

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### St Clare's, Oxford

Full Name of the School	<b>St Clare's, Oxford</b>
DCSF Number	<b>931/6120</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>294085</b>
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Principal	<b>Mrs Paula Holloway</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Nicholas Morris</b>
Age Range	<b>15 to 19</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 St Clare's was founded in 1953 by Anne Dreydel and Pamela Morris, with a commitment to promoting international awareness and understanding. Unusually for the time, it accepted students only for the last two years of secondary education. Anne Dreydel became sole principal in 1972. In 1977, the college was one of the first in the United Kingdom to introduce the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD), initially alongside A levels which were soon phased out. In addition, the college now offers a pre-baccalaureate course (Pre-IB) for students who are either too young or not yet ready for the IBD programme proper.
- 1.2 The college is situated in a number of large houses and some purpose-built accommodation, all within close proximity, in North Oxford. The rationalisation and refurbishment of existing accommodation and a considerable building development are currently major pre-occupations of the board of governors. The principal has been in post for three years and this is the first ISI inspection of the college.
- 1.3 The college's mission statement is 'to advance international education and understanding'. This is expanded in a statement of values and beliefs drawn up collectively by a working party representing different interests in the college: 'St Clare's welcomes students and staff of all nationalities and cultures who will benefit from, and contribute to, our learning community. Living and studying together, we learn from one another. We are enriched and challenged by a diversity of views and ideas. In this environment, international education and understanding are advanced.' The college aims specifically to develop students' intellects, imagination and independence of mind, to encourage them to engage in creative, aesthetic and physical activities; to develop in them a sense of environmental awareness and responsibility to the local and international community, to encourage the development of personal qualities such as honesty, compassion and self-reliance, and to enable students to take personal responsibility for their work and conduct.
- 1.4 In line with its aims, the college welcomes students from all over the world and some 44 nationalities are represented, the main groups coming from Germany, Russia, Great Britain, Italy and China. Two hundred and twenty-two students have a language other than English as their mother tongue, and 22 of them have extra tuition in English language. The number of students currently on roll is 264, 123 male and 141 female. Year 11 (the Pre-IB year) has 31 students, Year 12 (IB1) has 118 and Year 13 (IB2) has 115. All but 15 of the students are boarders who live in 15 houses close by the college. The number of students has increased significantly in recent years.
- 1.5 Standardised tests indicate that students' average ability is broadly in line with the UK national average for sixth-form students. If students are performing in line with their abilities their results will be in line with the average for all IBD students. Seven students have been identified by the college as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD).
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

School	NC name
Pre-IB	Year 11
IB1	Year 12
IB2	Year 13

## 2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The college is outstandingly successful in fulfilling its aim to promote international awareness and understanding through a broadly balanced education which produces well-rounded students able to make a successful transition to university and the world beyond school. The education provided nurtures students who become inquiring, knowledgeable, thoughtful communicators, and fosters skills for life, in particular those which will enable students to thrive at university. Notable features are the promotion of independent and co-operative learning, the development of oracy, the wide range of languages available for study, and the enrichment of the curriculum by an extensive range of creative, action and service (CAS) activities.
- 2.2 The college has followed the IBD programme for many years because it is in harmony with the philosophy of the college and provides a challenging programme of international education which seeks to ensure that students achieve their potential through the fostering of personal responsibility for their academic development through their study of academic subjects, the acquisition of cross-curricular skills and the pursuit of enrichment opportunities.
- 2.3 The education provided contributes extremely effectively to students' intellectual development and to the acquisition of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. The IBD programme is a particularly broad one. All students have the opportunity to study their first language, together with a modern foreign language, a course on individuals and societies, experimental science, mathematics and an arts subject or an additional language, humanities or science subject. Further challenge and opportunities for independent learning and research and for creative thought are provided through the course on the theory of knowledge (TOK) and the writing of an extended essay on a topic related usually to one of their higher level subjects. Particular attention is given to developing skills of literacy, numeracy, listening and speaking through all subjects. The development and application of information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum is another key feature. All courses have a strongly international flavour and students take growing responsibility for their own academic development.
- 2.4 For those too young or not yet sufficiently competent in English to begin the IBD programme, a modular Pre-IB course is offered, incorporating a foreign language for those whose first language is English, world literature, humanities, science, mathematics and expressive arts. This programme is modelled on the IBD course and is assessed by the same criteria.
- 2.5 A further distinctive and enriching element of students' educational experience is the requirement to spend 150 hours on activities chosen from each of three categories: creativity, action and service (CAS). More than 60 activities are on offer, spread evenly across the three categories. Many of the activities are international in flavour and considerable emphasis is given to activities which contribute to the community. A valuable feature of the CAS programme is the requirement for students to evaluate their development through these activities. Students expressed great appreciation of the programme.
- 2.6 All students follow a course in personal, social and health education (PSHE). The programme is comprehensive and well organised, adapted to the needs of young adults and focused on preparation for their future lives. Academic support and guidance about careers and higher education feature alongside elements designed to inform and challenge students about personal, social and health issues, often with an international dimension, as seen in a very mature discussion of the personal and global implications of the growth of HIV/AIDS.

- 2.7 Outstanding attention is paid to preparing students for university and adult life. Students' self-evaluation of their academic and wider programmes, supported by effective careers education and guidance, helps to ensure that they have realistic aspirations in terms of university applications. The programme begins in Year 11 with an introduction to work-related learning and self-evaluation exercises including recognition that selecting courses is like choosing an outfit for life. It continues during the IBD course to enable students to make appropriate choices and effective applications for the next stage of their education as lifelong learners.
- 2.8 The college has a good record of success in placing students. Almost all go on to university in the UK or abroad. About three-quarters of last year's graduates were placed in UK universities or on art foundation courses, with some taking a GAP year. Provision is made to ensure appropriate guidance is in place for those students applying for courses at US or other universities abroad. Students are very appreciative of the support and guidance provided.
- 2.9 Curriculum planning at college level is highly effective and provides equality of access and opportunity as well as a very wide range of activities. Curriculum policy is set by the senior management team and the academic steering group, where priorities are reviewed and discussed.
- 2.10 Planning at subject level is clear and coherent and is subject to regular review by senior management. The best schemes of work include explicit reference to different teaching styles, a variety of learning strategies including appropriate use of ICT, provision for the gifted and talented, opportunities for exploration of spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the subject and links to TOK. Nevertheless, not all match this standard.
- 2.11 To meet the needs of students with LDD, or for whom English is an additional language (EAL), the college has developed a comprehensive 'accessibility' plan, which has been followed up by extensive in-service education and training (INSET). Students are assessed and problems identified on entry and individual education plans (IEPs) are issued and made available to staff to guide lesson planning. Record keeping is excellent and the intranet is used to inform teachers of the needs of pupils who have educational psychologists' reports or IEPs. Good support is available for students with EAL. Teachers are very experienced in dealing with them, as was evident from the range of techniques observed in lessons.
- 2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.13 In keeping with the college's aims to 'develop students' intellects, imagination and independence of mind', students are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding; they learn effectively and achieve well in both their academic subjects and in their sporting, cultural and service activities. They acquire strong independent learning skills and readily take responsibility for their own learning. Their attitudes to study and the acquisition of skills are of a high order. Students with learning difficulties also make good progress, as do those whose principal language is not English.
- 2.14 Even though English is not the first language of the great majority of students, by the time that they reach Year 13 most write with a sensitive control of language and are articulate in discussion. Students have good mathematical skills; standards of numerical competence are high and students are content to carry out routine calculations without the aid of a calculator. Students develop good problem-solving skills by the time they reach Year 13. In science, students have good practical skills and a thorough knowledge of scientific principles. Students are particularly competent in ICT and apply standard software regularly and with

ease in a variety of subjects. They take notes on their laptops, word process their assignments, use programmes to process data and draw graphs, and access relevant external sites for purposes of research.

- 2.15 Students achieve good results in the IBD examinations in relation to their ability, particularly so given that the great majority of students take most of their examinations in what, for them, is a foreign language. Over the last three years results have been significantly better than the world-wide average and also better than the UK average; this in spite of the fact that the 2007 cohort was weaker than those that preceded it. Standardised measures indicate that students make good progress in relation to their ability. No significant differences in attainment are apparent between curricular areas and groups of students. Targeted support enables those with learning difficulties to fulfil their potential, and students whose principal language is not English perform as well as native speakers by the time they complete the IBD.
- 2.16 Students also achieve success in a range of other activities. Music is a particular strength; students gain merits and distinctions at Grades 7 and 8 and are successful in local and regional music festivals: a number participate in local music groups. Students regularly win gold certificates in the Senior Mathematics Challenge and have made good progress in the Mathematics Olympiad. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is an important feature of college life: in 2007, six students achieved the gold award and many are involved in community service activities. Competitive sport is not a major strength but college teams participate enthusiastically in local leagues and competitions with a degree of success. The Model United Nations group makes an important contribution to two Oxfordshire conferences a year.
- 2.17 Most students are skilled at note making and organise their work efficiently. The extended essay on a topic related usually to one of their higher level subjects provides students with excellent opportunities to demonstrate independent learning and research and many of the essays examined were of a high standard, revealing originality and a considerable degree of critical thought and imagination.
- 2.18 The college goes to considerable lengths to encourage internationalism, co-operation and community spirit, and students are frequently asked to work with students from different backgrounds and of the other gender; this they do willingly and productively. Students show outstanding levels of application, they settle quickly to work, persevere and really enjoy the activities that they undertake.

## **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.19 The college is outstandingly successful in its aim 'to develop in them (students) a sense of environmental awareness and responsibility to the local and international community, to encourage the development of personal qualities such as honesty, compassion and self-reliance, and to enable students to take personal responsibility for their work and conduct.' By the time that students leave the college, they are mature, balanced, confident and thoughtful, with a strong sense of community both immediate and international, thanks to the great care and attention that the college gives to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Contributory factors include the strong supportive ethos of the college, in which staff lead by example and all students are valued for themselves and their diversity, and the well-developed PSHE, CAS and TOK programmes.
- 2.20 Personal and spiritual development is an important feature of the college experience and the college is successful in ensuring that students have a strong sense of personal identity. They are confident, well-balanced individuals who are truly international citizens, secure in the knowledge that they are valued members of the college community. Within a supportive framework, students are encouraged to become self-reliant and to assume responsibility for their own learning. The care and consideration with which they are treated are reflected in their own attitudes to their fellow students and to others with whom they come into contact. Students are encouraged to reflect at all times and the quality of self-evaluation in their reports is impressive in its honesty and depth. In the well-conceived PSHE and TOK courses, students learn to deal with concepts such as the nature of truth and beauty, appearance and reality and in so doing develop their own ideas about the important questions of life.
- 2.21 The college has high expectations of students' conduct and behaviour and they develop strong moral values. They are set a good example by staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and are well able to distinguish between right and wrong. At all times, students are encouraged to think of the effect of their actions on others and on the whole college community. The college has a clear code of conduct, which the students heartily endorse. Students are treated as young adults and appreciate the freedom they are given as a stepping stone to independent living at university. They are aware of and respect the limits imposed and appreciate the firm but fair rules. No opportunities are missed to raise moral issues wherever they occur, not only in PSHE and in the TOK course but in other areas of the curriculum. During the inspection week, students discussed global warming, HIV/AIDS, cloning and the causality of war.
- 2.22 The social and community development of the pupils is outstanding. Co-operation and collaboration are key skills which the college seeks to develop and students are frequently required to work with students of other cultures or the other gender. Community living underpins the college and is highly valued by the students. Trips and residential visits in this country and abroad provide further opportunities for pupils to develop socially. The qualities of leadership and teamwork become strong through the many activities which allow students to work as teams and take responsibility. Many of the CAS activities are either initiated by students, or students take on much of the responsibility, for example when producing the college magazine. Students learn to be self-reliant, persistent and effective team members through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Service to the college community and to the wider community is a key principle of the college philosophy and all students contribute, by fund-raising or in practical ways, such as helping an organisation providing support for the disabled. Students learn about public institutions, not only in England but in other countries throughout the world, through the curriculum, the PSHE programme and students'

own experiences in the countries from which they come. The student council is an exercise in democracy at work and a further opportunity to develop civic responsibility.

- 2.23 Students' cultural awareness and development are outstanding. They live in a truly international community where diversity is celebrated. Every effort is made to break down cultural barriers and develop an international spirit. In their first year, students are deliberately roomed with someone of a nationality different from their own and different nationalities are spread through all the houses. In lessons, cultural diversity is exploited to enrich the learning experience. In a history lesson, for example, students were required to explain and discuss the impact of The Second World War on their respective countries of origin. The Model United Nations and the global perspectives activity engender an understanding of the wider cultural issues of other countries. However, the students' best resource is each other, as they learn at first hand what life is like in other countries. Music, art and drama are very important in the life of the college and enrich the lives of those who participate. Closer to home, the students have access to the vast cultural wealth of Oxford. They also enjoy outings such as theatre trips to London and other places of interest.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.25 The skilled teaching that students receive, in accordance with the college's comprehensive teaching and learning policy, enables all of them to make progress according to their abilities as indicated by the high levels of success in the IBD examinations. The quality of teaching was judged to be at least good in the great majority of lessons and in a significant proportion it was outstanding. Particular strengths are the infectious enthusiasm of the teachers, the excellent relations between teachers and taught, the degree to which teaching approaches are matched to the needs of the students, and support for students at an individual level. None of the lessons were unsatisfactory but in a few the pace was too slow and the students were not stretched or challenged enough. Assessment procedures are most thorough and consistent, in line with college policies and IBD requirements. The college works actively to improve the quality of teaching through discussion and INSET and a noticeably distinctive college style is beginning to develop.
- 2.26 In most subjects, teaching enables students of all abilities, including those with LDD, to make good progress relative to their ability, steadily acquiring new knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers have detailed knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses and vary their approaches to ensure that all make progress. In the case of students with LDD, guidance is provided by the IEPs. Teachers set extension work for the most able and are skilled at asking questions appropriate to the level of the student. The evidence of successful teaching lies in the high proportion of students awarded the diploma. Teachers' understanding of the problems of those for whom English is an additional language, the great majority, and the skill with which they help students to overcome them, enables these students to perform as well as native speakers. For example, in a Pre-IB physics lesson, the teacher introduced new terminology in such a way that students made progress in both physics and their command of English.
- 2.27 Teachers know their subjects well and their enthusiasm and high expectations bring a positive response from the students. Teachers are always ready to give advice and guidance but it is made clear to students that they are responsible for their own learning. This approach fosters well-developed independent learning skills as evidenced by the quality of investigations in science and the originality and depth of many of the extended essays. Aware of the heavy workload of the IBD programme, teachers help students to be organised



- and methodical in their learning. For their part, students are very happy with the quality of the teaching they receive. They feel secure in their teachers' knowledge and enjoy the variety of teaching methods used. Their questions are always answered.
- 2.28 In all the lessons observed students were very well behaved and co-operative. Classroom relations are excellent and the calm, relaxed, informal yet disciplined approach of the teachers produces a positive response from the students. The lessons are interesting and students are highly motivated but relaxed and good humoured; they concentrate, maintain attention and show genuine enthusiasm.
- 2.29 Much departmental planning is very thorough, and tasks and activities for teachers and students are detailed in the schemes of work. All lessons are planned carefully and comprehensively with clear objectives. Teachers use a wide range of methods and activities: notes, discussion, questioning, students working together, computer models and simulations, laboratory practicals, examination questions, essays, model making and word cards were all seen and put to good use to enable the students to learn, understand and progress. For instance, a well-planned lesson on soil erosion with clear objectives and conducted at a brisk pace enabled the students to develop a range of laboratory skills, make hypotheses and obtain reliable results.
- 2.30 Resources for teaching are good. Computers, data projectors and screens are provided in all of the rooms. In addition there are whiteboards and appropriate equipment and materials for practical studies in art and science. Teachers make good use of the resources available to them during lessons and examples were seen of the use of presentational software, computer animations and the internet. Laboratories are well equipped and students are taught to use the apparatus and materials safely. The extensive college intranet is well used as a source of material, and teachers email class notes to students so they can go over them after class. The well-stocked college library is particularly impressive. The foreign language books, periodicals and DVD collection are excellent. The library allows students to research topics in detail and in depth and it offers a quiet and well appointed space to enable them to study in a proper academic atmosphere.
- 2.31 The college has a clear and detailed assessment system which is applied consistently and effectively. Formative assessment of how students progress is obtained by regular appraisal of oral and written answers. Examination of lesson planning indicates that the information is used to guide the teaching strategies to be employed in future lessons. Regular topic tests and questioning in lessons enable uncertainties in understanding to be clarified. The assessment of coursework is strict but precise using the criteria and the seven-point scale provided by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO). At all times, the students are clear how well they are progressing, helped by the fact that teachers and students are in regular email communication with each other.
- 2.32 An unusual feature of assessment is the extent of students' self-evaluation and target setting. At each reporting period, students evaluate their progress in each subject and their CAS activities and set targets, which are then commented upon and discussed with their tutors. They input their comments electronically into the report and have a fixed period in which to do so. The comments seen were honest, analytical and thoughtful. The process reinforces the college's aim of making students responsible for their own learning.
- 2.33 The evaluation of students' performance is very thorough. Pre-IB students have five coursework grades and five sets of examinations during the year, and IB students have five sets of internal exams and coursework grades spread over the two years of the course, building up a cumulative record which becomes the official transcript for their IBD. All assessments use the IB seven-point scale. The results are used to identify issues so that

teaching can be modified. During Year 13, predicted grades are established for use with university applications in September, and a second set is produced for the IBO in March as part of the moderating process. The college has detailed instructions to safeguard the integrity of marking, for example double marking and group marking; it also uses ICT to deal with possible cheating or plagiarism.

2.34 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils**

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care is excellent and fully meets the college's aims 'to encourage the development of personal qualities such as honesty, compassion and self-reliance, and to enable students to take personal responsibility for their work and conduct.' Tutors are very well informed about their students and provide excellent support. Every measure is taken to ensure students' health, welfare and safety.
- 3.2 Tutors are at the heart of the system and each one is responsible for 15 students. This responsibility extends to academic and non-academic aspects of students' lives, and encompasses residential life as well as other aspects of the college outside the classroom. Personal tutors liaise with wardens, the dean of students and subject teachers in matters of discipline and students' academic work, attitude and progress. All information about attendance, unpunctuality, effort grades, commendations and sanctions is registered on computer and passed to the dean of students and the tutor who use it as a basis of monitoring. Tutors, therefore, know their students very well, they meet them regularly and deal effectively with their concerns. Students in their turn appreciate the support they receive and feel that there is a member of staff to turn to.
- 3.3 Tutors are responsible to the dean of students, who meets tutors every three weeks to discuss student issues. She is supported by the careers co-ordinator. A strength of pastoral care is the recording and collection of information and the effectiveness of communication. All information and correspondence is held on computer and is copied to all who may be concerned. In this way, tutors are quickly alerted to problems or potential problems and can deal with them rapidly.
- 3.4 The quality of the relationship between staff and students is extremely good. An aim of the pastoral policy is to make the students autonomous, taking responsibility for their own lives within a supportive framework. The students appreciate the relaxed atmosphere and feel that they are being treated as young adults. They are on first name terms with the staff and feel that this makes them closer, as the barriers are removed, allowing greater freedom of interaction. Nevertheless, it is very clear that mutual respect is high.
- 3.5 The college has high expectations of students. The behaviour policy and the college regulations are clear and comprehensive without being patronising and are appropriate to the age of the students. Rules are clear and the sanctions for breaking them are well defined and understood. Within these rules, students have a large measure of independence and trust. The students appreciate this fair but firm approach, which they see as an excellent preparation for university, and they feel that it is not abused. Any incidents are recorded electronically and kept in students' files, by wardens, and centrally. A summary is sent weekly to the vice-principal together with indications of the action taken. Examination of records and correspondence indicates that incidents are dealt with thoroughly and sensitively.
- 3.6 All necessary pastoral policies are in place and comprehensive, including those relating to bullying, child protection, behaviour and drug abuse. No evidence of bullying was found and students were confident that if it were to occur it would be dealt with swiftly. The vice-principal is the child protection officer and has had full training. Staff training, including ancillary staff, is updated every three years and forms part of the induction of new colleagues. The college's policy is based on the Oxfordshire template. A governor with considerable experience in the field has designated responsibility for child protection.

- 3.7 The general provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is excellent and complies with the requirements. All statutory policies are in place and are regularly updated. Students who become ill during the day are cared for in the well-equipped and centrally located medical room under the care of the school nurse. A small sanatorium is available when it is not appropriate for sick students to stay in their houses. Students are registered with a nearby medical practice. Twenty-two staff have full first aid training. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken, providing a very safe environment for the pupils. The health and safety committee meets regularly and the school carries it out its own internal audit of health and safety matters. Regular risk assessments take place and all electrical equipment is checked annually; risk assessments for visits are completed meticulously.
- 3.8 Registration procedures are rigorous. Students are registered electronically at every lesson with penalties for late arrival (more than 10 minutes equals absence). Absences are followed up and reported on as part of course assessment. A clear tariff of sanctions is applied for unjustified absences. Students aged under 16 are also registered centrally in the office. The detailed admissions register is held on computer and contains all the necessary information.
- 3.9 Students are encouraged to eat healthily and a good choice of menus is provided in the pleasant and recently refurbished canteen which is open throughout the day, starting with breakfast. Not all students appreciated the meals and a few, perhaps unreasonably, found that the quality of some ethnic meals was not as good as in their country of origin. Students are also required to take up some physical activity as part of the CAS programme.
- 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.11 The college enjoys good and improving relations with parents, despite the difficulties inherent in having a parent body the great majority of which lives outside the United Kingdom. Parents are well satisfied with the education their children receive. They are very well informed about the college and their children's progress and their concerns are dealt with rapidly and sensitively. Links with the community are extensive in accordance with the aims of the college.
- 3.12 The vast majority of those who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire are pleased with the education their children receive. They are particularly satisfied with the quality of teaching, the promotion of worthwhile attitudes, the standards of behaviour and the range of activities. A significant number do not think that the college encourages them to be involved, citing poor communication. Inspectors find that the college does all it can to involve parents, given the circumstances, and that the quality of communication is a major strength. A few parents have concerns about accommodation, food, showers and laundry. Inspectors think that the quality of food is good and that while the accommodation varies in standard, some of it being excellent, it is nowhere less than satisfactory, and any shortcomings continue to be addressed.
- 3.13 Because of the global catchment area, it is difficult for parents to be involved in college life. Nevertheless, the college does all it can to foster good personal relations with parents. Prospective parents are provided with comprehensive information through the prospectus, website and 'IB guide' prior to visiting St Clare's. They are given a tour and can sit in on the interview of their son/daughter. Interviews with the principal and either the vice-principal or director of studies during the admissions process help forge positive and personal initial contacts. When prospective students are offered a place, parents are provided with pre-

arrival information via password access to a zone on the college website. Parents are encouraged to drop in to the college, and with due notice it will arrange for staff to meet them. Parent consultations are arranged at the beginning or end of term so that more can attend and spend time at the college. Parents have the e-mail addresses of tutors and senior staff and are encouraged to contact them whenever there is a problem, thus establishing a two-way dialogue.

- 3.14 Parents receive a wealth of information through the parents' section of the college website, which is particularly well developed and comprehensive. The reports which parents receive twice a year are of a high quality. They contain a clear picture of students' progress, including prospects for the IBD; students evaluate their performance as well as their teachers and tutors, and parents have the opportunity to comment electronically.
- 3.15 The principal, vice-principal and senior staff operate an open-door policy and problems that may arise are usually dealt with speedily and informally. Parents living abroad are encouraged to use e-mail. Responses are usually very rapid. For more intractable issues, the college has a comprehensive complaints procedure, though it has not so far been needed. Examination of correspondence confirms that concerns are taken seriously and answered swiftly and sensitively.
- 3.16 The college enjoys good relations with the local community. Student teams take part in local sports leagues and sometimes play for local clubs. Musicians make a local impact; they take part in and win prizes at regional festivals; they give concerts and some play with local groups. The service activities of the CAS programme and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme play a large part in the life of the college. Students raise funds and help actively with the handicapped and the elderly.
- 3.17 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.18 Boarding at St Clare's is a wholly positive experience and makes a vital contribution to students' personal development. Boarding life is entirely consistent with the college's mission statement 'to advance international education and understanding'. Relationships are excellent both among students and between students and staff. The rich variety of activities which are open to all students are very much appreciated. Students speak highly of the boarding provision even though some issues exist regarding the facilities in the older, yet-to-be refurbished houses.
- 3.19 The school was inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in 2005. The report was very positive. It made only four, relatively minor recommendations all of which have been addressed, as was confirmed by the follow-up visit of the CSCI inspectors.
- 3.20 The college has a deliberate policy of rooming students with someone of a different nationality and culture during their first year, and of spreading larger national groups across the houses; this is in fulfilment of the aim mentioned above. Students particularly value the opportunity they are given to integrate with students from many different countries and cultures and they are relaxed, open minded and tolerant of each other. Relationships both among students and between students and staff are excellent. The wardens are seen as fair and understanding and many students spoke warmly about them. Students appreciate their boarding experience at St Clare's; they have a strong sense of community; they develop independence and self-discipline and have the confidence to manage their own lives.

- 3.21 The college has comprehensive procedures to promote internationalism and to safeguard the safety and welfare of the students. Policies about bullying, visiting and signing-out rules are clearly defined. Rules and sanctions are well understood and applied both evenly and fairly: students know where they stand. The job descriptions of all the staff involved in the boarding and pastoral care of students are clear. Wardens meet regularly with the senior resident to discuss boarding matters and are in regular two-way communication with tutors and the dean of students.
- 3.22 Activities are provided for all students, not just boarders. Photography, art classes, weekend trips, hill walking, dinners, cinema trips, paint balling and opera were all mentioned and enjoyed. Students spoke warmly about their CAS activities and the variety and choice on offer. The fact that they are able to choose their activities is applauded by all students. Wireless internet access is available and students appreciate being able to be on line. They understand that internet traffic is monitored and checks are made on what they download. Overall they respect being treated as young adults with responsibilities to the whole college community.
- 3.23 The quality of accommodation in the 15 houses in the school is somewhat uneven. In a recently refurbished house, the facilities are excellent, the rooms are well furnished and pupils have sufficient desk space for work and shelving for books. The showers are efficient and some rooms are en suite. The common room is adequately furnished but a lack of pictures on the walls creates a rather bland feel. In older and yet-to-be refurbished houses, some rooms were rather small for two students sharing. In some houses, tired-looking bathroom facilities and poor mattresses were mentioned as problem areas by some students. The college is addressing these issues gradually and, in some houses, new washing machines had been provided. Student accommodation is a priority in the building project. The location of the houses means that some rooms are quiet while others facing the main road are quite noisy. The variation in the standard of the accommodation and facilities between the houses is an issue with some students, but accommodation is overall satisfactory.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The college is well served by the governing body which provides expertise, maintains a clear and strategic view of the college's future development, and ensures that the college fulfils its aims. The 16 governors represent a wide range of expertise, legal, commercial, estate management, financial and educational, usually at a very senior level, though only one has direct experience of running a school. A number have European connections, giving them a ready understanding of the context of the college. Governors have no maximum term of office, though they come up for re-election every three years. Recruitment is by invitation after informal soundings but there is clear evidence of effective succession planning. Training for new governors is, however, limited.
- 4.2 Two sub-committees, one for finance and general purposes and human resources, and a second for strategy, buildings and the future make the operation of the governing body more efficient. A third sub-group, the academic forum, is informal and meets before the main governing body meeting; it has a limited remit but hears presentations from heads of department and other members of staff involved in college development. Heads of department and other senior managers appreciate this innovation but it is not totally satisfactory as a means of maintaining educational oversight of the college.
- 4.3 The governors are aware of their responsibilities and take them seriously. A governor has been nominated for child protection training who has considerable experience in the field. Governors receive regular reports on health and safety, though no one has a remit to keep abreast of current legislation. Financial and development planning are rigorous and have ensured that finances are in a healthy state: a major building development is at an advanced stage of planning. The governors receive a full report from the principal before the board meetings together with monthly management accounts. The governors hold the college to account effectively and their expertise enables them to scrutinise its academic and pastoral success.
- 4.4 The governing body has a sound insight into the working of the school and provides appropriate advice and support. Governors work hard in the interests of the college; they attend meetings and college events, but they are not well known to the staff in general, and they do not visit the college regularly to see it in operation.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.5 Outstanding leadership and management by the principal and senior managers have brought about a revival in the fortunes of the college and now enable it to fulfil its educational and philosophical aims. The number of pupils has risen substantially, as has the morale of staff. The principal provides clear direction for the college and is supported by a very effective vice-principal and senior managers; all have clear job descriptions and delegated authority and work well together as teams. Heads of department and wardens also carry out their responsibilities effectively. Together, these bodies ensure that students receive a high quality education which enables them to progress for the most part into higher education, not only well qualified but as mature and articulate young men and women.
- 4.6 Academic and pastoral structures are clear and regular, minuted meetings, together with extensive use of ICT for communication, ensure that all staff are kept well informed and have an opportunity to contribute to the development of college policy.

- 4.7 A thorough review of existing policies and the current situation of the college has resulted in a comprehensive development plan which has been widely discussed. The priorities are detailed and appropriate; financial and organisational implications are well thought out and criteria for success are explicit. Development planning at department level is also effective, based on a similar principle and departmental plans are scrutinised by senior managers.
- 4.8 Comprehensive policies are in place for all aspects of college life; senior managers check that they are implemented and the policies themselves are reviewed regularly and modified as necessary. Effective monitoring is an important feature of college management.
- 4.9 The college has a committed and well-qualified staff, which is deployed to best advantage. Recruitment practices are rigorous and all necessary checks are carried out. The college participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers. New staff, including newly qualified teachers (NQTs), receive a thorough induction, though the lack of a mentor, except in the case of NQTs, means that they do not have specific access to non-hierarchical support. Nevertheless, the new staff interviewed all appreciated the warm welcome they received.
- 4.10 Particular strengths of the college are the appraisal system and staff development. All teaching staff, including senior managers, are appraised as subject teachers, and all those with specific posts, such as head of department and careers co-ordinator, are appraised in their role. Extensive INSET is organised both for the whole school and for individuals on the basis of appraisals, and in relation to school and departmental development plans. Non-teaching staff are organised in teams under the control of the bursar and make a vital contribution to the smooth running of the college. They too have an appraisal scheme and INSET. Regular meetings with the bursar keep them informed. All staff, both teaching and non-teaching, appreciate the support provided by the college.
- 4.11 Prudent financial management and rigorous budgeting procedures ensure that the college is well provided with high-quality resources, particularly in respect of ICT; in particular, the outstanding library is very well stocked with books in languages other than English, in support of the college's internationalist ethos. Accommodation is well maintained, though some of it is due for renewal as part of the college development.
- 4.12 The college runs very efficiently thanks to effective management practices, the commitment of staff and extensive and sophisticated use of ICT.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 The college participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The college amply fulfils the aims of its founders 'to advance international education and understanding'. Young people from 44 countries live and work together in harmony and gain considerably from the experience, emerging confident, articulate and self-assured with high moral and social standards and a deeper understanding of cultures other than their own. Their experience encourages them to be independent and to take responsibility for themselves against a secure background of excellent pastoral care. Students enjoy a rich educational experience which embraces the spirit and not just the letter of the International Baccalaureate Diploma. They achieve well in relation to their abilities, not only in their academic studies but in the many activities offered, including service to the college and to the community. The quality of the committed teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding. Teachers know their students well and give them every support. Both parents and students appreciate the quality of education provided. The boarding experience is central to the life and ethos of the college, and to the development of international understanding. The success of the college is due to the commitment of the staff and the outstanding leadership of the principal and senior managers, well supported by the governing body.
- 5.2 This is the first inspection of the college and there is no previous report to refer to. Nevertheless, considerable development has taken place in recent years. Restructuring of senior management, tighter practices, more effective monitoring and the revised appraisal scheme have led to greater confidence in the college which, with more dynamic marketing, has resulted in a considerable increase in the student body. The considerable investment in ICT and its sophisticated and extensive use have greatly improved communication and the efficiency of the college.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 The quality of provision is such that there are no major recommendations. The college should, however:
1. continue to bring all accommodation up to the standard of the best;
  2. further develop the excellent appraisal scheme by including the role of the tutor in the review.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## **6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the sanatorium. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### **List of Inspectors**

Mr John Marshall	Reporting Inspector
Mr Durell Barnes	Former Deputy Head, HMC School
Mrs Olivia Boyer	Head of International Students, HMC School
Mr Graeme Garrett	Headmaster, ISA School
Mr Christopher Hall	Head of Science, HMC School