

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **Alleyn's School**

The junior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	<b>Alleyn's School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>210/6312</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1057971</b>
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Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Raymond Cousins</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 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 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 Alleyn's is a co-educational day school which, together with its junior school, educates approximately 1200 boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 18, the senior school catering for those over the age of 11. It is one of three schools originating from Edward Alleyn's Foundation of a 'College of God's Gift' in 1619, the others being Dulwich College for boys and James Allen's Girls' School.
- 1.2 Alleyn's distinctive vision within the Foundation is to provide 'co-educational excellence for all, in a caring, friendly, tolerant community'. The school believes in educating boys and girls together as preparation for life; it values academic excellence and sets out to educate pupils of high academic ability; it aspires to provide sufficient bursaries at age 11 to allow access for able children, irrespective of financial means; it respects the diversity of pupils and staff and the breadth of perspective that different backgrounds bring; it affirms the importance of a broad and inclusive academic and co-curricular programme for each pupil; it interprets the Founder's prayer that the school should be a place of 'godliness and good learning' in terms of respect for all faiths and the promotion of high moral standards and tolerance within a religious framework; it aims to foster a close and caring community with excellent pastoral care; through involvement with the community and in service and leadership activities, it seeks to engender in pupils mutual respect, social responsibility, concern for others and confidence in their own ability to make a difference.
- 1.3 The school occupies a 26-acre site in the village of Dulwich in South-East London. Alleyn's was established as a separate school within the Foundation in 1882 and some of the main buildings date from then. Originally only for boys from the age of 11, the school had direct-grant status from 1958 until 1975, after which the governors opted for full independence and embraced coeducation. Alleyn's Junior School, with approximately 230 girls and boys between the ages of 4 and 11, opened in 1992 and occupies part of the same site.
- 1.4 The present headmaster has been in post since September 2002. Since the last inspection in February 2002, the school has reviewed its aims and the governance and management structures needed to achieve them. In particular, a governors' strategy committee, an academic policy committee and the new posts of director of studies and deputy head (pastoral and personnel) have been created. An audit has been conducted of the school site, following which a new multi-purpose performance and teaching building will be completed during 2008 and is being combined with a pedestrianisation and landscaping programme covering the whole site.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection 960 pupils aged between 10 and 18 years, were attending the senior school, 481 girls and 479 boys. Of these, 277 pupils, 142 girls and 135 boys, were members of the sixth form. Entry to the school is selective. Approximately one third of pupils entering at age 11 transfers automatically from the junior school. The remainder is admitted following tests in English, mathematics and verbal and non-verbal reasoning papers. Candidates achieving an acceptable standard are invited for interview. The younger siblings of pupils in the school are given some preference in the selection process, which also recognizes exceptional family circumstances and the candidate's previous school record. Small numbers are admitted at age 13 and to the sixth form. Such entrants have to demonstrate their ability to fit into the year group.
- 1.6 The pupils come from a variety of economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the school's location within the city of London. One in three receives some assistance with the

fees in the form of a scholarship or bursary. The highly competitive nature of the entry to the school means that many travel from across the city.

- 1.7 Scores in standardized tests indicate that the average ability of the pupils in the school is far above the national average. Where pupils are performing in line with their abilities their examination results are expected to be above the average achieved nationally in maintained selective schools.
- 1.8 Four pupils at the school have a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified a further 205 pupils as having a recognised learning difference, mostly dyslexia, of whom 64 were receiving specialist individual tuition during the period of the inspection as part of a rolling programme of support for such pupils. Ten pupils are identified as not having English as their principal language, of whom 6 receive additional tuition.
- 1.9 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Years 7 and 8 are also referred to when appropriate as the Lower School; Years 9, 10 and 11 as the Middle School; and Years 12 and 13 as either the Upper School or the sixth form.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The school offers a broad, holistic education which encourages tolerance, inclusiveness, and a liberal approach and which, although broadly Christian in ethos, is not constrained by denomination or creed. As at the last inspection, the educational experience provided is of high calibre, and faithful to the stated aims, vision and values.
- 2.2 The curriculum is clearly documented, broad and generally well balanced in respect to core subjects. Since the last inspection, it has been enhanced and extended at sixth-form level by the addition of new subjects at A2 level, such as philosophy, media studies, politics and psychology, and nearly all subjects can now be studied through to A2 level as a clear matter of policy. The curriculum promotes strong skills of literacy and numeracy and confidence in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning across the curriculum, and is appropriate for the able, receptive and highly articulate learners that populate the school. Much has been reviewed since the time of the last inspection, but cause for concern remains over both the language choices leading up to GCSE and the relative balance of creative subjects such as art, music and design technology in Year 9. The school has considered both these issues and concluded that present arrangements, though not ideal, represent the best solution available at the present time. Schemes of work in the junior school do not as yet dovetail seamlessly with those of the senior school, but a planned programme of inter-departmental liaison has been established to address this.
- 2.3 The co-curricular programme is outstanding and is valued by pupils, parents, staff and governors alike. The school offers an extensive range of activities related to music, drama and sport together with countless other clubs, often run by the pupils themselves. This enriches the educational experience and contributes effectively to personal development and challenge. The programme is open to all, and all can and do participate freely, irrespective of talent. A significant number of boys and girls achieve distinction at county, national and international levels in their field. Numerous valuable opportunities for leadership are provided, especially through the combined cadet force (CCF) and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils gain from helping with a number of schemes to serve the local community, such as the Saturday mathematics initiative set up to provide tuition and support to talented young mathematicians from the locality. The wealth of activities offered is a feature of the school, but the programme as a whole is insufficiently evaluated and monitored to ensure balance and to track individual pupil participation and access. This the school has recognised in the recent appointment of an assistant head with specific responsibility in this area.
- 2.4 Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is generally good and in line with the school's aims and ethos. It is effectively taught through the house and tutor systems, with close guidance from the head of PSHE. Anomalously, the timetable does not provide a tutor period for this in Years 8 and 12 where provision is, in consequence, variable. The school does try to compensate for this by arranging special sessions on particular topics, often with outside speakers.
- 2.5 Issues of curricular development are under continuous review and the new management structures now in place, including the academic policy committee which involves a cross-section of teaching staff and a governor, allow wide and systemic consultation to take place to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to derive full benefit from what is offered.

- 2.6 Provision for pupils with identified learning differences has been strengthened since the last inspection. These pupils are more efficiently identified and teachers are generally sensitive to their requirements as specified in their individual education plans (IEPs). The learning support co-ordinator is now assisted by two part-time assistants. The requirements of those pupils with a statement of special educational needs are identified in their IEPs and appropriately provided. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are given effective help to enable them to progress.
- 2.7 Careers advice is good and begins in Year 9. A highlight of the programme is the post-GCSE work experience scheme. Outside speakers, including alumni, are regularly invited to speak on career-related topics and all pupils are required to attend a minimum number of such events. The school's in-house provision is enhanced by the support of county advisors, external courses, careers conventions and the use of computer-generated schemes to assist university and career selection. Pupils are well satisfied with the help and guidance that they receive.
- 2.8 The pupils recognise and appreciate the quality and breadth of the education that they are being offered and are rightly proud of their school, as was evident in the responses of those who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.10 Pupils throughout the school achieve well in relation to their abilities. Pupils' co-curricular achievements at all levels and at all ages are one of the strengths of the school. Independent learning skills, including the use of ICT and books, have improved since the last report. The school clearly demonstrates that it fulfils its aims to value, foster and encourage academic excellence and wide-ranging co-curricular achievement in boys and girls of high academic ability. Pupils' attitude towards and enthusiasm for learning are excellent.
- 2.11 At all stages of the school, pupils show good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill and achieve well in relation to their abilities in both the classroom and co-curricular activities. Pupils apply their knowledge, skill and understanding effectively in lessons and frequently demonstrate their ability to think critically and creatively. Pupils argue cogently and think for themselves. At times pupils' questioning of others and their intellectual curiosity serve as triggers for their peers and, indeed, for their teachers to be on their mettle and raise their performance. They are articulate, thoughtful and reflective learners who are willing to listen and to engage fully with whatever challenges teachers put before them.
- 2.12 Pupils write fluently for a wide range of purposes. Pupils in Year 8, writing commentaries on a short story they had written for small children, demonstrated their sound understanding of how what they write can be manipulated for different audiences. Mathematical and numerical skills are well developed and pupils apply them effectively where needed across the curriculum. They are regular and competent users of ICT as a learning tool.
- 2.13 No consistent and significant difference in attainment between different groups of pupils or subjects is apparent, although A-level results in English and mathematics are consistently good and above expectation.
- 2.14 Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve standards that are good in relation to their abilities, often demonstrating high levels of knowledge and understanding in their responses to questions in class. Results at GCSE over the three years to 2006 are above, and often well above, the average achieved nationally in maintained selective schools. Pupils achieve results that are at

least in line with their abilities in all subjects, and in most subjects have been good in the last two years. Standardised measures of progress confirm that pupils' progress to GCSE is above national norms in all subjects. Results at A level over the same period to 2006 are well above the average achieved nationally in maintained selective schools. Pupils are achieving good results at A level relative to their abilities. Standardised measures show that progress to A level is above national norms in most subjects. Results at both GCSE and A level have been consistently improving over recent years.

- 2.15 Pupils achieve considerable success in many co-curricular fields. Individual pupils have achieved international and national success in sport, and pupils from Alleyn's are also represented in the National Youth Orchestra and in the National Youth Theatre. Whilst it is significant that pupils can reach the highest heights, it is clear that the school also enables pupils of all abilities to enjoy acquiring new skills and interests through their participation in the co-curricular programme. The house music competition is much enjoyed by all and a recent audit of musical activity has confirmed the existence of suitable ensembles for any pupil in the school who plays a musical instrument. At all levels and in all activities, including knitting, enjoyment is central to co-curricular activities, and that, in turn, leads to achievement and high levels of satisfaction. Pupils are particularly delighted that their initiatives for running clubs, societies, or even a floating Year 11 promenade concert are welcomed, supported and encouraged by staff. The CCF, Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, music tours to Europe and charity appeals all allow pupils to work together to achieve communal aims, and pupils' achievements in organising fashion shows and other fund-raising events are notable.
- 2.16 Pupils are willing and cooperative learners, who make good use of the internet and the library. Given the opportunity, they work very well in groups to develop ideas. In many instances pupils demonstrate that they can rise to the challenge of establishing areas for further independent study and then bring the insights gained from that work to bear on their further learning, as was seen in a range of subjects including English, media studies, music and theatre studies. Pupils take full advantage of the wide range of activities and, if a desired activity is missing, they are quick to organize it for themselves, and numerous societies and interest groups flourish through the energy and initiative of pupil leaders and organisers.
- 2.17 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They study enthusiastically and with a real sense of enquiry. Throughout the school, they settle quickly and apply themselves eagerly. They are keen to please their teachers and do not want to let them down. Most particularly, however, they are aware that they work to be true to their own aptitudes and potential. For most the pressure and the motivation comes from within.

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

- 2.18 Interpreting 'godliness' in its widest sense, the school is very successful in meeting its aim of producing well-rounded young men and women who have an awareness of the spiritual and moral dimensions to human life, who are aware of their responsibilities as members of society and tolerant of cultural differences. As was recorded in the last report, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils in the school is good and, in many respects, outstanding.
- 2.19 The pupils are exceptionally aware and willing to engage with spiritual issues. Many pupils develop sensitivity and a sense of wonder through their experience of music, drama or art. The chaplaincy functions with a light touch and tolerance and mutual respect are evidently valued above dogma. The pupils respond positively to this caring, low-key approach. Members of the Upper School attend one assembly per week, which usually includes prayers and a hymn and a short address, enabling them to experience an act of collective worship and

to listen to a range of people talking about their values and beliefs. The Lower and Middle Schools hold two assemblies per week. The Christian Union, which meets weekly, has established links with a Christian group based at a local church and members of this group run a Lower School club which provides a useful forum for discussion of religious and spiritual issues for those who wish to participate. The result is that the pupils are alert to how beliefs and values affect people's lives.

- 2.20 The demeanour and behaviour of the pupils are clear indicators of a community whose members have an excellent and well-developed sense of right and wrong. Discussion of moral issues is strongly encouraged at the school. Besides assemblies, religious studies and PSHE lessons lend themselves readily to discussion of ethical questions. Sixth-form students participate in co-curricular philosophy and ethics sessions and A-level psychology students were observed discussing the ethical implications of psychological experiments performed on human subjects. Pupils are highly aware of the importance of distinguishing between right and wrong.
- 2.21 The social development of the pupils at the school is outstanding and is one of the strengths of the school. Relationships at all levels are very positive with an underlying sense of respect. Pupils benefit from the many and varied opportunities to develop leadership skills in, for example, the CCF, the school council or through community service, and many grasp them with confidence and enthusiasm. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is burgeoning: approximately 150 pupils are presently involved in working towards bronze, silver and gold awards. Over 90 pupils intend to travel to the school's field centre in the Easter holidays to complete their expeditions, supported by 12 members of staff. The school's CCF is strong and vigorous with Upper School pupils instructing pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 in a range of skills. Pupil-led activities are encouraged and senior pupils are very ready to lead, as was seen in a 'hip-hop' dance session led by two sixth-form students in the dance studio. In the last year two sixth-form-led drama productions have been staged, *The Dumb Waiter* by Pinter and *How Much is Your Iron* by Brecht. Pupils are fully involved in raising money for charity, with, once again, the prefects taking a strong lead in organising fund-raising events. The house structure effectively encourages friendly and supportive social interaction between different year groups, as is apparent watching pupils on the move between lessons.
- 2.22 Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the public institutions of England is variable. PSHE lessons foster some limited understanding of the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen. The police schools' liaison officer is a regular visitor to the school and Year 8 pupils recently enjoyed a PSHE day on the theme of 'safety in the street'. General studies lessons in the Upper School include politics and sociology, and the BBC's political correspondent addressed a very well attended politics society meeting during one lunchtime. Discussion with senior pupils revealed them to be well-informed and interested by current affairs.
- 2.23 The cultural development of the students is good, in so far as they are well versed in western European culture, but their knowledge and understanding of wider world cultures is less wide ranging. The religious studies syllabus is principally Christian in focus and, although it includes study of Old Testament Judaism, places little emphasis on learning about other world religions. The school is aware that the ethnic mix of the pupils reflects its location in Dulwich, rather than the full cultural diversity of South-East London. When the school actively seeks ways of promoting pupils' understanding of the cultures and faiths of their neighbours, as happened when a moving Middle School assembly was led by two girls who spoke about their recent visit to Auschwitz, pupils respond well, but such opportunities are infrequent. A large number of overseas trips is arranged: groups have recently visited

Canada, Japan, Iceland, Spain, France and some have been involved in an exchange visit to a school in Thailand, which does extend the cultural awareness of those who participate.

- 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 Teaching at all stages of the school is mostly good, and some is outstanding in that it provides excitement, challenge and enrichment well beyond the curriculum. The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection in that none is now unsatisfactory. However, as the school is aware, a small but significant proportion fails to inspire the pursuit of excellence. The respectful and supportive relationship between teachers and their pupils leads to a purposeful teaching atmosphere in which pupils behave well and enjoy learning.
- 2.26 Teaching effectively enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make appropriate progress according to their ability. Parents and pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaires rightly recognised the positive contribution that teaching makes to pupils' attainment. Although better than at the time of the last inspection, there remains a lack of consistency in teaching quality. In the least effective lessons, teachers rely too heavily on worksheets or dictated notes and provide too little challenge to excite able pupils. Teachers are made well aware of the needs and appropriate teaching strategies for pupils in their classes with learning differences, including the most able, and generally make adjustments to allow all pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Very good support systems are in place for such pupils outside the classroom. In some subjects, such as history, a range of extension reading and activities is provided for pupils wishing to pursue their interest.
- 2.27 Most teaching is successful in provoking pupils to be interested in their work, to be keen to do well and to exert considerable intellectual, physical and creative effort in asking challenging questions and pursuing topics beyond the limits of lessons. Pupils in a Year 7 geography lesson contributed enthusiastically and ably in a devised drama exercise to demonstrate river processes, and A-level politics students challenged the teacher's ideas and evaluated visual material in a combative and intelligent manner. Even when some teaching lacks sufficient pace and challenge, teachers' expectations that pupils are well-motivated learners are generally satisfied. However, some written tasks and teaching styles serve to constrain learning and limit the quality of written work, and the opportunities provided for independent learning are inconsistent across departments. When opportunities are provided for challenging and open-ended work, pupils respond with enthusiasm and high standards are reached. For example, the extended writing of pupils in Year 9 on *Twelfth Night* was thoughtful, insightful and detailed. Teaching in a Year 10 art lesson stimulated pupils to think and plan for themselves drawing on their experience of a wide variety of materials and processes.
- 2.28 The expectations of teachers and the secure style which typifies much of the teaching foster responsible behaviour, as does the clear mutual respect between pupils and their teachers. Scrutiny of pupils' work, and subsequent interviews, confirmed the pupils' enjoyment of school life in general and of the work that they do.

- 2.29 Most teaching is carefully planned to make good and purposeful use of the time available. Many lessons use a range of activities and teaching styles which evoke in the pupils an enjoyment of learning and a willingness to enter into exciting tasks with enthusiasm. Schemes of work are comprehensive and clear and provide good guidance for lessons, including a range of methods and activities.
- 2.30 Teachers are well informed of the aptitudes and range of learning needs of the pupils within this very able cohort. The IEPs provided for some pupils give clear guidance to assist teachers in providing appropriate and effective support. A number of pupils are encouraged to use laptops in lessons to record their notes, rather than hand writing them. In many lessons, the variety of teaching methods used allows pupils with different learning styles to benefit. Teachers at all stages in the school know their pupils well and the positive relationships in the classroom enable questions to be asked within a supportive environment.
- 2.31 The content and level of teaching in the Lower School is informed by some contact with the junior school and other feeder schools, although this contact is currently limited in scope in some subjects and departments. A framework for increasing contact between the two parts of the school has recently been established.
- 2.32 Teachers are well qualified specialists and demonstrate a strong subject knowledge and understanding of the material taught at all levels. Many have an evident passion and enthusiasm for their subjects, recognised by the pupils, which positively affects the learning outcomes for pupils.
- 2.33 Departments are amply resourced and are able to acquire up-to-date textbooks, subscribe to specialist journals and enhance their teaching with practical equipment, such as for field work in geography. Most teaching rooms have the advantage of data projectors as well as interactive whiteboards and this equipment is increasingly being used to enhance teaching. Science laboratories are well equipped, as is the school library. In most teaching effective use is made of the resources available.
- 2.34 Assessment and marking procedures throughout the school are adequate for their purpose, although practice is inconsistent within and between departments. Most subject departments have devised helpful marking descriptors to enable marks to be interpreted, although not all departments share these with the pupils. Nevertheless, pupils clearly understand the different marking strategies in use and appreciate the supportive comments that are frequently made on marked work, although those comments do not always indicate ways in which work can be improved. Constructive comment, which serves to promote further development of work, is most common in the GCSE, AS and A-level examination years, where examination criteria are widely used. Efficient records of marks awarded are kept by teachers in mark books or on computer systems, and in some subjects these are monitored by heads of department.
- 2.35 In some departments, such as history and the sciences, the academic performance of pupils is regularly recorded and monitored on a department database to build up an individual academic profile for each pupil. These profiles are used to manage pupil performance in the subject. Work is in progress to spread this very good practice throughout the academic departments.
- 2.36 The school is developing procedures for pupils' performance to be evaluated against national norms. Scores in standardised tests taken by all incoming pupils are compared with the school entrance test results to identify any anomalies and enable appropriate remedial action. In Year 10, scores in standardised tests are used in conjunction with the school's own judgement to generate GCSE target grades for pupils and subsequent progress is evaluated against those targets, enabling underperformance to be more readily identified. Target grades

for all public examinations are generated by the director of studies in order to guide and motivate pupils and to provide a benchmark for success. Work is in progress to involve subject departments more closely in using statistical measurements to analysis progress.

2.37 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 outstanding quality of the pastoral care throughout the school is consistent with the school's aim to foster a close and caring community within a culture of excellent pastoral care. Measures to safeguard the health, safety and well-being of pupils are well established and effective. Since the last inspection the school has reviewed and strengthened the pastoral system, appointed an additional counsellor and trained some pupil counsellors. In addition to this, significant improvements have been made to the security, access and traffic-management systems.
- 3.2 The care, support and guidance provided by form tutors, housemasters and heads of section are extremely effective and highly regarded by parents and pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaires. Tutors meet their forms daily for registration as well as during the weekly form period, except during Years 8 and 12 when there is no weekly tutor period, enabling them to know the pupils well and to maintain regular contact with each one. Houses meet regularly and housemasters also know the pupils in their houses well. Good channels of communication between the pastoral teams, teachers, parents and the pupils enable problems and issues to be responded to efficiently and quickly.
- 3.3 Every pupil in the school has the benefit of the support and guidance of a form tutor and a head of section and, from Year 9 onwards, an extra strand is added in the form of a housemaster. The structure provides each pupil with a choice of people to whom they can turn for advice. Effective communication between these key personnel is central to the success of these pastoral arrangements and house staff meet regularly with the senior management team to ensure good liaison. High quality specialist advice and support is available when needed for careers and university admissions from the schools careers department, from the counsellors and from the health centre staff and the chaplain, who is also the designated child protection officer.
- 3.4 Relationships between the staff and the pupils are extremely positive and mutually respectful throughout the school. Relationships between the pupils within and across the age groups are positive and supportive. Throughout the school pupils are polite and considerate, including to one another. Parents are highly supportive of the attitudes and values promoted in the school. The overwhelming majority of pupils participating in the pre-inspection questionnaire responded that they like being at the school and one in five added a comment about the warm and friendly ethos and how helpful the members of staff are.
- 3.5 Good discipline is expected by teachers and, as a result, behaviour is consistently of a high standard. Pupils confirm that measures to promote good discipline are consistent and fair. They are based on mutual respect and on the assumption of self restraint and consideration for others. Pupils understand what is expected of them and behave courteously, with confidence and without arrogance. Pupils are confident that the measures in place to guard against any form of harassment or bullying are effective and that any issue raised by them will be dealt with promptly and appropriately. The recent development of the role of student counsellors is appreciated by the pupils.
- 3.6 The school's policies and procedures for the protection of children are well thought out and effectively applied. All members of teaching staff and, more recently, all members of the non-teaching and administrative staff have received appropriate training in child protection. New members of staff receive this training as part of the induction process and all are given

- regular updates of their child protection training. The school has made every effort to ensure safe recruitment processes and current procedures are rigorous and effective.
- 3.7 A large number of staff are trained in basic and higher level first aid. Six members of staff are trained to use a defibrillator, with the aim of ensuring that at least one person trained in the use of this equipment is on-site when the school is open. The health centre offers expert care, support and guidance to the community. The centre's open-door policy enables anyone at anytime to 'drop in' where they will receive a warm and friendly welcome.
- 3.8 Effective measures are in place to minimise the risk from fire, including fire risk assessment and the regular testing of appliances and emergency evacuation precautions. The school employs external consultants to advise on fire and health and safety issues. Appropriate and effective measures are in place to ensure health and safety and proper compliance with regulations, and these are well monitored by both senior managers and governors. Departments are required to produce comprehensive risk assessments. Members of staff are, in general, appropriately trained to use the equipment required for their roles although, in some areas where specific training needs to be updated at regular intervals, sufficiently accurate records of when this is due have not been kept. The management of the safety issues arising as a result of the extensive building project in the heart of the school has been effective.
- 3.9 The catering arrangements are good and the menu offers an attractive choice and variety. Pupils are made aware of the issues surrounding healthy eating and the need for regular exercise through the PSHE and physical education programmes and the information available from the health centre.
- 3.10 A newly adopted electronic registration system has made the maintenance of accurate attendance and admissions registers easier and current procedures are very effective.
- 3.11 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**

- 3.12 The school has established an excellent array of links with the parents, in line with its aim to promote a caring, friendly and tolerant community. The overwhelming majority of the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire is highly satisfied with the education and support provided for their children and with the manner in which the school responds to any concerns that they raise. Links with the community are plentiful and exceptionally well-developed. As was identified at the last inspection, the school's links with its parents and the community are among its real strengths and continue to contribute positively to the fostering of good relationships and to a sense of belonging to the school community.
- 3.13 Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed a very high degree of satisfaction with the school. The most positive aspects identified by the parents are the worthwhile values and attitudes promoted by the school, the help that teaching gives to progress, the extensive range of co-curricular activities and the broad and balanced variety of subjects. One in ten of the parents responding to the questionnaire added a comment to the effect that they are very satisfied with the way in which their child is thriving at the school.

- 3.14 A small minority of parents expressed concern about the sufficiency of help given to pupils with identified learning differences. Inspection evidence showed that the school's provision for those with learning differences is both sufficient and effective and has been recently improved by the appointment of additional specialist teaching staff. Classroom teachers are provided with detailed IEPs for pupils identified with learning differences and the generally good teaching that prevails throughout the school ensures that each pupil is given every opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- 3.15 The school encourages all parents to be involved in the work and progress of their children by welcoming support at school events, music concerts, drama performances and matches. Opportunities for parental involvement abound. For example, parents conduct mock university or careers interviews with sixth-form students and the headmaster's recently introduced lunches, held each Advent and Lent term with an open invitation to all parents. These have no fixed agenda and parents are able to raise any issue in a relaxed manner, providing a valuable additional channel of communication as well as an opportunity for parental involvement.
- 3.16 The Alleyn's Association provides parents with further good opportunities to be involved with the life of the school. Its objective to 'foster communication and relationships between the staff, parents and others associated with the school by engaging in activities, both social and educational' significantly assists with the development of a sense of unity within the school community. The very committed officers successfully support the school in organising a range of fund-raising and social activities during the course of the year. Association events include 'welcome' parties for the parents of new pupils, quiz nights and numerous educational events, such as the careers programme for pupils in Year 11.
- 3.17 Parents are provided with regular and wide-ranging information about the school and its activities. The prospectus, the termly newsletter, the high-quality school magazine, the Edward Alleyn Club magazine, Alleyn's alumni e-bulletin and the school's website all convey much useful information about the school. Through the variety of communication provided, the school effectively highlights and celebrates success in a broad range of activities as well as giving useful notice of forthcoming events. The school website gives parents ready access to many school policies and procedures, including the school's vision and values statement, the development plan and the parental information guides.
- 3.18 The written reports sent out twice a year, as well as the interim grade sheets, provide parents with good and helpful information about their child's progress and activities. Annual parents' evenings allow parents to meet teachers. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire are well satisfied with the information that they receive about, and opportunities to discuss, their children's work. Parents report that their concerns are dealt with promptly and with proper diligence. Scrutiny of correspondence confirms the care with which serious concerns are handled. A formal complaints procedure is in place for those occasions when concerns cannot be resolved informally. It is comprehensive and readily available for parents.
- 3.19 The school has established an excellent range of links with the local community. The outstanding 'Facilities for the Community Programme' is a highly successful scheme, fully committed to sharing the school's facilities and teaching expertise with the local and extended community. The school currently supports 29 local groups, 8 local schools and has held numerous events for the local community, including some for the Dulwich Festival and meetings for the police. Positive links are promoted through the extensive schools' partnership programme, which includes curriculum support for the newly established sixth form in a local secondary school, a Saturday morning mathematics school launched at Alleyn's to provide extension and stimulation for gifted young mathematicians at which

sixth-form students act as mentors, and links with six other schools through the Southwark Schools' Learning Partnership. The school has strong connections with its two local fellow Foundation schools. Charitable giving and service activities provide other important regular links with the community and both local and overseas organisations benefit from the many school and house fund-raising events organised. For example, the charity committee elected to support the Open Arms Foundation in Malawi, which serves as a transit home for AIDS orphans. The many diverse links established with the community provide much worthwhile enhancement of the pupils' overall educational experience.

- 3.20 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].

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The school benefits from having committed and hardworking governors who provide strong and effective governance and have a clear vision of the sort of school that they want. The structures and arrangements that they have established, which have been strengthened since the last inspection, allow them good insight into the working of the school and enable them to offer appropriate support, advice and challenge to the staff. The work of the governors has contributed effectively to the school's recent progress and to its success in achieving its aims.
- 4.2 Governors are fully involved in monitoring the development of the school and receive an annual audit of progress. They are currently involved in an ambitious building project in the heart of the school which will significantly enhance the facilities. Despite some instability in staffing in the bursar's office, governors have maintained effective oversight of the school's financial well-being and the school benefits from good, well-maintained buildings and ample resources.
- 4.3 The involvement of a governor in the school's academic policy group and the election of a former member of the teaching staff to be a governor, together with the frequent presence of individual governors at school functions and the comprehensive reporting structure established, ensure that governors have good information on which to base their decisions and the provision of advice, support and stimulus for growth and improvement. A time limit on the length of service for governors, although not rigidly applied, ensures regular renewal in the membership of the board.
- 4.4 Governors are well aware of their responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of pupils and are conscientious in reviewing the arrangements and their effectiveness in these areas, including those for the protection of children.

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

- 4.5 The school is well and sensitively led and managed, as was reported at the last inspection, and, although both the headmaster and the structure and membership of the senior management team (SMT) have changed since that inspection, the distinctive ethos of the school has been carefully preserved and nurtured. Responsibilities are effectively delegated to the large SMT whose work helps to ensure that the aims of the school are largely met. They have played a significant role in the good progress made in developing many areas of the school's life since the last inspection.
- 4.6 Purposeful and clear leadership has given direction to the recent improvements in, for example, the quality of the facilities and resources, the pastoral care of pupils and the academic results. As a result, academic excellence, good learning, excellent pastoral care and a wide-ranging educational experience are obvious features of the school, in line with its vision.
- 4.7 The headmaster and his team have identified and prioritized the major needs of the school in the form of an aspirational development plan which is audited and updated annually, and which enjoys widespread consent. This is not, however, underpinned with an action plan that specifies criteria for success, time scales and responsible personnel and it is thus less effective as an instrument for change. In their annual reports, heads of department identify departmental needs and discuss these with the headmaster or members of the SMT. Despite

- the clear written feedback to the reports given by the senior staff, not all departments yet have a development plan, and those that are in place are seldom in the form of action plans.
- 4.8 Well-constructed policies and procedures affecting all aspects of the school are in place and readily available on the school website as well as in the school's publications. The staff handbook is comprehensive and detailed. The management and leadership of academic departments vary in quality. Most departments are managed effectively, the management of some is outstanding, but some are less well managed and led, leading to variable standards in some teaching and marking. Heads of sections and house staff provide effective leadership of the pastoral teams, which results in an excellent standard of care throughout the school.
- 4.9 Rigorous recruitment procedures for staff in all areas of the school are in place to check the suitability of those appointed. A comprehensive central recruitment register has been established and this has revealed that in the past, before current regulations came into being, a number of appointments were less rigorously documented. The school is taking action to re-check these people and this process is almost complete.
- 4.10 Comprehensive and effective arrangements for the induction of new members of staff, including newly qualified teachers, are in place and reflect the school's care for individuals. The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and all the requirements necessary for them to acquire fully qualified status are met.
- 4.11 The recently introduced process for staff professional development reviews, conducted by peers, has not yet been fully implemented. Whilst it has been welcomed by teachers, it does not provide heads of department with an effective tool for managing performance. The need for a more rigorous system of performance management was identified at the last inspection and the school is aware that the effective implementation of improved and more uniform practice requires a willingness on the part of all middle managers to engage in robust and professional performance management. No formal system of performance management has yet been established for support staff.
- 4.12 The developmental needs of the teaching staff are identified and training opportunities are readily made available. The provision of in-service training is carefully monitored and assessed for effect. Requests for training from support staff are supported and part of the school's training budget is set aside for this. However, no scheme for promoting or monitoring the professional development of these staff has been established. The recommendation of the last inspection to expand the provision of in-service development to include all members of staff has been acted upon, although further work remains to be done in identifying and monitoring training needs for the support staff. The school's management is aware of this and is taking steps to facilitate the necessary progress.
- 4.13 Financial resources are well and prudently managed. The bursar is a member of the SMT and works closely with senior colleagues to ensure that the educational aims of the school are properly supported with sufficient resources. Heads of department acknowledge that budgets are generally adequate. The development plan recognises and provides for the necessity for regular maintenance and refurbishment of existing resources and facilities. The new Edward Alleyn building, a multi-purpose performance and teaching building currently under construction in the centre of the school, encompassing a theatre, lecture hall, conference, seminar and training rooms, a pastoral base, teaching classrooms, a careers centre, an atrium with art display areas and a cafeteria, will be completed during 2008 and will provide additional facilities of a very high order.

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- 4.14 The care and commitment of the support staff contribute significantly to the well-organized and well-looked-after ambience of the school. Routine administration is very good and ensures that the school functions efficiently and smoothly as an effective, caring and purposeful community to which the pupils are happy and proud to belong.
- 4.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.16 The school 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 Alleyn's School fully meets its aim of providing a broad liberal education for boys and girls of high academic ability in a caring, friendly and tolerant community. Relationships between teachers and pupils at every level of the school are entirely natural and underpinned by an assumption of respect. The result is a community at ease with itself, where pupils are willing and cooperative learners who achieve high standards in work and activities without being pressurised, and who are happy, courteous and confident without being arrogant. The highly committed members of staff provide both outstanding pastoral care and an exceptional range of opportunities through the many activities, trips and links with the wider community. The very good and tolerant attitudes and values promoted by the school's ethos are well supported by the parents. The governors and senior staff provide good leadership and clear educational direction, but are aware that some aspects of management relating to planning, accountability and the monitoring of teaching, marking and progress are not yet sufficiently developed to ensure that the challenge and inspiration apparent in some departments become more widespread as the school works to improve on its already high standards.
- 5.2 The school has made good progress with all four of the main recommendations made in the report following the last inspection conducted by the ISI in February 2002, and is aware that further work remains to be done in the two concerning establishing a more rigorous system of performance management and encouraging more of the independent learning and intellectual challenge seen in the best practice at the school. The school has made widespread improvements since the last inspection, notably in the development of the curriculum, the increase in the quality of the teaching, the improved examination results, the wider range of links with the community and the improved management and pastoral structures.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 All major aspects of the school are either good or outstanding. In order to improve further the high quality of the education that it offers, the school should:
1. complement the current professional development review conducted by peers with a more rigorous system of performance management that will promote uniformly high and challenging standards of teaching and marking, and spread the excellent practices of some departments across all;
  2. underpin the school and departmental development plans with action plans that specify measurable targets, time scales and the personnel accountable for effecting planned changes;
  3. continue to develop the use of information about pupils' aptitudes obtained from standardised tests to identify underachievement and to promote attainment;
  4. create more opportunities for promoting knowledge and understanding of minority ethnic and faith groups.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 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 co-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, tutor group and house meetings, and assemblies. Inspectors visited the medical centre and took meals with pupils in the dining hall. 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, including a detailed self-evaluation.

### List of Inspectors

Mr Rodney Fox	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Val Burbank	Head of upper school, GSA school
Miss Eleni Conidaris	Director of sport, HMC school
Mr Tim Fulford	Assistant head, HMC school
Dr Julian Pattison	Deputy head, HMC school
Mrs Gwendoline Randall	Headmistress, HMC school
Mr Tim Turvey	Former headmaster, HMC school
Mr Nigel Watts	Housemaster, HMC school