

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report** 

**Princethorpe College** 

April 2022

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School	Princethorpe College
DfE number	937/6084
Registered charity number	1087124
Address	Princethorpe College Leamington Road Princethorpe Rugby Warwickshire CV23 9PX
Telephone number	01926 634200
Email address	post@princethorpe.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Ed Hester
Chair of governors	Mrs Elizabeth Griffin
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils on roll	932
	Seniors 690 Sixth Form 24
Inspection dates	26 to 29 April 2022

# School's Details

## 1. Background Information

#### About the school

- 1.1 Princethorpe College is an independent co-educational, Catholic day school. It was established in 1966 by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, initially as a boarding and day school for male pupils and has expanded over the years into its current form.
- 1.2 The school is the senior school of the Princethorpe Foundation, which is responsible also for two preparatory schools and a nursery. The Foundation is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The directors of the company are the trustees, who have overall responsibility for the Foundation and are guardians of the Foundation's Christian ethos.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, there has been an ongoing programme of building new facilities to support teaching and learning.
- 1.4 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

1.5 The school aims to prepare its pupils to be positive and active members of a diverse society, being generous of spirit in serving others. It aspires for them to achieve their academic potential, discover their talents and to lead happy and fulfilled lives. The school seeks to give pupils a deep understanding of the core values needed to build happy and healthy relationships.

#### About the pupils

1.6 Pupils come from a wide geographical area of villages and towns. Nationally standardised data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is broadly average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 169 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia, visual and hearing impairment and other conditions. Specialist help is available for those who require it. There are three pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school modifies the curriculum for those pupils it identifies as being the most able in the school's 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. 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 <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> <u>Regulations 2014</u>.

### **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 GCSE and A-level results in the years 2018 to 2021 confirm 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 and sex education, 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.
- 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. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

School name	National Curriculum name
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent
  - Pupils' achievements are excellent both within the classroom and in their extra-curricular activities.
  - Pupils are very focused in their lessons and display an excellent attitude towards their work.
  - Pupils communicate their ideas very effectively, both in discussion and in their written work, reflecting a strong, creative approach to learning.
  - Pupils demonstrate a strong level of knowledge in their lessons and make excellent use of this in the work they produce.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
  - Pupils exhibit a confident understanding of themselves.
  - Pupils have an excellent and compassionate awareness of the wider community and work hard to support those in need.
  - Pupils work together effectively on a range of projects outside of the classroom to achieve their common objectives.
  - Pupils display an excellent level of moral responsibility and respect the needs and rights of others around them.

### Recommendations

The school should make the following improvements.

- Ensure that all pupils always achieve their full potential through consistent opportunities to be active participants in their learning.
- Enable pupils in younger years to develop their leadership skills further.

### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.3 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.4 Pupils at the school achieve a high level of results, exceeding the predictions from standardised assessments at every level. At A level during the years 2018 to 2019, the average percentage of grades at A\*/A was 33%. At GCSE in the same period, 47% of grades were at 9 to 7. Pupils with SEND also achieve well above expectations and are fully in line with the main cohort. Pupils' results in these years are significantly higher than national figures at both GCSE and A level. The results from centre-assessed and teacher-assessed grading in 2020 and 2021 indicate that these are in line with previous performance. Many pupils in the sixth form also undertake the Educational Project Qualification (EPQ), with 80% of pupils achieving grades at A\* to B, further extending their expertise and knowledge. The vast majority of the many Year 13 leavers choosing to proceed to university achieve places at their first choice of places at competitive institutions. This strong achievement in public examination reflects the excellent progress made by pupils through the younger years.
- 3.5 Pupils display strong levels of knowledge in the classroom and are able to make effective use of their previous work in new situations. All pupils show knowledge and skills that are at least appropriate for their age group with some exhibiting skills much higher than peers of equivalent age. They can make links and recall previous areas of study well. Pupils diligently work through tasks and are methodical in their approach. For example, in a mathematics lesson, Year 7 pupils effectively drew on their knowledge of order of operations to solve a variety of mathematic problems and confidently explained the processes they had used. When questioned, pupils reply correctly and in detail and a large number show acuity in their follow-up questions. Pupils can sustain their questioning skills into a more extended discussion when encouraged. Pupils' written work shows how skills such as conciseness and developing arguments improve over time. Pupils in the sixth form, often produce excellent work, such as in a history lesson when they assessed the success or otherwise of the personal rule of Charles I. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents commented positively on the strength of their children's learning and how this reflected the commitment of the teaching and the direction provided by the school's leaders and trustees.
- 3.6 Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work and are highly focused in lessons. They are attentive and are quick to attempt tasks asked of them by their teachers. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they feel well supported in their endeavours by committed teaching. Pupils benefit significantly from an atmosphere in school which is positive and one where learning and trying one's best are celebrated. As a result, they are very keen to make progress and this applies across the years and the ability range. Some pupils show significant initiative in taking leadership of their own learning. However, not all pupils demonstrate such responsibility. Pupils make the most progress and show most motivation where they are able to be actively involved in their lessons. Pupils are able to work effectively on their own but equally are very comfortable with working together on a task. Pupils display for the most part an impeccable demeanour in class, enabling their strong progress.
- 3.7 Pupils' communication skills are of high quality. The majority of pupils are effective communicators both orally and in writing. For example, in a Year 9 textiles lesson, pupils spoke confidently and perceptively about the impact of fast fashion on the environment. The pupils are not afraid to express their views and talk with pride about their work. They listen with great care and rarely let their attention slip. Most pupils are very comfortable in communicating their ideas in discussion and are not afraid of being judged if they say something that is not quite correct. Pupils in a sixth form music lesson on analysing a film score, showed great creativity in discussing their ideas all through the lesson, to reach their conclusions on how it matched the nature of the film. However, not every lesson provides such opportunities for active participation and where this is the case, progress is more limited. Pupils' skills in communication are reflected in fluid and creative, cogent writing, seen in the work scrutiny and in the projects undertaken across the years.

- 3.8 Pupils show excellent study skills across the school. They take care to find their own ways to learn when given the opportunity. They display strong skills of analysis and are able to develop their own ideas creatively to produce thoughtful conclusions. Pupils are very reflective about what might be the most effective ways to learn. Pupils successfully plan their revision, using techniques such as spider diagrams and planning grids. They analyse their work in tests and respond to extension prompts in sciences. Pupils show a strong ability to use a wide range of resources to develop thinking skills of the highest order. In some lessons, pupils suggest detailed hypotheses, synthesising their resources to produce erudite work. The ablest pupils analyse with great care and cite evidence for their answers, while the less able work hard on developing skills of structure and cogency. Pupils are very creative in their ideas and use this to enhance their learning and progress, as seen in a sixth-form lesson on ethics where pupils analysed the strengths and weaknesses of Freudian ideas of the primal horde.
- 3.9 Many pupils demonstrate excellent mathematical and numeracy skills. For instance, some Year 11 pupils confidently tackled challenging GCSE questions, demonstrating fluent mathematical skills and supporting each other when solving problems. Year 13 pupils successfully solved synoptic problems in their lesson and spoke passionately about the progress they had made over the previous years. They noted the benefits that studying further mathematics at GCSE had brought to their sixth form studies. Pupils in the sixth form also highlighted how their mathematical skills supported their other A levels. Less able pupils are not always as confident in applying numeracy skills in other subjects. However, some strong examples of such application were also seen. Pupils demonstrate confident use of numerical skills in a variety of subjects and are able to independently draw on a number of resources to solve numerical calculations. The application of their mathematical knowledge and skills across subjects is excellent.
- 3.10 Pupils make confident use of information, communication and technology (ICT) to support their studies and are fluent at accessing online resources and other aids to learning. This is enhanced by the school's decision to enable every pupil to have their own device. Pupils are competent at word processing which they use for essays and in the various projects they engage in across the school. They make increasing use of technology as they move through the school, to collect and analyse data. Year 13 pupils studying mathematics found that using online graphing software was highly effective and helpful in developing their understanding of functions. The pupils use ICT as a natural part of their learning. It is well integrated across the school. As a result, pupils show excellent and skilled use of ICT throughout their work. Pupils use ICT comfortably a productive tool in their learning whether it is directed by teaching or by their own volition. The school has effectively embedded the skills pupils developed during periods of remote learning to support this area of school life.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve success in a wide range of activities both within and beyond the classroom. The pupils are able to find their own unique passions and relish taking part in them, broadening their perspective on life. In their responses to the questionnaire, pupils commented positively on the different skills they had been able to develop through the co-curricular programme. Pupils embrace wholeheartedly the many opportunities to participate in a myriad of activities at the school and many enjoy substantial success in these. This includes individuals being selected for sports teams both regionally and nationally, as well as teams in school achieving success. Pupils achieve highly in music and drama examinations. Individual pupils have earned places in national artistic groups. Pupils achieve success in national competitions for mathematical and scientific subjects. Many achieve success in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), including at gold level. Pupils gain new skills from their involvement in the DofE, enabled by the broader vision of the school and its desire to encourage pupils to develop themselves as widely as possible.

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### The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.13 Pupils have an excellent level of self-understanding. They are aware of their areas of strength and weaknesses and are not afraid to confront the latter. They can articulate accurately and effectively what steps to take to improve in all their pursuits. This was seen in an English lesson where pupils showed maturity in the way they assessed their own work and then that of their peers. The pupils have a high level of resilience and are able to tackle aspects they find challenging, without fear. Older pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of their current progress and of how to improve their own learning. Pupils are very positive in dealing with setbacks and in this they feel strongly supported by the pastoral system in the school. They know who they can ask for help but equally they understand the need to work things out for themselves. Pupils in the sixth form declared in interview that the difference between the pupils they were on arrival and how they were now, was 'simply exponential' and they were very appreciative of their time at the school. In the questionnaire, parents praised the strong support provided by the school for their children's development as individuals.
- 3.14 Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness of the importance of contributing positively to the lives of others both within the school and in the wider community. The extensive range of charity work within school, often led by senior pupils, provides a social compass which guides all pupils in their thinking. This helps pupils to develop excellent social skills which become increasingly sophisticated as they progress through their school career. Opportunities for responsibility vary at different stages of the school, increasingly becoming more accessible as pupils move up the years. Consequently younger pupils are not always able to demonstrate their leadership strengths in the way that the most senior pupils can. Those at the top end of school are excellent ambassadors and role models serving as examples that younger pupils aspire to, promoted by the vertical house system. Year 7 pupils spoke enthusiastically about events, such as non-uniform days and Easter egg hunts that raised money for charities. They take pride in what they as individuals and as a school can give back to society and in so doing, gain a greater appreciation of the needs of people, as they explained in interview. Pupils provide support in local schools and care homes. They engage fully in the community service element of the DofE scheme, often in their own locality. They also look beyond the immediate environs to the global community, seen in their support for the organisation Mary's Meals and their work with a school in Malawi.
- 3.15 As a result of the vertical tutor group structure and the house system, pupils develop a strong appreciation for the value of working together as a team. This impact can be clearly seen in pupils' strength of feeling for house events and their loyalty to their houses. Pupils also engage fully and develop new skills through the many opportunities for working together, such as in sports' teams, in the DofE scheme or in the excellent musical productions, seen on film during the inspection. Pupils work together very effectively both inside and outside the classroom and can see the many advantages in collaboration to achieve common goals. A group of pupils spoke enthusiastically about how they had planned and created all the elements for a fashion show the previous year, ranging from designing and making the clothes to planning the music and organising the staging and lighting. This approach to collaboration and its positive impact on pupils' social development is a source of strength within the school.
- 3.16 Pupils have a strong sense of moral responsibility, encouraged by an environment in which there are the key rules of *Be Kind* and *Do your Best*. This makes them more aware of monitoring their own behaviour, so they become self-regulating. This understanding of right and wrong was demonstrated in an English lesson where pupils studying the novel *Atonement*, discussed objectively whether the decisions taken by the key characters were the right ones, given the tragic impact of their actions. Pupils appreciate the right of all people at the school to go about their daily lives without interference from others and so they respect the needs of the people around them. In interview, pupils said they respected the school rules and believed that the vast majority of their peers do so. They understand the need for sanctions and see the incremental approach as a means not only of deterrence but of

learning how to behave. The pupils display a strong nuance of understanding around behaviour, even having an appreciation of why certain pupils may get treated with more leniency due to their own personal circumstances. Younger pupils understand the difference between high spirits and bad behaviour but also recognise that high spirits can make other pupils uncomfortable, which is not acceptable.

- 3.17 Pupils are well aware of the importance of decisions they make affecting their futures. Pupils from Year 9 spoke confidently about their GCSE choices. They appreciate the importance of making good decisions because these might determine the pathways they follow later and respect the advice provided by their teachers. Younger pupils understand the importance of developing independence and the role that choice has in this development. They appreciate being able to serve on the school council and are happy to fill in the school's questionnaires and lobby the council members. Pupils learn effectively from the available opportunities for decision making in their work, seen in history and textiles lessons. They appreciate the freedom which they get to choose the extra-curricular clubs they attend, so that they can learn new skills. Pupils appreciate the way in which the school promotes their independence whist also ensuring they can receive support where needed. They declare themselves to be confident in their choices, supported by the advice they are given, often from senior pupils who have been through the system and know what is best.
- 3.18 Pupils do show a strong awareness of the wider elements of life, encouraged by the Catholic ethos of the school. Year 7 pupils talked about gaining a greater understanding of concepts such as hope, which is the school's theme for the year. Pupils very keenly discuss issues of faith and say that they want to understand other practices and philosophies to broaden their understanding. In an art lesson, pupils explored themes of identity, which demanded consideration of the non-material world and made strong links with psychology and issues of the mind. The school's Christian ethos means that spiritual understanding is at the heart of pupils' education and the pupils are aware of the benefits of this and are clear that all religions and faiths are tolerated in the school. There is a strong sense of philosophical understanding of a more general nature among the pupils themselves. For example, Year 9 pupils spoke knowledgably about the impact of fast fashion on the environment and the importance of recycling, repurposing and looking after the planet's resources. Pupils are active in promoting an environmental awareness, reflected in their Planet Princethorpe project, which is led by sixth formers and invites input and ideas from the whole school community. Recent initiatives include sowing wildflower seeds and providing bird boxes. The pupils' aesthetic awareness is very strong also, seen in the outstanding quality of the artwork displayed across the school, as well as in musical performances such as the choir's rendition of the ethereal hymn Ubi Caritas, listened to, on a recording of a recent concert.
- 3.19 Pupils have a very strong sense of the importance of treating everyone equally and feel that this is a fundamental part of the school's ethos. Pupils show a great level of respect for the differences between themselves and others and indeed, seek to celebrate them. Consequently pupils can be proud of their individuality. Pupils frequently lead assemblies that promote inclusion and the gains to be made from living harmoniously as a society. The pupils themselves have come up with their definitions on terms related to diversity and shared these with the school. Pupils are also aware that some groups of pupils need more support and appreciate the discreet way in which the school can help them, thus enabling all pupils to gain confidence and make progress with their learning. Pupils discuss issues of race and gender knowledgeably, in an academic context and make strong and apt links between historical exempla and contemporary issues and behaviours. They show interest in an empathy for other cultures and beliefs and evince a desire to discuss and explore such ideas more deeply in lessons. Pupils do embrace one of the school's core aims of being kind to each other.
- 3.20 Pupils feel very safe both within school and the virtual world online where they have a strong understanding of how to protect themselves, supported by the school's teaching and ICT systems. Pupils also understand the importance of being physically healthy and involve themselves fully in the varied opportunities for exercise in school. Pupils talk sensibly about adopting a balanced diet,

witnessed in a food technology lesson for younger pupils. They are also aware of the need to take care of their emotional health and understand the importance of giving themselves time to step back from their busy lives. Consequently they take advantage of the opportunities to attend well-being sessions and in this they are given support by the pastoral team within the school. In their responses to the questionnaire, pupils expressed their appreciation for this and explain how this strong support has helped them cope with the challenges of the pandemic. Consequently, pupils feel confident that they can give of the best inside and outside of the classroom, in keeping with the school's core aims.

## 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 the chair and other trustees, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Mr Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Mr Paul Vicars	Compliance team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Garry Binks	Team inspector (Former head of department, HMC school)
Mr David Fotheringham	Team inspector (Former deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Suzie Longstaff	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Alex Smith	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Ms Jacqui Zugg	Team inspector (Deputy head HMC school)