



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

DEAN CLOSE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Dean Close Preparatory School

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

Full Name of School	Dean Close Preparatory School		
DfE Number	916/6034		
Registered Charity Number	1086829		
Address	Dean Close Preparatory School Lansdown Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL51 6QS		
Telephone Number	01242 512217		
Fax Number	01242 258005		
Email Address	dcpsoffice@deanclose.org.uk		
Head	The Reverend Leonard Browne		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Patricia Napier		
Age Range	7 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	261		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (149 boys; 112 girls;)		
Numbers by Age	7-11:	141	11-13: 120
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	192	
Number of Boarders	Total:	69	
	Full:	58	Day: 11
Inspection dates	25 Sep 2012 to 27 Sep 2012		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing primarily on compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS). The inspection occurs over a period of two and a half continuous days in the school.

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. From September 2011 the inspection of boarding welfare forms part of the inspection process. This inspection focuses on the school's compliance with 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. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in November 2008 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 judgement.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Jan Preece

Mrs Claire Grant

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding (Director of Studies,
IAPS School)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Dean Close Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between seven and thirteen years. It was founded on its current site, on the outskirts of Cheltenham, in 1886 and named after a former rector of the town. The preparatory school has been a separate entity since the 1930's. It shares a 50-acre parkland campus with a senior and pre-preparatory school.
- 1.2 The school is a registered charity and incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. The responsibilities for governance of the school rest with trustees who are elected by a council of members, which is, in turn, elected to represent friends and supporters of the school. This governing body is also responsible for the governance of the senior and pre-preparatory schools.
- 1.3 The preparatory school is led by an independent headmaster, but the headmaster of the senior school is overall head of the three schools. Since the previous inspection in 2008 there have been changes to some house staff, including new house parents in the girls' boarding house. Communication with parents has been developed through the internet and weekly newsletters from the boarding house parents.
- 1.4 Currently there are 261 pupils in the school. While most pupils come from varied social backgrounds in the United Kingdom, about 15 per cent come from overseas. These include some foreign nationals and others whose parents serve in the armed forces. No child has a statement of special educational needs, but 49 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 38 receive specialist support in school. Support is also provided for 12 of the 17 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL). Most pupils transfer to the senior school at the age of 13.
- 1.5 At the time of inspection there were 69 boarders, of whom 32 were boys and 37 girls. The school educates the choristers of Tewkesbury Abbey, some of whom are boarders. Ninety per cent of boarders stay full-time and the remainder board for at least two nights. Accommodation is arranged in three adjacent houses; separate boarding houses for older boys and girls and a mixed house for younger pupils. Boarding is overseen by house parents who are supported by a team of residential staff including matrons and gap students.
- 1.6 The school has a strong evangelical Christian ethos and boarding aims to safeguard the physical and emotional welfare of the children in an environment that is homely, comfortable, safe and supportive. The school strives to develop and inspire in each child a desire for respect, truth, tolerance, trust and responsibility for themselves and those around them. Staff seek to nurture an enthusiasm for learning within the curriculum and encourage participation in a wide variety of activities and experiences beyond the classroom.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvements

1. Ensure that the evaluation of boarding practice links to action planning with clear targets and recorded outcomes.
2. Ensure that appraisal for boarding support staff is as thorough as that for academic staff.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.2 The previous boarding welfare inspection that was undertaken by Ofsted in November 2008 made one recommendation which related to the recording of staff recruitment checks. At the time of inspection this had been fully implemented as was confirmed by the ISI inspection of 2011.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

3.(a) Boarding provision and care

- 3.1 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 A thorough induction process that includes a taster day for most children, an informative guide and a “shadow” on arrival, helps new boarders to settle quickly. Boarders say they have a wide choice of house staff should they need support or guidance. Contact details for independent listeners and external helplines are published on all house notice boards. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Effective arrangements overseen by qualified nurses and resident matrons ensure suitable care for boarders who are ill or injured. Boarders who are unwell are cared for in designated accommodation in their house by their matron, under qualified medical supervision when required. House parents organise visits for ancillary treatment. Prescribed medicines and homely remedies are carefully administered by staff who have undergone appropriate training. Medicines are securely stored and proper records kept of accidents, treatment and medication. Boarders are not allowed to self-medicate. Their rights to confidentiality as patients are respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can easily contact their parents and families at appropriate times, using portable phones in the houses or their own mobiles. They also have access to email and video messaging and write letters to their families at the weekend. House parents keep parents informed through photos and newsletters sent electronically. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 All boarding accommodation is of a consistent standard. Each house is well-maintained, warm and comfortably furnished. Bathrooms are clean and afford appropriate privacy. Boarders are encouraged to bring favourite toys and items to personalise their sleeping and work spaces. Older boarders have a suitable room in the house for personal study, whilst younger boarders complete homework around the kitchen table in a homely atmosphere. All houses have computers and older boarders have supervised access to the computer room when necessary. Access to the boarding houses is restricted to boarders and is secure. Whilst surveillance equipment contributes to boarders’ security it does not compromise their privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Boarders, including those requiring special diets, are provided with healthy, nutritious meals which they enjoy. Arrangements for the preparation and serving of food are hygienic. Whilst some pupils felt that snacks were limited, inspectors found that drinking water is readily available and all the houses offer snacks and hot drinks before bedtime. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Boarders say that arrangements for the speedy and efficient laundering of their clothes work well. Matrons buy any personal items or stationery for them out of their pocket money. They have a lockable tuck box and the majority feel that their belongings are generally well respected by their peers. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 After supper, boarders are offered numerous activities in well-equipped recreational areas, including an outside covered play area. They enjoy a varied social programme on Saturday evenings. The sports centre and swimming pool are regularly available at the weekend. Boarders are encouraged to read age-specific newspapers and when they log on to the school intranet have immediate access to a

news summary. The school recognises the additional demands made on the choristers and manages their time and workload sensitively. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school places high importance on health and safety; efficient arrangements are monitored by the health and safety committee which regularly reports to the trustees. Risk assessments cover all areas of the school's operation including boarders' activities both on and off site. Equipment is inspected for safety at the required intervals and records are maintained correctly. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school has appropriate procedures to promote fire safety. Fire drills, which include some in boarding time, are held regularly. These are recorded and appropriate action is taken to remedy any problems. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The arrangements for safeguarding and welfare comply with current requirements. The child protection officer and all staff have undertaken appropriate training and are clear about how to implement correct procedures. The trustees pay careful attention to their responsibilities in this area. [NMS11]
- 3.13 Good behaviour is promoted during school time through the school's behaviour policy, which includes appropriate rewards and sanctions. A suitable anti-bullying policy is in place and boarders report that bullying is rare and that when cases arise, they are well-handled by staff. In the boarding houses behaviour is managed through a system of incentives and minor sanctions, such as boarders might expect at home. Boarders appreciate this distinction and overall, say that staff are fair in their handling of misbehaviour. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school follows thorough safe recruitment procedures and records appointment checks correctly. Residential staff and adult members of their families sign an agreement which gives guidance on their, and their visitors, contact with boarders. Outside contractors are supervised appropriately when working on site. The school does not appoint guardians. [NMS 14]

3.(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The aims and principles of boarding are clearly provided to parents, boarders and staff. Boarding practice is consistent with these and in accordance with the school's Christian ethos. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, almost all parents were satisfied with their children's experience of boarding. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Committed leadership and management of boarding ensure that standards are upheld consistently. Frequent liaison between academic and boarding staff promotes the well-being and development of all boarders, including those with SEND and EAL. Self-evaluation is undertaken informally, although this is not linked formally to action planning. Boarding staff have appropriate experience and enthusiasm for their roles and are encouraged to develop their skills through further training. All required boarding records are maintained. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff involved in boarding have appropriate job descriptions and receive induction training. Teachers with boarding duties have these roles considered in their appraisals. Whilst support staff also receive regular reviews of their practice, these are informal and are not recorded in a consistent manner. Supervision

arrangements with sufficient duty staff ensure boarders' whereabouts are always known. Children know where to find a member of staff at all times, including at night, and staff understand how to implement the missing pupil policy. Boarders do not have inappropriate access to resident staff's accommodation. [NMS 15]

- 3.19 Boarders, including those from abroad and those with SEND, say that they do not experience any discrimination and feel well-supported. The head of learning support, who is also a house parent, ensures that staff are updated regularly about children's specific requirements, and the resident chaplain provides additional pastoral support. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 The relaxed relationships in boarding encourage children to offer their views informally to staff. They also submit any concerns confidentially through a worries box in each house, and most say these are speedily followed up by their house parents. Boarders' house forums, held several times a term, give formal opportunities for discussion. In the pre-inspection questionnaire and confirmed in discussions, boarders expressed their enjoyment of boarding. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has a clear complaints procedure which is available on the website to parents. Complaints records show that concerns are generally resolved informally and recorded carefully. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 School prefects do not have a role in the boarding houses since these operate as homes. Pupils share tasks around the house according to their age and maturity. [NMS 19 not applicable]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for pupils. [NMS 20 not applicable]