



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**DENSTONE COLLEGE**

**BOARDING WELFARE**

**INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Denstone College

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Full Name of School       | <b>Denstone College</b>   |
| DfE Number                | <b>860/6003</b>   |
| Registered Charity Number | <b>1102588</b>  |
| Address                   | <b>Denstone College<br/>Denstone<br/>Uttoxeter<br/>Staffordshire<br/>ST14 5HN</b> |
| Telephone Number          | <b>01889 590484</b>   |
| Fax Number                | <b>01889 590744</b>   |
| Email Address             | <b>hoffice@denstonecollege.org</b>  |
| Headmaster                | <b>Mr David Derbyshire</b>  |
| Chair of Governors        | <b>Mr Gerald Gregory</b>  |
| Age Range                 | <b>11 to 19</b>   |
| Total Number of Pupils    | <b>614</b>  |
| Gender of Pupils          | <b>Mixed (371 boys; 243 girls)</b>  |
| Number of Day Pupils      | Total: <b>443</b>   |
| Number of Boarders        | Total: <b>171</b><br>Full: <b>113</b> Weekly: <b>58</b>                           |
| Inspection Dates          | <b>20 Jan 2015 to 22 Jan 2015</b>   |

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing primarily on compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS). The inspection occurs over a period of two and a half continuous days in the school.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended. This inspection focuses on the school's compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgement.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

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

### **Inspectors**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Mrs Deborah Forbes   | Reporting Inspector  |
| Mr Stuart Corrie     | Team Inspector for Boarding<br>(Housemaster and Assistant Director of Music, HMC school) |
| Mrs Sarah Williamson | Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)                                    |

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Located in the village of Denstone in 100 acres of Staffordshire countryside, Denstone College is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils aged from 11 to 19. It aims to develop achievement, confidence and happiness in all its pupils. The school is a registered charity, a limited company and a member of the Woodard Corporation. It is overseen by a governing body, the chair of which is known as the Custos.
- 1.2 Founded in 1873 as a boarding school for boys, the school admitted both day pupils and girls in 1976. It is organised horizontally into three 'Schools' by age: Junior School, for Years 7, 8 and 9, Middle School, for Years 10 and 11, and Senior School, for pupils in Years 12 and 13. It is also organised vertically into six houses. Each School includes boys and girls, day pupils and boarders. Boys board by Schools in separate buildings from the girls' boarding house.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has built a new sports pavilion and complex, and a new classroom block. It has rebuilt and extended the library, and made improvements in boarding accommodation. Weekly and termly boarding has been introduced. The school has also taken appropriate measures to accommodate the growth in pupil numbers, including increasing the seating in the chapel.
- 1.4 There are currently 614 pupils in the school, 371 boys and 243 girls, of whom 171 are boarders. Pupils are drawn from the local area, from business, agricultural and professional backgrounds. A small number of boarders from overseas join the school each year. The school has identified 66 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 30 receive specialist learning support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 36 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL); 22 of them receive support for their English.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

| School      | NC name |
|-------------|---------|
| First Form  | Year 7  |
| Second Form | Year 8  |
| Third Form  | Year 9  |
| Fourth Form | Year 10 |
| Fifth Form  | Year 11 |
| Lower Sixth | Year 12 |
| Upper Sixth | Year 13 |

## **2. SUMMARY**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

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

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Enable each boarding house to create its own development plan and evaluate its progress annually.

### **(iii) Progress since the previous inspection**

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in June 2011. There were no recommendations.

### **3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS**

#### **3.(a) Boarding provision and care**

- 3.1 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 Boarders are very positive about the induction that they receive from boarding staff, pupil handbooks and experienced boarding pupils. Boarders name several members of staff, including the external listener and the school counsellor, to whom they would willingly go for help or advice. Contact details of appropriate sources of outside help, including the Children's Commissioner, are displayed in houses. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has comprehensive policies for the care of boarders who are unwell, including first aid, care of those with chronic conditions, administering homely remedies and medical emergencies. The medical centre is sited separately from the boarding houses, with provision, including washing facilities, for male and female boarders. It is staffed by qualified nurses, who are on call at night, and a doctor who attends surgery twice a week. Boarders have access to local medical, dental, optometric and other specialist services as required. The medical centre dispenses prescribed medication, and boarders are allowed to self-medicate when they have been assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. Their rights and confidentiality are respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 In their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires a few boarders said that they do not find it easy to contact friends and family outside school. In interview and conversation boarders indicated that the wi-fi signal is very weak in some places. The mobile telephone signal is also inconsistent. Inspectors found that boarders can, however, contact home by landline telephone and by email or through an internet-based communication program using school computers. Systems are in place to guard against unsafe use of the internet. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Most boarders share spacious rooms, although a few older boarders can opt for single rooms if they prefer. Each boarder has a desk for work and each boarding house has common rooms and kitchens for recreation. Sufficient toilet and washing facilities are close to sleeping areas and offer privacy. Boarders reported that the showers provide hot water at good pressure. Rooms are clean, warm, well ventilated, well maintained and suitably furnished. Boarders are able to personalise their own space, although not all choose to do so. Boarding accommodation is protected from access by unauthorised persons and security measures do not intrude on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 A minority of boarders who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed discontent with the food and with the availability of snacks outside mealtimes. Inspection evidence in terms of meals sampled and menus seen demonstrated that the food is nutritious, tasty, and plentiful in choice, amount and variety. Conversations with boarders supported this view. Specific dietary and religious needs are met. All kitchens, including those in houses, are clean and well maintained. Drinking water is readily available and boarders may prepare snacks in the evening, either with food sent from the school kitchens or using their own supplies. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Boarders appreciate the speed and the efficiency of the daily laundry service. The school shop allows boarders to obtain personal items easily, and there is a popular weekly shopping trip to a local supermarket. All boarders have lockable storage spaces. Valuables and money are stored by the school. [NMS 9]



- 3.8 There is an extensive and varied activity programme during the week and at weekends. Houses and grounds provide a range of safe recreational areas and places for boarders to be alone if they wish. Boarders have access to national and international news from newspapers, television and the internet. The activity commitment of boarders is monitored by activities and boarding staff. In questionnaire responses a very small minority of boarders said that they were not happy with the balance of free time and activities, although this view was not supported by them in interview. Effective liaison with local clubs and societies allows some boarders the option to utilise local facilities. [NMS 10]

### **3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding**

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school ensures the safety of the boarders through the implementation of its health and safety policy, which complies with the relevant legislation. All buildings and equipment on the site are well maintained, and any shortcoming is quickly rectified. New and refurbished buildings reflect concern for the pupils' welfare. Risk assessments are carried out for all parts of the buildings and the grounds, as well as for activities, trips and educational visits. All of the boarders who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they feel safe in their boarding houses. [NMS6]
- 3.11 The school seeks and takes advice from the local fire service and has well-established policies and procedures concerning fire safety. Clear signage and suitably maintained equipment are evident in all buildings. Staff are appropriately trained. Fire drills are carried out regularly in boarding time. [NMS7]
- 3.12 Arrangements are made, having regard to the most recent official guidance, to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. All staff are regularly trained by the local safeguarding children's board, and all new employees on the site receive induction training before they commence work. The school has co-operative working relationships with other local agencies, and the designated safeguarding leads are alert to the situation of any pupils in need. They have been active in educating pupils about e-safety. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Measures for promoting good behaviour are outlined in the school's policies, and boarders are well aware of the expectations of the school. They are rewarded for good behaviour, and their concern for one another is based on an understanding of the values of their community. They say that bullying is rare and, when it occurs, it is swiftly and effectively handled. A small minority of boarders said in pre-inspection questionnaires that teachers are unfair in giving sanctions. Inspectors' scrutiny of records of sanctions showed that those awarded by boarding staff were fair and proportionate. In interview, boarders themselves expressed this view. The school has suitable policies on restraint and on searching pupils and their possessions, but very rarely has occasion to use them. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school operates safe recruitment procedures and carries out all necessary vetting checks on members of staff, in line with regulatory requirements and official guidance. A criminal records check is undertaken for everyone over 16 living on the same premises as boarders, and a written agreement between any such person and the school specifies the terms of their accommodation. Visitors to boarding accommodation are kept under staff supervision. The school does not appoint guardians for pupils. [NMS 14]

### **3.(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision**

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The school's statement of boarding principles and practice is published widely to parents, staff and pupils. It is displayed in boarding houses, and the confidence and respect for others that are apparent in pupils' behaviour demonstrate that the principles work in practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Leadership and management of boarding are clear, and the vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that boarding is well organised and managed effectively. Weekly meetings between all those responsible for boarding ensure regular communication and discussion of boarding issues. The school has undertaken self-review against the NMS, and house staff contribute to the overall school development plan. Individual development plans for each boarding house are not drawn up. Academic aspects of boarders' lives are supported by tutors in the vertical house system. A variety of meetings and records enables tutors to communicate progress to boarding staff, and these effective links ensure that academic needs are supported during study time. All necessary records are maintained and suitably monitored. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Senior boarding staff are all experienced and suitably qualified. Roles, including those of spouses, are clearly defined. Training and regular induction meetings with the boarding leadership are provided for all staff as they take up their boarding roles. Regular appraisal includes review of boarding practice, and staff are encouraged to undertake further pastoral training. Boarders are always appropriately supervised in houses and during evening or weekend activities, and know how to contact the member of staff on duty or at night. Staff sleep in separate accommodation in each house, and boarders do not have inappropriate access to this. Systems ensure that staff always know the whereabouts of boarders, and a published procedure is in place to implement should a boarder go missing. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders say that the school is tolerant, and that they are treated fairly and equally, experiencing no inappropriate discrimination and enjoying equality of opportunity. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders express views through house suggestion boxes, and the pupil-led boarders' council and school council. A small minority of boarders expressed in questionnaire responses that the school does not seek or respond to their opinions; however, in interviews, boarders could identify actions that had improved boarding provision as a result of their suggestions. The overwhelming majority of pupils indicated in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they enjoy their boarding experience. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has and implements a suitable policy for dealing with complaints. Almost all parents expressed that any concerns they had were handled well. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 All senior pupils are able to act as prefects with defined responsibilities. They are given suitable training, including child protection, in preparation for school-wide and boarding duties. They are able to issue sanctions, but only with staff oversight. In practice they very rarely do so. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]