



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Laxton Junior School

June 2022

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School's Details

School College	Laxton Junior School			
DfE number	940/6051			
Registered charity number	309921			
Address	East Road Oundle Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE8 4BX			
Telephone number	01832 277275			
Email address	info@laxtonjunior.org.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Sam Robertson			
Chair of governors	Mr Robert Ringrose			
Chair of Laxton subcommittee	Mrs Debbie McGregor			
Age range	4 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	259			
	EYFS	36	Juniors	223
Inspection dates	14 to 17 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Laxton Junior School is an independent co-educational day school. The school is an integral part of The Corporation of Oundle School, which was founded in 1556. Laxton Junior School was founded in 1973 and moved to its current site in 2002. The Corporation of Oundle School is a charitable trust, and both Laxton Junior School and Oundle School are administered by the same governing body. The Laxton Junior School sub-committee of the governing body advises and supports the head.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide a high quality and inclusive education with children's happiness at the heart of its approach. The school aspires to ensure that the culture of the school is built upon its core values of love of learning, care, opportunity, community and quality. Through this, the school endeavours to support children to become kind and respectful, confident and resilient, and in doing so develop the qualities necessary to succeed and thrive in all aspects of their future lives.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a wide catchment area. Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability of pupils is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 38 children with special educational needs or disability including dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive additional support or intervention; no pupil has an educational, health and care plan. English is an additional language for nine pupils, but no further support is required. The curriculum is modified for those pupils identified by the school as being the most able in its population.

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. 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 (EYFS) statutory framework. 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 FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED 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 standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; 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 standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 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. 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.
- 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 have outstanding knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils have excellent study skills for their ages supported by the questioning techniques encouraging hypothesis and analysis, which are a constituent part of many lessons.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning in response to the school's high expectations for pupil engagement, and active involvement.
- Pupils are outstanding communicators, competently using sophisticated vocabulary for their age when both speaking and writing.

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

- Pupils have excellent social skills, collaborating exceptionally effectively to achieve shared goals.
- Pupils are outstanding decision-makers, taking advantage of the many opportunities to make appropriate choices in their learning.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of self-confidence and self-discipline.
- Pupils make excellent contributions to others in their school and local community in response to the schools focus on kindness and caring.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of mental health within a healthy lifestyle.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might consider the following improvement.

- Enable pupils to extend their learning through increased opportunities to apply their excellent mathematical, scientific and technological skills 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 and abilities demonstrate outstanding knowledge and skills across all areas of the curriculum. This confirms the school's successful fulfilment of its aim to provide a high quality and inclusive education with children's happiness at the heart of its approach. Children in the EYFS, whilst exempt from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS curriculum, demonstrate

excellent understanding of the world around them. They accurately named the different parts of a bumble bee and confidently explained the importance of bees to humans. Pupils demonstrate high levels of creativity, as seen in Year 4 pupils' skilful interpretations of the work of the artist Hokusai, recreating his paintings in different media. Pupils across the school demonstrate excellent musicality, playing stringed instruments accurately from an early age, with excellent rhythm and tone. Older pupils demonstrate their excellent understanding of historical events explaining what life was like for Jewish people in the events leading to the Holocaust. They skilfully interpret information from a range of artifacts and by interviewing a visiting speaker. Pupils accurately and expertly combined their maths and technology skills in science, to investigate the potential trajectory of missiles (sweets) needed to destroy a 'candy' castle. Able pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding of the difference between kinetic and potential energy, at a level well above that expected for their age. Older pupils used a wide range of skills across subject areas and were highly enthused by their investigation into the use of palm oil, for a science and technology fair. Pupils' outstanding understanding and application of skills are enabled by access to specialist facilities and equipment, ensured by the school's governance, and because of their teachers' high level of subject knowledge. A small number of pupils felt that lessons were not interesting, and some felt they were not sufficiently challenged. Inspectors did not find evidence to support this. However, they agreed with pupils' views that their enjoyment and academic achievements could be further enhanced by further opportunities to utilise their excellent scientific, technological and mathematical skills across the wider school curriculum. Pupils' excellent physical skills benefit from specialist facilities and encouraging feedback. Older pupils made swift progress in a swimming lesson, developing their skills in both backstroke and front crawl.

- 3.6 Pupils of all abilities make excellent progress relative to their starting points by the time they leave the school. This was confirmed by observations of pupils' work in books, in observations of lessons and through analysis of the school's own assessment data. Many pupils achieve attainment results in standardised tests well above the average for pupils taking the same test nationally. A small number of parents who responded to the questionnaire felt their children's educational needs were not being met. Inspection evidence did not support this view, finding that pupils with SEND make rapid progress in line with their peers and those identified as able are suitably challenged. This is because of the suitable individual support that they all receive, effectively utilising assessment data. Pupils are academically well prepared for entry to their future schools. A small minority of children receive sport, music, or academic scholarships and almost all gain places at their first-choice selective independent school or local grammar schools.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages have excellent study skills, particularly the ability to hypothesise, because of the many opportunities they are given to think for themselves and be active participants in finding things out. This is a result of the school's belief that the curriculum should be influenced positively and constantly by the individual learners at its centre. School leaders place a deliberate focus on this teaching style, and almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire felt the school helped their children to develop learning skills they will need for later life. Children in the EYFS successfully used a range of information to generate and answer questions about minibeasts. Year 4 pupils showed excellent analytical skills making links between the prophecy of *Luke 24* and C.S Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, drawing the comparison of Jesus dying for his disciples and Aslan dying to save Edmund. Older pupils thoroughly enjoyed investigating the events behind the death of Romeo and Juliet, justifying their opinions of which character was primarily responsible for the tragedy. Younger pupils used their knowledge of the fire triangle to hypothesise about the best structure for building a fire, and then successfully put this into practice.
- 3.8 Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and are extremely willing to actively engage in discussion and tasks. This is because of the very many opportunities they are given to be active learners, working collaboratively with partners and small groups, in almost all lessons. Pupils quickly settled to collaborate carefully and successfully when building a catapult because they were excited by the challenge posed. Children in the EYFS confidently choose activities which interest them, working with considerable independence playing with small world equipment or in role play. Older pupils self-select

the medium they will use to complete homework. Pupils of different ages in the choir, collaborated successfully to make significant progress in learning songs for their concert. Pupils work with considerable focus to support one another in 'polishing' their work, so achieving success in their writing at an extremely high level for their age.

- 3.9 Pupils are outstanding communicators. Their language skills are highly developed because of the focus on discussion and the emphasis teachers place on finding 'new' and 'better' words when pupils are self-editing their writing. Children in the EYFS successfully use available resources to mark make and write for a wide variety of different purposes, and they confidently shared their ideas in role play at a 'salon'. Younger pupils read aloud extremely confidently, at levels which exceed age expectations. The most able decode unfamiliar words such as *valuable* and *efficiently*, successfully applying their excellent phonic knowledge. They use sophisticated vocabulary for their age and accurate journalistic techniques, such as when describing the demise of Pompei in a newspaper article. Older pupils used high-level writing skills to engender empathy in the reader for the plight of suffragettes, through their choice of vocabulary and sentence construction. They demonstrated excellent use of skimming and scanning techniques to obtain salient facts about mountain ranges quickly and efficiently. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of subject specific vocabulary, such as when using their understanding of French to converse in everyday language in shop roleplay. Older pupils' strong understanding of Latin enhances their awareness of the derivation of English words.
- 3.10 Pupils are excellent mathematicians. They make excellent progress over time because of well-structured lessons which build mathematical knowledge and skills at an appropriate pace. Those who learn at a slower pace are well supported in small groups, and more able pupils attain very highly for their age. They confidently work in groups on independent mathematical investigations to explore the relationships between decimal numbers, identifying patterns in number. EYFS children understand how to use mathematics to solve problems, successfully working out how many cups of water it would take to fill another container, with the most able understanding the concept of capacity. Older pupils made rapid progress in a lesson furthering their knowledge of angles. They confidently explained their reasoning to find out the value of unknown angles and used mathematical equipment accurately when doing so. Pupils successfully applied their mathematical knowledge in science investigations, when measuring the speed of a pendulum swing and in humanities when displaying questionnaire results in charts and graphs.
- 3.11 Pupils have excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills and high levels of understanding of ICT as an effective learning tool. This is because of the ready availability of necessary resources. Children in the EYFS use simple coding programs effectively to move a character on the screen. They demonstrate excellent progress in understanding coding, from using their class programmable toys. Older pupils use the internet successfully to research, and accurately use various presentation applications. They have excellent word processing and developing touch-typing skills and use these effectively across the curriculum. Pupils used different fonts and colour schemes effectively when creating electronic 'books' ensuring these were engaging and aesthetically pleasing. Pupils accurately use formulae in spreadsheets to calculate totals and averages. Older pupils use an application tool effectively, to share ideas for improving their writing.
- 3.12 Pupils achieve high levels of individual and group success in a wide variety of disciplines. Many pupils achieve excellent results in their graded music exams. A few pupils achieve individual and team success in IAPS sporting events, competing in swimming and athletics. Some individuals achieved success in local show jumping competitions, poetry and chess competitions and cross-country or gymnastics events. A few individuals have been selected to represent their county in cricket or tennis, to play for local football academies or to play for the national children's orchestra.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils work extremely effectively with others, with almost all parents stating that the school helps their children build strong social skills. This is because of the very many opportunities for, and the strong focus on, collaborative learning, encouraged by the school leadership. Almost all lessons observed involved pupils collaborating successfully in paired or group learning activities. Pupils enjoy working in their houses from Reception to Year 6, whether competing against one another in football or singing, or to sharing activities in house events. Younger pupils co-operated in pairs to see if they could 'make a rainbow', with considerable independence for their age, during a science investigation on the solubility of different colour pens and pencils. Younger pupils created an excellent strings ensemble who joyfully performed to parents with a high degree of musical skill for their age. Older pupils work collectively and enjoy writing and performing their own songs in a band. Pupils involved in the school newspaper club collaborate effectively to produce a monthly newspaper. Pupils' highly developed social skills are underpinned by the fact that they feel school is a safe and welcoming environment, where they can have fun learning together in their supportive community.
- 3.15 Pupils are excellent decision makers, both academically and in terms of understanding how decisions impact on their own well-being. In discussion, older pupils clearly articulated the importance of thinking twice before you speak. They explained how they are taught to pause and take a deep breath. Pupils acquire a mature wisdom through their deeply reflective approach to their own and others' behaviour. Pupils explained how making the right choices made them a better person, such as when making sensitive choices of friends to help them in their dramatization of Roman Britain. This awareness is supported by the school's emphasis on restorative justice and the strong core values which underpin all aspects of school life. These values are well known and confidently quoted by the pupils. Pupils described how they want to put in more effort and take longer to work out answers carefully, as they know this will be a vital skill for learning in the future. They are proud of their school and want to do well and play an active part in it. They understand that their choices and decisions can benefit all, such as the democratic decision to choose to have 'Football free Friday'.
- 3.16 Pupils exhibit high levels of self-understanding. Almost all parents who answered the questionnaire felt that the school helps their child to be confident and independent. Pupils show remarkable self-discipline when applying the school marking policy to improve their work with the 'polishing pen'. School leaders ensure that its clear policies are followed, so that pupils feel confident in familiar routines and practices. Pupils demonstrated excellent self-knowledge and confidence which enabled them to become 'expert teachers' for their classmates when learning about mountain ranges. This was because they were given clear success criteria for the task against which to check their own progress. Pupils explained that they have high levels of self-confidence and are prepared to speak and perform in front of large groups of adults. They know they can face challenges head on because they have the support of their peers and teachers. They are given very many opportunities to build confidence and resilience, and in doing so meet the school's aim to develop in pupils the qualities necessary to succeed and thrive in all aspects of their future lives.
- 3.17 Pupils make outstanding contributions to their own and the wider local community. Pupils are enabled to follow their passions, express their opinions and know that these are valued by school leaders. The school council proposed that the house Christmas trees should be donated to care homes after school term. Members also met with the catering team to propose a reduction in the use of palm oil products. The termly community concert continues to be a pupil-led event, originally established as a result of a pupil-initiated idea. Digital leaders wrote the online safety charter and take a lead in ensuring its application. The eco team worked with the school domestic team to improve approaches to recycling and encourage everyone to switch off lights. The head boy and girl represented the school in laying a wreath at the community memorial and play leaders from Year 5 ensure all have the chance to be included in games at break time. Buddy up club enables older pupils to act as excellent role models for younger ones and to enjoy one another's company. Collaborative art projects enhance the school

environment such as the 'coffee pod creature' created using the techniques of pointillism. Each house raises a large amount of money for their pupil-chosen local, national or international charities, often through child-initiated activities.

- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of the importance of being healthy, most parents agreeing that the school helps their children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are physically active because of the varied sports provision within the curriculum and the excellent facilities for play and outdoor learning. The activities of the school council together with the school curriculum help pupils to understand the importance of eating healthily, and how to make sensible choices from the wide variety of options at lunch time. Pupils understand how to be safe in a digital environment, supported effectively by the curriculum and the efforts of pupil digital leaders in promoting online safety. The pupils have an outstanding understanding of the importance of mental health because of the high level of importance placed on mental well-being by the school leadership team and the provision the school makes in a variety of ways to support this. Many staff run well-being sessions, and pupils demonstrate great maturity in self-regulation. They know how to calm themselves and relax and understand the importance of talking about their feelings and worries. The school supports this high level of self-awareness, through the provision of the quiet reflection room 'the oasis', which the pupils requested.
- 3.19 Pupils have an excellent understanding of what is right and wrong, learning how to regulate their behaviour and to take responsibility because of the strong support from the school pastoral systems and leadership. Children in EYFS respect rules and work very sensibly in free-flow groups, co-operating with one another without the need for close adult presence. Class charters devised together set clear boundaries. Pupils explained how these rules are respected and encourage them to be kind and think about others around them. Pupils rationalise that the school's emphasis on values and the overt celebration of those who espouse those values, helps them to develop a strong moral compass and sense of duty of care for others. Pupils recognise how to improve their behaviour and are keen to then be advocates in their community, setting a good example for others in recompense, such as when writing a charter for good minibus behaviour.
- 3.20 Pupils have a strong appreciation for the diversity of cultures represented in the school and local community. Pupils happily share their family traditions, safe in the knowledge that their peers will be interested and respectful. Pupils sensitively reflect on what life lessons can be learnt from the major world faiths, which they learn about through the school curriculum, saying it teaches them to respect the choices and opinions of others. Pupils are highly appreciative of the diversity of British culture, through visiting many different centres of worship in the community, because of the active promotion of tolerance through the assembly program and through the resources and reading books used throughout the curriculum which celebrate and promote all forms of diversity.
- 3.21 Pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of the importance of the non-material aspects of life. They reflect maturely on questions such as how do you find happiness or what makes you peaceful? Pupils showed an excellent understanding of the meaning of love, freedom, peace, joy and hope, in their work on abstract nouns, whilst preparing their material to write a motivational speech. Much of the deep appreciation pupils show for their natural world is developed through the very many opportunities they have to learn and interact with it. Pupils enthusiastically described the fun they have in the woodland garden on outdoor learning days or on the many trips and activities that supplement the school curriculum. They walk in the Peak District and marvel at the view or enjoy the serenity of water when paddleboarding and canoeing. Younger pupils reflected on the importance of looking after the world that provides for them. Older pupils completed poignant poems on the effect of man's inhumanity and collaborated on a group prayer reflecting on the impact of war and poverty and giving thanks for peace and their friends.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions 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 meetings. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Vivien Sergeant	Reporting inspector
Mrs Susan Clifford	Compliance team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Mr David Brown	Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mrs Sarah Hollingsworth	Team inspector (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school)