

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

d'Overbroeck's College

Full Name of the School	d'Overbroeck's College
DCSF Number	931/6104
Registered Charity Number	N/A
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Age Range	11 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	15th to 18th October 2007

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 d'Overbroeck's College was founded in 1977, initially as a sixth form college, taking pupils at age 13 from 1998. In 2001 the International Study Centre (ISC) was opened as an entity within d'Overbroecks College, catering for resident international students aged 15 to 18, offering the study of English as an additional language together with a number of subjects in GCSE. In 2005 Leckford Place School was opened as a day school to educate boys and girls aged 11 to 16, with d'Overbroeck's sixth form continuing to educate day and boarding pupils aged 16 to 18. All three parts of the school are fully co-educational. The three sections of the school operate independently on a day to day basis. Leckford Place has its own head, and the ISC its own director. The sixth form is led by the principal, assisted by the academic head of sixth form. All three sections are overseen by the principal of d'Overbroeck's College, and governed by one governing body, at present constituted by the four proprietors of d'Overbroeck's College. The head of Leckford Place was appointed in September 2005, and the director of the ISC in January 2006.
- 1.2 The three sections of d'Overbroeck's College occupy sites across an area of North Oxford, with some facilities, for example, for performing arts, being shared by all three sections of the school. d'Overbroeck's sixth form is based largely in the Swan Building, formerly a language school, refurbished and re-opened in September 2005, with science, mathematics, computing and art based in Ewert Place. Leckford Place is situated in a former primary school rebuilt and refurbished at the same time. The ISC occupies a building close to the centre of Oxford, with pupils using facilities at Leckford Place for science practicals. Sixth formers who are boarders live in one of four boarding houses, or with local families in home-stays. Three-quarters of pupils at the ISC live in home-stays and the others in a boarding house alongside sixth form pupils.
- 1.3 d'Overbroeck's sixth form currently has 239 pupils aged 16 to 18 (Years 12 and 13), of whom 120 are boarders, with girls and boys being roughly equal in number. The ISC has 28 pupils, 16 boys and 12 girls, who are all boarders. Leckford Place currently has 104 pupils aged 11 to 16 (Years 7 to 11), all day pupils, of whom three quarters are boys.
- 1.4 Leckford Place aims to 'create a school where the individual child is at the core of everything that the school does'. It further seeks to combine the highest standards of teaching, learning and pastoral care with a strong sense of ethical values and a sense of community. d'Overbroeck's sixth form aims for its pupils to be 'happy, grow in self-confidence and become more aware of the world around them, while realizing their full academic potential', whilst the ISC seeks to 'provide a study programme specially adapted to the needs of individual students from abroad, building on communication skills, in preparation for study at A level either at d'Overbroeck's sixth form or another school'.
- 1.5 Entry to Leckford Place is usually at age 11 or 13, and is by assessment during a day's visit to the school, together with reports from the pupil's present school, and an interview. In addition to some academic scholarships, Leckford Place also offers scholarships in art and the performing arts. d'Overbroeck's sixth form admits pupils on the basis of results in GCSE and an interview, together with a reference from their current school. Pupils applying to the ISC are assessed through tests in English and mathematics, together with a telephone interview, and references from their current school. Entry to ISC may be in either September or January. Standardised tests in Leckford Place show that pupils are of a wide range of abilities, with around one tenth of well above average ability and over a quarter of below average ability. Where pupils at Leckford Place are performing in line with their abilities,

results in public examinations are expected to be in line with or above the average for all maintained schools. Standardised tests of ability are not used in d'Overbroeck's sixth form. The school considers its pupils to be of a range of abilities, with most of average or above average ability. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results will be above the national average for all maintained schools. Standardised tests are not used at the ISC. Tests on entry in English and mathematics lead the school to consider pupils at ISC to be of a range of abilities, with most of average or above average ability, with variable levels of experience of English as an additional language.

- 1.6 Pupils attending the ISC come from a large number of countries in Europe and Asia. Pupils at Leckford Place come from Oxford and surrounding areas, while pupils at d'Overbroeck's sixth form are drawn from a wider geographical area. Of pupils at d'Overbroeck's sixth form, about a third come from families where English is not the principal language, while there are few pupils at Leckford Place for whom this is the case. All pupils at the ISC come from families where English is not the principal language. Currently three pupils at Leckford Place have a statement of special educational need (SEN), and 48 pupils across the school have learning difficulties or disabilities. About one-tenth of the intake to d'Overbroeck's sixth form at age 16 is from Leckford Place, with the majority of pupils coming from a variety of independent and maintained schools, and from the ISC. Those pupils who leave Leckford Place proceed to either maintained schools or sixth form colleges for vocational study. At present about two thirds of pupils at the ISC proceed to study at d'Overbroeck's sixth form, with those who leave proceeding to other independent schools.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The quality of the educational experience provided throughout d'Overbroeck's College is good. The last inspection recommended a review of the curriculum together with expansion of the programme of activities, and this has been carried out to good effect. The curriculum has been both expanded and enhanced since 2001 across all sections of the school. The range of subjects, and the number of activities now offered, provides a wide range of opportunities that is well suited to the needs and interests of pupils of all ages and abilities, both girls and boys. The educational experience offered by the school is well suited to the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Leckford Place

- 2.2 In Years 7 to 11 the school meets its aim to provide a curriculum that ensures that pupils are given the opportunity to develop skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 includes the study of English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, humanities subjects and science, alongside physical education (PE), and creative and aesthetic subjects. Arrangements for the study of personal, social and health education (PSHE) alongside the philosophy of religion in Years 7 and 8 do not currently allow all elements of these subjects to be covered effectively. The school has plans to improve this aspect of pupils' experience. Pupils may also study Latin or classical studies from Year 7. Balance in the curriculum is maintained in Years 10 and 11 by study towards GCSE in a group of core subjects which includes one modern foreign language alongside English, mathematics and a variety of options for scientific study. Pupils then choose from a good range of carefully arranged options which give the opportunity for further study in subjects which strengthen human and social development, as well as creative skills. At present, information and communications technology (ICT) is the only subject available for study in GCSE to develop technological skills, due to lack of appropriate accommodation.
- 2.3 Pupils benefit from a good programme of extra-curricular activities which includes musical and artistic opportunities, a range of individual and team sports, trips, including travel abroad, and participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's (DoE) Award scheme. There is a weekly activities afternoon for all pupils in years 7 to 10. Some parents, in response to a pre-inspection questionnaire, expressed concerns about the range of extra-curricular activities currently offered and the way in which they were timetabled. No evidence was found to support this view and pupils spoke with enthusiasm of the opportunities offered to them in activities. All pupils in Year 10 undertake a work experience placement with a local business or organisation, which gives them a good opportunity to enhance their experience of the local community. In addition they meet members of the immediate neighbourhood, such as residents of a local home for the elderly, who are invited into school to attend concerts and events.
- 2.4 The PSHE programme is effective in providing opportunities for pupils to prepare for adult life. They have opportunities to discuss issues such as drug awareness, sexual health and responsibility in relationships, and to consider choice in their lives. Careers education begins in Year 9 when pupils receive effective assistance in making appropriate choice of subjects for study at GCSE. Pupils in Year 11 attend an examination skills preparation morning at a neighbouring college of the university which includes mind mapping techniques and advice on diet. Links between Leckford Place and the sixth form are good. Pupils from the sixth form visit to talk with Year 11 pupils about A-level choices and career options, and there are a number of joint meetings, visits and social events.

- 2.5 The curriculum is well planned, giving suitable opportunities for boys and girls of all ages and abilities. Small class sizes allow pupils to be placed in groups appropriate to their level of ability, giving a good starting point for the development of suitable learning skills and facilitating good progress. Extra lessons are offered for pupils wishing to study additional subjects in GCSE such as Latin.
- 2.6 Provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is outstanding, taking full account of individual needs. Some are withdrawn from lessons for individual support, while in Year 9, those for whom it is necessary receive personal assistance in English directly from the learning support department. Subject teachers are carefully kept informed about pupils who receive extra support with regard to both progress and any need for further help, as are parents. Those pupils with statements of special educational need have appropriate individual education plans, which are put into practice effectively. The school identifies those pupils with particularly high levels of ability in one or more subjects but as yet there is no whole school approach to meet their needs, other than setting. The school is aware of this and has plans to develop curricular provision that meets the needs of these pupils.

Sixth form

- 2.7 The sixth form provides pupils with an extremely broad and flexible curriculum, combined with a wide range of good quality activities. This fulfils the school's aim to provide pupils in the sixth form with a programme which is 'attuned to the differing needs of individual students.'
- 2.8 Pupils have a choice of thirty-seven subjects from which to select a programme of study in the sixth form, with few constraints on choice. Subjects outside the mainstream which may be studied include sociology, communication studies, Japanese and accounting. Most pupils study four subjects in Year 12 and three in Year 13, but those who choose may study five subjects at A level. The wide range of subjects offered allows pupils to pursue with ease those interests which they have developed in study prior to entering the sixth form. Elements of unexamined study which have been included since the last inspection include a programme of drugs and sexual health education and by visiting speakers on subjects such as journalism.
- 2.9 The academic curriculum is enhanced by many opportunities to engage in sporting, aesthetic and performing activities in a programme which has been expanded since the last inspection. Accommodation for drama and music is limited, but the school makes good use of facilities in various parts of the city to allow pupils a wide range of activities from which to choose. Provision for sports activities is good. Although there are no timetabled lessons for physical activity, provision is made one afternoon a week for pupils to pursue sports or other activities, and the great majority of pupils participate in sport at some point during the school week. Trips out of school are many and varied. Some support the curriculum, such as biology field trips and frequent visits to art galleries in both Oxford and further afield, while others are more recreational, such as ski trips, but all are popular with pupils. Participation in the DoE award scheme is growing, allowing pupils to participate in voluntary service and work in the local community, but such opportunities outside the scheme are limited at present. There is no formal work experience scheme in the sixth form but arrangements are made by the school to enable pupils who wish to take a course of study at university where such experience is required, such as veterinary medicine, to acquire the relevant experience.
- 2.10 Highly effective arrangements are in place to give advice to pupils on careers and application for higher education, co-ordinated by the head of careers together with a member of staff with particular responsibility for overseeing university applications. Information on courses

of study is readily given by heads of department, and pupils receive individual advice and oversight from their director of studies, as personal tutors are known in the sixth form.

- 2.11 Excellent arrangements exist to ensure that all pupils in the sixth form have equal access to the curriculum provided by the school and to the wide range of activities offered. Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is provided by staff at the ISC. Those pupils who did not attend the centre before entering the sixth form receive tuition to prepare them for examinations in qualifications in English necessary for university entry. Those with learning difficulties or disabilities receive help according to their need. Pupils applying to highly competitive universities receive additional tuition which allows them to extend the range of their experience in their chosen subject.

International Study Centre

- 2.12 The ISC successfully fulfils its aim of providing a study programme adapted to the needs of individual pupils from abroad, building on communication skills, in preparation for sixth form study either at d'Overbroeck's or another school.
- 2.13 The educational experience at the ISC is well designed to develop a wide range of skills, principally the rapid acquisition of key language and writing skills in English. This then enhances pupils' ability to benefit from other aspects of the curriculum. These include study in mathematics and science subjects, together with a range of humanities subjects, including history and geography, all in preparation for examination in GCSE. Although arts subjects are not included in the curriculum, opportunities for aesthetic development and appreciation are provided throughout the curriculum, for example in the use of both classical and modern music as stimuli in a number of lessons. Pupils are given lessons on study skills and examination techniques which are well designed to address their particular needs, such as the use of bi-lingual dictionaries. Pupils receive additional help on an individual basis with aspects of English directly related to the GCSE subjects they study.
- 2.14 Activities afternoons are used well to provide varied experiences and opportunities for pupils such as a wide range of sporting activities, an art club and an international festival of the arts, which enables pupils to share their cultural heritage with others. A wide range of regular and occasional evening activities, such as quiz nights, are well supported and appreciated by the pupils. There are additional visits and activities at weekends which contribute to overall preparation for sixth form study in an English school.
- 2.15 Excellent advice is given to pupils through a programme designed to help with application for sixth form entry to English schools. Individual interviews with the director of the ISC provide pupils with advice on a wide variety of English schools together with guidance about and monitoring of the application process.
- 2.16 Pupils' needs are identified during the ISC's induction week through testing and activities. Appropriate education plans are then designed to suit individual pupils. These focus on the appropriate level of study in English for each pupil, combined with careful choice of additional subjects for study. These plans, which take into account appropriate qualifications in subjects already held by pupils, result in a curriculum for each pupil which makes suitable provision for entry to an English sixth form.

Whole School

- 2.17 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.18 Pupils' achievement, both boys and girls, is good, sometimes outstanding, in relation to their abilities in lessons and in public examinations. They perform successfully in a wide range of activities. Pupils make good progress in response to the school's aim to encourage them to have high expectations of themselves. Pupils enjoy learning, and make good use of the opportunities created by the school to develop their personal interests through individual research.
- 2.19 Skills are developed throughout the school to a good level and pupils understand their work well. In two-thirds of lessons in Years 7 to 11, pupils' achievement was good or higher, with pupils in Years 9 to 11 making good progress towards the demands of GCSE. A similar picture was seen in the sixth form. Pupils at the ISC make rapid progress in English, demonstrated by their ability to use technical language related to mathematics in lessons six weeks after arriving at the school. This was at a level considerably higher than that demonstrated in tests on their arrival. Pupils of all ages demonstrate secure knowledge of the subjects they study. Pupils are able to put theoretical understanding into practice with great success, as in a Year 12 biology lesson, where pupils successfully demonstrated in practical work their understanding of the effect of changing temperatures on the permeability of membranes. Pupils think critically to good effect, with excellent analysis evident in English and history lessons at Leckford Place, although in some lessons in science and mathematics in the sixth form pupils were reticent in offering their perceptions. In drama, music and art, pupils think creatively across all age groups, and perform in front of others with confidence. Notably good examples of creative writing in English were seen at the ISC.
- 2.20 Pupils of all ability levels within the school achieve well and make good progress across the curriculum, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those in the sixth form for whom English is an additional language. More able pupils throughout the school achieve well across the curriculum, often above expectations for their age. This was seen in a further mathematics lesson in Year 12, where pupils solved problems on radian measure with great rapidity. Pupils with SEN, learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress, developing confidence in their growing achievement which enables them to participate fully in lessons with success.
- 2.21 Pupils' attainment in GCSE is good in relation to their abilities in all subjects. Results over the last three years for which comparative data is available have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. Standardised measures of progress indicate that pupils' progress to GCSE is above national norms. At A level, pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities; their results over the last three years for which comparative data is available have been well above the average for all maintained schools and above the average for selective maintained schools.
- 2.22 Good standards are achieved by pupils in the varied sports offered by the school both within and outside the curriculum. Individual pupils from Leckford Place and the sixth form have achieved particular success in motor sports and equestrian eventing nationally, and in squash at county level. Pupils from Leckford Place participate in the National Youth Choir and have achieved success in national competitions for composition.
- 2.23 Pupils throughout the school are highly articulate. This was particularly evident in lessons in English, philosophy and drama, and, given pupils' level of experience in English, in all lessons at the ISC. They converse confidently with each other, and with adults. Pupils read well and are attentive listeners, able to process information quickly. Written work is mostly well presented, clear and fluent, and shows good command of vocabulary and appropriate technical terms.

- 2.24 Mathematical skills are well developed throughout the school and pupils were seen to apply them effectively in other subjects, such as geography and science. In a Year 11 physics lesson pupils were able to carry out appropriate calculations successfully when solving problems relating to energy.
- 2.25 ICT skills are used effectively in lessons when pupils are called upon to do so. Highly adept use of ICT was seen in a Year 13 music technology lesson, and pupils used ICT skills well in a modern foreign languages lesson at Leckford Place, but use of ICT skills in learning is not yet fully developed across all subjects.
- 2.26 Discussion and argument amongst pupils is effective and well informed. Pupils listen well to the views of others and accept their views readily. In a Year 12 history of art lesson pupils were able to share their opinions on frescoes effectively, the discussion based on secure subject knowledge. Pupils present arguments with clarity. In addition to work in class, opportunities across the school for debating and drama foster confidence in this area.
- 2.27 Work in pupils' files is well organized and it is clear that many pupils take pride in their written work and in their studies generally. In discussion, pupils in Year 7 were able to identify the style of learning which suited them best and understood the relevance of this to their independent study. The school has clear aims to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and pupils' comments in questionnaires showed that they understood this concept well. This was particularly apparent in the responses of sixth form pupils, who valued the responsibility placed on them to sustain their learning independently, and were often seen to demonstrate this in practice.
- 2.28 Good working habits were seen throughout the school. Pupils settle quickly to their studies and work co-operatively with their teachers and with each other. Highly effective work in pairs was seen in PE, science practicals and drama. Several examples were seen of pupils with SEN, learning difficulties or disabilities receiving assistance from fellow pupils in quiet and undemonstrative ways both in and out of class.
- 2.29 For the most part, pupils settle quickly to a given task, applying themselves diligently and showing a good degree of determination to succeed. Pupils at the ISC showed a notably high level of enjoyment in their work.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.30 The spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils is good, and their social development is outstanding. The school successfully fulfils its aim to encourage pupils to be happy, grow in self-confidence and become more aware of the world around them.
- 2.31 Pupils in all sections of d'Overbroeck's develop high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, given strong encouragement to do so by the school's emphasis on the development of self-reliance at all ages. The concerns expressed in the previous inspection have been fully addressed. In Leckford Place and the ISC this is nurtured through assemblies and in the curriculum, as well as by regular contact with tutors. In the sixth form the encouragement of such development is implicit in the expectations of teachers for pupils to take responsibility for all aspects of their life at the school, and reinforced by the monitoring of pupils' development by directors of studies. Pupils readily acknowledged the positive effect these expectations have on their personal development. Formal opportunities for spiritual development through whole school activities are fewer in the sixth form, but pupils showed growing awareness of this dimension in their lives in lessons, and in their work, in many areas of the curriculum, such as English, psychology, chemistry and history of art. Pupils at the ISC share significant moments in the life of their various faith systems openly,

and to mutual benefit, while pupils at Leckford Place responded with interest to presentations by visiting speakers about their different spiritual experiences.

- 2.32 A clear awareness of right and wrong is evident in all pupils, who respond in a mature way to the school's expectations of good behaviour. All pupils appreciate the limited number of rules that they are required to observe, acknowledging the sense and necessity of those that are in place. At the ISC, pupils commented that they appreciated the sense of responsibility that the school's attitude to rules encouraged. Pupils at Leckford Place showed a keen sense of justice and fair play in their written work, for example in Year 11 work on conditions for women in the early twentieth century.
- 2.33 In their demeanour around the school, in conversation, and in their dealings with one another, pupils throughout the school demonstrate strongly developed social skills within a relaxed atmosphere. The mutual respect shown between pupils and teachers throughout the school is a key element in the tolerant and considerate ethos which pervades lessons and other activities. It is evident also in boarding provision in the sixth form and at the ISC. Pupils at Leckford Place are lively, yet thoughtful of others. They enjoy, and speak highly of, the opportunities to contribute to the development of their school provided through participation in the school council. PSHE lessons provide a good introduction to understanding elements of civic life such as elections. The PSHE programme at the ISC gives pupils the chance to extend their experience and understanding of features of every day life in England through a carefully constructed series of lessons which enable them to feel at home in the country quickly. Formal opportunities to contribute to the life of the school occur less frequently in the sixth form, but many instances of successful, pupil-instigated initiatives occur, such as an environmental group set up by pupils which has organised recycling projects in the sixth form buildings. Pupils enter readily into community activities, for example a concert by Year 13 musicians, where pupils gave good support to those performing, and the annual pantomime prepared by the ISC.
- 2.34 The ISC provides an important international dimension to life at d'Overbroeck's, strengthened by the substantial number of international pupils who proceed from there to study in the sixth form. Elements of other cultures are a frequent element in assemblies at the ISC, and in joint entertainments, such as a Bollywood-style dance show mounted by pupils from a variety of nationalities. Trips abroad are frequent in both Leckford Place and the sixth form. At Leckford Place pupils are introduced to classical civilisations in Year 7 and enjoy visits from a number of speakers, both from outside and inside the school, for example from teachers who had visited Zambia to form contacts with a partner school. The effect of these experiences is evident in pupils' attitudes to and respect for other cultures. Pupils in the ISC spoke of the marked change they had experienced in their tolerance and respect for the lifestyles and views of others since arriving at the school.
- 2.35 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.36 Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is good, and some teaching is outstanding. Teachers' secure subject knowledge, combined with high expectations and effective resources, allow pupils of all ability levels to achieve good standards. All pupils are enabled to make good progress and some, particularly those for whom English is an additional language, make outstanding progress in response to the teaching they receive. The quality of assessment and marking is generally good, but not yet consistent across all subjects.
- 2.37 The school's aim to place at the core of its work a high standard of teaching which reflects the needs of individual pupils is achieved well. All pupils are enabled to make good progress, or better, including those with SEN and those with learning difficulties or disabilities, for whom focused help in small sets and individual tuition outside lessons make good provision, particularly in Years 7 to 11. Communication between staff responsible for giving extra help and subject teachers is regular and effective. Those for whom English is an additional language are enabled to make good, frequently outstanding progress through teaching finely attuned to their individual needs. At the ISC, pupils' progress is enhanced by good quality teaching they receive on an individual basis to support linguistic elements of other subjects. More able pupils are enabled to make good progress through carefully directed questioning. Pupils throughout the school further their understanding successfully in response to stimulating teaching in most lessons, and develop their skills, confident in the teaching they receive.
- 2.38 In all sections of the school, and across all subjects, teachers demonstrate high expectations of pupils, frequently working highly effectively to engage pupils, and keep them involved. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, and coaching in sporting activities is well focussed to stimulate physical development. In creative subjects, pupils are encouraged to develop appropriate skills, but also to appraise each other's work critically, as seen in a Year 7 drama lesson where pupils assessed each other's story-telling to excellent effect.
- 2.39 Teaching is carefully planned, making good use of small class sizes to set tasks which address the particular needs of pupils. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace, making efficient use of class time, but this was not always evident. Some teaching in the ISC and sixth form moved slowly, particularly when information was given solely through dictating notes or writing them on the board. The most successful lessons often involved rapid interchange between teachers and pupils, as seen in a PSHE lesson at the ISC, where pupils exchanged views on effective study skills with the teacher to excellent effect. Some teaching, particularly in English and history, grips pupils' imaginations. A teacher-led discussion of complex poetry by Philip Larkin in the sixth form which related it to contemporary culture, and imaginative tasks set for Year 10 pupils learning about speech writing, ensured that pupils of all abilities were enabled to make rapid progress. All teaching demonstrates good subject knowledge and understanding, with some teaching informed by a high level of scholarship.
- 2.40 A good understanding of what pupils might achieve informs teaching in all sections of the school, based on a clear appraisal of their individual potential, especially at the ISC where the results of initial tests in English and mathematics are used well to inform planning. The needs of pupils with SEN, learning difficulties or disabilities, and those in the sixth form for whom English is an additional language, are addressed by teachers carefully and sensitively through varied styles of questioning and the setting of carefully tailored tasks. More able pupils were sometimes seen to be given more demanding tasks, but this was not always evident, although frequent encouragement was given to these pupils to pursue their ideas further.

- 2.41 A good range and plentiful supply of resources is available for teaching, and these are used well. Books are up to date and relevant. Well-resourced science laboratories, a photographic dark room for use in the sixth form and a good range of music technology software mean that teachers have an appropriate range of resources to use in specialist teaching, and these are effectively used. There are many interactive whiteboards throughout the different sections of the school and some effective use of ICT was seen, for example in a Year 12 history lesson where troop displacements in the first world war were explained by use of an animated diagram. In other lessons use of ICT equipment was less widespread. Some departments in the sixth form provide excellent resources in the form of websites to enable pupils to study outside lessons. Accommodation for teaching is spacious and welcoming at Leckford Place, although teaching space in art and music is limited and not always free from extraneous noise. The buildings in the sixth form and at the ISC have been carefully adapted to allow maximum use to be made of them, but some teaching rooms can feel cramped. Libraries across the school have developed since the last inspection, providing an adequate supply of resources to support teaching and learning. They are used well for personal study, although less so as a resource for teaching. The library at Leckford Place is airy and welcoming, although there is limited space for pupils to sit and read, and it is popular with pupils at break and lunchtimes.
- 2.42 The assessment and marking of pupils' work is generally thorough and regular, but varies across subjects and across different sections of the school. At the ISC the quality of marking seen was variable, but pupils had confidence in the assessment they received orally in lessons after work had been seen by teachers. Teachers make good use of information gained through assessment to plan future work. In the sixth form, work is marked regularly and well in general, but this good practice is not consistent across and within all departments. At Leckford Place work is marked frequently and, at its best, marking is encouraging and constructive, often followed up with verbal feedback to inform pupils of their progress. Some marking, however goes no further than acknowledgement that work set has been completed. A newly established merit system at Leckford Place allows teachers in Years 7 to 11 to reward excellent work and leads to public acclamation in assemblies for outstanding work. Pupils said they appreciated this system, and the encouragement it gives to good progress. The school has recently introduced a similar system to reward success at the ISC.
- 2.43 Teaching encourages responsible behaviour in pupils in all sections of the school. Relationships between teachers and pupils are based on mutual trust, respect and understanding, and the need for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. This shone through all aspects of school life.
- 2.44 The school makes good use of the results of standardised tests of ability to organise teaching at Leckford Place. However, the school is still developing use of this information to indicate pupils' potential achievement, and current progress in relation to national norms, to pupils and their parents. In the sixth form the school uses its own assessment system to assess pupils' potential achievement and this is used well to inform pupils and parents of what they might expect to achieve, and how much progress they are making towards doing so. At the ISC pupils' initial performance in tests in English and mathematics is used well to indicate potential achievement and the progress being made towards that. Regular internal assessment is strengthened by individual interviews with the director of the ISC to discuss pupils' progress.
- 2.45 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care shown for pupils is outstanding. Arrangements for pupils' welfare, and to promote the health and safety of pupils are good. The school's aim to promote a close-knit yet relatively liberal community is met with great success. The very good standards of pastoral care which were a feature of the school at the time of the last inspection have been further strengthened, and implemented in setting up Leckford Place.
- 3.2 Teachers provide highly effective support and guidance for all pupils in all sections of the school. Pastoral care is a priority and pupils' comments in questionnaires highlighted the good quality of care they receive. Pupils at Leckford Place receive highly effective support from form tutors but also commented that there was a wide range of people that they could turn to if they needed help. At the ISC form tutors have an insight into the particular needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language and who come from a huge variety of cultures. This insight underpins the successful integration of each new group of pupils as they arrive. Pupils in the sixth form expressed great confidence in the care received from their directors of studies.
- 3.3 Teachers are assisted by effective and appropriate pastoral arrangements in all three sections of the school. Responsibilities of tutors at both Leckford Place and the ISC are clearly delineated and supported by regular meetings between staff who have care of pupils. Good allocations of tutorial time allow for delivery of PSHE at the ISC and for additional PSHE to that given in lessons at Leckford Place. The use of planners and homework diaries keep tutors in touch with subject teachers and parents. In the sixth form directors of studies have a key role in support and guidance. Most also teach their tutees and therefore are able to get to know them very well, giving frequent guidance on an individual basis. The wide-ranging responsibilities of directors of studies are reflected in the care with which teachers are chosen to fulfil this role and the thorough training they receive on appointment. Both in the sixth form, and at the ISC, tutors and directors of studies have strong and highly effective links with those who care for pupils in boarding houses and home-stays, ensuring that problems can be dealt with quickly and sensitively. Arrangements for pastoral care are supported by clear and effective policies which are monitored well by senior staff.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is excellent in all areas of the school. Pupils feel valued and supported by staff, both teachers and those with other responsibilities, and their relationships with staff are characterised by mutual respect and politeness in a relaxed atmosphere. This care for the pupils is at the heart of the ethos of the school. In the sixth form, pupils commented on the relaxed relationships they have with staff but were clear that teachers are also able to challenge, for example, their attitudes to work, without jeopardising those relationships. Pupils support one another and give of their time for each other freely and without ostentation. Pupils at the ISC spoke of how quickly they settled in on arrival, making friends with staff and pupils easily during the induction week.
- 3.5 In all three sections of the school pupils appreciated the emphasis on responsible behaviour that the relative lack of rules creates. Rewards to recognise and promote good behaviour are used at both Leckford Place and ISC and these are highly valued by the pupils. The positive effect of this approach was evident in the high standards of behaviour displayed throughout the school. The school's anti-bullying policy is clear. Pupils were confident that bullying is rare, and that any issues are quickly and successfully resolved. When disciplinary issues

- arise these are quickly and effectively dealt with, and parents are contacted early in the procedure.
- 3.6 Excellent child protection measures are in place and are operated successfully in all areas of the school when the need arises. Child protection officers exist in each section of the school and all receive appropriate and regularly updated inter-agency training. The school provides regular training and updates for all staff in both policy and practice in child protection. The school has an independent counsellor who can be contacted easily and in confidence by pupils.
- 3.7 Efficient systems are in place to ensure pupils' health and safety. Necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken, with thorough inspections and regular checks on equipment and alarms being carried out. A careful analysis of health and safety issues within the various sites, including boarding areas, is undertaken annually and appropriate action is taken. Risk assessments are made in all appropriate situations, with an excellent policy and well-understood routines in place across the school for risk assessment in planning and conducting outside trips and visits. The science department carries out risk assessments for each activity. The school maintains an up to date and comprehensive admissions register, and arrangements for the registration of pupils are good. Pupils' level of attendance is good. The school has prepared an adequate three year plan to promote access for those with disabilities or SEN.
- 3.8 Appropriate facilities and emergency measures exist for pupils who feel unwell, and an adequate number of staff have received first aid training, with some having been trained at a higher level. At Leckford Place, healthy eating is promoted in PSHE and science lessons, and by the provision of healthy meals at lunch time. At the ISC this topic is touched on in a variety of lessons, and in PSHE and tutor sessions. Appropriate signage is in place with regard to ensuring that smoking does not occur on school premises.
- 3.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.10 The school has excellent links with parents, and with the local community. There are many opportunities for parents to be involved with the life of the school, particularly at Leckford Place.
- 3.11 A high proportion of parents who responded to questionnaires expressed satisfaction, often strongly, with the education the school provides. Some parents felt that they had limited opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, but acknowledged that distance was a contributory factor. Particular satisfaction was expressed with the quality of teaching at the school, and with the high levels of support that pupils receive.
- 3.12 The formation of a parents' association at Leckford Place soon after its opening has given parents enhanced opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. Parents can contribute to school life in practical ways, including being members of the school choir. A summer social event involves staff, pupils and parents in providing entertainment. A similar association does not exist in the sixth form, but parents regularly attend concerts and other events, including information sessions on topics relevant to pupils' school life, such as careers. Parents also contribute their own expertise by giving talks, and several talks by visiting speakers are open to pupils and parents alike. Nearly all parents of pupils at the ISC live abroad, but the school takes great care to ensure that parents receive regular information on developments at the ISC, either directly or through pupils' agents or guardians.

- 3.13 Parents receive good information about their child's progress. Several comprehensive reports are sent home during the year. These include good quality information, including targets for future achievement, which is clear and useful to parents. At Leckford Place there is an additional report on how new pupils have settled in after three weeks, which parents appreciate. There are regular parents' consultation evenings with teachers. At ISC good and effective provision is made to keep parents abroad well informed about pupils' progress and parents are informed of any issues such as lateness or poor attendance with great speed.
- 3.14 The school ensures that parents' concerns are handled fairly and quickly. An appropriate complaints procedure exists and is operated effectively when necessary, which is seldom. Parents' concerns are dealt with by the school in a friendly and professional manner, and parents expressed confidence that problems are effectively resolved.
- 3.15 The school actively supports both local and national charities and is developing links with overseas communities, for example a school in Africa. Links with the local community are wide and varied. The school sponsors Oxford Artweeks, offering an opportunity for staff and parents to exhibit art work. Strong links exist with local hospices and with homes for the elderly. Members of the community regularly come into the school, but at present there are fewer opportunities for pupils to go out into the community to make a contribution.
- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.17 Boarding is a significant part of the educational experience of all pupils at the ISC, and of some in the sixth form. The quality of boarding education is good, both for those pupils resident in boarding houses and those in home-stays. All staff involved provide good support for pupils. Boarders are offered a good range of activities which add to the experiences gained in the classroom. Accommodation varies, with some pupils in newly renovated boarding houses, and others placed in homes with local families, but all accommodation provides a caring environment in which pupils feel secure. All the recommendations from the last report by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) have been implemented in full.
- 3.18 Relationships in boarding are both positive and supportive, and are a strength of the school's boarding provision. Boarders spoke highly of the atmosphere of trust which prevails between pupils and boarding staff. The school's aim to foster comfortable relationships in boarding is met well. The friendships and tolerance evident between boarders adds to the development of the school as a liberal, close-knit community. 'Houseparents' in home-stays, and boarding house staff, provide a caring environment together with a considerable, yet carefully monitored, degree of independence within a clear framework, which boarders appreciate and respect. Communication between boarding staff and tutors at the ISC, and directors of studies in the sixth form, is frequent and effective. The accommodation office, which administers boarding arrangements, is efficient and provides a further level of support for pupils. It monitors the home-stay provision for boarders regularly and thoroughly.
- 3.19 The school provides a good range of activities for those in boarding, both in the evenings and at weekends. Pupils at the ISC look forward to organised activities, such as quiz nights, with great anticipation, and these activities further strengthen pupils' experience of English culture. There are further trips arranged at weekends, both to events in the local community and further afield.

- 3.20 The quality of accommodation and resources is adequate in all cases, with good quality accommodation provided in many home-stays. Boarding houses provide large, comfortable rooms for pupils with plenty of room for socialising, and dining facilities within houses are appropriate to the age of the boarders. The food provided in boarding houses is plentiful and nourishing, and boarding staff monitor the boarders' diet tactfully yet effectively. There is an ongoing programme of maintenance and refurbishment in houses, and the school is constantly looking to improve its boarding accommodation through new purchases, such as a new boarding house which came into use recently.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Effective governance ensures that a good quality of education is offered to all pupils, in each section of the school, supporting the school's aim to provide the highest standards of teaching, learning and pastoral care.
- 4.2 The governing body was constituted in 2006 and currently consists of the four proprietors under the former arrangements. Two members of the governing body play an active role in the day to day management of the school, one being the principal. The governing body contains a wealth of experience in overseeing the running of d'Overbroeck's and its members have played key roles in the school's development, particularly in the last few years. The governors acknowledge that recent changes in the nature of the school, and aspirations for future development, make an increase in the number of governors desirable, and this is planned for in the near future, once the newly constituted arrangements have been consolidated. As it is currently constituted the governing body has access to legal and financial expertise through longstanding external advisors. The fruit of this advice is apparent in the acquisition and development of new buildings, and the extension of the school's activities at Leckford Place and the ISC in recent years. Educational advice from figures not directly associated with the school is less consistently available.
- 4.3 Governors are aware of their responsibilities, and have effective oversight of areas such as health and safety, and child protection, which are discussed at appropriate intervals. Planning is forward looking, but long term development planning currently lacks detail of financial needs or precise timescales. This is explained in part by constraints of space on the school's present sites, and uncertainties over the frequency with which suitable properties for further development become available, but likely needs in terms of human and other resources are not planned for in detail.
- 4.4 Governors are routinely provided with good information by the principal and the director of finance, health and safety. Relationships between governors and staff within the school are enhanced by the regular and close contact that staff have with members of the governing body, informally and through an elected staff group. This enables governors to have a good awareness of current concerns and needs throughout the school, such as the need for the development of purpose-built facilities for music and drama, and to plan for them as finances and the acquisition of appropriate premises permit.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 d'Overbroeck's is led with vision and good focus by those with senior management roles. The principal, supported by senior leaders at the three sections of the school, provides leadership which is clear-sighted and committed to the distinctive ethos of the school. Those in positions of responsibility within ISC and Leckford Place have clearly defined roles which are performed to good effect. In the sixth form, recent growth has led to a need for revision of senior management roles, which the school is pursuing.
- 4.6 The principal leads the three sections of the school well, with resourcefulness and purpose. At the ISC, senior leadership figures show great commitment and insight into the needs of pupils, providing a caring and supportive environment which allows good progress to be made by pupils from the outset of their time in the school. Senior leaders at Leckford Place fulfil their roles to good effect. Strong guidance is given in the care of pupils, and in setting

up an atmosphere which, whilst retaining structures helpful to pupils aged 11 to 16, reflects the whole school's over-arching ethos of encouraging learning in a liberal environment. Those with leadership roles in the sixth form carry out their responsibilities well, imparting a clear sense of the school's ethos. Several staff in senior management positions have accrued additional responsibilities over time as the sixth form has developed. This has led to a lack of definition in some senior posts which the school has plans to address.

- 4.7 Communication within and between different sections of the school is generally good. Communication between boarding houses, host families, and other sections of the school is frequent and effective. The school's needs across all sections are identified effectively, and thoughtful consideration given to planning to meet those needs. In Leckford Place strategic planning for future development is initiated amongst staff and the results incorporated into a structured plan with clear financial implications. In the sixth form such planning is not yet common within departments. The ISC has clear plans for future development with realistic aims. Whole school development planning following the changes of recent years focuses on consolidation, but lacks clear financial detail at present and is not currently shared with staff in all sections of the school. Heads of academic departments throughout the school initiate appropriate policies in most areas, but the monitoring of some policies, such as those for assessment and marking, is not consistent within and between subjects, and across all sections of the school.
- 4.8 The school secures highly committed and well-qualified teaching staff, together with a wide range of support staff who contribute well to the diverse activities within the school. A significant number of staff teach across different sections of the school. In all sections of the school, teachers within individual departments observe each other teaching, constituting one element of professional development. Observation across different subject areas is less often undertaken, restricting opportunities for sharing successful approaches to teaching. Professional development is further strengthened by individual discussions between classroom teachers and heads of department. Senior staff monitor heads of department and, in the sixth form, directors of studies. Excellent arrangements exist to give thorough training to those staff selected as directors of studies. Arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors are appropriate, and arrangements for the induction of new teachers are good. Arrangements are in place for newly qualified teachers to be monitored and trained under the appropriate national scheme.
- 4.9 Financial planning is good at Leckford Place and the ISC, with budgets allocated for individual departments and appropriate opportunities given for departments to plan for future funding. Financial aspects of staffing are administered centrally. In the sixth form departments do not receive individual budgets, but requests for funding are usually effectively met. The school plans to introduce departmental budgets in the sixth form in the near future, within planned development of management structures. Finance for boarding requirements is readily available.
- 4.10 The smooth running of the school across a widely spread number of sites is achieved by methodical procedures. It is enhanced by the hard work of, and effective communication between, members of the secretarial and support staff, who actively contribute to the school's ethos of friendliness and support amongst all members of the community.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The clear-sighted vision of the principal, together with that of the heads of Leckford Place and ISC and the academic head of sixth form, and the outstanding level of pastoral support that all staff give to pupils, enables the school successfully to meet its aim of creating a close-knit but liberal community providing teaching and learning to pupils attuned to the needs of each individual. Standards of teaching are high, although sharing of good practice is not always consistent. The school's concern for individuals characterises its approach to the provision of boarding in both boarding houses and host families. Mutual respect, loyalty and consideration are notable features of relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils. Pupils develop as articulate and socially responsible individuals responding well to the high expectations of their teachers. Pupils of all ages and abilities reach good levels of achievement in academic work, particularly those for whom English is an additional language. Links with parents are excellent and those with the community are well developed. The interest and experience of the governing body ensure that resources and support to maintain and consolidate the school's success and recent development are available. Whilst acknowledging the constraints of available accommodation on planning, plans for future development lack detail in some aspects.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection in 2001 the school has made substantial progress, so much so that some areas show complete change. The provision for pupils under 16 has been transformed into a school for pupils of ages 11 to 16 with a well-balanced curriculum in GCSE subjects, and the provision of activities throughout the school has been extended. The spiritual development of pupils has been enhanced by curricular arrangements at Leckford Place and the ISC, and through creative opportunities in the sixth form, alongside a strong focus on self-reliance. New accommodation for, and information about boarding has been successfully developed, alongside the curriculum and teaching styles of the ISC. Recreational facilities for sixth formers in terms of a common room have been provided in the Swan Building, acquired since the last inspection. Library resources have been extended, with considerable success at Leckford Place. ICT throughout the school has been developed significantly, largely through the provision of inter-active whiteboards, which are used well in some teaching. The academic achievements of students have been maintained and developed, particularly at age 16. The school has initiated a programme to enable teachers to observe each other teach in order to enhance professional development, but monitoring of teaching, and the application of policies by heads of departments is not yet consistent. As a result of the demands of the recent rapid development of the school some senior management roles in the sixth form lack clarity.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 No major aspect of the school is weak, but in order to improve its provision further it should:
1. take steps to ensure that existing good practice in marking and assessment is adopted by all teachers;
 2. continue to strengthen development planning, with particular regard to the financial implications involved, and the involvement of all staff in planning;
 3. further develop existing management structures by
 - reviewing senior management roles in the sixth form
 - clarifying and strengthening the roles of heads of department across the school in monitoring good practice in teaching.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 15th to 18th October 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mr David Beck	Former Deputy Head, HMC School
Mr Garry Binks	Housemaster, HMC School
Mrs Gwen Caddock	Former Head, ISA School
Mrs Polly Dangerfield	Head, ISA School
Mrs Elizabeth Ferrand	Head of Sixth Form, HMC School
Mr Robert Haworth	Head, ISA School
Mrs Gwenda Lilley	Head of Sixth Form, GSA School
Dr Stuart Nuttall	Former Head, HMC School
Mr David Williams	Head of Sixth Form, HMC School