



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

DEAN CLOSE SCHOOL

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

26th APRIL 2016 to 27th APRIL 2016



School's Details

Full Name of School	Dean Close School
DfE Number	916/6035
Registered Charity Number	1086829
Address	Dean Close School Shelburne Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL51 6HE England
Telephone Number	01242 258000
Email Address	office@deanclose.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr Bradley Salisbury
Chair of Governors	Mrs Kathryn Carden
Age Range	12 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	461
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (256 boys; 205 girls)
Number of day pupils	Total: 189
Number of boarders (including full, weekly and flexi / 'dayboarders')	Total: 272
Number of full boarders	Total: 230
Pupils' Ability	Standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils is above the national average
Pupils' Needs	The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 45. They receive literacy, numeracy and general curricular support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Eighty-four pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), fifty-two of whom receive support.
History of the School	The school was founded as a boys' boarding school, known as The Dean Close Memorial School, in 1886, in its current location. The school became fully co-educational in 1972 and is part of four schools which together with three nurseries

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	form The Dean Close Foundation.
Ownership and Governing Structure	The Dean Close Foundation is a registered charity whose schools are governed by a board of trustees.
School Structure	The school is a co-educational boarding school for pupils aged 13 to 18 and includes a sixth form for pupils aged 16 to 18.
Inspection Dates	26/04/2016 to 27/04/2016
Other Useful Information:	<p>i) Dean Close School occupies a 50 acre shared site with Dean Close Preparatory School and Dean Close Pre-Preparatory School.</p> <p>ii) The site includes a music school, theatre, swimming pool, indoor and outdoor sports pitches, woodland and playing spaces.</p> <p>iii) The school has three girls' and three boys' boarding houses for mostly full boarders, but with a limited number of places for 'day boarders', providing a 'half-way house' between a day pupil and a boarder.</p>

About the Inspection

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.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (“boarding NMS”). 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 NMS. 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 standards.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or 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, including the boarding NMS, following their inspection 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 and any qualitative concerns identified at their previous inspection.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school’s compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. 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.

The inspection does not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as:

- (i) the school’s aims;
- (ii) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (iii) compliance with data protection requirements
- (iv) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features;
- (v) contractual arrangements with parents
- (vi) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups. Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Independent School Standards Regulations](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#).

SUMMARY EVALUATION

The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1

Quality of education provided

At GCSE in the years 2012 to 2014, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools. In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2012 to 2014 has been above the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.

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 pupil performance is in place.

The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1 - 4] are met.

PART 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.

The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.

PART 3

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

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. Boarders do not experience discrimination, and their care is sensitive to different needs.

An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.

The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6 -16] and the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 and NMS 2-4, 6-12, 15 and 16 are met.

PART 4

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised.

The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17-21] and NMS 14 are met.

PART 5

Premises of and accommodation at schools

Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their 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. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.

The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22 – 31] and NMS 5 are met.

PART 6

Provision of information

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 those 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, and its results in public examinations, 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. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.

The standards relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.

PART 7

Manner in which complaints are handled

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, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.

The standards relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.

PART 8

Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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 wellbeing of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.

The standards relating to leadership and management of the school [Paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.

About the inspection

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 members of the governing board of trustees. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils and the boarding houses. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Richard Mannix	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Adele Wright	Compliance Team Inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Sarah Gomm	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy head, HMC school)
Ms Emma Picken	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Boarding, GSA school)

Inspection Reports: Dealing with the Media

Inspection reports on ISC schools are public documents. It must be expected, therefore, that the news media will take an interest in reports as they become available.

For most schools, this will mean the local and regional media, but there may be circumstances in which national newspapers and news organisations will want to examine ISI reports. The purpose of these notes is to help schools prepare themselves for media interest in their inspection reports and findings.

In most cases, the publication of an inspection report should be regarded as an opportunity to strengthen your school's relations with local media. In many cases the media will not know that your school has been inspected unless you tell them. Assuming that your report is a largely positive one, it makes sense to make the most of that opportunity. Further help is always available from:

The ISC Press Office: 020 7766 7062
Out of hours mobile: 07825 806017
Email: ed.holmes@isc.co.uk

The press release

Unless your report discloses serious weaknesses in the school, you can prepare a press release to send out to local papers and radio stations. You can send it out before issuing the report to parents, but with a clear embargo date on the top of it, so that journalists know when they can use it and can speak to you beforehand about its contents. But do make sure that parents have received their copies of the report, or summary, before they are likely to read about it in the press.

Be careful about selective quoting from the report. You can emphasise the positive in your press release as long as it is genuinely true to the spirit and balance of the inspection report's main findings and recommendations. There is little point in trying to conceal important features of the report, since the press may well ask for a copy of the report and will soon spot the omissions.

How to write a good press release

Write in plain and simple language, no jargon or abbreviations. Avoid overly long sentences in the introduction.

Sum up the essence of the whole press release in your opening sentence. You need to grab the attention of the journalist in this sentence. Try and identify what is the news element of your story. Your press release could start with a positive summary of the main findings, for example:

Eastminster School is a 'purposeful and happy school where pupils enjoy learning', independent school inspectors find.

It should go on to explain the report's main findings and **include a quote from the head**. Significant points of criticism and recommendations for action should be acknowledged and the release should describe what the school is doing to address them.

Note that, because ISI does not make overall inspection findings, you should be careful about misrepresenting individual inspection judgments, for example:

The school provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities that enhance the pupils' personal development.

And not:

The school is 'outstanding', according to independent school inspectors.

Structure

- **The intro:** The introductory sentence is the shop window for your story. Use active verbs and words with impact which will attract attention. The intro should tell the reader quickly what the story is about. The intro should be brief and topical.
- **After the intro:** As quickly as possible, give all the essential information. After 150 words, look to see whether you have answered the basic questions: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY. If the story was cut at this point, would it make sense?
- **Don't mix fact and comment:** The story should give indisputable facts. If you want to say something like "This is the most important change in the recent history of the school" (which is a matter of opinion), make sure an individual is quoted as saying it: Headmistress Mrs Sarah Smith said: "This is the most important...."
- **Explain things:** You are writing for ordinary people, not other teachers. They won't know what IAPS is, or why INSET is important.
- **Include contact details** at the end.

Keep the release relatively short and tell journalists how they can obtain the full report if they want more details. Your purpose in preparing the release is to give the general picture painted by the inspection.

Suggested note on the ISI inspection system

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Department for Education for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with independent school regulations. ISI inspections are also carried out under arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

Serious criticisms

If the inspection identifies serious weaknesses in your school, you may find it difficult to compose an accurate press release. Do not issue a press release which does not stay true to the meaning and spirit of the ISI report. It is likely, however, that news of a seriously critical report will reach the ears of journalists. You should be ready for this. Have a brief statement ready. This could start positively, for example:

Eastminster School is committed to offering the best education and highest standard of pastoral care and we welcome the opportunity this inspection has given us to make improvements.

The statement could go on, if appropriate, to address the main points of criticism, highlight any mitigating circumstances and set out action being taken to put things right.

There is further information on dealing with the media on the ISC website in the member zone. www.isc.co.uk

How to manage a media crisis

No hard and fast rules will cover every circumstance to which a school may fall victim. But this checklist should help schools to avoid the compounding of disaster by ill-informed reporting or the inflation of a minor incident into a serious embarrassment or worse.

In case of disaster

- **KNOW ALL THE FACTS**, or find them out fast. The last thing you want is to be told things you didn't know by a reporter.
- **TAKE CHARGE AND ESTABLISH CLEAR LINES OF COMMUNICATION.** Only the head (or, if it is unavoidable, a senior member of staff nominated by the head) should speak to reporters. Let staff know what is happening and advise them not to speak to reporters. If appropriate, give pupils similar instructions. Keep chairman of governors informed.
- **PREPARE A STATEMENT.** Brief, factual, correct. Include positive information which is relevant to the incident (precautions, rules, sanctions). Don't sound complacent; emphasise any appropriate action being taken. Keep it as short as possible - newspapers are unlikely to quote more than the two or three sentences they regard as most important.
- **CONTACT OUT OF THE BLUE.** Find out what the reporter knows, what he wants to know, and when his deadline for a response is. If necessary, ask for more time. Promise to ring back and use the time to prepare your response. Always ring back when you say you will.
- **STICK TO STATEMENT.** Correct any facts which are wrong but otherwise make it clear that all you want to say is in the statement. Try to anticipate any follow-up

questions you might be asked. Don't get trapped into conversations over which you have no control.

- **IF A REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER VISITS.** Treat with courtesy but do not permit to wander round school asking questions of staff or pupils. You have little control over journalists outside the school gates.
- **NEVER "NO COMMENT".** Reporters will assume, rightly or wrongly, that you have something to hide.
- **LAW-BREAKING.** If illegal activity has taken place, the police should be informed. If they are already involved, seek their co-operation in handling press enquiries. If criminal charges have been laid or are imminent, the press is strictly limited in what can be reported before the case comes to trial.
- **PARENTS.** Let them know by letter what has happened, if possible before any damaging publicity has appeared. Afterwards, if supportive responses are needed, parents' letters are much more effective than ones from the school.
- **AFTER THE EVENT.** Don't try to correct every minor inaccuracy. Least said, soonest mended, is usually a good rule. If there has been a serious misrepresentation, seek an apology or correction from the editor.

Advice is always available from the ISC Press Office:

The ISC Press Office: 020 7766 7062.
Out of hours mobile: 07825 806017
Email: ed.holmes@isc.co.uk