



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

NOTRE DAME SENIOR SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Notre Dame Senior School

The preparatory school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	Notre Dame Senior School
DfE Number	936/6163
Registered Charity Number	1081875
Address	Notre Dame Senior School Burwood House Convent Lane Cobham Surrey KT11 1HA
Telephone Number	01932 869990
Fax Number	01932 589 481
Email Address	headmistress@notredame.co.uk
Head	Mrs Bridget Williams
Chair of Governors	Mr Glen Travers
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	377
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Inspection dates	22 Mar 2011 to 23 Mar 2011

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in February 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will 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

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Notre Dame Senior School is a selective Roman Catholic day school for girls aged between 11 and 18. It is part of the 400 year old international foundation of the Company of Mary Our Lady. The school was founded on its present site in Cobham in 1937 by the Sisters of the Order. The school and its neighbouring preparatory school became a charitable trust in 2003, with a single governing body that includes representatives of the Order. The vision of Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac, the foundress of the Order, is embodied in the mission statement of the school, embracing fulfilment through the recognition and nurturing of individual potential in all areas of endeavour. The school aims to emphasise personal, moral and spiritual values, to strive for pupils' personal academic excellence, to develop pupils' talents and to work with families to prepare young women for their role as responsible citizens of the wider world, following in the steps of Jesus Christ. Recent development has included a new building that houses laboratories, information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, a library and learning resource area, a chaplaincy room and a number of additional classrooms. A performing arts centre is under construction and due to be opened in the autumn of 2011.
- 1.2 The school has 377 pupils on roll; of these, 55 are in the sixth form. The ability profile of the school to GCSE using standardised measures, is above the national average, with few pupils having ability that is below average. The ability profile of the sixth form is slightly above the national average, with a wider range of abilities represented than in the rest of the school. Pupils come principally from the local area and mainly from professional and business families. The school is dedicated to the Catholic faith but welcomes pupils of other faiths or none, and a number of different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds are represented.
- 1.3 The school has identified eighty pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD); of these, forty receive specialist support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and also receives specialist support. Thirty pupils have English as an additional language (EAL); most of these are assessed as fluent users of English, but four pupils currently receive support for their English.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The overall achievement of the pupils is good, and this reflects very well the aims of the school. Pupils of all ages display good knowledge and understanding across their subjects and are able to apply their knowledge effectively. Pupils are articulate and highly capable of presenting and discussing their ideas. They successfully use mathematical and ICT skills in many contexts. Their considerable creative skills are evident throughout the school, in the outstanding art displayed, in excellent textiles work in the library and in a performance by a group of Year 11 pupils of a script they had written themselves. Pupils achieve success in a range of extra-curricular activities and competitions, including mathematics, music, sport and public speaking.
- 2.2 The following analysis uses the national data for 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Results at GCSE have been above the national average for girls in all maintained schools, with 98 per cent achieving five A* to C grades and 58 per cent awarded A* and A in 2010. Over the same period, results at A level have been above the national average for girls in all maintained schools, with 73 per cent A* to B grades and 22 per cent of pupils gaining the new A* grade in 2010. With few exceptions, pupils gain places at their first choice of university. These levels of attainment, together with work seen during the inspection, indicate that at both GCSE and A level pupils make exceptional progress relative to pupils of similar ability. Appropriate learning support and careful monitoring enable pupils with LDD, with statements of SEN or with EAL to fulfil their potential.
- 2.3 Pupils display very positive attitudes towards their learning and a high degree of motivation, both within and outside the classroom. Sixth form pupils show a mature attitude towards their studies and have highly developed analytical skills, enabling them to settle quickly into the demands of their A level courses. The house system, largely run by house captains in Years 12 and 13, provides opportunities for all pupils to participate in a large array of extra-curricular competitions, from which they derive both enjoyment and feelings of success. The recent introduction of an afternoon activities slot and the increased staffing in physical education have provided pupils with many more sporting opportunities. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of careers guidance which includes work with specialist agencies, outside speakers and further education guidance.
- 2.4 As at the time of the last inspection the quality of teaching is good overall, with some excellent practice seen. Teachers know their pupils very well and are highly knowledgeable. In the best lessons seen, excellent planning, open-ended questioning and dynamic pace challenged pupils to use their knowledge, test their understanding, develop their thinking and maximise their potential. Occasionally, an undemanding pace and routine tasks limited the opportunities for independent learning.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.5 The pupils' personal development is excellent, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school is highly successful in meeting its aims to create a community that is fully inclusive of all faiths and cultures whilst maintaining a Catholic ethos. This takes place in a healthy and safe environment.
- 2.6 The strong focus on the value of each individual enables pupils to grow rapidly in self-esteem and confidence. They participate readily in assemblies and reveal their well-developed ability to reflect on spiritual issues. Pupils show their concern for the needs of others in many ways. For example, those in the sixth form work with residents in a local home for the elderly, and further afield they contribute each year to a project in Albania, where they live and work with disadvantaged students. There is a long-held tradition of pupils helping with a pilgrimage for sick people to Lourdes and past pupils regularly return to continue this service.
- 2.7 Pupils are courteous and they have a clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils reflected thoughtfully in a form period at the end of the day on the significance of the 'poor man, rich man' lunch in which they had taken part. They enjoy taking on roles of responsibility, for example in the house system, in peer mentoring and in the student council, which enables the development of leadership skills and awareness of duties associated with good citizenship. Pupils show consideration and respect for their teachers and for each other, and relationships throughout the school are warm and supportive. Pupils are proud of their school and keen to contribute to community life both within and outside it. They actively fund raise and support a broad range of charities at home and abroad. Pupils respect and understand the traditions of other cultures and live harmoniously together.
- 2.8 Excellent pastoral care in the quiet and positive atmosphere of the school supports pupils very well, fully in the spirit of the school's mission statement to educate young people, accompanying them in their efforts to build their lives in the present and for the future. Staff are wholeheartedly committed to the well-being of the pupils, and they are supported by comprehensive policies and well-implemented procedures. Arrangements for child protection are secure and staff are trained appropriately in this area. The caring ethos extends to the relationships amongst pupils: Year 7 explained how much they appreciate their "big sisters" in the sixth form, as they can easily ask for help and advice. Pupils of all ages say they feel confident that there is an adult to turn to if they have a concern with which they need help.
- 2.9 The school has comprehensive policies and procedures in place to ensure welfare, health and safety, including the safeguarding of pupils and all aspects of fire prevention. The school has an appropriate plan in place to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, and recent buildings have appropriate facilities. The school's activity programme has been restructured to encourage pupils of all ages to take healthy exercise, and healthy eating is encouraged through the personal, social and health education programme, food technology lessons and the healthy menu offered in the dining room at lunch time.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.10 The quality of governance is excellent, supporting the ethos and continued development of the school. The responsibility for educational matters is fully devolved to the head and the senior leadership team. Governors are well informed about the life and work of the school through the head's report for each meeting and through reports from the work of the nine committees that cover a wide range of aspects of the school. Statutory responsibilities are successfully fulfilled in ensuring that safe employment procedures are followed. All requirements to safeguard pupils are in place, and suitably implemented, including the governors' annual review and report. The expertise of governors and careful financial management enable the school to plan and develop successfully, including implementing an ambitious building programme to provide first class facilities for the school.
- 2.11 The leadership and management of the school are good. The senior leadership team is deeply committed to the ethos of the school, in the Lestonnac tradition, maintaining a welcoming and positive atmosphere, in which pupils thrive. Clearly defined responsibilities at both senior and middle management levels, and regular management meetings as well as informal discussions ensure good communication that brings together academic and pastoral aspects of work. Whole-school review has resulted in a school development plan that shows clearly focused initiatives backed by staff training, including the development of a tracking system to collect and facilitate the use of the extensive assessment data to monitor the pupils' progress and to guide planning. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching are well set out and the school management team is engaged in implementing this scheme to ensure that the excellent practice in some departments is extended to the whole school.
- 2.12 All appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure the suitability of staff and governors. These are suitably recorded in the centralised register of appointments.
- 2.13 The quality of the links between the school and parents is good. Parents receive all required information, and are well informed about the life of the school through the website, weekly newsletters, reports, parent-teacher meetings and parent information evenings on specific topics, as well as social events organised by the parents' association, school productions and performances.
- 2.14 In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated that they are supportive of the work of the school, highlighting as strengths the attitudes and values promoted, the pastoral help and guidance given, and the range of subjects offered. In their comments, a number of parents felt that monitoring of the pupils' progress is somewhat limited. The school has already identified this as an area for development and has started work to develop the monitoring system. The complaints procedure meets requirements, and is used appropriately and with care.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that data on the progress of pupils is used consistently to improve learning and raise standards.
 2. Monitor the quality of teaching more consistently, and identify ways in which it can be improved still further.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. 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 Gwen Caddock

Reporting Inspector

Miss Barbara Habayeb

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