

School Statement Regarding The ISI Report

This statement is written to accompany the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) Report of Brockwood Park School and Inwoods Small School. The inspection took place in February 2023, over two days.

In England, schools are regulated by the government and are inspected periodically. These regulatory frameworks, created by the Department for Education (DfE) to be enforced by inspecting bodies such as Ofsted and ISI, are becoming exceedingly prescriptive, restrictive and punitive. This means that educators and schools are under increasing pressure to do what is asked of them rather than what they feel needs to happen. This fact was highlighted recently when a headteacher committed suicide as a result of an inspection by Ofsted, followed by an outcry in the education sector and beyond. This incident brought a lot of reaction from schools and teachers across the UK about the regulatory framework and the manner in which inspections are carried out. You can see some of the news headlines [here](#).

Even though Brockwood Park is inspected by ISI, it faces similar challenges, in particular due to its ethos and intentions which are about offering a very different type of education and learning space than most schools. With the recent inspection occurring over only two days, you can imagine our difficulty conveying the whole of the school's educational approach and ethos to the inspectors, who were themselves under pressure to do their job in the two days and arrive at a verdict.

Brockwood Park School, with around 70 students, offering holistic and alternative education, must meet the same criteria as an established large school of 2,000 pupils with an army of administrative staff. However, there is no other way than to continue doing our best to communicate to the inspectors how we do things at Brockwood and to manage this difficulty as best as we can. This process of inspection puts our staff and management under enormous pressure. Our limited resources, usually dedicated to running the school and providing its warm and caring atmosphere that we feel is unique in the current educational landscape, have to be diverted to managing this ever expanding administrative process.

Below, we touch on some of the findings of the recent inspection and put these findings in the context of Brockwood Park School.

The school places a great deal of trust in our students regarding their intelligence and goodness. Our older students have been great mentors and support for our younger ones. However, the inspectors disagreed with our view and considered that having older students accommodated in the same area as slightly younger students was "unheard of" and an inherent risk which needs to be addressed.

At Brockwood, staff and students aged 14 and above are responsible for taking care of the place and managing the cleaning of the school every day. The inspectors felt that students having open access to everyday cleaning materials was a concern and as a result and after seeing a door to the shed containing cleaning products unlocked, the inspectors failed the school on health and safety grounds.

Like all schools in the UK, we must adhere to hundreds of pages of various policies and prescriptive content set out by the government. We must process a vast number of forms, procedures and regulations on a daily basis. The inspectors considered one form not being in a format they approved of, which resulted in failing our school on that account.

It is a challenging endeavour to manage a community of teenagers and adults, creating a space for learning in the widest sense possible, and it is unfortunate that so much time gets spent on the administrative side, diverting increasing amounts of energy from what we feel is the essence of Brockwood's educational work. Regulatory frameworks are moving towards more control, stricter rules and more punishment.

Our experience of the inspection has been surreal. We will share more with you in December when we all meet, but in the meantime we will do what we can to comply with these orders and implement what is asked of us. We will work with the ISI and DfE to continue to communicate the context of our school and why we do things the way we feel is necessary and best for our students' growth and well-being.

We feel fortunate that Brockwood Park School enjoys strong support from the parents and students and are thankful for this.

School Management Committee
on behalf of Brockwood Park School Staff