



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

Dunottar School

September 2019



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School's Details

School College	Dunottar School			
DfE number	936/6078			
Registered charity number	1016538			
Address	Dunottar School High Trees Road Reigate Surrey RH2 7EL			
Telephone number	01737 761945			
Email address	info@dunottarschool.com			
Headteacher	Mr Mark Tottman			
Proprietor	United Learning			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	407			
	Seniors	363	Sixth Form	44
Inspection dates	24 to 26 September 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Dunottar School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between 11 and 18 years old. The school is a registered charity and is owned and administered by United Learning, supported by a local governing body which meets five times a year.
- 1.2 The school originally opened in 1926 for female pupils only. It became co-educational, when it became part of the United Learning group of schools in 2014. It combines a year-based pastoral system with vertical houses, the latter acting as a medium for activities and competitions.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to provide an outstanding education to boys and girls through excellent teaching and a high level of individual support, enabling pupils to achieve their full potential. The school espouses what they call 'warrior learning' behaviours: creativity, curiosity, independence, aspiration, tenacity, collaboration and inclusivity.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, mostly from white British families living within a 5-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 73 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including dyslexia and dyspraxia, 27 of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil has an educational, health and care (EHC) plan. Data used by the school have identified 16 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 At GCSE in the years 2016 to 2018, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.3 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2016 to 2018 have been in line with the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- Pupils have a strong work-ethic and are very focused in lessons.
 - Pupils are effective collaborative learners.
 - Pupils make skilled use of the school's technology.
 - Pupils develop valuable skills from the varied opportunities of the co-curricular programme which has enhanced their learning and academic horizons.
 - Pupils' progress is hindered at times by some teaching which is rather one-paced and does not stretch and challenge them sufficiently, particularly the more able.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils gain excellent skills for life.
 - Pupils are very aware of their responsibility to the wider world and contribute significantly through their charity work and other enterprises.
 - Pupils display an excellent level of behaviour both inside and outside the classroom.
 - Pupils take full advantage of the leadership opportunities available in school and take these roles very seriously.
 - Pupils are highly tolerant and respectful of others, embracing the ethos of this happy and collegiate community.

Recommendation

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement:
- Enable all pupils to make good progress at all times, by ensuring that teaching consistently provides sufficient challenge for all pupils.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 Pupils in the school show a good level of achievement, promoted by leaders' emphasis on what the school terms 'warrior learning' characteristics. At GCSE for the years 2016-2018, results have been above the national average for maintained schools, and at A-level, they have been broadly average. There is no significant difference between the results of different groups within the school. Pupils throughout the school make good progress overall in their learning and this observation is supported by almost all parents and pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The commitment of the teaching staff enables this good progress to take place and leaders' and staff's effective use of data to monitor progress means that pupils know how they are doing at every stage. However, pupils' progress is hindered at times by some teaching which is rather one-paced and does not stretch and challenge them sufficiently. This was notable for the more able pupils in some classes.
- 3.6 Pupils show a good level of knowledge, skills and understanding, both in class and in the written work they produce independently. This was seen throughout the school. Pupils often discuss ideas confidently in lessons, though at times they are reluctant to go beyond the simple answer and are not always encouraged to elaborate further. There were useful, explicit references to exam technique in many of the lessons observed and pupils improved their ability to develop relevant and effective answers to questions. Thorough and prompt feedback enables pupils to move on in their learning and make improvements. Pupils often showed a good recall of prior knowledge and could make valid

comparisons, sometimes across subjects. This was seen in a GCSE English lesson where pupils made interesting links between their study of Dickens earlier in the year and their current text of Macbeth. Pupils study separate sciences from Year 7 and are confident in discussing the subject, as seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils showed good understanding of the Rutherford Model. Pupils experience a range of creative subjects within a carousel system and consequently develop a greater variety of skills from the different areas. Their strong creative skills were on display throughout the school and in lessons observed, where pupils of all ages showed a good understanding of concepts, such as Year 9 musicians who showed very encouraging keyboard skills and Year 7 pupils who spoke confidently on the importance of fibre in the diet during a food and nutrition lesson.

- 3.7 Pupils are confident and strong oral communicators, very willing to discuss ideas in class and develop their thoughts fully. However, not every lesson encouraged such development and expression of thought, with the result that pupils' progress was hindered at times. It was not always clear in lessons that the more able pupils were able to make the most of their abilities, as they were restricted by some limited questioning. In the most effective lessons seen, pupils explored the topic fully and contributed perceptive ideas, often taken from other areas. In a senior English lesson, pupils made an interesting and unusual links between a poem about war and a piece of modern art, capturing the essence of the emotional theme in both. In tutor-time pupils in the middle part of the school were very articulate in sharing points of view. Pupils' written work, seen both in their folders and on their tablets, was of good quality across the years. This strength of communication emanates from leaders' and governors' focus on building up pupils' confidence in learning and this is very apparent when looking at how far pupils have developed with their sense of curiosity and ambition between joining the school and the senior years.
- 3.8 Pupils display effective numeracy skills and can apply their knowledge and understanding to other subjects. GCSE pupils in geography confidently used graphical skills in their coastal geomorphology course. Pupils' business studies books showed skilful handling of data and graphs to analyse trends in supply and demand curves. Year 10 work scrutiny included some data analysis of the human development index, demonstrating confidence in understanding the index and using graphical skills to identify patterns and trends.
- 3.9 Pupils are confident in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all their work. This is encouraged and enabled by the school's provision of tablets for all pupils, a policy implemented by the leadership team and supported by the local governing body and United Learning. Pupils are able to work almost entirely on their tablets: they can send electronically their work to staff and have it marked and returned electronically easily and quickly. This feedback provides strong support and its electronic nature means that parents also can view the work and know their child's progress. Pupils in A-level history use electronic programmes for recording their work. GCSE English pupils make valuable use of the technology to annotate texts easily, providing them with very visual and informative notes for future use.
- 3.10 Pupils use a range of good study skills in their learning. They work effectively as individuals and are very focused in class. In an A-level drama lesson, pupils gave valuable analytical feedback to their peers during a stage performance task, resulting in them pulling together all the comments to produce a better performance. Pupils in a psychology lesson discussed their ideas on the nature of schizophrenia and why it affected later adolescence particularly, producing a very good level of thinking.
- 3.11 Pupils take full advantage of the school's varied extra-curricular programme and clearly enjoy these activities and learn new skills from their involvement, in terms of developing different abilities and talents. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is very popular with over a third of the school enrolled and many pupils gaining bronze, silver and gold success. The music and drama productions are well-received and seek to involve all pupils who want to participate. Pupils are proud of their achievements and they show a genuine sense of collegiality and aspiration in all they do. Sixth form pupils often lead the way in these cross-curricular activities, furthering the sense of community.

3.12 Pupils are very positive and enthusiastic in their attitudes to learning. They work together very successfully and share ideas, so that the whole class can benefit and improve their learning. Working in pairs is common throughout the school, as well as group work, reflecting this strong desire to make progress and share their learning. This was seen in a junior French lesson where pupils were collaborating in a game to aid their learning. Pupils often work independently to good effect, as seen in a lesson in history where pupils were working with noticeable diligence and maturity. Pupils demonstrate their initiative and learn new skills from the research tasks they undertake in some subjects, an example of good practice. Pupils focus and work hard in class for the most part but there are times when some can be rather passive and limited in their discussion of ideas. Overall though, the attitude of the pupils to their learning is a real strength of the school and reflects the positive impact of the 'warrior learning' traits.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils display very high levels of self-confidence inside and outside the classroom. They embrace fully the behaviours of the school's 'warrior learning' traits and clearly direct their approach to school, along these lines. These traits underpin all that goes on in the school. Consequently, pupils feel they are making great strides in their development as individuals. Senior pupils who spoke to the inspectors described how they now felt confident in their abilities and able to discuss their ideas in class which they would never have been able to do before joining the school. In a junior assembly, there was a celebration of achievement against the 'warrior learning' traits and clearly pupils understood and valued their significance, wanting to gain recognition for their efforts. The investment in tablets has engaged the pupils in taking responsibility for their own learning and they are more confident in their work as a result. They persevere and they make progress, helped by effective and prompt feedback from teachers. Students grow in confidence because they are in a secure environment in which they can learn from mistakes without fear of being shown up. 'Inclusivity' and 'tenacity' both feature in the list of warrior traits and pupils work and act with these in mind. The direction of the leadership team in driving these 'warrior learning' traits and promoting them through the teaching has strengthened the self-understanding and resilience of the pupils. Most parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps pupils to be confident and independent.
- 3.15 Pupils understand fully the value of making their own decisions. They show this in lessons, in the way they tackle problem-solving tasks effectively in class. Senior pupils described in positive terms the support they received when it came to making sensible choices on subject options and the question of higher education or a career. They felt that the school encouraged them to be responsible decision-makers and said that the opening of the new sixth form centre had enhanced their sense of adulthood. The prefects and heads of houses regularly take decisions in their roles and display an excellent sense of purpose and pride in their responsibilities. The school council and charity committees felt that their views were respected by the leadership team, giving examples of changes that had resulted from their ideas, such as the provision of new bag racks and prohibiting single-use plastic bottles.
- 3.16 Pupils show a good awareness of the non-material aspects of life. The work in the creative departments that could be seen around the school shows that pupils appreciate the value of developing their emotional responses to the world around them. They talk positively about the advice they receive in PSHE lessons and assemblies, promoting their understanding of these issues in life which go beyond the practical and mundane. Pupils reflect maturely and thoughtfully on questions of religion, gender, climate change and humanity. They are actively engaged in philosophical debate, considering ethical issues, debating animal welfare and food choices, morality and tolerance. This philosophy has been deeply instilled into the mentality of the pupils and the results can be seen in the thoughtful manner in which pupils approach their lives.

- 3.17 Pupils exhibit a very strong awareness of the need for sensible behaviour and this is apparent from the orderly manner in which they move around the site and the positive atmosphere seen in lessons, which is a real strength of the school. In this respect pupils clearly live up to the school's aim of kindness and integrity in all things. In interview pupils discussed important issues and displayed a strong moral compass between right and wrong, promoted by the school's excellent programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils exhibit an overriding sense of enjoyment, inclusivity and respect for others throughout the school. In a religious studies lesson, there was a wide-ranging discussion on gender inequality. Pupils understood the sanctions and rewards in school. In discussion with inspectors, they noted that these were fair and that sanctions were explained to pupils thoughtfully and carefully. Pupils were overwhelmingly collegiate, they valued each other and were respectful of difference. The school's values develop responsibility and respect and these were evident in areas such as the drama and games programmes.
- 3.18 There is an excellent sense of working together throughout the community and pupils thrive in this positive and supportive environment, learning to take responsibility for themselves and each other. The house system helps to promote the collegiate atmosphere and pupils said that they were enthusiastic about belonging to these groups. Pupils display strongly collaborative qualities both in lessons and in their co-curricular activities. Pupils collaborate on events and plan them, so that they learn to work together and solve problems. There are many team building initiatives. In interview, some pupils spoke about their visit to an activity centre, where they had to help each other cope with challenges outside of their normal experience. Younger pupils took part in a camping trip at the beginning of term, learning how to share tasks and work together. Collaboration was a trait added to the 'warrior learning' behaviours in the last year, responding to how pupils were already showing this quality, reflecting the way that the leadership team takes notice of the pupils and works with them.
- 3.19 Pupils take their responsibilities towards others very seriously. They engage whole-heartedly in supporting charities, raising over £20,000 last year. Pupils decide on which charities they are going to support and work together on funding these projects. Pupils contribute positively to the school community building strong relationships with their peers and the staff. Some senior pupils take on sports leaders' awards which involves them with local disabled people and younger children and gives them excellent opportunities to develop their skills in guiding and training these individuals. Musicians gain the experience of performing in a Christmas event for older people from the local community and understanding how their participation in such events brings pleasure to others. This is an area that pupils express a wish to take further. Pupils are respectful, considered and thoughtful in their approach, showing compassion and kindness to other pupils in the school and to those less fortunate in the local community.
- 3.20 Pupils show a genuine respect for each other and are highly appreciative of the rights of individuals and the need to avoid judging people simply because of perceived differences. The atmosphere around school was seen to be open and relaxed, with everyone seeming at ease with each other, reflecting pupils' strong sense of tolerance and inclusivity. This happy environment is encouraged by the excellent relationship between pupils and teachers, seen throughout the school. In interviews, the pupils spoke thoughtfully about religious tolerance and sexual identity. Pupils establish positive friendships in their own year groups and through the opportunities to be involved in clubs and societies across different year groups, provided by the leadership and teaching. Pupils celebrate different cultural traditions through events such as the modern foreign languages week, catering events, and religious festivals. Most parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.
- 3.21 Pupils commented positively on their understanding of the importance of leading healthy lives, saying that the school supported them fully, in this respect. Pupils, including the youngest, spoke knowledgeably about the significance of diet and exercise in their lives. Pupils take part in regular exercise through the varied sporting programme offered by the school and supported by the very good facilities, thus enhancing their physical health. Most pupils have played in at least one of the

school's sports teams and a large majority of pupils take part in extra-curricular sporting clubs, boosting further their levels of fitness. The food at lunchtime was balanced and nutritious and pupils all expressed their appreciation of the catering and could see how this helped their health. Pupils valued the appointment of a counsellor as a further support for their emotional well-being, commenting on their confidence in dealing with any pressures as they arose. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they know how to stay safe online. Inspectors found that pupils' understanding of online safety was strong and secure. The commitment of the pastoral team in the school provides an excellent level of care for pupils, reflecting the aim of supporting the individual at every level and this is helped by leaders' and staff's central focus on the 'warrior learning' traits, imbued in all they do. Consequently, pupils throughout the school display the qualities of excellent personal development, becoming confident, thoughtful, responsible and resilient people, both inside and outside the classroom and this is a special characteristic of the school.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Mr Daniel Cross	Compliance team inspector (Senior deputy head, HMC school)
Mr David Bradbury	Team inspector (Head, SofH school)
Mr William Ings	Team inspector (Director of teaching & learning, HMC school)