



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

DEAN CLOSE SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Dean Close School

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

Full Name of School	Dean Close School	
DfE Number	916/6035	
Registered Charity Number	1086829	
Address	Dean Close School Shelburne Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL51 6HE	
Telephone Number	01242 258000	
Fax Number	01242 258003	
Email Address	office@deanclose.org.uk	
Head	Mr Jonathan Lancashire	
Chair of Trustees	Mrs Patricia Napier	
Age Range	13 to 19	
Total Number of Pupils	482	
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (265 boys; 217 girls;)	
Numbers by Age	13-16:	258
	17-19	224
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	209
Including Day Boarders	Total	38
Number of Boarders	Total:	273
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, with the chair of trustees and the trustee with responsibility for child protection, 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 Gwen Caddock

Ms Jo-Anne Duncan

Mr George Walsh

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding (Head, GSA school)

Team Inspector for Boarding (House Master,
HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Dean Close School opened as a school for boys in 1886 on the 50 acre parkland site in Cheltenham which it still occupies today. Named after a former Rector of Cheltenham, the school was founded on Evangelical Christian principles. Girls first joined the sixth form in 1967 and were admitted throughout the school in 1972. The school is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The responsibilities of 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 separate preparatory and pre-preparatory schools located on the same site.
- 1.2 As a Christian school, Dean Close aims to uphold the Christian faith as a positive force for all, including those who do not share this faith, and to treat every pupil as unique and equally valuable. The school seeks to uphold the values of unselfishness and respect for others, and aims to build a community with strong relationships and service at its core. Dean Close welcomes pupils with a broad range of abilities, aiming to give all its pupils a well-rounded education which values independent thinking and encourages pupils to have the self confidence to challenge the status quo.
- 1.3 The school currently has 482 pupils (265 boys and 217 girls), of whom 273 are full boarders, and 224 are in the sixth form. The school has two girls' and three boys' boarding houses, of which four accommodate boarders of all ages and one is occupied by sixth formers.
- 1.4 Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds in the United Kingdom, and also a number of European and far-eastern countries. Ninety-five pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and of these 35 receive specialist language support from the school. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs, a further 79 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and of these 37 receive learning support.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Fourth Form	Year 9
Remove	Year 10
Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

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

2.2 The school is recommended to make the following improvements:

1. Formalise the process of regular self-evaluation across all boarding houses with outcomes recorded as action points for future development and monitoring.
2. Establish formal systems of consultation with boarders within all houses to enable them to raise issues, discuss boarding life and contribute to the development of boarding across the school.

(iii) Progress since the previous Ofsted boarding welfare inspection

2.3 Previous recommendations related to medical care of boarders, ensuring definitions of bullying are clear and well understood, developments in child protection and related employment procedures, and improving aspects of provision for and care of boarders. All of these matters had been resolved by the time of the subsequent ISI inspection in 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 New boarders feel well supported by a comprehensive induction programme, and support they receive from older pupils. Boarders have a range of staff to whom they can turn for help. Contact details for the independent listener, school counsellor and relevant outside agencies, including the Children's Rights Director, are on display. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Comprehensive health care policies for boarders are in place and implemented appropriately. The health centre, staffed both day and night, provides suitable accommodation for pupils who are injured or unwell. All medication is securely stored and detailed records are kept. Prescribed medicines are given only to the boarder to whom they are prescribed. Pupils administer their own medication after appropriate risk assessment. Access to other health care services is organised through the medical staff. The rights of boarders as patients are respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders contact their families using mobile telephones, house payphones and computers. Internet access on school and personal computers is monitored appropriately. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The houses provide suitably furnished surroundings; pupils personalise their own spaces and say they feel at home. The houses provide appropriate facilities for private study, for all ages. A rolling renovation program is in progress to bring all accommodation up to the standard of the best. Bathrooms are clean and afford reasonable privacy. Suitable security arrangements are in place, and do not intrude unreasonably on the privacy of pupils. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 The nutritious menu meets the dietary requirements of all boarders. On the whole, pupils comment positively on their meals. Food is prepared and served in hygienic areas. Boarders can prepare snacks and drinks in their house kitchen. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Laundry arrangements are efficient and older pupils are able to do their own washing. Personal items can be obtained from the school shop, and from the town. In the inspection questionnaire a significant minority of pupils raised concerns about the security of valuables but this was not substantiated by the inspection evidence. Each boarder is provided with a lockable storage space which some choose not to use. House banks are operated by house staff for pocket money. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 The school provides a suitable programme of weekend events. Pupils have appropriate free time and many after school activities are offered including a combined cadet force. During the evenings boarders use sports facilities or recreational areas in their houses and a number of areas offer privacy should they wish to be alone. Daily newspapers, satellite TV and internet links are provided and pupils are able to go to the town during their free time. There are no unusual or especially onerous demands on the boarders. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding.

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 Comprehensive policies, procedures and arrangements, having regard to official guidance, ensure the health, safety and welfare of the boarders. The use of facilities

by outside groups is carefully managed. Electrical equipment is regularly tested. New members of staff undertake a health and safety induction programme, and whole school training updates support this. The health and safety committee and a designated Trustee review practice regularly. [NMS 6]

- 3.11 Regular fire practices are carried out during the day and at night and evacuation arrangements are clearly displayed. The house staff record fire drills, and these are monitored appropriately. The school complies with Fire Safety requirements. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Suitable child protection policies and procedures are in place and are implemented as intended. All members of staff are trained at the appropriate levels and intervals, and are aware of their responsibilities. Prefects also receive suitable training. Policies and procedures are in accordance with locally agreed procedures and there are suitable relations with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Policies and practice to promote good behaviour and combat bullying comply with relevant legislation and guidance. Boarders indicated that bullying is rare and that they feel safe in their houses. Younger pupils are confident that older pupils will help them if necessary. Parents shared this view in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions system which is used fairly. Arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions are published although seldom used. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The recruitment of staff follows correct procedures, which have regard to official guidance. All adults living in the same premises as boarders, but not employed by the school, are vetted and appropriate contracts are signed. Careful arrangements are in place to supervise all visitors, include workmen, in the boarding houses. 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 school publishes a full statement of boarding practice and principles in boarding and house handbooks. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 There is a clear structure for the management and leadership of boarding. Boarding staff are appropriately experienced and are well-qualified and trained. Although informal self evaluation of boarding and the boarding houses takes place, there is no follow up to ensure that appropriate action is taken. Effective links between academic, pastoral and boarding staff ensure that boarders feel safe, supported and make academic progress. The required records are fully maintained. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 New staff take part in induction meetings, and regular in-service training is provided for all those who work with boarders. Job descriptions and clear rotas ensure effective supervision by all staff in the houses. Boarders know how to contact duty staff at any time and are able to make contact easily in an emergency. There is at least one member of staff sleeping in each boarding house at night. Staff know the whereabouts of all pupils, and mobile phone numbers are recorded so that contact can be made if needed. The missing pupil policy is known to all staff. Clear written guidance is given to staff about appropriate relationships and access to staff accommodation. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 There is no inappropriate discrimination and opportunities are open to all pupils. In their pre inspection questionnaires parents were very supportive of the school and there were no concerns raised by a significant number of parents. [NMS 16]

- 3.20 Boarders confirmed that they are able to raise issues informally with house staff and tutors but in questionnaire responses, many thought that discussions rarely resulted in action. While there is no formal forum for pupils to put forward suggestions or raise concerns, the school does take appropriate steps to follow up serious matters brought to its attention. Pupils know that they will not be penalised for raising a complaint in good faith. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has a clear complaints policy which meets requirements; complaints are handled and recorded appropriately. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Older pupils in positions of responsibility receive clear guidance and training and are well supervised. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long stay lodgings for pupils. [NMS 20 not applicable]