

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 03000 130311
michael.wilshaw@ofsted.gov.uk



Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

26 November 2014

Mr Simon Bennett
Chief Inspector
School Inspection Service
Tolbury House
St. Catherines Hill
Bruton
Somerset
BA10 0DG

Dear Chief Inspector

Annual report on the quality of the inspections and reports by the School Inspection Service 2013/14

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your inspectors for their courtesy, cooperation and professionalism during the year. This has been very helpful in enabling Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to monitor the work of the School Inspection Service efficiently. I should also be grateful if you would extend my thanks to those schools which we have visited.

Further to Ofsted's monitoring, I have pleasure in sending you a copy of the annual report letter that I have sent to the Secretary of State today. A copy of the annual report letter will also be published on Ofsted's website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Wilshaw'.

Sir Michael Wilshaw

Annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the School Inspection Service 2013/14

Context

The School Inspection Service (SIS) is approved by the Department for Education (DfE) under section 162A (1) (b) of the Education Act 2002, as inserted, to inspect registered independent schools that are affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, schools accredited as members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship and those schools belonging to the Cognita Group that are not members of the Independent Schools Council and its constituent associations. Since November 2013, SIS has also been approved to conduct inspections of registered early years provision where this forms part of integrated provision in schools belonging to the Cognita Group or the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship.

Ofsted monitors the work of SIS at the request of the DfE, which is the registration authority for independent schools. Her Majesty's Inspectors monitor SIS inspections and review its inspection evidence bases and published reports.

During the academic year 2013/14, SIS carried out 26 inspections. Her Majesty's Inspectors monitored two on-site inspections and reviewed three evidence bases and one inspection report. One of the on-site inspections monitored was an unannounced emergency inspection.

Regular meetings held during the year between Ofsted, SIS and the DfE included discussions about inspection development, the monitoring of SIS inspections and reporting and regulatory changes.

Summary of findings

The quality of the inspectorate's work continues to be strong. The inspectorate has addressed aspects of practice that were identified for improvement in the previous year's monitoring report. SIS inspections are well-led and thorough, with evidence bases that are secure and underpinned by the independent school standards.

Her Majesty's Inspectors monitored the inspections of two Steiner schools. One of these was an emergency inspection to monitor a school's progress towards meeting specific independent school standards following a safeguarding incident the previous year. The quality of both inspections was judged to be good.

The three evidence bases (one Focus Learning Trust, one Cognita Group and one Steiner Waldorf) and one report (Cognita Group) reviewed by Her Majesty's Inspectors were also judged to be of good quality and met the standards agreed with the DfE.

Quality of inspections monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectors

Reporting inspectors led and prepared their inspection teams well. They were thorough in their additional team briefings and checking of inspectors' work during inspections.

A clear focus on the independent school standards was maintained throughout inspections. Schools' child protection and safeguarding procedures were checked rigorously against the independent school standards. School leaders praised the positive relationships that the inspection teams built with staff and pupils.

Quality of evidence bases reviewed by Her Majesty's Inspectors

Inspectors' judgements on provision and achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs were well evidenced. This evidence is an aspect that has improved after being identified for development in the previous year's monitoring report.

Lead inspectors effectively recorded inspection team meetings, illustrating evidence of discussions around the key issues.

Inspectors noted schools' regulatory compliance with the appropriate emphasis on child protection and safeguarding. Reporting inspectors recorded their quality assurance of inspection teams' evidence well.

The evidence bases linked clearly to the final report, including how the school complied with the independent school standards.

In one evidence base, inspectors collected limited information about how the school ensured that pupils were aware of how to be safe on the internet and when using electronic communication devices.

Quality of the report reviewed by Her Majesty's Inspectors

The report provided a clear and detailed picture of the school, including how it meets the independent school standards. The improvements the school has made since the previous inspection were explained well. The provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs was also well recorded.

Judgements were consistent throughout the report and the main findings provided an accurate summary. The reader is reassured about the school's arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe, including compliance with the safeguarding regulations.

The report had two minor weaknesses. It did not specifically refer to the most able students. Also, it made some unclear judgements about the Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

Priorities for further improvement

Ofsted recommends that SIS ensures that inspectors gather evidence and report more thoroughly on e-safety and pupils' understanding of how to stay safe when using technology.