



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS**

**INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Dame Allan's Schools

Full Name of School	<b>Dame Allan's Schools</b>
DfE Number	<b>391/6035</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1084965</b>
Address	<b>Dame Allan's Schools Fowberry Crescent Fenham Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE4 9YJ</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0191 275 0608</b>
Fax Number	<b>0191 274 5428</b>
Email Address	<b>enquiries@dameallans.co.uk</b>
Principal	<b>Dr John Hind</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Elliott Ward</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>741</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (420 boys; 321 girls)</b>
Inspection dates	<b>08 Mar 2011 to 09 Mar 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 October 2006.

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.

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	<b>2</b>
The quality of the pupils' personal development	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	<b>4</b>
<b>3 ACTION POINTS</b>	<b>6</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	<b>6</b>
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	<b>6</b>
<b>INSPECTION EVIDENCE</b>	<b>7</b>

## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 The Dame Allan's Schools were established in 1705 as Christian foundations providing education for under privileged boys and girls in the centre of Newcastle. The senior schools, which are the subject of this report, have shared the current site since 1935, but until 1988 they operated as separate boys' and girls' schools with a joint governing body. The governors then took the decision to appoint a principal with overall responsibility for the management of the two schools. At the same time, they created a joint mixed sixth form and reintroduced a mixed junior school. The schools are a company limited by guarantee, and a charity, of which the governors are the directors and trustees respectively.
- 1.2 There are 741 pupils on roll, of whom 420 are boys and 321 girls. Of these, 212 are in the sixth form, with 116 boys and 96 girls. Between the ages of 11 and 16, pupils are educated separately, with 304 in the boys' school and 225 in the girls' school. Pupils now come from across the city and a wide surrounding geographical area. They are predominantly from white British families, but about a tenth come from other cultural heritages.
- 1.3 The schools aim to provide a good all-round education within a supportive environment, so that, through a rich mixture of experiences, all may develop their academic, sporting, artistic, leadership and other talents. The development of self-discipline, self-confidence, integrity and independence within a community informed by Christian ethics is another key aim.
- 1.4 The two schools are selective and entry is competitive. Pupils take entrance tests in English, mathematics and verbal reasoning, and are interviewed. The ability profile of both boys and girls is above the national average. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but the schools have identified 79 pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 22 receive specialist learning support. Twenty-eight pupils have English as an additional language, and one receives language support.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection, the post of vice-principal (academic) has been created, the library has been refurbished, an all-weather surface has been laid, and significant investment has been made in information and communication technology (ICT).
- 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 The quality of pupils' achievements is excellent. They are extremely well educated, in line with the schools' aims to enable pupils to develop their academic, sporting, artistic, leadership and other talents. They develop excellent levels of knowledge and understanding, and demonstrate very strong literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are very articulate. They think logically, argue well and listen to others. They exhibit strong mathematical and ICT skills across the curriculum. They also display excellent creative skills, particularly in dance. The most able do well in mathematics and science Olympiad challenges. Pupils with LDD make excellent progress due to highly effective discrete learning support and to teachers adopting strategies to meet their needs in most lessons. Pupils have won essay and economics competitions, sung in the National Youth Choir, acted with the National Youth Theatre, and won scholarships to acclaimed ballet and dance schools. Teams and individuals achieve national prominence in a variety of sports. Almost all Year 13 leavers enter higher education, over three-quarters at universities of their choice.
- 2.2 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Pupils' results at GCSE have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained schools. Three out of every five grades awarded were A\* or A. At A level, results have been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools and in line with the national average for maintained selective schools. Well over three-quarters of grades awarded were A\*, A or B. Boys and girls achieve equally well at GCSE, but at A level, the girls do better. These results, interpreted in the light of inspection evidence of a good proportion of excellent teaching and learning, indicate that pupils' progress throughout the school is good in relation to pupils of similar ability, as shown by standardised measures of progress.
- 2.3 Pupils have an extremely positive work ethic. They participate enthusiastically in discussion and readily grasp opportunities for active learning. Concentration levels are high. Pupils' rapidly developing independent learning skills are matched by their joy in working together co-operatively.
- 2.4 The broad, well-balanced and challenging curriculum makes an excellent contribution to pupils' achievements and learning. All required areas of experience are covered, offering pupils opportunities for personal discovery, creative expression and intellectual challenge. All pupils in Years 7 to 11 are taught the three separate sciences, although some take science and additional science at GCSE. Three modern foreign languages and Latin are available. Provision for design and technology is strong, but limited by lack of facilities. Provision for learning support is generally excellent. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught throughout, careers guidance is offered at different stages and many pupils undertake work experience placements. The most able pupils take Open University modules and attend university lectures. The new library has encouraged good reading habits, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- 2.5 The curriculum is enriched by a stimulating variety of excellent extra-curricular activities, ranging from the creative and performing arts, through debating and science clubs, to the physical and challenging, including a large variety of sports,

several with specialist coaching. Outdoor education is strong, and large numbers of trips, exchanges, tours and expeditions at home and abroad further expand pupils' horizons. Participation rates are high, but attendance is not monitored, nor does it feature in reports to parents.

- 2.6 The good and often excellent teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' achievements and learning. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach and are aware of pupils' diverse abilities. Most plan lessons to challenge and engage all pupils and meet their needs. In many, pupils are inspired and stimulated to extend their thinking and their knowledge but in a few, teachers' strategies focus on one level of ability and fail to provide others with tasks matched to their needs. Frequent discussions and group work sessions are structured to involve all pupils. A variety of strategies promotes active learning. A group of A-level biologists was motivated to create, choreograph and then film an excellent dance routine to illustrate the chemistry of cell respiration. Discrete learning support is excellent. Detailed diagnostic assessment is now the norm in the marking of pupils' work, but targets for improvement are not always included. The use of standardised tests informs planning and enables progress to be monitored effectively.

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

- 2.7 The excellent quality of pupils' personal development and of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is one of the strengths of the schools. In line with the schools' aims, pupils develop both self-confidence and self-discipline in a supportive environment where they feel safe and valued. They develop strong self-awareness and self-esteem. They readily explore their ideas and beliefs, not least in PSHE and in religious studies lessons, where a variety of religions is studied. Pupils show a highly developed sense of moral responsibility, seen most clearly in their considerate and caring behaviour. They develop a clear sense of right and wrong, and speak enthusiastically about the opportunities they have to work together to support charities. Moral and ethical discussions occur in many lessons.
- 2.8 Pupils' social development is excellent. They grow into confident, articulate, caring young men and women who go out of their way to help others. Their strong social skills contribute to excellent relationships. Pupils value leadership highly and aspire to it. They give of their time to lead others, organising activities, for example with a dance company. Peer support is channelled through a link counselling scheme. Pupils know they have a voice through the school council, although a minority felt that their suggestions are not listened to. The inspectors noted several successful initiatives that had resulted from the school council's suggestions. Responsibilities of citizenship are explored in the PSHE programme. Pupils grow in cultural awareness through music, art and drama, through literature and the humanities, and through participation in the school visits abroad.
- 2.9 The quality of pastoral care and of the arrangements to safeguard the welfare, health and safety of pupils is excellent and makes a strong contribution to their personal development. At the heart of the community lies a concern for each pupil's welfare. A cohesive team of form tutors, heads of year and senior management provides comprehensive, personalised support and guidance. Some Year 11 pupils are mentored during their revision period, whilst a 'buddy' scheme helps new pupils settle in. Further care is offered by the nurse and by the school counsellor. The behaviour of pupils is excellent. The system of rewards and sanctions is generally seen as fair and effective, but a minority of pupils felt that it is not fairly applied and

that they are not all treated equally. Inspectors did not see any evidence to support this view.

- 2.10 Safeguarding and anti-bullying procedures are fully implemented. Pupils felt that when bullying had occurred, it was dealt with quickly, fairly and effectively. All staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding. The school maintains strong links with the local authority dedicated officer. All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective and include provision for pupils who are ill, injured or have medical needs. Risk assessments are carefully prepared and cover all areas of school life and accommodation. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with disabilities and any with statements of special educational needs. Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits and take regular exercise. The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained, and correctly stored for the previous three years.

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

- 2.11 The quality of governance is excellent. Its structure of strong committees with delegated responsibilities facilitates effective oversight of the schools. Governors gain a detailed insight through reports from the principal and the three vice-principals, the work of a link governor in each school and their visits to the schools, where they attend lessons to monitor standards of teaching and learning, and to sample pupils' curricular experience. The education committee regularly reviews the work of individual departments.
- 2.12 Governors take their responsibilities seriously. An induction course is run for all governors and most have attended training courses. An audit of governor skills has led to a system of self-appraisal being established. Governors oversee the effective implementation of policies and procedures for child protection and for health and safety, reviewing them annually. A governor with delegated responsibility works closely with the child protection officers, and attends health and safety committee meetings and staff safeguarding training.
- 2.13 The quality of leadership and management is good, with some excellent features. Leadership and senior management are excellent, offering clear educational direction. Their consultative, collaborative management style has succeeded in enabling most middle managers and staff to share their vision. A new development plan, informed by extensive self-review and consultation with staff and parents, is now operative. Since the previous inspection, initiatives have raised the standard of teaching and learning, and provision of learning support has greatly improved. Data is available to help middle management monitor teaching performance, but standards are still sufficiently variable to cause some inconsistency in pupils' educational experience.
- 2.14 Management is successful in recruiting well-qualified, highly motivated staff. An appropriate appraisal scheme is in place and very good procedures are followed for the induction of newly qualified teachers. A senior manager oversees continuing professional development.
- 2.15 Safer recruitment procedures are rigorously implemented. The premises and accommodation are spacious and well maintained.



- 2.16 The school maintains good, effective links with parents. A comprehensive flow of information is sent out about their children's education and about the school's life and procedures, encouraging their involvement. All required information is published on the schools' website. Informative reports on pupils' progress are sent every half term and parents meetings are held annually for each year group. Direct communication by text and email helps to ensure a rapid response to concerns.
- 2.17 Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were positive about the academic and pastoral sides of school life, the values the school promotes and the way it is run. They also praised the school's communication with them. A small minority was less happy with the provision for gifted and talented pupils, but the inspectors saw evidence of able pupils being given tasks that matched their ability and of strong, challenging provision outside lessons. A formal complaints procedure is operative, and parental concerns are handled with care. The great majority of pupils like being at the school, which they agree is well run. They feel they are making good progress, are offered an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and are encouraged to develop strong independent learning skills. However, a significant minority felt that the school does not listen to their views. Evidence seen by the inspectors pointed to the contrary.

### **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 meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

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

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Develop further the improved strategies for the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure a consistency of educational experience for all pupils.
  2. Strengthen further the curriculum in the area of design and technology to extend pupils' technological skills.
  3. Introduce measures to monitor pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities and to include details in the reports sent out to parents.

## **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 vice-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 John Sugden

Reporting Inspector

Mrs Valerie Fogarty

Head of Middle School, HMC school