



**St. Clare's, Oxford**  
— An International Education —



# Independent Schools Inspectorate Report

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ST CLARE'S, OXFORD**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## St Clare's Oxford

Full Name of College	<b>St Clare's Oxford</b>
DfE Number	<b>931/6120</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>294085</b>
Address	<b>St Clare's Oxford</b> <b>139 Banbury Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX2 7AL</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01865 552031</b>
Fax Number	<b>01865 310002</b>
Email Address	<b>admissions@stclares.ac.uk</b>
Principal	<b>Mrs Paula Holloway</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Richard Dick</b>
Age Range	<b>15 to 19</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>273</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed</b> (116 boys; 157 girls;)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>14</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>259</b> <b>Full: 259</b>
Inspection dates	<b>19 Mar 2013 to 22 Mar 2013</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. 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, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of ISI on the Ofsted website. The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

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

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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

### Inspectors

George Fisher	Reporting Inspector
Andrew Storey	Team Inspector (Head of Department HMC school)
Doris Hugh	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department GDST school)
Jonathan Ullmer	Team Inspector (Principal International College)
Tony Halliwell	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Anne Haas	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head SHMIS school)
Jeremy Hallows	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head HMC school)

# CONTENTS

<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b> .....	1
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b> .....	2
(a) Main findings .....	2
(b) Action points.....	2
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements.....	2
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement .....	2
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b> .....	3
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning.....	3
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils) .....	3
(c) The contribution of teaching.....	4
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	6
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils .....	6
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care.....	6
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety .....	7
(d) The quality of boarding .....	7
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b> .....	9
(a) The quality of governance .....	9
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians .....	9



## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Clare's is an international, residential college which is situated in north Oxford. It comprises two centres, of which one, the Banbury Road campus, is the site for International Baccalaureate (IB) students and summer courses. The second, separate site, the Bardwell Centre, caters only for adult students. The vast majority of the students are boarders, and the college owns 15 residential houses, close to the campus, with the capacity to house up to 267 students.
- 1.2 The college was founded in 1953, growing out of a scheme to establish links between British and European students after the Second World War. Its central aim is to advance international education and understanding. To this end St Clare's is home to students from 47 different countries and the college aims to encourage them to pursue their education in a spirit of enquiry, open-mindedness and tolerance and to develop a sense of environmental awareness and responsibility to the local and international community. The largest groups of students are from Britain, Italy, Germany, Russia and Poland. There are 232 students for whom English is an additional language (EAL), and fourteen receive additional tuition in English.
- 1.3 The IB has been taught since 1977 and the college provides a pre-IB course as necessary. The college is overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection the college has refurbished and upgraded its residential accommodation.
- 1.4 There are currently 273 students on roll, 116 male and 157 female. There are 41 students enrolled onto the pre-IB course. Nearly all of the students are boarders. Fourteen members of the college are day students. Standardised tests indicate that the students' average ability is slightly above the UK national average for sixth-form students, with a wide spread of abilities being represented. Fourteen students have been identified by the college as having specific educational needs or disabilities (SEND), mainly dyslexia; none has a statement of special educational needs.

- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the college. The year group nomenclature used by the college and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

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



## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### 2. (a) Main findings

- 2.1 St Clare's, Oxford is highly successful in meeting its primary aim of developing an international awareness and understanding in its students. In addition the college achieves excellent levels of academic attainment, with results in public examinations showing a continuous improvement over recent years. Students make rapid progress and this is achieved through excellent teaching, an exemplary attitude to study and committed and supportive leadership. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous report although it is still not wholly consistent across all subject areas. The curricular and extra-curricular programmes are excellent, with the IB and its attendant philosophy being firmly embedded within the college. Both programmes have a very positive impact upon students' overall achievement.
- 2.2 The students' personal development is excellent. Students are well balanced, highly motivated, polite and extremely supportive of one another. The international culture of the college is a real strength and all students, irrespective of their own background, fully embrace the uniqueness of this experience. Relationships between students, and with staff, are uniformly respectful and supportive. Students demonstrate compassion and empathy and show a real desire to take personal responsibility, to support those less fortunate than themselves, and to develop an independent approach to study and decision making. Many already have highly developed leadership skills. Staff act as excellent role models and their attitude, rooted within the boarding houses and cemented further within the classroom, creates a powerful and entirely positive environment within which students can thrive. The boarding experience is excellent and both shapes and secures the personal development of the boarders. Students who responded to the questionnaire expressed some reservations about the quality of food and of medical care, and the availability of drinking water. However, inspection evidence does not support these views. The college's arrangements for pastoral care and for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 2.3 Governance is good and the governing body, informed by detailed reports from the college, has planned carefully for its development, including a commitment to an ambitious programme of refurbishment and capital building. Governors and the senior management group have combined very effectively to plan

the long-term development of the college and this has created a feeling of confidence and optimism in the future. The recommendation of the previous inspection to extend the appraisal scheme to include personal tutors has been fully implemented, and the standard of boarding accommodation continues to rise in response to the second recommendation. Leadership and management are excellent and staff are energetic, committed and focused carefully upon the needs of the individual student. A comprehensive development plan is in place, although the college does not have a systematic approach to the regular review and development of policies, which are updated on an ad hoc basis. The college has a good relationship with its parents, although its international nature means that it is not easy for parents to be actively involved in the life of the college, a point raised within the parental questionnaires. Communication with parents is, however, excellent and parents commented very favourably on all aspects of the college's educational and pastoral provision.

### 2. (b) Action points

#### (i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

#### (ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The college is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Implement a systematic approach to ensure the regular review, development and monitoring of policies.
  2. Ensure that the excellent practice in teaching and use of assessment already evident is shared across all subject areas.

### 3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

#### 3. (a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the students' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The overall level of achievement has improved significantly since the previous inspection and the college is highly successful in meeting its aim of developing intellects, imagination and independence of mind. A sense of enjoyment pervades most teaching and learning and results in excellent achievement. The students' literacy skills develop rapidly during their time at the college. By Year 13 students are able to write with sensitivity and control, as demonstrated very clearly in the extended essays they all complete. These show a striking ability to hypothesise, argue coherently, assess strengths and weaknesses and draw conclusions from their research.
- 3.3 The students' oracy is highly developed, evidenced in discussions and debates both in English and in other non-native languages; for example, in French, where the target language is used throughout lessons, students speak with excellent fluency and articulacy to each other. Subject-specific language and terminology are used accurately. Students demonstrate very good numerical skills within mathematics, and these are reinforced within other areas of the curriculum, such as the sciences and economics. They are able to apply prior knowledge to new situations successfully, for example in mathematics where students derive geometric formulae using trigonometric ratios successfully.
- 3.4 Students work very well in small groups, such as in theory of knowledge where they work in pairs to research ideas such as the concept of homeopathy as a pseudoscience, create collaborative presentations and then explain their findings to the rest of the class. Very good creative skills are in evidence in art, where students use everyday objects to create casts, and in drama. The students' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good and matched carefully to the requirements of their daily studies. They regularly use standard applications effectively and have a good working knowledge of graphing tools in mathematics and physics; they also have highly developed research skills. Many students take up the opportunities they are given to improve their physical development by using an off-site fitness suite, where their hours are tracked as part of the creativity, action and service programme (CAS). Alternatively they take part in college-led or locally run sporting activities, such as boxing, ice hockey and free running where there have been notable individual successes.

- 3.5 Students also achieve in a range of extra-curricular activities, including music, where they achieve success at local festivals, mathematics, where they make good progress in national mathematics olympiads, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, where up to ten students achieve the gold certificate per year. The girls' basketball team were county champions in 2012 and both the boys' and girls' teams were tournament finalists in 2011. Students also make significant contributions to the Model United Nations (MUN) programme regionally and experience success in inter-school sporting fixtures.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Overall attainment in the IB is excellent in relation to the average for schools worldwide and good in relation to that for schools in the UK. The results have shown an improvement year on year since 2009. This level of attainment, and evidence from the nationally standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that students make progress that is excellent in relation to the average for students of similar abilities. This high level of progress is notable given that the majority of students have English as an additional language. Attainment is consistently high for all groups, including those with SEND and the most able because the curriculum and the carefully targeted nature of the teaching enable all to thrive. Boys' levels of attainment have shown particular improvement in recent years. Pre-IB students perform well in end of module internal examinations, although this success cannot be measured against national tests. The students' attainment enables them to gain places at a range of UK and overseas universities, including those with high entry requirements.
- 3.7 The students are pro-active, engaged and motivated learners. They have a mature approach to their studies, are confident to ask questions which extend their individual understanding, and listen attentively and empathetically to the views of others. They are highly organised and adept at working independently and thereby taking responsibility for their own learning. Students also make excellent use of laptops and mobile devices to enhance their study.

#### 3. (b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 A broad, well-balanced and extensive curriculum based upon the IB requirements secures the students' intellectual, physical and personal attainment and

meets fully the college's aims. The curriculum provides very effectively for mathematical, scientific, linguistic, human and social development. It also enables the acquisition of high levels of oracy and literacy together with the advancement of technological skills. The pre-IB course prepares students for the rigours of IB, with students being offered a range of subjects and options to give them a full flavour of what the diploma involves.

- 3.10 The curriculum encourages students to be reflective and independent learners, enhanced by the experience gained within the theory of knowledge and extended essay components. Since the previous inspection, astronomy and world politics and international relations have been added to enhance the range of option subjects. Students are enthusiastic about the curriculum and the international dimension which forms an integral part of it. The majority of IB students take the bilingual diploma, with an extremely wide range of native language tuition being offered. The needs of the more able are supported particularly well by the curriculum, for example through the extended essay.
- 3.11 In keeping with the philosophy of the IB students are encouraged to reflect on their studies. This self-evaluation is a feature of termly reports home and the students also actively respond to requests to review the teaching they receive. Preparation for higher education is excellent. There is a strong programme of guidance seminars, including for universities and medical schools with very high entry requirements, and there are opportunities to prepare for American university entrance. Careers education and support for all students is outstanding; this includes a weekly course in 'thinking skills' and support on interview skills. All students take part in regular personal development sessions as part of a highly effective scheme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and there is a comprehensive scheme of work in place which covers the effects of alcohol and drugs, first aid, healthy living and citizenship.
- 3.12 Small class sizes are very beneficial to students with SEND and those who need focused help with EAL. Individual educational plans are drawn up and stored in the information system, thereby ensuring that all staff have easy access to them and can tailor their teaching to the needs of individuals. Students are also fully involved in the construction of their IEPs. The particular needs of these groups are identified and met, largely through excellent support from individual departments.

- 3.13 The curriculum is significantly enriched by an excellent programme of activities throughout the week which make a powerful contribution to the CAS element of the IB. Activities enhance knowledge of British and world culture as well as offering a full range of sporting, intellectual and creative opportunities, together with work in the local community. Hours undertaken on this extra-curricular work are rigorously monitored, with both staff and students able to make suggestions for new and different activities. Students undertake an evaluation of their activities each term, which gives useful information to staff managing the programme.
- 3.14 Students have exceptionally strong opportunities for involvement in international activities such as MUN and a human rights action group. A wide variety of enrichment trips is provided to underpin and extend the curriculum, and this enables students to explore sites of interest, both abroad and within the UK. The college is justifiably proud of its involvement in and service to the local community, again a feature of the CAS element of the IB. Students visit local primary schools and the elderly within residential homes; they are also active in volunteering within local charity shops.

### 3. (c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching to the students' achievements and progress is excellent.
- 3.16 The overall quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection and fully meets the college's aim of providing a shared experience which is challenging, rigorous and stimulating. Teaching shows good awareness that English is not the first language of the majority of students and great care is taken to ensure that not only subject-specific words but also general vocabulary are explained with a high level of clarity. The vast majority of teaching demonstrates an excellent knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject and this is communicated through meticulous planning, executed at a brisk pace, using a variety of resources. In a small amount of less effective teaching, pace which is too slow for the students' needs, and activities which are too teacher-centred, hinder progress. A good variety of approaches is evident in much teaching. This includes pair work, collaborative work, class discussion, practical demonstrations, online research, and approaches such as organising statements

on hexagonal cards in history to explore Hitler's rise to power. These methods enable students to learn from one another and to be actively engaged in their studies.

- 3.17 Adept use of interactive whiteboards together with well-prepared computer presentations, enabled by strong wireless connections, is a key feature of many lessons. Other teaching methods used, including well thought-out starter questions, enable identification and correction of weakness in individual student's knowledge or understanding. Strategies such as the use, in chemistry, of an interactive computer animation controlled by students to work out the pH value of virtual solutions, very effectively allow students to further increase their understanding. Students are encouraged to use technology for research and note-taking, and they are enabled to do this very well.
- 3.18 A well-resourced library, staffed by very enthusiastic staff, provides a valuable resource, as does the intranet which holds many useful departmental resources.
- 3.19 The relationship between students and staff is friendly, warm and based on mutual respect. The students respect the academic rigour of the teaching they receive and are confident to ask questions freely, something which the teaching encourages. Students comment on how accessible teachers are.
- 3.20 Teachers know their students very well and teaching generally meets the needs of the whole class, including those with SEND and EAL, enabled by small class sizes and the availability of a wealth of assessment data. The development of detailed class profiles, which identify the students' individual needs and relevant teaching strategies, has been particularly effective. Well thought through extension material provides additional challenge for the more able.
- 3.2 Work is marked in a timely fashion and students comment on the helpfulness of the feedback they receive, especially, as is often the case, when it is backed up with one-to-one, in-depth dialogue. The best marking is accompanied by useful and encouraging comments on what students need to do to improve further. Where marked work does not follow departmental or college policy, the students still know how well they are doing and how the marks relate to the IB grading system. A 'traffic light' system is well used in some subjects to enable students to communicate their current understanding of topics to teachers by using red to indicate uncertainty and green to show understanding. Students are encouraged to set their own targets each term at report time.

#### 4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

##### 4. (a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is excellent.
- 4.2 The students' spiritual development is excellent. Students thrive in a nurturing environment and acquire high levels of self-esteem and confidence. Self-evaluation of their performance in academic subjects and in their CAS activities enables them to develop a keen awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. They learn to reflect on their own beliefs and those of their peers and to think about spirituality through the theory of knowledge and PSHE programmes; some choose to practise their faith through attending local places of worship. They develop informed views on concepts such as the meaning of life and issues concerning euthanasia.
- 4.3 The students' moral awareness is outstanding, fully reflecting the college's aims of developing honesty, compassion and responsibility to the community. Students know the difference between right and wrong and they recognise the fairness of the sanctions imposed, if they transgress rules. Their moral understanding is reinforced by an egalitarian culture with teachers acting as excellent role models. Students relish the many opportunities to discuss moral issues in their lessons, as in a German lesson on racism in football, a French lesson on non-government organisations and a literature lesson on honour and dignity in *Death of a Salesman* which was read in Italian. Students demonstrate concern for those less fortunate than themselves by participating enthusiastically in fund-raising events and other charitable activities.
- 4.4 The students' social development is extremely high. From the moment students enter the college, they embrace its aims of developing mutual respect and tolerance. They value the diversity of their environment and the integration of the different nationalities is highly successful. Students are supportive of each other and they alert their personal tutors if they think a friend needs help. They develop leadership skills through a range of activities, for example taking on roles in the student council, the college magazine or Young Enterprise. Students understand the concept of democracy. Students acquire a strong sense of responsibility towards the wider community. For example the 'Green Fingers' group takes care of plants in classrooms and supports a sustainable forestry project in Africa. A balanced programme of workshops enables students to develop a keen sense of political and economic awareness.

- 4.5 The students' cultural development is outstanding, fostered by the college policy of mixing nationalities across and within the houses, the programme of residential trips both abroad and in the UK, and occasional international days. The students' cultural knowledge is broadened by the opportunities they are given to compare cultural attitudes in class discussions, such as their countries' attitudes towards astrology or to give presentations on the problems facing their country. They develop their understanding of British history and culture through extra-curricular activities such as the British culture club.
- 4.6 The quality of the students' personal development is a strength of the college. By the time they leave, students have well-rounded personalities, they are articulate and self-assured, they can make informed decisions and they converse confidently with adults, including visitors. Through their life at the college, they develop easy relationships with students of many different nationalities and, on completing their courses, are ready to take their place in the global environment.

##### 4. (b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.7 The college's arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.8 The comprehensive system of personal tutors and wardens ensures that the individual needs of students are fully met and supports their excellent personal development. Students know that there is always an adult to whom they can talk and they value highly their weekly meetings with their personal tutors. The fortnightly grading and progress review allows them to devise effective strategies in collaboration with their tutors. Tutors liaise with wardens, the dean of students and subject teachers on all matters relating to their tutees and are thus able to praise and encourage, or deal swiftly with any issues concerning them. The thorough record-keeping system makes an important contribution to this framework.
- 4.9 Relationships between staff and students and among students themselves are excellent. They are built on mutual trust and students are treated, and respond, as young adults. Students are on first name terms with staff but this in no way detracts from the respect that they show. Students develop firm friendships with those from other countries and learn much from one another.
- 4.10 Students are strongly encouraged to develop healthy eating habits through the PSHE programme and communication with the catering department.



The compulsory IB requirement for physical activity ensures that they take regular exercise. Some students increase their level of fitness through additional activities which they organise independently of the college.

- 4.11 The college is highly effective in promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying. Robust policies ensure that constructive measures to ensure the students' welfare are in place. Students feel safe in their environment and are confident that any incidents will be dealt with firmly and rapidly.
- 4.12 The college has a suitable plan to improve the educational access for students with special educational needs.
- 4.13 A minority of students stated in the questionnaire that their views are not listened to, but the inspection evidence does not support this view. The students' suggestions for improvement are successfully represented by the student council. Student evaluation of the academic and non-academic programme has also been instrumental in enabling the introduction of new courses, for example within the PSHE programme.

#### **4. (c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.14 The college's arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.15 There is a very strong culture of safeguarding within the college, evident throughout the documentation and in the comprehensive approach to training. The safety and well being of the student are seen as paramount and all staff, including within the induction process, receive detailed guidance. Training for staff is updated regularly, including for the designated persons who work closely with local agencies.
- 4.16 The health and safety of students are taken very seriously, with sensible provision to ensure greater awareness on the part of the students as they mature. Day trips, residential visits, and activities are carefully planned, with associated risk assessments undertaken where appropriate. The premises are subject to regular scrutiny by external consultants, for example with regard to health and safety and fire risk. Their comments and recommended actions are acted upon appropriately. The documentary recording of actions taken, and those still to be implemented, is not wholly systematic and lacks rigour, although the students' welfare is never compromised. Other consultants report and advise the college in other areas such as electrical safety and gas.

- 4.17 Day students and boarders have access to a professionally staffed medical centre and appropriate records are kept of treatments and medication. The overall quality of medical provision is very good, and inspection evidence does not support the reservations expressed by some students in response to questionnaires. Accidents are carefully logged with additional reporting to the college's risk management group where appropriate. Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored.

#### **4. (d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.19 The excellent outcomes for boarders fulfil the college's aims, in particular to nurture an enduring commitment to global citizenship. Boarders contribute significantly to the distinctive nature of the college, in particular to the successful integration of the cultural and international dimensions within the college. Boarders often regard their residences as their second home. Students are elected as house representatives, enabling them to make a positive contribution through the student council with appropriate recommendations being adopted. Most students enthusiastically contribute to extra-curricular activities through an extensive programme which includes sport, music, drama and community action. They are very polite and well behaved. Students greatly enjoy each other's company and acknowledge the beneficial effect that boarding has on their independence and self-reliance.
- 4.20 In response to the questionnaire parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with boarding. In their questionnaires some students expressed adverse comments regarding the food and the availability of drinking water. Inspection evidence does not support these views, and meals sampled during the inspection were found to be of a high quality. Additionally all residences have the facility for students to prepare snacks and Sugar House offers an alternative and popular informal dining venue. The students' educational experience is further enriched by their engagement in the CAS programme offering nearly sixty activities. There is a strong emphasis on international and community activities and students expressed great appreciation of the programme.
- 4.21 The quality of the boarding provision and care is excellent. Thorough induction processes are in place for new students, including a four-day orientation programme. Parents and guardians of new boarders are invited to arrivals day at

the start of the college year to meet with the house wardens and college staff. Students reported that they feel safe and well cared for. Staff ensure that the academic and pastoral needs of individual students are well met and give freely of their time to assist students requiring extra support. In the questionnaire students indicated concerns about the quality of medical care which is provided, but this reservation was not supported by inspection evidence. Medical care is very good; nursing staff tend students who are unwell and two separate rooms are reserved to allow students to recuperate under supervision when the need arises. Very good collaboration between medical staff, wardens and the counselling services ensures a high standard of pastoral care is maintained and the college has responded effectively to the medical care recommendation in the previous Ofsted boarding welfare report. A healthy lifestyle is encouraged and students benefit from appropriate periods of non-directed time for rest, relaxation and study. Students comment positively on the more relaxed and less regulated atmosphere of the college, which promotes individual responsibility, closely reflecting that of a university lifestyle.

- 4.22 Boarding accommodation is comfortable and students have the opportunity to personalise their working and living space with posters, photographs, and personal items. A refurbishment programme is in progress and this has resulted in improvements across all houses with a number of residences being substantially refurbished to a very high standard, including rooms with en suite facilities. The general quality of provision of toilet and washroom facilities is high, and the houses are well heated and lit. The programme meets the requirement of the 2008 inspection. Routines and procedures are posted on the main house notice boards together with contact details allowing access to the college's medical room and independent counselling services. Students are able to communicate easily with their friends and parents via the wireless networks available in all residences which enable the use of software applications. Wardens and tutors maintain regular contact with parents, usually through email and telephone.
- 4.23 The effectiveness of the arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. The college senior management and house wardens ensure that child protection is given a high priority and implemented well. Procedures for promoting the welfare and safety of students are very well put into practice by the wardens, whilst also enabling the students to respond to the high level of trust which they

are accorded. In discussion, students reported without hesitation that they were treated almost as adults but that, should a concern arise, they know that there are members of staff and others to whom they can turn for assistance. All staff with access to students are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. All the required recruitment checks are completed and staff undergo thorough induction procedures. At all times students are under the supervision of suitably qualified and experienced staff, all of whom have received appropriate training and many of whom hold first-aid qualifications. Arrangements to ensure the safety of students in the residences are effective and access to houses is only available through individualised key cards. Students report no instances of bullying but they are fully aware of how to address any concerns, and confident that they will be dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Clear guidance is given on sanctions and rewards so that students know and understand what is expected of them, and they report that the system is fair.

- 4.24 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. Residences are led by very professional and dedicated wardens who demonstrate an on-going commitment to pastoral care. There is an effective appraisal scheme for boarding staff. Consistency of approach and uniformity of procedures are maintained without compromising the unique identity and flavour of each house. Steps are taken to improve the boarding experience with a strong emphasis on self-evaluation, and taking into account the views of boarders and their parents. The college development plan includes a major section relating to boarding, and this, as with the rest of the plan, is reviewed on a regular basis. Staff receive appropriate training and policies are understood, and implemented by, boarding staff.

## 5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### 5. (a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the college is good.
- 5.2 The governors are committed to supporting the college in achieving its central aim, namely the advancing of international education and understanding. Since the previous inspection the governing body has overseen a phased programme of refurbishment of the premises and approved an ambitious capital building programme designed to enhance the provision further.
- 5.3 Governors are informed about the college through detailed reports from senior managers, although they do not feel the need to have a thorough insight into the day-to-day working of the college. Presentations from staff precede the termly meetings of the full governing body and this academic forum is instrumental in helping governors to keep abreast of major developments within the college. This is sufficient to ensure the students' excellent academic achievement and personal development.
- 5.4 The board of governors contains a number of academics and business people with distinguished careers, several of whom have close connections with local universities. Governors have wide-ranging expertise, including considerable international experience, and this is used to support and challenge senior managers. There is also a staff-appointed governor who provides a channel of communication between staff and governors. The governors' expertise has been invaluable in providing input into financial risk management. A finance, personnel and general purposes committee meets to monitor the business aspects of the college and to make financial recommendations to the full board, ensuring appropriate staffing and resources.
- 5.5 The governors discharge their responsibilities very diligently with regard to safeguarding, and the full governing body conducts a thorough, annual review of child protection procedures, and one governor takes an additional, specialist interest in this aspect. The board also receives regular reports from the college on health and safety matters. Governors monitor the academic outcomes and financial provision very carefully although there is less rigorous monitoring of college policies. The governing body maintains oversight of the appointments procedures for staff and governors. There is an informal induction programme

in place for newly appointed governors but limited training for governors on an on-going basis.

### 5. (b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management of the college and its links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent.
- 5.7 The senior management group provides a clear focus and direction for the college and the aims and vision of the founders are promoted very effectively by senior staff. Staff lead by example and create an atmosphere of mutual respect and support. Concern for the needs and security of the individual are always at the forefront and safeguarding is a clear priority of the senior team. Furthermore, it has embedded the philosophy of the IB into every aspect of college life with training and regular review being a feature at all levels. The end result of such effective leadership is students who are confident and empowered and who achieve highly across a wide range of areas.
- 5.8 Since the previous inspection senior managers have focused much energy on successfully raising the quality of teaching and this has led to improved levels of academic achievement.
- 5.9 An effective appraisal system for teaching staff is in place which includes student comment and self-evaluation, and both formal and informal lesson observations. Pastoral staff also benefit from a rigorous appraisal system, so meeting the recommendation of the previous inspection. Staff training needs are identified and addressed systematically with comprehensive programmes in place to develop both teaching and support staff. Clear priorities are established and recent sessions have addressed dyslexia, theory of knowledge, motivation and student profiles. Staff development sessions are popular not only because of their quality but also because staff are closely consulted on their content. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, and there is a very thorough and effective induction programme in place for newly appointed staff.
- 5.10 A three-year development plan is in place at the college with a clear statement of priorities and the objectives to be met. The plan is reviewed and evaluated



on an annual basis. Heads of department, including boarding house staff, are involved in the process, with departmental plans clearly informing whole-college planning. There is a rolling programme of improvement in boarding provision which successfully addresses the recommendation of the previous inspection.

- 5.11 Academic managers are highly committed, both to their departments and to the ethos of the college and the unique experience which it provides. Their knowledge and monitoring of the work of the departments is thorough. There are, however, variations of approach to teaching and learning, marking and assessment both within and between departments. Resources within departments are well managed.
- 5.12 Pastoral management is very strong, including in boarding, as is leadership of support staff. Regular meetings with line managers ensure that all members of staff feel included.
- 5.13 Links with parents, carers and guardians are good. The college handles any concerns with great care and sensitivity, and the complaints policy is both appropriate and implemented properly where necessary. Responses to preinspection questionnaires show extremely high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the college's provision. Although a minority of parents in the parental survey stated that they do not feel involved in the life of the college, ample opportunities are provided. These include drama evenings, college events, graduation celebrations and scheduled parent meetings with staff, although the far-flung nature of many parents inevitably restricts the ability of some to attend. Many parents are given individual tours and opportunities to meet staff throughout the year. The college shows considerable flexibility and is highly effective in meeting the needs of overseas parents.
- 5.14 Parents receive regular, high quality reports every term and are also able to access useful academic and attendance data on the website. College policies are readily available on the comprehensive website, including those required for parents of current and prospective pupils. Letters can be translated on request and full information on all aspects of college life can be accessed from the UK and overseas. Parents have contact details for residence staff and personal tutors and effective communication is clearly maintained and recorded. Internet-based social media is used to supplement regular emails which are sent to parents. Students are interviewed during the admissions process and parents can update

and submit personal information online, as well as checking regularly on their child's attendance and academic progress.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

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