



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

MERCHANT TAYLORS' GIRLS' SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Merchant Taylors' Girls' School

Full Name of School	Merchant Taylors' Girls' School		
DfE Number	343/6130		
Registered Charity Number	1125485		
Address	Merchant Taylors' Girls' School Crosby Liverpool Merseyside L23 5SP		
Telephone Number	0151 9243140		
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Email Address	office@mtgs.co.uk		
Head	Mrs Louise Robinson		
Chair of Governors	Mr Leo Coligan		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	866		
Gender of Pupils	Ages 3-7:	Mixed (251 girls; 70 boys)	
	Ages 7-18:	Girls	
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	51	5-11: 270
	11-18:	545	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	866	
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Julie Yardley		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	29 Mar 2011 to 30 Mar 2011		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in February 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Situated in Crosby, Liverpool in a residential area on the edge of the town, Merchant Taylors' Girls' School was founded in 1888 by John Harrison, a member of the ancient guild of Merchant Taylors. Governance of the four schools in the Merchant Taylors' group is by a single board of governors. The school comprises the senior department and a separate building, Stanfield, for the junior pupils and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It aims to enable pupils to realise their full academic and personal potential in a caring environment where initiative, independence and self-discipline can thrive. Since its previous inspection the accommodation has undergone extensive refurbishment and a number of specialist teachers have been appointed.
- 1.2 At the time of inspection, 866 pupils were on the roll. Of these, 321 between the ages of 3 and 11, including 70 boys, were educated in Stanfield. Of the rest, 417 girls were between the ages of 11 and 16, and 128 attended the sixth form. The ability profile of pupils in the junior school is above the national average, as is that of the senior school and sixth form. The school takes pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. Those from minority ethnic backgrounds make up fifteen per cent of the school population. Of 29 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), five receive language support from the school. The school provides support for the 57 pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).
- 1.3 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The overall achievements of the pupils are excellent. From the EYFS onwards, pupils are high achievers. They receive an excellent education in line with the school's aim to enable all pupils to realise their academic and personal potential.
- 2.2 The pupils are articulate, confident and keen to learn. From the very early stages, they write creatively expressing their ideas clearly and concisely. They are good listeners both to their teacher and to each other. A good understanding of mathematics is intelligently applied to problem solving and pupils demonstrate a good capacity for logical thought. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used competently for research, presentation and in design projects. Physical skills are well developed and pupils enjoy many individual and team successes in county and national competitions. Pupils achieve a steady stream of scholarships and success in obtaining places in higher education.
- 2.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The school does not enter pupils for National Curriculum tests in Years 2 or 6, but the results of standardised tests in English indicate achievement higher than national norms. Results at GCSE and A level have been far above and above the national averages for girls in maintained schools respectively, and similar to those for girls in maintained selective schools. At all levels of the school, in work seen and in lessons, pupils make excellent progress, which is well above that expected for pupils of similar ability nationally. The needs of able, gifted and talented (AGT) pupils are well met by the planning of particular tasks to provide suitable challenge. However, this good practice is not widespread in the planning of appropriate work to support pupils with LDD, SEN and EAL.
- 2.4 Pupils display excellent attitudes to learning. They enjoy their work and remain focused when working on their own. In group work, pupils collaborate well, encourage each other and are quick to praise the achievements of others. In open-ended investigations, for example a Year 6 class working on the Enigma Code, pupils show initiative and propose original methods of approach.
- 2.5 The broad curriculum is enriched by the inclusion of a number of subjects; for example, Mandarin, psychology, classical civilisation and Latin, together with creative and expressive subjects, are well represented. In the junior school, enrichment is provided through exercises in problem solving and special awareness; pupils also have the opportunity to join Thinking Skills club.
- 2.6 The excellent range of extra-curricular activities, through which pupils develop their initiative and confidence, benefits from very constructive links with the community. Pupils came second in the national biathlon finals at Crystal Palace, the choir sang the Mass for Children by John Rutter in the cathedral and art students completed a sculpture for the Aintree NHS Trust's 'Year of the Environment'.
- 2.7 Their success in academic work, sport and the arts owes much to the imaginative approach adopted by high quality teaching. Teachers know their pupils well and in the best planning provide appropriate work for all abilities. A group has been set up to challenge able and gifted pupils, for example through enrichment activities such

as debates and presentations by visiting speakers. The evidence from work scrutiny and the small sample of lessons observed shows that the inclusion of opportunities for independent learning has improved since the previous inspection, but is not yet secure in all lesson planning. The sharing of this good practice is still developing across the curriculum. In work seen, marking was of good quality overall. However, the inclusion of comments to show how work may be improved has yet to become routine in all subjects.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.8 Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent personal development. Their well-developed spiritual awareness is demonstrated in their appreciation of the arts and their impressive performances and displays of their work. Many lessons and assemblies give pupils an opportunity for quiet reflection and time to consider the beauty of the natural world. The eco-council is proud to have earned the Green Flag award.
- 2.9 In line with the school's aim to provide for the development of a clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong, pupils show respect for others and for the rules which govern their own environment and that in society at large.
- 2.10 Pupils are socially at ease with their peers and with the adults who care for them. A real concern for those less fortunate than themselves is demonstrated through their enthusiastic fundraising for charity. From an early age they show marked responsibility for their own actions and are willing to take on extra duties, such as prefects and monitors within the reinstated house system, for the benefit of the school.
- 2.11 Pupils demonstrate outstanding tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity. Their development is underpinned by theme days such as Chinese New Year and those marking festivals in a variety of faiths. A reading of a poem by an author from the Czech Republic was followed by a lively debate by Year 4 pupils who considered how his experiences had affected the content of his work.
- 2.12 The school's excellent provision for pastoral care reflects its aim to create a happy and caring environment in which pupils can develop a sense of self worth. In their questionnaire returns, pupils appreciated the care they received and of knowing there was always someone to whom they could turn with problems.
- 2.13 The excellent citizenship module in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme enables pupils to understand public institutions and services. Pupils are encouraged to embrace a healthy lifestyle and they receive good sex education.
- 2.14 The anti-bullying and safeguarding policies fully comply with regulations and are understood by members of the school community and by parents. Appropriate child protection training has been undertaken by all staff. Pupils are well supervised. Medical and first aid procedures are clear and each site has a medical room for sick pupils. Twenty-seven staff are fully trained in first aid, five at the higher level. All required risk assessments are in place, including those for school trips. Fire officers have checked the policy and fire systems are checked weekly by the trained building manager who maintains meticulous records of fire practices. Admissions procedures and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.15 The school benefits from excellent governance. Members of the board frequently visit and strongly support the aims of the school to support the development of initiative, confidence, independence and self-discipline. The governing body has effective arrangements to enable them to have an oversight of day-to-day events.
- 2.16 The executive board, comprising the four heads of the schools in the group, develops a shared approach to the education of young people well equipped to meet the challenges of adult life. The chair of governors meets with them regularly in the role of a critical friend, balancing the need for challenge and support. New appointments have widened the expertise available and led to the very effective management of standards, financial planning and accommodation.
- 2.17 The board is effective in overseeing welfare, health and safety and in maintaining a high quality of resources and staffing. All policies are reviewed regularly and comply with regulatory requirements. Named governors are trained in health and safety and child protection matters. The school development plan has relevant objectives to ensure continued improvement of the provision provided for the pupils' academic and personal development.
- 2.18 The school, including the EYFS, is led strongly by members of senior management who are committed to the vision expressed by their excellent leadership. The highly regarded strategy day provides quality time for the review and updating of a very detailed and visionary school development plan.
- 2.19 Recent initiatives include the introduction of a professional development strategy supported by appraisal of staff and lesson observations. Heads of department and subject co-ordinators have been trained in monitoring and evaluating performance, and evidence of improvements in departmental management was seen during this inspection.
- 2.20 Staff throughout the school are highly qualified and very skilled. Rigorous checks are made for all appointments, both teaching and administrative, and these are appropriately recorded in the well-maintained central register. The induction of new staff is given strong emphasis and all staff benefit from training appropriate to their roles.
- 2.21 Extensive refurbishment of the premises and accommodation has established good provision for teaching and recreation. Access for those with learning and physical disabilities has been improved and is under constant review. Regular inspections have ensured that the buildings and grounds provide a safe and secure environment.
- 2.22 The school maintains close and very effective links with parents, ably supported by the newsletters from the parents' association, the parental website and handbook. In their pre-inspection questionnaires, parents expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the quality of education their children received, their progress and the worthwhile attitudes and values they developed. A small number felt dissatisfaction with the information regarding their children's progress and that complaints were not handled well. However, the school reports inspected were comprehensive and detailed, and inspectors found that complaints were handled properly. The parents website and handbook includes all the required policies and supplies detailed information regarding the complaints procedure which complies with requirements.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Raise the quality of marking to the standard of the best and include guidance on ways in which pupils can improve their work.
 2. Reflect the good progress made in providing for able, gifted and talented pupils by including suitable work for all ability needs in all lesson planning.
 3. Further develop assessment procedures in the EYFS by including the next steps in learning.
 4. Further develop links with feeder nurseries.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding. All children respond to this carefully planned environment with a growing awareness of their own individual talents and interests and by making rapid progress in their learning. Good links are maintained with relevant external agencies. The head of EYFS sets clear direction for development within the setting, with a strong focus on achievement and continuing to strive to develop the best of practice.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Leadership and management are outstanding with an excellent understanding of the provision's strengths and areas for development. Policies and procedures for equality and diversity are regularly reviewed to maintain effective improvement. Children are safeguarded by well-trained staff with an excellent understanding of all procedures. Thorough appointment checks ensure that all adults are suitable to work with children. Effective use is made of good resources. Activities, equipment and surroundings are rigorously assessed to eliminate risk and medical provision is of a high standard. Excellent links are maintained with parents who expressed overwhelmingly appreciation of the warm and friendly atmosphere and good support given to their children.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The quality of provision is outstanding and the children's welfare is well supported. Children learn and develop exceptionally well through a range of carefully planned activities both indoors and out. Each child's progress is regularly noted and used to build a 'learning journey' record shared with parents and covering the requirements of the EYFS profile. This tracking of children extends to after-school care where the enthusiastic leader continues the 'learning journey' of each child. A well-judged balance is maintained between adult-led and child-initiated activities, and children work independently with sustained interest. Adults support children well, promote their welfare and guide them towards independence. The small outdoor area has been developed extremely well to provide a range of activities covering all six areas of learning. For example, children tested their problem-solving skills devising ramps for boarding their 'aeroplane' made from large construction equipment. Planning using themes such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar' involves all staff in a way that maintains children's interest and enthusiasm. Children with additional needs, including those with EAL, are identified and well supported. Links are being forged with feeder nurseries to give children the best possible start in the school.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 The outcomes for children are outstanding. The majority of children reach, and some exceed, the early learning goals at the end of the EYFS. They recognise and use numbers up to ten and show good phonic awareness. They are eager to contribute and listen to each other's views, and respond well to the high expectations of adults. They are physically active in play and more structured activities such as physical education and movement, responding creatively to music. Children are happy and clearly enjoy their learning. They are inquisitive, enthusiastic and self-motivated, relating extremely well to one another and to adults. Behaviour is exemplary. Children are extremely competent in the use of ICT in both teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Their personal development is excellent. Children have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and personal safety and are aware of dangers, such as when using knives. Visitors include a Sefton road safety officer to discuss road safety.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a small sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior 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 registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Patricia Cullen	Reporting Inspector
Miss Mary Burridge	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Dr Valerie Anderson	Former Head of Department, GSA school
Ms Philippa Thompson	Former Head, GSA school
Mrs Ann Richards	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector