



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

DAVIES LAING AND DICK COLLEGE

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Davies Laing and Dick College

Full Name of College	Davies Laing and Dick College			
DfE Number	213/6391			
Address	Davies Laing and Dick College 100 Marylebone Lane London W1U 2QB			
Telephone Number	020 7935 8411			
Fax Number	020 7935 0755			
Email Address	dld@dld.org			
Principal	Mr David Lowe			
Chair of Governors	Sir John Ritblat			
Age Range	14 to 19			
Total Number of Students	311			
Gender of Students	Mixed (162 boys; 149 girls)			
Numbers by Age	11-16	43	16-18	268
Number of Day Students	Total:	311		
Inspection dates	01 Feb 2011 to 02 Feb 2011 02 Mar 2011 to 04 Mar 2011			

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the college's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2005.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government 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*. 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 Standards 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 college 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 college, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COLLEGE

- 1.1 Davies Laing and Dick College is a college admitting students aged from fourteen to eighteen. It is located in Marylebone, central London, and moved to its present site from Notting Hill in 2004. Founded in 1931, its initial role was to offer tuition to students taking civil and colonial services exams, but over the years it has evolved to offer courses at GCSE and A level. In September 2010, the college offered a new two-year GCSE programme for the first time.
- 1.2 The college is one of 19 schools and colleges owned by the Alpha Plus Group. In January 2010 the Alpha Group reorganised its governance provision, and this included the setting up of a governing body with the responsibility to oversee the general wellbeing, compliance and educational standards of the colleges. A director of Alpha Plus oversees the colleges within the group, acting as line manager for each of the principals and communicating directly with the main management board.
- 1.3 The college aims to: guide students to achieve academic success and fulfil their aspirations; respect and value each student, providing a friendly, safe and supportive environment where each person can learn and grow in confidence; and enable students to meet the challenges of the 21st century by helping them to develop key skills to succeed - resilience, adaptability, independence and determination. It also aims to prepare students to access universities of their choice.
- 1.4 About half of the students come from outside the UK, with around 40 countries being represented. Students entering the sixth form are generally of average ability, although the range is wide. The six students in the present Year 10 all have learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). At the time of the inspection there were 311 students on roll, with 43 in Years 10 and 11. One hundred and forty nine students have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 74 receive some support. There are five students with statements of special educational needs (SEN) and 67 identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). The college offers accommodation for 57 students but it is not yet registered as a boarding school.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the college.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE COLLEGE

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The college educates its students well. It offers a wide range of courses, although the provision for extra-curricular activities is somewhat limited. Students attain results higher than the national norms in GCSE and results which are in line with national norms at A level. Students benefit from the good teaching, with a significant amount outstanding, and this means that they make satisfactory progress from GCSE to A level. This apparent disparity between good teaching and satisfactory progress is partly explained by the fact that many students are learning in a second language and some have a high rate of absenteeism. Students have a good attitude to learning, willingly participate in lessons, and develop good basic skills, with those from abroad doing particularly well in establishing their language.
- 2.2 Students like being at the college and are very happy with the personal support they receive; they feel well looked after and are very appreciative of the help and guidance given generously by the staff. They develop strong personal skills in a pleasant, family atmosphere. The wide mix of nationalities works well together in a friendly, safe and supportive environment.
- 2.3 The college achieves well in almost all areas of its provision because of good governance and management. The senior leadership team have the respect of staff and students because of the good relations they have established and their open style of communication. Effective practices and policies have been put in place so that the welfare and safeguarding of students are secure. The leadership of pastoral staff is very effective and heads of subjects ensure that the teaching is good, although their role with respect to planning and financial management is underdeveloped. Good governance has ensured that the college meets all the regulatory requirements, although the college development plan lacks sharpness. Governors have been particularly effective in offering support and advice. The college has made good progress since the last inspection, although the recommendation to improve the library remains outstanding. Parents are very satisfied with the education and support the college provides and believe that it promotes worthwhile attitudes and views. They believe that the college is well managed and governed, and they are content with communications and the reports they receive. Parents are less satisfied with the range of extra-curricular activities provided, and inspection findings support their concern.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the college met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Produce a detailed college development plan with clear criteria for success.
 2. Develop the roles of the heads of department by giving them greater autonomy in planning for the future and in financial management.
 3. Provide a greater range of extra-curricular activities for students.
 4. Establish a clear purpose for the function of the library.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 Students are well educated in accordance with the college's aims and their overall achievement is good. They display good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill, especially since many are learning in a language that is not their own. They have a good knowledge of their previous work and are able to recap on the ideas previously taught, as in history and science.
- 3.2 Students' skills of reading and writing are well developed and most present their written work clearly. Examples of particularly strong writing skills were seen in history, classics, and English. Most students in Year 10 have difficulties with handwriting but, where they have used a word processor, it is evident that they are able to communicate strong ideas with emotion, for example in their analysis of a Wilfred Owen poem. The emphasis teachers place on suitable vocabulary means that students acquire good technical language, as in biology, economics and English.
- 3.3 Students produce copious quantities of work and undertake many tests, all stored in their files. These are mostly well organised, but the less able students are not always provided with sufficient guidance on how best to keep their work. In some subjects, students are given many worksheets, sometimes at the expense of writing in their own words. Their standards of numeracy are good; their grasp of basic skills in algebra and trigonometry means that they are able to apply mathematics in other subjects, for example, in making calculations in chemistry.
- 3.4 Students demonstrate good practical skills in science through their thoughtful participation in the laboratories. Standards in art are high, with students gaining an appreciation of the life and works of artists, as well as developing a critical eye for quality. Inspectors were unable to observe students in any physical education or games.
- 3.5 Although no examples of students using information and communication technology (ICT) were seen during the inspection, and not much evidence in students' files, students reported that they use word processing, make presentations and, in science, record data using ICT. The college has recently established an ICT course and in some subjects students are expected to use ICT facilities to enhance their learning, for example in EAL, business studies and English. Students use the computers in the library to undertake research for their projects.
- 3.6 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. Attainment in A-level examinations is in line with the average for all maintained schools and GCSE results are good in relation to the average for all maintained schools. Standardised data indicates that students' progress from GCSE to A level has been satisfactory. Results at A level and GCSE have been consistent over the past three years, showing no particular trend. Performance in the IGCSE examinations has varied across the subjects taken. Results in German and science have been above international norms, whilst ICT and mathematics have been below.
- 3.7 The college is successful in its aim of placing students in an impressive range of higher education courses and institutions. Some students have achieved well in

national competitions, such as the UK Maths Challenge and Olympiad, and Independent Schools Association (ISA) art competitions, although participation in such events is not widespread.

- 3.8 Students have very good attitudes to work, often working with enthusiasm and a mature approach. They settle to work well and are attentive in classes. When given the opportunity, they show initiative and work well in groups, but also show an aptitude for independent work, as seen in drama and art.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.9 The college offers a wide range of GCSE and A-level courses, but a rather limited number of extra-curricular activities. Students taking GCSE have a suitably broad coverage of the requisite areas of learning and those taking AS and A level choose from a wide range of subjects. Classes are often small and this leads to effective progress and good levels of student confidence and satisfaction.
- 3.10 The provision for students with LDD is good. They are offered a challenging range of courses, feel well supported by the recently appointed special needs co-ordinator and other teachers, and make good progress. Provision for the large number of students with EAL is also strong. They too expressed great personal satisfaction with their progress and achievement. This is strongly aided by the college's commitment to small teaching groups, with the consequence that EAL teachers are able to provide personalised teaching and support. The college has a coherent and thoughtful approach to EAL teaching, with students following suitable foundation courses that lead towards successful International English Language Testing System (IELTS) qualifications that support the college's aims to enable all students to access higher education in the UK.
- 3.11 Provision for gifted and talented students is largely a responsibility devolved to heads of department, but the college does run the Extended Project Qualification for a small number of students who take this on alongside their A levels.
- 3.12 Students receive very good careers guidance. This is linked to the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes of study at all year levels and offered through a variety of individual discussions, workshops, interview practice and lectures. Advice on further education is well organised and the college ably matches students' aptitudes and interests with suitable institutions. In this regard, it fulfils its aims very well.
- 3.13 The range of extra-curricular activities offered is rather limited and is something that students have expressed a strong desire to see expanded. However, a good number of curriculum-related trips and talks are organised to societies, museums, festivals and theatres.
- 3.14 There are a limited number of links with the local community, an area in which the students would like to become more involved. For example, they fondly remember a fund-raising event in 2009. At present, students participate in the local Marylebone Christmas lights celebration and have some contact with a local maintained secondary college. The college does not organise work experience placements but offers advice for those who wish to do so.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 Students receive good teaching, with a sizeable proportion which is outstanding. Of the lessons seen, three in four were good or better, with one in five being outstanding.
- 3.16 The best lessons were characterised by lively, energetic teaching where a range of creative and varied techniques was used to elicit strong student participation in learning. For example, the creation of an extraordinary commitment and focus amongst students was observed in a Year 12 drama lesson, and the use of diverse methods of engagement to produce a highly co-operative approach to learning was seen in French. Other excellence was observed in the teaching of art, biology and humanities lessons.
- 3.17 In less successful lessons the students' engagement was less positive because they were not given sufficient opportunity to participate actively, or they felt unwilling to engage more fully. In some of these lessons there was too little dialogue between teachers and students.
- 3.18 Lessons were characterised by excellent relationships between teachers and students. This is a hallmark of the college and contributes strongly to the positive learning environment. A bond of mutual trust and respect was consistently in evidence, leading very often to friendly and purposeful atmospheres in lessons. Teachers know their students very well and in the best lessons their support was tailored to individual needs to shape the course of a lesson. Against this, some students are late to lessons and this has a damaging effect on teaching efficiency.
- 3.19 Teachers have excellent knowledge and most are enthusiastic about their subjects. They plan lessons well and, in most cases, lesson objectives are clear to the students. Although the college has invested in ICT in recent years, little imaginative use of ICT was seen, but there were some examples of ICT being used to enhance learning in some lessons, such as biology and physics.
- 3.20 A well-organised and clear assessment and reporting system is in place. Regular testing is conducted in all subjects and the data stored centrally. Results in tests are reported to parents regularly and linked with predicted grades. Under-performing students are identified and given appropriate support. At its best, marking is thorough and helpfully formative, but the consistency, quality and quantity of marking varies.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The personal development of students is good. The college allows students to develop a degree of maturity, self-awareness and self-belief. It succeeds in its aims to respect and value each student, and to provide a friendly, safe and supportive environment where they can learn and grow in confidence. Students are confident, thoughtful and have their own beliefs and values, whilst respecting the rights of others. The student body forms a wide mix of nationalities and the whole community works together in an integrated and harmonious way.
- 4.2 The spiritual development of students is good. They are thoughtful and are able to reflect on a wide range of issues. They show a respect for personal freedom in their attitudes and discussions and help is quickly offered to those in need. Students can empathise with worldwide issues and have very strong opinions on the protection of the environment. For example, in a Year 10 humanities lesson, they discussed the energy crisis in a passionate, but informed, debate. Students' spiritual development benefits from the high quality works of art displayed around the college, which challenge them to stop and think.
- 4.3 The students' moral development is very good. Through their regular PSHE lessons they learn tolerance and have discussed prejudice and aspects of citizenship. This helps them to have a clear idea of right and wrong and encourages them to have a very highly developed sense of fairness. They also learn about care and concern for others through their study of global inequality, fair trade, civil rights and asylum seekers. In a lesson on the difference between truth and opinion, students were able to respond thoughtfully, whilst having definite views of their own.
- 4.4 The social development of students is good. In lessons and around the college they show self-discipline and determination to make use of opportunities on offer. Students have clear ideas about what they would like to develop at the college and are encouraged to initiate and organise events for themselves. For example, the college council has successfully organised a campaign to keep the accommodation free from litter. They are also planning other improvements, such as offering subject-specific help to students, and encouraging their peers to demonstrate and share their cultural heritage. They are very keen to further the work they have done for charities, many volunteering time and effort, as well as ideas. Opportunities for students to take responsibility are rather limited, but many would relish the possibility to serve and develop the college community. They would like more social activities, or friendly competition, perhaps through a house system.
- 4.5 Students' cultural development is good. Those who come from abroad are inducted in learning about living in London and all gain knowledge of public institutions from their PSHE programme. They relish the cultural mix, considering it to be one of the strengths of the college, and are aware of and appreciate traditions and beliefs from around the world. Further development takes place through the trips and visits made to cultural establishments.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.6 The arrangements for students' health and safety are good, and for their welfare they are very good.
- 4.7 The welfare of students is a priority within college. All students have a personal tutor. The comprehensive support and guidance offered to all students contributes effectively to their personal development. The college succeeds in its aim to 'respect and value each student'. This is because teachers know students very well and provide them with the support needed to fulfil their potential. Clear lines of communication between staff ensure that the needs of students are met and problems dealt with quickly. Students are also supported by the administrative staff who make a valuable contribution to the pleasant working environment.
- 4.8 The teaching makes a very positive contribution to students' welfare because lessons are used to boost their self-confidence and motivation. It helps them to succeed in their personal quests for educational progress and high grades. The students are very appreciative of the efforts of the staff and feel able to approach them with any problem, confident that a solution will be found. Replies to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meetings with students show overwhelmingly that students are happy in the college and appreciate the adult manner in which they are treated.
- 4.9 The rules are few and are designed to ensure educational progress. Students behave well, both in lessons and around the college. They are sensitive to the needs of others and work well together. Bullying is not tolerated and the very few instances that do occur are resolved quickly and effectively. Students are encouraged to appreciate each other's point of view and live together harmoniously.
- 4.10 Arrangements for the health and safety of students are effective. There are regular fire drills and all required fire checks. In case of an emergency, arrangements are in place to assist any student who may have difficulty leaving the building. The safeguarding policy is compliant with statutory requirements and appropriately implemented. Staff are aware of their responsibilities and receive regular training. The medical room is un-manned, but there are sufficient first aiders to provide students who are ill with frequent care and attention. Despite the nature of the accommodation, every effort has been made to provide educational access for students with disabilities.
- 4.11 The college does not provide food but, through the PSHE programme, students are encouraged to eat healthily and they benefit from talks on a variety of health issues. There are limited opportunities for organised sport and many students expressed a wish for more frequent opportunities to participate in a wider variety of sporting activities.
- 4.12 Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored for the length of time required by regulations. Although students are registered in each lesson and the data analysed, some students have very low levels of attendance. The college is attempting to improve attendance rates and puts a high level of importance on this matter, so that parents are contacted promptly about unexplained absences. Parents are made aware that regular absence may seriously disrupt educational progress. Not all students arrive at lessons on time.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Good governance has ensured that the college meets its principal aims, that educational standards have been maintained, and that the college has sufficient resources.
- 5.2 There is a suitable structure for effective governance. A board of governors was founded in January 2010; it meets termly and is responsible for safeguarding and regulatory compliance. In addition, a management board meets monthly and receives a report on the main issues and developments in college.
- 5.3 A chief executive has overall responsibility for the colleges in the Alpha Plus Group and ensures that the board of governors and the management board are regularly informed on all appropriate matters, including standards, budget management, premises, health and safety, safeguarding, and student welfare. He is supported by five directors, each with a specific area of managerial responsibility, who are also governors. They meet weekly as the group's senior management team and consider strategic and operational matters.
- 5.4 This structure ensures that the governing body is kept well informed about the college's business. The principal attends a board meeting each year to make a formal presentation on the college's progress, performance and priorities. Further monitoring takes place through regular visits from directors who report on students' progress, financial well-being, standards, self-evaluation and progress in the development plan. The principal also benefits from termly meetings with his peers in the Alpha Plus Group.
- 5.5 Governors have a good range of expertise and also access to other experts in a variety of fields. For example, further support and advice on human resources, training and property maintenance is available from the Alpha Plus Group's central staff. Governors are particularly strong in their educational expertise and the advice and support they give to the college is greatly appreciated. Matters relating to the welfare, health and safety of students, including aspects of child protection, are taken seriously and dealt with well.
- 5.6 Budget setting is well planned and clearly linked to criteria, such as student numbers, the requirements of the curriculum, staffing and training needs. A detailed financial progress report is provided for the board monthly by the director of finance. At present, heads of department do not take responsibility for managing their own budgets.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.7 Leadership and management of the college are good, a significant factor in its continued success and development. There is a clear structure for effective management, with well-defined roles and responsibilities within the senior leadership team, and good lines of communication. The senior leadership team comprises: the principal, vice-principal, senior director of studies, director of academic administration, the director of studies and the group's bursar. They meet regularly and work well as a team characterised by openness and a desire to improve and

succeed. The style of management has ensured that relationships between the senior leadership team and the teaching staff are good.

- 5.8 Directors of studies, working with personal tutors, are responsible for the welfare and academic progress of their group of students. They know the students well and are effective in ensuring their academic progress and welfare. Heads of department show a keen and enthusiastic interest in their areas, which they manage well, given their present remit. However, they are not required to undertake formal planning which links to the college development plan, or to take responsibility for the financial management of their departments.
- 5.9 The college development plan covers areas such as the curriculum, staff and students, and the promotion of the college. Timescales and personnel are defined, but the plan lacks sufficient detail, and the absence of criteria for success makes its evaluation difficult.
- 5.10 A system of appraisal, called 'personal review', is seen as positive and includes discussion, feedback and links to further training, if required. In addition, teachers are encouraged to see their peers teach and many do so. There are suitable arrangements for checking the suitability of staff. New teachers receive a good induction. Opportunities for training, including those related to the welfare, health and safety of students, are good.
- 5.11 The college has made good progress since the last inspection. The principal has spent time recruiting students, resulting in a rise in numbers and more international students. Policies and practices have improved the management. The academic and pastoral structures have been re-modelled. Most issues identified at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed, although, whilst the provision of books in the library has improved, its purpose and function are still limited to a place for students to study.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.12 There are good links with parents. The college's informative website gives prospective parents and students much useful and relevant information. Letters and emails allow effective communication to parents and a newsletter is used to inform them about subjects and future events, as well as celebrating the work and talents of students. The college's virtual learning environment contains course notes, homework and revision materials, which gives parents the opportunity to be involved in the work of their children.
- 5.13 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that they are overwhelmingly satisfied by the education and support provided for their children. They believe that the college promotes worthwhile attitudes and views and that it is well managed, with good governance. Parents are very positive about the frequency and quality of feedback about their children through reports and parents' evenings. They are less satisfied with the range of activities provided, and inspection evidence supports this concern. Parents have limited opportunities to be involved in the college because many live abroad.
- 5.14 Written reports are sent to parents each term and contain a clear indication of students' progress and suggestions for further improvement. Helpful comments from personal tutors give parents information on their children's social well-being and participation. Further information on interim assessment grades is regularly

sent home, with a comment if required.

- 5.15 The college handles the concerns of parents well and with sensitivity. Parents praise the ease with which they can contact the college and the effective response to their concerns. All these are duly logged and more serious complaints are followed up using the published procedures in the complaints policy.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

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