



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

THE DOWNS, MALVERN COLLEGE PREP

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Downs, Malvern College Prep

Full Name of School	The Downs, Malvern College Prep
DfE Number	884/6000
Registered Charity Number	1120616
Address	The Downs, Malvern College Prep Brockhill Road Colwall Malvern Worcestershire WR13 6EY
Telephone Number	01684 544102
Email Address	hmpa@thedowns.malcol.org
Headmaster	Mr Alastair Cook
Chair of Governors	Reverend Kenneth Madden
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	221
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (125 boys; 96 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 169
Number of Boarders	Total: 52 Full: 46 Weekly: 6
Number of EYFS Children	24
Ownership and Governance	The school is overseen by an independent governing body and maintains strong links with Malvern College, sharing bursarial, human resources, information and communication technology, marketing and estates, and other services.
School Structure	The school provides for pupils from the age of three to thirteen and is divided into two sections: Pre-Prep (pupils aged 3 to 7) and Prep (ages 8 to 13).
Inspection Dates	24 Nov 2015 to 25 Nov 2015

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

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) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, this inspection records whether the school complies with each of these Regulations, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Compliance is judged both by written formulation and by implementation. The Regulations represent minimum requirements and are given as either 'met' or not 'met'.

Additionally, inspections consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the Education (Abolition of Corporal Punishment) (Independent Schools) Regulations 1989.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on 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 and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding Standards. It identifies any Standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the Regulations.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. For children aged from two to five, this report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations and related aspects of the EYFS Statutory Framework.

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) the school's aims, detailed coverage of the quality of educational provision or pupils' achievement;
- (ii) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (iii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features;
- (iv) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures;
- (v) an 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 mentioned specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

The report reflects the evidence used in deciding whether the school's provision meets or does not meet the various requirements. Grades are not provided for the quality of the school as a whole or for each aspect inspected.

If the school has EYFS registered provision (for children under the age of two), reports use the same evaluative terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.

National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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 teachers, senior members of staff and with governors. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and 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

Mrs Sara Wiggins

Reporting Inspector

Mr Rob Bosshardt

Compliance Team Inspector (Bursar, GSA & IAPS school)

Mr Christopher Sparrow

Team Inspector for Boarding (House Master, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Downs, Malvern College Prep is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between 3 and 13. It was formed in 2008 following the merger of Malvern College Preparatory School and the Downs Preparatory School. The school is situated on a rural 55-acre site in the Malvern Hills, in the village of Colwall, Herefordshire. The boarding house provides accommodation for 56 boarders.
- 1.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is located in the Pre-Prep building and has Nursery and Reception classes for children between the ages of 3 and 5.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school has undergone staffing restructuring, including the appointment of a senior management team.
- 1.4 Most pupils' families have professional or business backgrounds, and live in the local area. A number of boarders come from overseas, from a range of countries.

2. COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATORY STANDARDS

Part 1 Quality of education provided

Curriculum

- 2.1 The school meets the Regulations.
- 2.2 Throughout the school, the written policy for the curriculum is supported by schemes of work. The schemes take appropriate account of the aptitudes and ages of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are able, gifted and talented, and those for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The arrangements do not undermine the key features of British values such as democracy and the rule of law. [Paragraph 2(1)(a) and (b)]
- 2.3 From Nursery to Year 8 the curriculum and extra-curricular programme is organised to ensure progress for all pupils, whatever their needs or abilities. The curriculum covers all the requisite areas, and enables all pupils to develop skills in literacy, speaking, listening and numeracy. Those in the EYFS have further opportunities to develop their physical and social skills through sessions that take place in an outdoor woodland learning environment. French is taught throughout the school, and older pupils benefit from opportunities to study German, Spanish and Latin, as well as the teaching of drama as a discrete subject. A hobbies and activities programme supplements the curriculum, providing additional experiences and supporting the pupils' personal development. In interviews pupils were enthusiastic about the opportunities provided, and all parents who responded to the questionnaire were clear that their children have access to a broad education. [Paragraph 2 (2)(a), (b) and (h)]
- 2.4 A structured programme of personal, social, health and economic education is taught which reflects the school aims, and this alongside assemblies and a values programme prepares pupils effectively for the world of work and life in modern Britain. [Paragraph 2(2)(d), (e) and (i)]
- 2.5 Children in the Nursery and Reception follow the seven areas of the EYFS framework. The interests of the children are used to devise activities, for example in literacy and regarding the understanding of the world, enabling the learning needs of all children to be met. [Paragraph 2(2)(f)]

Teaching

- 2.6 The school meets the Regulations.
- 2.7 Teaching enables pupils to make good progress and supports their acquisition of knowledge and skills according to their ability. Teaching from the youngest classes is appropriately planned, uses time well, and employs a suitable range of good resources. It uses suitable assessment to set appropriate learning challenges and respond to pupils' diverse learning needs. Teaching is characterised by the school's values programme and does not undermine British values. It ensures pupils are treated fairly and provided equal opportunity to take part in class activities, which encourages good behaviour, mutual respect and tolerance. From the earliest ages pupils have the confidence to organise themselves effectively and settle to work quickly. Secure subject knowledge of teachers enables a range of teaching strategies to be used to support pupils' interest in their work. The vast majority of

pupils report that their lessons are interesting and engaging, that they are encouraged to do their best and that they have the support they need to learn. [Paragraph 3(a) to (j)]

- 2.8 The school assesses pupils' work regularly and provides parents with frequent written information on pupils' effort and attainment across a range of subjects. It uses standardised tests in reasoning, English and mathematics to identify areas for future progress. In the EYFS, teaching is well planned. Children's progress is appropriately monitored from the Nursery onwards, contributing to the EYFS profile which is completed for each child at the end of Reception. [Paragraph 4]

How well do pupils achieve?

Pupils' Ability	The ability profile of the school is above the national average, although with a fairly wide spread of abilities represented.
Pupils' Needs	Eighteen pupils require support for SEND. They require support with a wide range of disabilities including dyslexia and dyscalculia. None has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Fourteen pupils have EAL but do not receive specialist support. The school has identified fifty-three pupils considered to be able, gifted and talented.
Pupils' Achievements	The school uses its own framework for assessing attainment. Including the use of commercial tests.

Part 2 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.9 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.10 The school supports the personal development of the pupils. It actively promotes the British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance, which underpin the school's aims to enable every pupil to fulfil his or her unique potential - academically, creatively, physically, socially and spiritually. Through a values programme that is promoted in both lessons and assemblies, even the youngest pupils learn about forgiveness, kindness and citizenship. Pupils understand the school's expectations which encourage them to support each other, behave appropriately and ensure that the rights of others are respected. From the EYFS upwards, pupils are self-confident and self-esteem is well developed. The youngest pupils understood that 'endurance' meant continuing to try even when facing difficulty, and this theme was continued in the whole-school assembly which sought to inspire others to do their best. Pupils comprehend right from wrong and the rule of English law, and are clear about what they can do to improve situations. They show initiative and take their responsibilities seriously. The oldest pupils help those younger than themselves in a variety of ways, including during a family service at lunch in which they say grace, serve the food and formally conclude the meal by inviting staff to provide notices for the remainder of the day. Senior boarders have suitable responsibilities for which they are appropriately prepared. Pupils across the school understand how they take an active role in their own and the wider community by raising money to help those in greater need than themselves. [Paragraph 5(a), (b) (i) to (iii)) and (vi). NMS 19]

- 2.11 Pupils are aware of the importance of British democracy and the role of the public institutions and services of England, including Parliament and the monarchy. The oldest and youngest pupils display an understanding of mutual tolerance as they work and socialise with pupils of diverse faiths and cultures. This is further developed by the care taken by the school to ensure that, when covering political matters, a balanced view is presented through the range of visitors, trips and the curriculum. Paragraph 5(b) (iv), (v),(vii),(c) and (d)]
- 2.12 Pupils contribute to the development of the school through the school council and the opportunities provided for individuals and small groups to talk about the activities undertaken. Boarders' views, whether suggestions or complaints, are welcomed, taken seriously and acted upon promptly. The vast majority of pupils report that they enjoy school. [NMS 17]

What are pupils' views of the school?

Pupils are asked to respond as 'agree' or 'disagree' with the option to specify 'no view' or not to answer individual questions. One hundred and eight pupils responded to part or all of the questionnaire. The table below shows the proportions of pupils who responded 'agree' or 'disagree' in relation to each question, and the number who didn't offer a view. A large number of the individuals who offered no view concerning the boarding questions are day pupils, who opted not to answer such questions due to having no experience of the school's boarding provision.

	% Agree	% Disagree	Number offering no view
School questions			
1. I enjoy school	100		4
2. I find my lessons interesting and engaging	99	1	13
3. The school gives me the support I need to learn	98	2	7
4. I can get help if I need it	97	3	7
5. The school encourages me to do my best	100		4
6. I feel safe and happy at school	100		6
7. My views and ideas are listened to in class and in school	98	2	20
8. Behaviour is good in the school	100		19
9. Teachers are fair in the way they give rewards	94	6	14
10. Teachers are fair in the way they give sanctions	88	12	20
11. The school deals with bullying	98	2	12
12. There is a member of staff or senior pupil I can turn to if I have a problem	96	4	14
Boarding questions			
1. I enjoy boarding	95	5	57
2. Boarders get on well together in the house	92	8	61
3. I am well looked after if I fall ill or am injured	98	2	63
4. I am able to contact my family and friends if I need to	99	1	60
5. I like the food in boarding	80	20	65
6. I feel safe in my boarding house	100		56
7. I am able to have snacks and drinking water outside main mealtimes	77	23	61
8. I am able to keep my belongings safe	89	11	63
9. Boarding staff treat me fairly	96	4	63
10. I am happy with the balance of free time and activities in the evenings and at weekends	91	8	62

Part 3 Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.13 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.14 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of both day and boarding pupils at the school, including those in the EYFS. Concerns about pupils are recorded. Staff undertake declarations of disqualification as appropriate. New staff are inducted appropriately and staff, including the designated lead for safeguarding, have been trained in line with requirements and also possess awareness of the most recent requirements contained in Keeping Children Safe in Education. Staff are also undergoing training regarding the dangers of extremism. Appropriate policies are in place for safe recruitment and the use of mobile 'phones and cameras, including in the EYFS. [Paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 11]
- 2.15 Written behaviour, anti-bullying, cyberbullying and e-safety policies are consistently applied and promote good behaviour, which the vast majority of parents report is well managed. Pupils, including boarders, were clear that if they had any concerns they could talk to someone and matters would be resolved. They are aware that antisocial behaviour is inappropriate and that such offences bring consequences. Records of sanctions are maintained in all areas of the school and include details of action taken. Staff are aware of the arrangements for restraint of pupils. [Paragraphs 9 and 10; NMS 12]
- 2.16 A written health and safety policy, supplemented by detailed risk assessments, ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with. The school takes care to ensure the health and safety of the boarders. Suitable risk assessments are carried out and monitored, with action taken as appropriate. All pupils and parents in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses reported that pupils feel safe in the school, including when boarding. [Paragraphs 11 and 16; NMS 6]
- 2.17 Procedures to reduce the risk of fire meet requirements. Fire drills are undertaken appropriately including in boarding time. Fire equipment is tested and maintained on a regular basis and a fire risk assessment has been undertaken. Training has taken place for fire marshals and for other staff as appropriate to their needs. [Paragraph 12; NMS 7]
- 2.18 The first-aid policy and supporting documentation covers the recommended requirements. Training in first aid is undertaken on a regular basis and includes paediatric training for EYFS staff. First-aid kits are readily available. [Paragraph 13;
- 2.19 Supervision of pupils is well organised and managed during the school day and boarding time by appropriate number of qualified staff. During the evenings and weekends boarders are provided free time, space to be alone, and a suitable range and choice of appropriately supervised and risk-assessed trips and activities. Boarders have access to current affairs through newspapers and television. Staff know the whereabouts of boarders in their charge and understand the policy on what to do should a pupil go missing. Always at least one adult member of staff is responsible for boarders at night and boarders know how to contact them. Staffing ratios in the EYFS are appropriate. [Paragraph 14, NMS 10 and 15]
- 2.20 The admission and attendance registers are maintained appropriately and are suitably managed and stored for three years. [Paragraph 15]

- 2.21 Boarders have an enjoyable and informative induction, enhanced by the buddy system. They are well supported by other boarders and have a choice of staff to turn to for guidance. External helplines are suitably displayed and include the telephone number of the independent listener. [NMS 2]
- 2.22 The medical centre is well equipped and staffed by knowledgeable and well-qualified matrons. It provides separate accommodation for male and female boarders. Medicine, including household remedies, is stored appropriately and careful records are maintained. A doctor and other medical practitioners can be seen as required. Procedures to support the physical and mental health and emotional well-being of pupils are understood and their confidentiality is respected. [NMS 3]
- 2.23 A small minority of boarders' parents commented in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses that it is not always easy to contact their children. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Boarders can contact their parents through a variety of channels including through the internet, their mobile phones and the phones available in the boarding houses. Systems for e-safety are suitable. [NMS 4]
- 2.24 Food in the boarding house and during the school day is prepared hygienically, plentiful and includes provision for particular dietary needs. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses a small minority of boarders indicated that they do not enjoy the food provided and felt that snacks and drinking water are not always available. Inspection evidence does not support this view. During formal interviews and conversations at mealtimes pupils were clear that food was mostly much enjoyed, that snacks provided in the evening were sufficient and that drinking water was available. [NMS 8]
- 2.25 Boarders' possessions are well looked after in their own lockers or by house staff, and laundry is dealt with efficiently. An appropriate policy is in place for any necessary search of boarders' personal belongings. Personal stationery items are available. [NMS 9]
- 2.26 The required checks are undertaken for adults and family members accommodated in boarding accommodation. Visitors are suitably supervised. The school does not appoint guardians for boarders, nor does it place boarders in lodgings. [NMS 14.2, 3, 4; 20]
- 2.27 Boarders confirm that they are well cared for and, in accordance with the school's values are treated fairly and experience no inappropriate discrimination. [NMS 16]

Other legislation

- 2.28 Corporal punishment is not used or threatened. [The Education (Abolition of Corporal Punishment) (Independent schools) Regulations 1989]
- 2.29 The school has an appropriate accessibility plan to improve information, access to the curriculum and physical access for pupils with SEND. [Equality Act 2010]

Part 4 Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

- 2.30 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.31 The school conducts the necessary checks to ensure the suitability of staff and governors. All staff have provided two references and had an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, a barred list check and an employment history check prior to appointment. Historically, in a very few cases, these were not always undertaken before the member of staff commenced employment. The school had recognised the error and all checks had been completed before the inspection. Current procedures are robust, including appropriate checks for governors and volunteers. The school does not appoint supply staff. [Paragraphs 7(a) and (b), and 8(a) and (b), 18 and 20; NMS 11 and 14.1]
- 2.32 The single central register of appointments is suitably maintained. [Paragraph 21]

Part 5 Premises and accommodation

- 2.33 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.34 Sufficient and suitable toilets, showers and washing facilities are provided and drinking water is labelled appropriately. Hot water taps are maintained at an appropriate temperature. Arrangements for changing and showering are appropriate for the age of the pupils. [Paragraphs 23 and 28]
- 2.35 The boarding accommodation is bright, appropriately furnished and protected from unauthorised access. Security procedures do not intrude on boarders' privacy. Boarders can personalise their sleeping area. Heating, lighting and ventilation are suitable. Common rooms and areas for socialising are provided. Private study spaces are appropriate. Bathroom facilities meet the requirements. [NMS 5]
- 2.36 Accommodation for the care of sick and injured pupils meets regulatory requirements. [Paragraph 24]
- 2.37 The premises are well maintained and repairs are undertaken where appropriate. Internal and external lighting and acoustic standards are met. [Paragraphs 25, 26 and 27]
- 2.38 Appropriate outdoor areas including playing fields and playgrounds offer space for play and physical education for pupils, fulfilling requirements. [Paragraph 29]

Part 6 Provision of information

- 2.39 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.40 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with the full range of required information about the school, including the EYFS and boarding, through the school's website or on request from the school office. A statement of boarding principles and practice is included as well as a handbook, which sets out the details of the boarding provision. Throughout the school, parents receive detailed reports on their children's progress, which provide a record of achievement and targets for future progress. [Paragraph 32 and NMS 1]

Part 7 Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.41 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.42 The school has a suitable policy for handling complaints. Clear procedures are in place for informal and formal complaints including boarding and the EYFS. Detailed, dated records include the action taken in response to complaints and whether or not it was upheld. The vast majority of parents report that the school provides timely responses to questions, concerns or complaints. One formal concern was recorded at stage two of the procedure during the academic year 2014 to 2015. [Paragraph 33 and NMS 18]

Part 8 Quality of leadership and management

- 2.43 The school meets the Regulations and Standards.
- 2.44 The proprietors have discharged their responsibilities for ensuring that the regulatory standards and EYFS requirements are met consistently. All required policies and procedures are in place and their implementation is suitably monitored. Throughout the school, including the EYFS and boarding, leadership and management demonstrate skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles. Boarding staff are suitably trained and have appropriate job descriptions. Residential and academic staff maintain close liaison. Induction procedures throughout the school are secure. Since the previous inspection the school has restructured its leadership, enabling additional focus on development planning throughout all areas of the school. Pupils' well-being is actively promoted. [Paragraph 34, NMS 13]

What are parents' views of the school?

Parents are asked to respond as 'agree' or 'disagree' with the option to specify 'no view' or not to answer individual questions. Seventy-four parents responded to part or all of the questionnaire. The table below shows the proportions of parents who responded 'agree' or 'disagree' in relation to each question, and the number who didn't offer a view.

	% Agree	% Disagree	Number offering no view
School questions			
1. My child is happy at the school.	99	1	1
2. My child is making good progress at the school.	99	1	3
3. My child feels safe at the school.	100		
4. My child is well looked after at the school.	100		1
5. The school actively promotes good behaviour.	98	2	
6. There is someone for my child to go to if problems arise in the school.	99	1	1
7. The school welcomes my views.	99	1	3
8. The school deals well with bullying.	94	6	12
9. Behaviour is well managed.	98	2	1
10. I receive good information about my child's progress, the school's policies and activities/events.	98	2	2
11. I receive timely responses to my questions, concerns and complaints.	99	1	2
12. My child has access to a broad curriculum.	100		
13. My child's individual educational needs are being met at school.	99	1	4
14. I would recommend the school to another parent.	99	1	3
Boarding questions			
1. My child enjoys boarding.	100		61
2. The boarding accommodation is well maintained.	100		62
3. My child is well looked after if he/she is ill or injured.	100		62
4. I am able to contact my child easily.	75	25	62
5. I am able to contact boarding staff easily.	100		
6. My child feels safe in the boarding house.	100		61
7. My child's belongings are kept safe.	100		62
8. Boarding staff treat my child fairly.	100		62
9. I am happy with the balance of free time and activities my child has in the evenings and at weekends.	100		61

3. SUMMARY OF REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

	All requirements met?
Part 1 Quality of education provided (curriculum)	Yes
Part 1 Quality of education provided (teaching)	Yes
Part 2 Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Yes
Part 3 Welfare, health and safety of pupils, including Other legislation	Yes
Part 4 Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors	Yes
Part 5 Premises and accommodation	Yes
Part 6 Provision of information	Yes
Part 7 Manner in which complaints are handled	Yes
Part 8 Quality of leadership and management	Yes
National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools	Yes

Action points

3.1 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Progress since the previous inspection

3.2 The school has addressed the regulatory non-compliance of the previous inspection in May 2012 where it was found that volunteers and governors had been appointed without the completion of necessary checks. The school has now developed systems to ensure that checks are carried out appropriately.