



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**DOVER COLLEGE**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Dover College

Full Name of School/College	<b>Dover College</b>
DfE Number	<b>886/6003</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>307856</b>
Address	<b>Dover College Effingham Crescent Dover Kent CT17 9RH</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01304 205969</b>
Fax Number	<b>01304 242208</b>
Email Address	<b>admissions@dovercollege.org.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Gerry Holden</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Joe Sullivan</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>307</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (171 boys; 136 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>0</b> 5-11: <b>54</b> 3-5 (EYFS): <b>20</b> 11-18: <b>233</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>193</b> Capacity for flexi-boarding: <b>18</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>114</b> Full: <b>104</b> Weekly: <b>10</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Miss Rachel Morley</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>29 Nov 2011 to 30 Nov 2011</b>

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in February 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced in March 2011 by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will 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.

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills	2
The quality of the pupils' personal development	3
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	4
<b>3 ACTION POINTS</b>	<b>5</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	5
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	5
<b>4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	<b>6</b>
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
<b>INSPECTION EVIDENCE</b>	<b>8</b>

## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Dover College was founded in 1871 by a group of local businessmen, in the medieval remains of a 12<sup>th</sup> century Benedictine priory in the heart of Dover; it includes the only Norman refectory in Britain which is still used for its original purpose. The school became fully co-educational in 1975. It currently provides both day and boarding education for pupils from the age of three to the age of eighteen. Overall responsibility is vested in a large governing body who meet annually, but in practice detailed governance is carried out by a smaller body, known as the council, together with sub-committees. The current headmaster has been in post since September 2011. Since the last inspection, BTEC courses have been introduced, a new music school and seminar room created and an appraisal system for staff introduced.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, there were 307 pupils on roll. Of these, 20 pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for pupils aged three to five, together with 54 pupils in Years 1 to 6, were in the junior school. The remaining 233 were in the senior school, made up of the Priory, for pupils in Years 7 and 8, Lower College for pupils in Years 9 to 11, and the sixth form for pupils in Years 12 and 13.
- 1.3 Pupils are recruited from the surrounding area, continental Europe and further afield. At present around a quarter of pupils come from overseas, with about 25 countries represented. A number join the International Study Centre each year, mainly into Years 9, 10 or 12. One hundred and fourteen pupils are boarders, all in Years 7 to 13. Pupils come from a wide range of professional and business families, with about a tenth from service families. Most are of white British origin, with a wide range of other ethnicities. The majority of pupils move into higher education when they leave.
- 1.4 The school aims to make school a profound and challenging experience by opening the minds and hearts of pupils, teachers and parents, thus developing the intellectual, physical, creative, spiritual and social faculties of all members of the community.
- 1.5 Pupils are admitted without academic selection. The analysis of standardised tests shows that the range of ability is broad. The ability profile is above the national average in the junior school and in line with the national average in the senior school; in the sixth form it is, in the judgement of inspectors, below the average for pupils taking A level. The school has identified 64 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 31 receive support in school; none has a statement of special educational needs. Ninety-one pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 50 receive support.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 Pupils' level of achievement is good; they are well educated in line with the school's aims. Junior pupils show an excellent grasp of grammatical elements, enabling them to interpret a text. They apply their understanding of science to predict results in investigations and use good numeracy skills to estimate weight. Across the curriculum, senior pupils develop a strong understanding when expected to think for themselves. An extended project on the implications of removing a wartime wreck from Dover harbour showed high quality research and presentation skills. When not required to think independently, pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills but are less able to apply them to new situations. Pupils of all ages and abilities speak confidently and clearly, are numerate and can use information and communication technology (ICT). They achieve success on the sports field, sing with conviction in the choir and show imagination and creativity in art. Pupils of a wide range of ability are successful in entry to university.
- 2.2 Results at GCSE over the years 2008-2010, the most recent years for which comparative data is available, show that pupils' performance was similar to the national average in 2008 and 2009, but good in relation to the national average in 2010; this improvement in the results was maintained in 2011. The results in 2010 and 2011, taken with the analysis of predictions from standardised tests, show that pupils now progress well to GCSE in relation to the progress of pupils of similar ability. Performance in IGCSE has been below international and UK norms. Results at A level were similar to the national average in 2008 and 2010, but below it in 2009. Since the range of ability in the sixth form is below the average for pupils taking A level, this shows that pupils continue to make good progress at this level. This is confirmed by the school's success in BTEC courses. Good progress is also made by pupils with EAL and SEND.
- 2.3 In the best lessons, pupils work independently and collaboratively, progressing well as a result. They remain focused and apply their knowledge to unfamiliar problems and situations. In lessons in which the teacher takes too prominent a role, pupils are more passive and take less initiative.
- 2.4 Teaching is good overall, showing more consistent strengths in the junior school. Teachers know pupils well and pupils, in turn, much appreciate the additional help they are given outside class. The best lessons are marked by clear explanation of key ideas, supported by well-chosen visual material. Questioning is probing, helping pupils to refine their ideas and apply their understanding to new situations. Pupils are given opportunities to work independently and are expected to think for themselves. A brisk pace is complemented by a good variety of activities in which pupils, not teachers, are the key players. Planning is continually reviewed to take account of pupils' needs. In the smaller proportion of lessons which are no more than satisfactory, teaching is less well planned, offers too narrow a range of activities or involves too much input by the teacher and not enough by the pupil. The pace is slow and questions are closed, stimulating a limited range of responses from the pupils and reflecting lower expectations of them, especially for older pupils. Marking is generally good, with plenty of comments to show pupils how to improve their work. Assessment is used to monitor the progress of individual pupils and of the school as a whole.

- 2.5 The curriculum is broad and generally balanced and has been successfully adapted to support learners of a wide range of abilities. For example, a range of BTEC courses is available in Years 10 to 13, including those in sport, business and travel and tourism. The curriculum is flexible so that, for example, Year 13 pupils can take Year 12 classes and similar flexibility has been used in the junior school. However, at GCSE, separate sciences are not offered except in exceptional circumstances. Since the last ISI inspection, ICT has been provided as a discrete subject and religious studies has been introduced to Years 7, 8 and 9. Appropriate support is provided for pupils with EAL and those with SEND, and pupils who use this support say they value the help they receive. A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities support pupils' learning. Amongst these are a thriving Young Enterprise programme, various societies, and the chance to travel near and far. Almost all parents agree that their children are offered a good range of subjects and activities.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 2.6 Pupils' development is excellent throughout the school, fully meeting its aims of developing confidence by educating the whole person. Their good spiritual development is shown by a high degree of self-esteem and self-confidence which result from the excellent relationships and the extensive opportunities provided, especially through extra-curricular activities. Pupils participate in chapel services each week; they benefit from the fact that chapel is open to all during the day and to boarders during the evening. The school has a strong Christian ethos, but the range of faiths represented is celebrated through events led by both staff and pupils, and through lively displays around the school.
- 2.7 The pupils' excellent moral development is demonstrated by the respectful relationships they enjoy which, together with their good behaviour, demonstrate a strong set of moral values. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and initiate their own code of conduct by drawing up their own class rules. Class rewards, house points and merits are much valued. Pupils show their responsibility towards the needs of others by their willingness to be involved in many national and international charities, raising large sums in donations each year. The work staff and pupils have undertaken with underprivileged children in the Ukraine has enabled pupils to reflect upon their own lives and increased their awareness of global political issues; where appropriate, they have brought this understanding into other areas of learning.
- 2.8 Pupils' social awareness is excellent. The strong emphasis on community helps pupils to develop excellent social skills. Pupils readily accept positions of responsibility, for example, as head boy and girl in both parts of the school, as school and house prefects and in other areas. The school council has enabled pupils to express their opinions on school matters and to make a difference.
- 2.9 Pupils' cultural development is also excellent. Pupils come from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds, and their understanding and respect for other cultures creates a harmonious atmosphere and engenders a strong community spirit. An extensive range of trips, both abroad and in the UK, alongside visits to museums and theatres, provides further opportunities for pupils' cultural development.
- 2.10 Throughout the school, strong pastoral care results in a caring and friendly community where pupils feel highly valued. Pastoral arrangements are clearly understood and the whole teaching staff meet weekly to discuss any issues. Pupils feel comfortable to talk to any member of staff if they have a concern or a problem to be resolved. Pupils of all ages were confident that unpleasantness between pupils is

rare and that it would be quickly dealt with if it occurred. Teachers know their pupils well and parents are kept well-informed of any concerns regarding their children. Boarding contributes much to the personal development of pupils who board.

- 2.11 The school has good arrangements for supporting pupils' welfare, health and safety. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and staff have received appropriate training in child protection. Pupils' medical needs are well provided for. They enjoy a good choice of hot and cold dishes when eating lunch in the Norman refectory. The sports programme provides ample opportunity for exercise. The school has an appropriate policy and plan to develop access for pupils with disability. Attendance and admission registers are properly maintained.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.12 In almost all respects, governors give good oversight to the school and the education it provides, and bring a broad range of experience and expertise to their work. Council meetings provide proper opportunity for the discussion of strategic issues and routine business. The sub-committees draw usefully on the wider group of governors as well as on council members, thus broadening the range of expertise available. The presence of senior staff on sub-committees gives governors valuable insight into the school's leadership and management. Finance is well managed, reflecting a shrewd understanding of the school's priorities. Along with senior staff, governors give careful attention to matters of welfare and safeguarding in almost all respects, although some omissions in the central register of appointments had gone undetected in the past; suitable action has now been taken to create a more robust system in future. Parents are very pleased with the role played by governors.
- 2.13 Within the school, the good quality of senior leadership is based on excellent working relationships and gives a clear direction to the school's everyday life. Policies and procedures are monitored and implemented properly. The structure of heads of faculty provides academic leadership in an appropriate way for the size of school, and heads of faculty play an important role in the annual review of departments. Despite this, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain, especially in opportunities for older pupils to participate fully in their own learning. Led by the new headmaster, the school has a clear sense of priorities and commitment to its core ethos; both governors and staff contribute much to the sense of community which pervades the school. Both pupils and their parents say how well the school is run.
- 2.14 The school enjoys considerable support from parents. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were highly complementary about their children's education, in particular praising the curriculum, the quality of pastoral care, the way they are encouraged to become involved in the school, and the ease of communication; inspectors agreed with all these views. No criticisms were shared by a significant number of parents. The Friends of Dover College provide welcome support to the school, both financially and socially. In general, reports provide a clear picture of pupils' achievements and how they should develop them further. The school has an appropriate complaints procedure and the scrutiny of a sample of correspondence shows it gives proper attention to any concerns.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

3.1 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore must:

- ensure that all the required checks are completed before staff begin work and that the dates on which they are completed are recorded in the central register [Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety, and Part 4, paragraph 22(3) (b) under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors].

#### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

3.2 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that pupils have greater opportunities to work and think independently, that questioning is challenging and that activities are varied, especially in the senior school.
2. In the EYFS, extend the opportunities for open-ended self-initiated activities, particularly outdoors.

#### **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

##### **4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.1 The effectiveness of the setting is good. It meets children's needs well and fulfils its aim to provide a rich and varied environment supporting children's learning and development, personal welfare and well-being. Children make good progress in their learning, benefiting from dedicated and enthusiastic staff who work extremely well as a team. Adults recognise the uniqueness of each child as reflected in the excellent 'Learning Journeys'. Children are very well prepared for Year 1. Strong support from senior managers and governors ensures that the capacity for future development is high.

##### **4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.2 The quality of leadership and management is good overall, despite past shortcomings in the central register of appointments. Effective policies and practices ensure that standards are improved and children safeguarded, enabling all of them to have the opportunity to develop fully. The number of well-qualified staff ensure that the required staffing ratios are met. Comprehensive risk assessments ensure that buildings and equipment are regularly checked and safe. Regular monitoring of policies, provision and outcomes leads to the identification of targets for further improvement. Children's needs are exceptionally well met through highly effective partnerships with parents, carers and others. Parents are very happy with the quality of provision. Opportunities exist for them to participate in the daily life of the setting, but a small number have stated that they would appreciate a more active role. Good use of resources allows every child an equal opportunity to succeed.

##### **4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.3 Provision is good, with a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Space within the compact classrooms is used extremely well to provide a wide range of accessible and stimulating resources to support children's learning. Outdoor provision is good, but provides fewer opportunities for independent, child-initiated play. Excellent assessment procedures, including input from parents and reflective evaluations, provide a clear record of children's development. Planning takes excellent note of children's individuality. A highly effective key person approach, combined with close relationships with parents, local providers and other agencies, provides valuable support, particularly for children with additional needs. Hygiene routines are effectively reinforced, and cooking activities and a varied lunch menu introduce children to healthy eating. Thought-provoking assemblies help children to feel part of the whole-school community and broaden their knowledge of the wider world. Daily checks of equipment and facilities ensure that hazards are removed quickly.

#### **4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.4 Children make consistently good progress with most achieving and, in some cases, exceeding the early learning goals by the age of five. In Nursery, children develop good speaking and listening skills and, in Reception, continue to make good progress in literacy, blending letter sounds and writing simple words and sentences. In numeracy, children count confidently to 20 in real life and play situations. They use ICT with increasing confidence, becoming familiar with technology and using digital cameras and camcorders independently. Children's behaviour is exceptionally good and they understand the need to take care to be safe. Children are helpful, thoughtful and cooperative, responding well to the expectations of key people, with whom they develop secure relationships. They recognise the importance of adopting good hygiene habits and the benefits of physical activity, and can explain what constitutes a healthy diet.

**Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

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

### **Inspectors**

Mr Ian Newton

Mrs Dee Hutley

Mr John Tuson

Mr Chris Manville

Reporting Inspector

Former Principal ISA school

Academic Deputy Head, HMC school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector