, where pupils offered their own well-thought-through definitions of 'autonomy' and 'consent'. Pupils exhibit clear understanding of how to stay safe in a range of situations, and they say that they know who can help them if they feel worried or have concerns about others. When appropriate, pupils make effective use of 'worry boxes'; they can if they so wish, refer themselves to the school counsellor.

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 a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and form meetings, chapel and assemblies. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Robert Pugh	Reporting inspector
Mrs Di Dutton	Compliance team inspector and team inspector (Former head, independent school)
Mrs Amanda Childs	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)