

INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

SHERBORNE, ENGLAND



DISPAR • MORIBUS • HONORIBUS • COMPAR

Inspection by Independent Schools Inspectorate

8th to 11th May 2006

An short version of the full report, which can be found on the Independent Schools Inspectorate website, www.isinspect.org.uk

Introduction by The Principal Dr Christopher Greenfield, MA MEd

The College's second inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate was carried out in May 2006. Since then we have tried to make copies of the report widely available. There have, however, been several requests that we produce a shortened version, in a more attractive format, to improve the accessibility of the report.

This printed version, therefore, aims to make the contents of the ISI report more widely known. I have edited the full report by simply leaving out some of the paragraphs which refer to specific practical details, whilst leaving in full paragraphs which refer to some of the enduring aspects of the International College.

The full report, of course, is available on the ISI website, www.isinspect.org.uk.

For further information about the College itself, please contact me at the address on the back cover of this publication.

International College
30th September 2007



by Tracy Pan

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 has 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.





1. Introduction

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The college was founded by Sherborne School in 1977 as an international study centre with the specific aim to prepare boys from overseas to pass entrance examinations to British independent schools. It grew to the stage where it became a distinct school in its own right and, in 1991, moved to its own campus with separate premises, staff, timetable and budget, and registration with the Department for Education and Skills. Girls were admitted soon afterwards. The college is administered by a separate governing committee, responsible to the board of governors of Sherborne School.
- 1.4 The college is located on its own campus close to Sherborne town centre. The buildings comprise a blend of appropriately renovated older buildings and modern purpose-built blocks for teaching and senior boys' boarding. Boarding accommodation for girls and junior boys is situated off site, but close at hand.
- 1.5 **The college has two broad aims:**
- to provide a thorough preparation (cultural, linguistic and academic) for boys and girls from non-British educational backgrounds who wish to join British boarding schools;
 - to provide short courses for non-native students during Easter and summer holiday periods.





2. The Quality of Education

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided for the students is excellent. It very effectively fulfils the college's aim to provide a thorough preparation for boys and girls from non-British educational backgrounds who wish to join British boarding schools. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, in particular in developing the curriculum to include a planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and tutorials for all students. The college is aware of areas in which further development is needed, for example in increasing the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in subjects, and strategies for the future are already under review.
- 2.2 The education provided is consistent with the college's declared aims and philosophy. The aims and objectives are clearly understood by the staff and the ways in which they are to be achieved are fully set out in departmental documentation alongside subject-specific aims that support them. A key objective is to develop English language skills that allow full access to the curriculum in British schools. Schemes of work focus both on what is to be taught and on the learning that is to take place, although this is primarily concerned with acquiring knowledge, with less emphasis on students thinking for themselves. These are working documents that show good awareness of the needs of individuals while providing a clear structure for teaching and learning. These programmes are fully implemented in practice in the classroom.
- 2.3 The taught curriculum and the wider educational provision in the college contribute well to students' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development, and to the acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is appropriately balanced with sufficient



breadth and depth for students at all stages, including those taking one-year examination courses. A realistic appreciation of what can be offered successfully in the short time students stay at the college to prepare them for life in British independent boarding schools is clearly evident in the college's work. Technological development is achieved through the study and use of ICT; aesthetic and creative development is achieved in art lessons, the study of literature and in creative writing, and in instrumental music lessons. Students' education is also enhanced (particularly so for these students from non-British backgrounds) through visits to art galleries and theatres.

- 2.4 Students choose from a good range of extra-curricular activities, both in activity periods and at weekends. Many sporting activities take place both within the timetable and after school, including individual sports such as tennis and badminton, house competitions (such as the swimming gala) and team fixtures with other schools. The range and variety on offer prepare students well for life in the British independent school system, and make a significant contribution to their personal development. The curriculum is also enriched by links with the local and wider community, and these are noted later in the report.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 The students demonstrate an impressive level of knowledge, skills, understanding and application in their academic subjects and in a wide range of activities, particularly so given their initial low levels of English language. The standards achieved and the learning developed contribute strongly to meeting the college's aims to provide a thorough academic preparation for students to join British boarding schools. The good standards of achievement and learning seen during the last inspection have been maintained, and the college is aware that continued development of independent research and problem-solving skills is needed to raise standards still further.

- 2.11 Students apply their knowledge and understanding well – for example, in chemistry when considering cause and effect in the structure and properties of materials; in English when inferring points of comparison in the study of poetry; and using information in geography. Students show considerable skill in applying knowledge in mathematics. They are competent users of ICT. In English, students progress rapidly through the different levels of specialist examinations to GCSE level, demonstrating competence and confidence in listening, reading, speaking and writing. Considerable success in football and basketball was also noted.
- 2.12 More able students are challenged through accelerated learning programmes and extension work, particularly in English and mathematics, and those less able are supported through individual tutorials and extra English classes. No significant difference was observed between the achievement of boys and girls.
- 2.13 Students’ attainment at GCSE is high in relation to their capabilities and level of English, results over recent years being well above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. Taking into account their level of English on entry, and the short time they are at the college, this represents particularly rapid progress. Students have performed creditably in the mathematics Olympiad and in the UK Maths Challenge. Individuals have achieved success in the English Speaking Board examinations and in music, in a range of instrumental examinations. High levels of achievement and rapid progress through the different levels of the Cambridge English tests have been particularly notable.



Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.18 The college provides excellent opportunities for students to develop personally and to enhance their self-esteem, self-knowledge, self-awareness and sense of responsibility. The values promoted, the educational opportunities provided, and the boarding experience, all promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students very well, and this is a great strength of the college. This is a school that instinctively understands the need to develop individuals in as many areas as possible and, in so doing, helps to fulfil the college's aims and purpose extremely well. Progress since the last inspection has been good, and improvements in spiritual and social development and the creation of a formal PSHE programme have been significant contributory factors to the current high standards of personal development.
- 2.23 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.24 Throughout the college, the good standard of teaching, together with the excellent staff- student relationships, are key factors in promoting students' learning and achieving good standards. In the great majority of lessons, teaching was at least good, with some outstanding lessons seen. The effectiveness of the teaching lays the foundation for high expectations and hard work by students. The quality of teaching contributes well to the college's aim of enabling students to achieve good GCSE results and preparing them for academic life in their next school. The college has maintained the high standards noted in the last inspection and has made some further progress in enabling students to explore wider educational issues and develop independent research skills, but more can still be done, even though the college's primary aim is to achieve examination success.
- 2.25 A key priority for all teachers is to concentrate on the teaching of English, and the high standard of this is a key factor in students' progress. This is helped by the significant number of teachers with

formal qualifications in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). It is clearly understood by all staff that they are teachers of English first and subject specialists second. Good examples of this were seen in a Year 8 mathematics lesson that concluded with a game of 'Hangman' using mathematical terms, and a geography lesson where artefacts and models were passed around to illustrate unfamiliar words.

2.26 Teaching throughout the college is well planned, with appropriate support materials being effectively used through carefully constructed handouts, specially prepared tests and revision notes. Each subject has its own glossary of terminology to supplement the college word bank booklet and these are well used. Expectations set by teachers are high, and students invariably meet the levels required of them in terms of effort, understanding and presentation of work. The teaching encourages students to behave well and take responsibility for their own progress.

2.30 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].





by Wilson Tsoi

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 the provision of pastoral care, welfare and health and safety of all students is excellent. It successfully promotes a climate of trust, the development of positive relationships and confidence, and makes a major contribution to the college's aim of preparing students for the pastoral systems they will encounter upon entry to their new schools. Progress since the last inspection has been very good and all recommendations have been addressed. An effective tutor system is in place, effective training for all staff in child protection has been undertaken, and opportunities are steadily being developed for older students to take on more responsibility.
- 3.2 The staff provide effective, sympathetic and conscientious support and guidance for all students. They know them very well and are committed to meeting their needs. They respond very effectively to individual concerns and changing circumstances. Students report that they find it easy to approach members of staff with problems and are confident that their concerns will be resolved. Staff are particularly conscious of the significant cultural changes and the new school routines and expectations that all students encounter on arrival. The thorough induction programme takes this fully into account, an example of the high standard of pastoral support that enhances students' social development and academic progress.
- 3.3 The structure and organisation that underpin the pastoral and welfare systems are strong, robust and effective. Clear procedures, well defined areas of responsibility and effective communication between staff, academic departments and boarding houses ensure that educational and social progress is extremely well monitored. The regular academic meetings every student has with the vice-principal enable them to discuss achievement and progress and set specific targets. The regular grading system provides staff and tutors with an efficient system to monitor progress.

- 3.4 A striking feature of the college is the good-humoured, purposeful and respectful atmosphere which permeates every facet of college life. Students are open, very well mannered and courteous and, while both committed and well motivated, extremely relaxed and good-humoured. The genuine interest of staff in their students fosters mutual trust and understanding. These excellent relationships are a strong factor in the college's success in achieving its aims.
- 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 college has forged very good links with parents, and limited but worthwhile links with the local community. As the college is fully boarding with all parents resident overseas, the college's aim to have a thorough and efficient communication system is well met. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in developing the college's website and other electronic means of communication, and in translating many of the key college documents.
- 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 The college provides a very positive and fulfilling boarding experience, and the opportunities it offers to boarders enhance students' education and personal development very well. comprehensively supports the college's mission and aims by providing a supportive environment well suited to achieving social integration into British boarding schools. The arrangements for boarding also fulfil the particular aim to enable students to "be able to work, play and relax, free from abuse, intimidation and harassment and bullying" very well. Improvements have been made in recent years to the quality of the living accommodation, providing a strong team of committed staff, and enabling students to take some responsibility for themselves and others.

- 3.18 Relationships within the boarding houses are warm, supportive and respectful. Students are clearly appreciative of the care and help given by staff, and their evident concern for their well-being and welfare. A calm and purposeful atmosphere prevails in the houses, and students show obvious pride in their house communities. This spirit is developed very well, considering the short time that all students spend in the college. Opportunities are being developed for students to take greater responsibility for themselves and others. House committees have been set up to allow chosen students to represent the views of their peers to staff. Computer monitors oversee students' use of the library computers in the evenings.
- 3.19 Activities for boarders during the week are necessarily fitted in around their demanding academic commitments. A good range is available at weekends, blending whole-school trips and outings to places of interest such as Bath and Bournemouth with social outings such as bowling and the cinema, and more informal house-based activities, such as cookery, computing and bead-making. Successful and popular inter-house competitions are held in activities such as table-tennis. Time is also set aside on Sundays for revision and catching up with academic work.
- 3.20 Accommodation and resources for boarding are good, with recent improvements and refurbishment in all houses providing a homely environment that is appreciated by the students. A significant strength is the generous deployment of committed staff who provide both academic and pastoral support. Academic staff on evening duties in the house are well used by students for support and help with their work. Staff induction and training needs are well managed and met.



4. The Effectiveness of Governance and Management

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The support provided by the college's governors is of a particularly high standard, and contributes greatly to the college's success. Governors have a clear commitment to the college's aims and central purpose, and provide comprehensive guidance and encouragement for these to be fulfilled. They have been key figures in maintaining high standards and improving resources and facilities since the last inspection. Through their involvement with the working life of the college and their clear strategic vision, they are fully aware of areas that need further development.
- 4.2 The college's governors operate as a semi-autonomous sub-committee of the full board of Sherborne School which oversees the financial operation of the college. The governors provide a wide range of valuable expertise and experience, and have a clear understanding of the particular needs and special circumstances of the college and its students. They have a good grasp of academic priorities and the needs of staff, many of whom have been enabled to gain specialist teaching qualifications in English as an additional language. Governors have drawn up clearly defined aims and objectives, and a comprehensive action plan to meet them.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The overall quality of leadership and management throughout the college is particularly high, and is one of the major factors in helping the college to fulfil its aims and purpose so successfully. In particular, the leadership and management at all levels enable the students to prepare very well for the cultural, social and academic demands of their future schools.
- 4.5 Since the last inspection, clear identification of students' needs, and efficient deployment of staff and resources, have enabled the college to make good progress in many areas. Recognising that there are still further improvements to be made, the college has already introduced

initiatives to look more consistently at the use of ICT and the nature of curriculum choices offered to the students.

- 4.6 One of the greatest strengths is the development of a very strong culture of self-evaluation and self-improvement. This is underpinned by the carefully constructed objectives that outline just how the college's aims will be achieved. The clear strategic focus and the very comprehensive action plan enable senior management and governors to assess progress in each area. Staff are all involved through the thorough departmental review process that enables heads of subject to discuss the past progress and future developments of each department with the principal and vice-principal. Subject-specific targets link both with whole-school priorities and with the staff appraisal and individual target-setting process. Communication within the college is efficient and effective, relying both on regular informal contact, easily possible in a small school, and more formal regular meetings and briefings.
- 4.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].



5. Conclusions and Next Steps

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 This is a remarkably successful school. Its very strong sense of purpose and the excellent quality of the education provided enable it to fulfil its mission exceptionally well. Through their strong personal development, their positive relationships, good standards of achievement and learning and, above all, their extremely rapid improvement in English language skills, students are able to proceed to their next schools very well developed socially, culturally and intellectually for the new challenges ahead. Staff at all levels know the students very well; they have a real understanding of their particular needs and a great interest in their progress and welfare. The excellent leadership and management at all levels, and the strong support of the governors, provide a sharp and effective focus for identifying the future direction of the college and creating a willing acceptance of self-improvement and development.
- 5.2 The college has made considerable progress since the last inspection, maintaining the strengths identified in 2000, and improving the curriculum, tutorial provision, staff training and facilities. The further improvement needed in the development of more sophisticated learning skills, and in widening the opportunities for ICT in students' work, has been recognised and, in the latter area, initiatives are already under way.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.





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SHERBORNE
SCHOOL

Accredited by the



International College
Sherborne School
Newell Grange
Sherborne
Dorset DT9 4EZ, UK
+44 (0)1935 814743
reception@sherborne-ic.net
www.sherborne-ic.net

