



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**D'OVERBROECK'S COLLEGE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## d'Overbroeck's College

Full Name of School	<b>d'Overbroeck's College</b>
DfE Number	<b>931/6104</b>
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Telephone Number	<b>01865 310000</b>
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Email Address	<b>sami.cohen@doverbroecks.com</b>
Principal	<b>Mr Sami Cohen</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr James Noel</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 19</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>447</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (225 boys; 222 girls)</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>286</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>161</b> Full: <b>161</b> Weekly: <b>0</b>
Inspection dates	<b>15 Oct 2013 to 18 Oct 2013</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2007.

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) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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 judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with proprietors and 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 and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Colette Culligan	Reporting Inspector
Mr Adrian Underwood	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Lynda Billinge	Team Inspector (Former deputy head, GSA school)
Dr Eric Boston	Team Inspector (Head of academic support, ISA school)
Mr Bill Burn	Team Inspector (Former second master, HMC school)
Miss Joanne Green	Team Inspector (Former deputy head, GSA school)
Mr Stephen Jolly,	Team Inspector (Deputy head, Society of Heads school)
Mr John White	Team Inspector (Director of sixth form, HMC school)
Mr Tony Halliwell	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Linda Smallwood	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former deputy head, GSA school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 d'Overbroeck's College is a co-educational day and boarding school situated in north Oxford for students aged 11 to 18. Originally founded as a sixth form college in 1977, it first expanded with the addition in 2001 of the International Study Centre (ISC) catering for overseas students taking a one year IGCSE course. Opened in 2005, the lower school at Leckford Place admits day students aged from 11 to 16. The same ethos and approach apply throughout the school, each section having its own head reporting to the principal who is responsible for the overall management of the school. The school is overseen by a governing body of six, of whom four are proprietors.
- 1.2 Three of the school's four sites are within north Oxford. The lower school site at Leckford Place and the two sixth form buildings are within walking distance of each other. The ISC pupils share some of the Leckford Place facilities but are otherwise taught in the ISC building, located in the centre of Oxford.
- 1.3 The school aims to enable all students to achieve to the best of their potential, academically and personally. It seeks to establish a sense of close-knit community which is relatively liberal but within which relationships are based on mutual respect and consideration. The school intends for all students to feel engaged, happy and at ease with themselves and their fellows. It sets out to maintain excellence in academic matters and in pastoral care, always bearing in mind the needs of individual students.
- 1.4 Currently there are 447 students enrolled with approximately equal numbers of boys and girls. The 153 students in the lower school are all day students, drawn from within a 30 mile radius of the school. Of the 259 sixth form students, 126 board. The ISC currently educates 35 students, all of whom board. Boarders are drawn from a range of nations, including China, Thailand, Russia and a number of European countries. The school's three boarding houses provide accommodation for Year 12 students, students in the ISC and all Year 13 boarders
- 1.5 The ability of students in the lower school, the sixth form and the ISC is above the national average in each case. The school currently has 84 students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and one student with a statement of special educational need. There are 149 students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and of these 92 receive extra support from the school.
- 1.6 Since the previous inspection, the scope of extra-curricular activities, especially for sport, has been extended. An enrichment programme has been introduced for the sixth form. Learning support for students with SEND and the careers education programme have been increased. Arrangements for the continuous professional development of staff have been enhanced. There has been refurbishment and improvement of facilities in several areas and the school's provision for information and communication technology (ICT) overhauled.
- 1.7 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
Year 7	Year 7
Year 8	Year 8
Year 9	Year 9
Year 10	Year 10
Year 11	Year 11
ISC students	Year 11
Lower Six	Year 12
Upper Six	Year 13

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 d'Overbroeck's College is extremely successful in meeting its aim of providing an education which is finely tuned to the specific requirements of individuals. The high quality of the teaching, the flexibility of the timetabled curriculum and the very broad range of options available to students at examination level ensure that students are able to develop their interests and fulfil their potential. Throughout the school, students demonstrate excellent achievement. They are highly articulate, numerate and at ease with complex scientific concepts. Music, drama, art and related technologies as well as students' written work show imagination and creativity. The school's extra-curricular programme, significantly expanded since the previous inspection, provides many opportunities for students to engage in a range of individual and team sports; these opportunities are seized with enthusiasm. Boarders benefit from the combination of careful pastoral guidance and the school's high expectations of personal responsibility. Students' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are eager to learn, asking probing questions and putting forward personal views which often show highly sophisticated levels of thought. The vast majority of sixth form leavers go on to study demanding courses at universities or colleges.
- 2.2 The quality of the students' personal development is excellent and the school is outstandingly successful in enabling students to grow into hard-working, mature and responsible individuals. Parental responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed extremely high levels of satisfaction with the school overall and especially with its care for students. A defining characteristic of d'Overbroeck's is its close-knit, informal atmosphere within which students grow in confidence, self esteem, respect for themselves and for others. Students are very supportive of each other and behaviour throughout is excellent, exemplified in considerate, warm relationships. New boarders are quickly integrated, feeling at home within days of joining the school. The presence of a large international student body, most of whom are boarders, makes a significant and enriching contribution to the school's tolerant atmosphere. The students' willingness to help the school community by undertaking leadership roles is very evident.
- 2.3 The governors, four of whom are proprietors, are fully committed to maintaining the distinctive ethos of the school they founded. They demonstrate a close interest in its daily workings and progress. The plans under discussion at the time of the previous inspection to strengthen the governing body's effectiveness by extending its composition, however, have still not been finalised. Staff have been consulted in the production of a thorough strategic development plan and management structures have been clarified. Procedures exist for staff appraisal, although these are not consistent across all sections of the school. The visionary, energetic leadership and personal examples provided by senior figures result in a school which, although geographically divided, is united by its distinctive educational philosophy.

## **2.(b) Action points**

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

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

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

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Finalise and implement plans to strengthen the governing body and its effectiveness in monitoring all aspects of the school's life.
2. Create a consistent system of staff appraisal which meets the needs of all staff across the school.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of the students' achievement is excellent.
- 3.2 Students are very well educated in accordance with the school's aim of enabling all students to achieve to the best of their potential, academically and personally. The overall consistency of students' achievement has improved since the previous inspection.
- 3.3 Students demonstrate excellent understanding and skills. All students, including those with SEND and EAL, are articulate and apply logical reasoning in a range of situations including the application of mathematical and scientific concepts. Students are creative, think for themselves and relish stretching the boundaries of their knowledge. In the sixth form especially, students frequently move beyond examination requirements, engaging in sophisticated exploration of new ideas. Throughout the school, students enjoy opportunities to apply their knowledge and utilise learned skills in challenging activities, such as in the launch of an extreme altitude balloon probe. They use ICT confidently. Most go on to prestigious art colleges or universities, where they study a broad variety of disciplines.
- 3.4 Students reach high standards in a wide range of team and individual sports. Standards in activities are taken very seriously, with expert coaching enabling students to achieve high skill levels. Their well developed oral and listening skills enable students to be successful in public-speaking competitions. Creative and artistic endeavours also reach high standards, with several students achieving good grades in music examinations. Students succeed at silver and gold levels of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Several also achieve high levels of success in Maths Challenges and Olympiads.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 to 2012. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been good in relation to the national average of maintained schools. In 2011, results were also similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2013, 80 per cent of results were at grades A\* to B. Results in the majority of IGCSE subjects are good in relation to the worldwide average. Results at A level have been well above the national average for maintained schools and good in relation to the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2013, 86 per cent of entries at A level resulted in grades A\* to B. Analysis of performance data and of examination results shows that students identified with SEND or EAL achieve at the same level as their peers and that those students identified as particularly able achieve at excellent levels.
- 3.6 Analysis of attainment and work indicates that at GCSE level, students' progress is good relative to the average for those of similar ability. The school has not collected standardised data for students at sixth form level until this year and therefore students' progress cannot be measured against fixed national norms. However, on the evidence available, including observation of lessons, scrutiny of work and the school's own analysis, it is judged to be high relative to national age-related expectations.
- 3.7 Students display excellent attitudes to learning and all are committed to working hard. Students love to learn from their teachers and from each other, energetically

debating their own ideas with their peers. The school's success in nurturing their positive, enthusiastic and absorbed approach constitutes one of its many strengths.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The school is extremely successful in meeting the academic needs of all students and enabling them to achieve high standards. The curriculum and extra-curricular programme fully support the aims of the school in allowing students to achieve to the best of their ability, encouraging hard work in all activities, academic excellence and independence.
- 3.10 In the lower school, the curriculum provides a very good education, including, and moving beyond, the required areas of learning. The core GCSE curriculum includes at least one modern foreign language and one humanities subject. The curriculum has been extended since the previous inspection to include design technology at GCSE and there is now a more coherent personal development programme.
- 3.11 Students joining the ISC follow a one-year course. They study at least six IGCSE subjects, the majority taking more, and also follow a bespoke course in citizenship which helps them understand British culture. The options available for these students have been broadened since the previous inspection.
- 3.12 The curriculum for sixth form students is very wide-ranging, and the school's flexibility in timetabling allows for virtually any combination of subjects. Many students extend their learning by completing an extended project qualification. This allows them to pursue areas of personal interest, topics in recent years ranging from stem cell research to injustice in the Victorian novel. Excellent careers guidance for all students and a compulsory enrichment programme for sixth formers ensure that all are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 3.13 Support for students with SEND has been strengthened throughout the school since the previous inspection. The individual needs of students are extremely well communicated, with all teaching staff receiving useful information and guidance very well tailored to the individual. In the lower school, students receive support in private sessions. In Years 10 and 11 a pilot scheme is providing some students with additional support within some lessons. The provision for SEND in the sixth form is excellent; students are very well known by their teachers and very good examples of individual attention and forward planning for their needs were seen. Students with EAL are also very well supported. Students identified as able, gifted or talented are given work which extends and enriches their studies, although no formalised support programme is in place.
- 3.14 The range of extra-curricular activities offered has been extended since the previous inspection and students are given excellent means to develop their personal interests, learn new skills or simply to have fun. Activities afternoons, as well as activities offered in lunch time, ensure that all can benefit from the available opportunities. In the lower school all departments offer lively and very well supported activities. Sporting excellence is encouraged by training from well qualified external coaches, for example in the golf and archery classes for Years 7 to 9. Sports coaching at sixth form level is also of exceptionally high quality. There is growing support for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, now extended to start in Year 10. Some activities have been started at the students' request and provide opportunities for students to take the initiative and show leadership. For example,

students are involved in every aspect of preparation for the planned performance of "Peter Pan". Amongst activities observed, inspectors saw lively debate on the relevance of Shakespeare to the curriculum, enthusiastic wrestling with complex mathematical puzzles and singing by boys in three-part canon. The vitality of extra-curricular provision considerably enriches students' experiences at d'Overbroeck's.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.16 The school is highly successful in providing an excellent standard of teaching which engages students' absorbed interest and reflects the needs of individual students. Energetic debate and dynamic pace, encouraged by the teachers' infectious enthusiasm for their subject, are regular features of lessons. Stimulating and highly engaging teaching was seen across a wide spectrum of subject disciplines, resulting in students making rapid progress and achieving very good levels of success.
- 3.17 Lessons are well planned, very effectively building on and extending previous learning. This planning is supported by rigorous and regular assessment of students' work, with high expectations made clear and understood by students. Marking and assessment practices have been improved, as recommended in the previous report. In the majority of subjects it is very full, providing constructive feedback comments that support students' efforts to improve.
- 3.18 Lesson planning and content show a thorough understanding of the individual needs of students. Tasks are set and questions directed to provide the right level of challenge. Much good practice in support of student needs is evident; for example, in the lower school teachers act as academic mentors to under-performing students and use careful discussion to improve performances. All teachers are alert to the needs of their individual students and are concerned to provide good support as required. Students identified as particularly able and talented are often given more demanding tasks as well as frequent encouragement given to pursue their ideas further in independent research. Many lessons provide good opportunities for more extension and development of learning.
- 3.19 Time in lessons is well managed and a range of strategies are employed to sustain students' interest. Independent, pair, group work and full class discussion are all used successfully. The effective and often imaginative use of a range of resources enhances students' learning. In a number of lessons, such as geography and French, ICT is used successfully to generate interactive learning.
- 3.20 Teachers demonstrate a high level of subject knowledge. Often, students are skilfully led through an exploration of a topic by probing and sensitive questioning. As a result they learn to love a subject for its own sake while also acquiring the knowledge needed for examination success. This was seen frequently, for example in a Year 10 English literature lesson where students voluntarily introduced links to other texts and in history of art lessons in which sixth form students drew on numerous examples to support their analysis of the works under discussion. Well prepared, stimulating teaching in photography fostered strong interest in bringing to life inanimate objects. High levels of student involvement and participation, with encouragement of personal interpretation and individual responses, characterise many lessons. The many good discussions between students and teachers show excellent rapport and a common desire to achieve strong outcomes. The learning atmosphere generated by creative, absorbing teaching which treats students with

respect is excellent. A sign seen in the lower school giving four rules – *show respect; be nice; work hard; no excuses* – neatly sums up the overall classroom ethic.

- 3.21 The students are very appreciative of the quality of teaching. In pre-inspection questionnaires and discussion, they praised it, recognising that it is very good and frequently inspiring, enabling them to achieve academic success as well as to grow as individuals.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school fully meets its aim that all students achieve to their best of their personal potential as individuals.
- 4.3 Students' spiritual awareness is excellent. They are full of ideas and questions and like to engage in lively debate with each other and with adults. The quality of their self-awareness is encapsulated in comments such as, "previously I was a learning machine and now I understand and apply my understanding". Students appreciate the faiths of different cultures, represented in the wide range of nationalities at the school. Their awareness of the intangible is reflected in their art, notable examples of which fill the school walls, and their regular discussion of philosophical topics such as the death of the individual in the 21st Century or the nature of community.
- 4.4 The moral development of the students is excellent. From Year 7 onwards they enjoy bringing their own moral judgements to situations and relationships, accepting and upholding the school's behavioural parameters; students have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Students develop their moral compass through a range of stimuli. They enhance their moral values in personal development and enrichment activities with discussions of subjects as wide ranging as law and order in the Chairman Mao regime, gender stereotyping, and revenge as opposed to restorative justice. In the sixth form students refine their moral stance through discussion of ethical issues in nearly every subject, notably in literature and philosophy. The animation of students in these discussions and the ways in which they marshal their arguments confirm the quality of their moral development.
- 4.5 Students' social development is excellent. This is immediately obvious in their attitude to each other and to adults. They have strong friendships and also relate well to newcomers. New students in a sixth form boarding house confirmed how much they valued each other's company and support after only a few weeks together. Students carry responsibility well, as representatives of lower school houses and members of the student council or members of the sixth form student forum. Students in the ISC illustrated their social awareness by defining the specific roles of responsibility appropriate for them. Students' awareness of their wider social responsibility results in fund-raising for causes such as children's hospices and support for a school in Namibia.
- 4.6 Students' cultural development is excellent. The very nature of the school, with its range of nationalities, helps students understand, value and respect each other's cultures, including those of the western tradition. Students from the ISC contribute significantly, but not exclusively, to this understanding. Students enjoy joint ISC and sixth form afternoon activities and from these stem awareness of how students from different cultures can learn from each other. Students throughout the school are culturally aware through their interest in art, music, history and literature, an interest reinforced by many opportunities to visit galleries, museums and theatres in this country and to travel abroad on a wide variety of cultural tours. Students in the ISC confirm they gain significant cultural understanding of Britain through their citizenship course.

- 4.7 In the course of their time in the school, students grow into articulate, probing, caring and courteous individuals who are equally able to express their views cogently and to listen well to others. Their maturity and sense of responsibility is a tribute to the success of the school's ethos

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 Staff throughout the school know the students extremely well and are united in their commitment to providing high quality advice and guidance tailored to the needs of each individual, in line with the school's aims. In the many questionnaire responses, parents and students expressed strong appreciation of the support students receive from all staff, especially from their tutors and directors of studies. Students say that teachers are always willing to help and really care about them.
- 4.10 The excellent quality of relationships throughout the school is a defining characteristic of d'Overbroeck's. It is outstandingly successful in establishing a relaxed, friendly community based on mutual respect and courtesy. With a light touch approach, staff maintain a deft balance between informality and clear behavioural expectations. As a result, students mature rapidly, learning to accept responsibility for themselves and for their actions.
- 4.11 The school's enhanced provision for sport encourages students to keep fit and adopt a healthy lifestyle. The lunchtime meal provided for students in the lower school is appetising and nutritious. Sixth form students enjoy the freedom of going out to buy their own lunch.
- 4.12 The school has clear policies and procedures to promote good behaviour and tolerance. The overall atmosphere engendered is one of happiness and good humour underpinned by excellent behaviour. Students say that bullying does not happen and are totally confident that the school would deal promptly with any unacceptable behaviour, in accordance with its stated procedures.
- 4.13 There is a suitable plan to improve educational access for students with SEND.
- 4.14 In questionnaire responses, a small number of students said that they did not feel the school listens to or responds to their concerns. However, conversations with students, minutes of school council meetings and the school's responsiveness to the ISC students' preferred structure of responsibility roles show that the school willingly considers students' requests.

#### **4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.15 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.16 The school's safeguarding policies are thorough and fully implemented. The appointments procedure ensures that all necessary checks are carried out and recorded before new staff are allowed to start work. Host families undergo similar checks. Suitable training is given at the required intervals. Care is taken to ensure that overseas students have suitable guardians in this country. The school has a very good relationship with local Children's services. The school's overarching approach to safeguarding is entirely in keeping with the school's aim of placing the care of the individual student at its heart.

- 4.17 The school is keenly aware of the need to provide a safe environment for living and working, especially in teaching areas for practical subjects where space is limited. Staff clearly appreciate the need to be vigilant in this area and ensure safe working practices are understood. Departmental risk assessments are thorough. Excellent policies and procedures for educational visits are carefully implemented. The school has also put in place a careful programme to ensure students are aware of e-safety issues. Since the previous inspection the school has further strengthened its security procedures.
- 4.18 The school's concern for its students is evident in well-considered arrangements for students who are sick or injured. Medical information is carefully recorded and suitable numbers of staff are trained in first aid, some to a higher level. Training is updated as required. The small medical room in the lower school is suitable for the short term care of day students. Boarders are well cared for by boarding staff or their host families. The recording of illness and the small number of minor accidents is thorough.
- 4.19 All necessary measures have been taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards; practices are carried out termly and correctly logged. Admission and attendance registers are well maintained and stored, with electronic systems being fully backed up.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.20 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.21 The school readily fulfils its boarding aims in providing a positive experience helping students to develop a sense of confidence and individual responsibility in a safe and healthy environment. It ensures that students' welfare and wellbeing needs are fully met. The flexible residential experience, whether accommodation is in a school boarding house or within one of the extensive range of host families arranged by the school, makes a strong and vital contribution to the school's distinctive ethos and draws on the best traditions of residential education. The strong community spirit and international dimension of the boarding community is a real strength of the school. The school has implemented all of the recommendations from the last Ofsted welfare report.
- 4.22 The outcomes for boarders are excellent.
- 4.23 There is a very strong sense of community amongst the students such that both the ISC and sixth form boarders contribute significantly to the life of the school. The boarders' personal development is strongly promoted and they show high levels of maturity. Boarders state that the experience provides a very effective preparation for the next stage of their lives. The boarding ethos promotes independence, allowing students high levels of freedom whilst encouraging a sense of responsibility. Boarders appreciate that they can make their own decisions, managing both their out-of-hours study and their free time.
- 4.24 They show great tolerance towards each other and interact very well with their peers and most especially with their house parents and host families. The host family option allows international students in particular a valuable opportunity to be part of a family environment whilst being fully integrated into the school. There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities, harmony and tolerance, with the younger ISC boarders regarding their sixth form elders as good role models. Students, including those with EAL, feel fully supported in the boarding community. Relationships

across the boarding community are excellent and demonstrate that most students regard their boarding houses and host family residences as their natural second home. It is evident that boarders enjoy each other's company and acknowledge the beneficial effect that boarding has on their independence and self-reliance.

- 4.25 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent.
- 4.26 The promotion of boarders' health and arrangements for medical care are well managed. Students feel that they are well looked after and readily confirm that there is access to a range of appropriate adults with whom to discuss personal issues. Each student is allocated to a director of studies who provides guidance and support for a small group of students, ensuring that pastoral and academic matters are efficiently dealt with and appropriately recorded. Students are given the independence of making their own lunch time dining arrangements. Boarders report that the quality of food provided at other meals is generally very good and nutritious, with boarding and host family meals being of a high standard. The boarding houses and host family residences have facilities for the preparation of food and drinks and for many students a highlight of the day, whether in a boarding house or with a host family group, is the home-cooked evening meal.
- 4.27 Boarders benefit from the school's wide range of extra-curricular activities and access to local sports facilities, in addition to a popular selection of activities arranged for them over the weekends. Boarders fully appreciate the advantage of living in a bustling university city with many social, cultural and recreational opportunities readily on offer.
- 4.28 There has been much investment in the upgrading of boarding accommodation to a good standard in recent years and the ongoing programme of refurbishment ensures continuous improvement. Accommodation is comfortable and secure. Information for parents is disseminated by regular emails and newsletters enabling them to feel involved in the lives of their children whilst at school. Many overseas parents develop strong links with their offspring's host family and students report that contact with parents across a whole variety of different time zones is readily available through mobile phones, email and internet communication programs.
- 4.29 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent.
- 4.30 Procedures and practices ensure that the safety of boarders is well promoted and managed effectively by boarding staff at all levels. Effective anti-bullying and behavioural policies and procedures are in place, including those for dealing with all forms of harassment, including cyber bullying. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to identifying and challenging any form of anti-social behaviour. Clear sanctions for any misbehaviour are in place and are well documented; such incidents, however, are rare and are dealt with swiftly. Good behaviour and achievement are recognised and praised across all residences.
- 4.31 All boarding house staff and host family members have up to date safeguarding training and know the correct procedure to follow should an incident occur. The school takes its health and safety responsibilities very seriously and produces comprehensive internal boarding house risk assessments. Host family residences are carefully vetted before students are allowed to become resident and there is liaison with the local authority in connection with the placement of any students under the age of 16. Students genuinely appreciate the house parents and host family members who are involved in their pastoral care and feel that they are both very approachable and willing to provide help and offer guidance as necessary.

Many hosts go well beyond their remit to ensure that the students in their care enjoy a genuine family experience in a residential educational environment.

- 4.32 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent.
- 4.33 Boarding houses are well led by professional and dedicated housestaff teams. The host family arrangements are managed by highly competent school staff based in the boarding office at the school, offering a 24-hour contact service, highly regarded by the host families. All staff involved with the residential experience have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The strong and very positive relationships between boarders and those who care for them is a real strength of the boarding community.
- 4.34 Boarding documentation and policies have been progressively reviewed and there are clear priorities in the school development plan to ensure ongoing improvement. Effective progress is being made in the use of self-evaluation and appraisal to support the long-term development of boarding in the school. Training for boarding staff is encouraged although host families do not currently have access to similar training. Boarders are routinely encouraged to contribute their views on their quality of life and they feel that they have a voice at school level. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, boarders and their parents expressed extremely high levels of satisfaction both with the boarding house and with host family provision.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good.
- 5.2 The governing body's aim to ensure that the school continues to thrive and develop while remaining true to its distinctive ethos in the long term is being well met. Financial planning is astute. Since the previous inspection, the governors have overseen improvements in the curriculum and the premises. The governing body has also carried out an extensive consultation with the staff on the future development of the school. This has identified eight areas for development. Foremost amongst these is the acquisition of additional buildings for teaching and learning and for boarding, and the governors are working assiduously to achieve this development.
- 5.3 A number of governors have lengthy experience of the school as the board includes the founder, its first principal and its first director of studies. This, coupled with the current principal and bursar as governors, and the governors' involvement in the life of the school, gives the governing body a good understanding of the school's needs, successes and challenges. In the latest development plan the governors do acknowledge that the school and its governors would benefit from having an advisory group, particularly to give additional support to the monitoring of the academic and pastoral aspects of the school's life. This was being discussed at the time of the previous inspection; the governors have made it a priority to have it in place during this academic year.
- 5.4 The governors discharge their responsibilities effectively in relation to statutory requirements. The full governing body regularly reviews policies and procedures and all health and safety issues. The full governing body conducts an annual review of child protection procedures as required. It also monitors the appointment procedures for staff, ensuring that d'Overbroeck's ethos is maintained.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.5 The leadership and management of the school are excellent.
- 5.6 Leaders at all levels of responsibility are focused, clear-sighted and committed to the provision of an outstanding educational experience which encourages students to achieve to their best, academically and personally. They are exceptionally successful in creating a palpable sense of a relaxed, friendly community based on mutual respect.
- 5.7 They are effective in ensuring that appropriate policies for the various aspects of school life are created, regularly reviewed and carefully implemented. These cover all required policies, including those for health and safety. The school attaches a very high priority to safeguarding the welfare of students. There are several members of senior staff suitably trained at the appropriate level to lead in the safeguarding of students. This training is updated every two years and full retraining is provided for all staff as required, supplemented by annual updating briefings.

- 5.8 Leadership and management provide visionary educational direction. This direction is reflected accurately in the quality of the students' education and in their personal development. The ethos and atmosphere which permeate the school result in students who are mature, confident and articulate; who achieve good results; and who thoroughly enjoy their education. In pre-inspection questionnaires parents and students alike praised every aspect of the school's provision, particularly drawing attention to the quality of leadership which was described as inspirational.
- 5.9 Self-evaluation and reflection are established features of the leadership style at the school, and constitute a central strength. They demonstrate a restless, tireless energy in the quest to develop and improve the school's provision, both in material facilities and in educational standards. Senior leaders' determination to bring to fruition their vision for the future means that there is no resting on laurels. Strategic planning, with identification of priorities for further action, is a central element of discussion amongst senior leaders. A school development plan, much improved since the previous inspection, has been formulated after extensive consultation and debated at a recent staff training day. Departmental development plans are assembled by middle managers in accordance with a template which ensures explicit links to the overall school plan, with appropriate emphasis on areas which the school as a whole wishes to develop.
- 5.10 The school places a very high emphasis on the quality of its staff. Its success in appointing, supporting, developing and motivating appropriate staff is evident in the students' personal development and academic success. In the appointment process, particular care is taken to ensure that there is an understanding and willingness to embrace the school's particular culture and expectations. Induction procedures for new staff are thorough and include careful training in procedures for child protection and general health and safety. The continuous professional development of staff is a priority, with an annual theme articulated and developed through the staff development committee. In recent years the focus has been on issues such as teachers' use of technology in the classroom, independent learning, assessment, and matching work to students' needs. The results of such initiatives are carefully monitored by senior leaders.
- 5.11 Middle management has been strengthened in recent years and generic job descriptions have been created for sixth-form directors of studies and for heads of department. There is a heightened awareness of the need to monitor and manage workloads, especially of those who carry multiple responsibilities. Senior managers are actively involved in supervising heads of department, with an annual cycle which includes reviews of examination results, schemes of work and development planning, as well as lesson observation. There are now clearer systems for heads of department to monitor standards of teaching and learning in their areas. They are making good overall use of the data the school collects, although not always exploiting its full potential. A programme of peer observation is under development. The ethos of the school has at its heart the quality of relationships and communication, so that much monitoring and support is carried out informally. Appraisal systems are not consistent across the school, however, some being more rigorous than others. At its best, appraisal is used effectively, with conversations and lesson observations documented carefully, targets identified and recorded, and helpful periodic follow-up. On the rare occasions when a teacher needs support, problems are identified and addressed quickly.
- 5.12 The school has an excellent relationship with parents, carers and guardians. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents and guardians expressed exceptionally high

levels of satisfaction with the quality of provision and communication from the school. Comments made were overwhelmingly positive, valuing especially contacts which demonstrate the levels of care shown to their students by teachers, form tutors and directors of studies. Parents also praised the quality of education and extra-curricular opportunities now being offered. Such positive opinions were wholly supported by what inspectors saw while in the school. Informal communication with parents by telephone and email is frequent. Parents agreed that should they have cause to raise a concern, it is handled swiftly and well. The school has a thorough and clear policy to deal with formal complaints, which it has not yet had cause to implement.

- 5.13 The growth of the lower school since the previous inspection has led to creation of an active parents' association, and the involvement of sixth form parents has also grown. There are various opportunities for parents to work with the school, from helping with cake baking to careers advice. The latter is both appreciated and exploited by the school, which actively draws on the wide range of professions within the parental body to enhance careers guidance for students.
- 5.14 All required information is readily available to parents on the school's website. Parents' handbooks are comprehensive and the material on offer for prospective parents is excellent. Formal communication with parents is regular, frequent, and highly informative. Brief progress sheets are sent home every half term in addition to twice yearly full written reports. These are of excellent quality, showing a close knowledge of the students and offering clear advice on how to improve. Parents of students joining Year 7 are especially appreciative of the settling in report sent after a student's first three weeks in the school. Assiduous efforts are made to maintain good contact with parents of students in the ISC. The emphasis the school places on establishing such strong, supportive relationships with parents demonstrates that its focus on creating a welcoming, close knit community extends well beyond the school gates and contributes to its overall success.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**