



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports  
For Schools with Residential Provision**

**Dorset House School**

**September 2018**



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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Dorset House School			
<b>DfE number</b>	938/6015			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	307035			
<b>Address</b>	Dorset House School The Manor Church Lane Bury Pulborough West Sussex RH20 1PB			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01798 831456			
<b>Email address</b>	info@dorsethouseschool.com			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Matt Thomas			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Captain Willy Hockin			
<b>Age range</b>	4 to 13			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	144			
	<b>Boys</b>	80	<b>Girls</b>	64
	<b>Day pupils</b>	95	<b>Boarders</b>	49
	<b>EYFS</b>	9	<b>Pre-prep</b>	48
	<b>Prep</b>	87		
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18 to 20 September 2018			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Dorset House School is an independent day and flexi/weekly boarding school for boys and girls aged from four to thirteen, located on the north side of the South Downs in West Sussex. It is able to trace its foundation to Hertfordshire in 1784. It moved to its current location in 1964 when a charitable trust run by a board of governors was formed, and in 2016 a new headmaster was appointed. The school is divided in two sections, the pre-prep for Reception to Year 3 and the prep for Years 4 to 8. The early years foundation stage (EYFS) is an integral part of pre-prep. There is one boarding house which occupies the upper floors of the manor house.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.2 The key aims are to inspire pupils through a challenging approach to academic learning, to ensure that each individual's social and academic progress is supported by meeting their needs, and to ensure that they value their own and other pupils' cultures. A particular emphasis is placed on maintaining a valued partnership between home and school.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.3 Pupils come predominantly from White British, professional and business families living within twenty miles of the school. Nationally standardised test data indicate the ability profile of the school is above average. It has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 17 of whom receive additional specialist support. One pupil has a statement of educational needs and no pupils have an education, health and care plan. One pupil has English as an additional language (EAL), and they receive additional support. The school has identified 57 pupils as being gifted or talented in Years 3 to 8, for whom lessons and activities are modified.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards, including the boarding NMS, may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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 is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as met or as not met. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management, together with the NMS covering the same areas. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#)[Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

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

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.1 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.2 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.3 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.4 The standards relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.5 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.6 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.7 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2–4, 6–12, 15 and 16 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.8 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.9 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

## **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.10 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.11 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

- 2.12 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.13 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and statement of boarding principles [NMS 1] are met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

- 2.14 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.15 **The standards relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 2.16 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.17 **The standards relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.**



### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

**The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work.** It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

## Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- By the time they leave the school the pupils demonstrate a high level of achievement.
  - Pupils demonstrate mature and positive attitudes towards their learning.
  - The oral communication and confidence of the pupils are excellent
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Throughout the school, including in the boarding house, the pupils are kind, happy, well-behaved, and confident.
  - The pupils successfully strive to continually improve in everything they do.

## Recommendation

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to:
- Develop further the recently implemented academic tracking system to ensure that information is consistently and effectively used to enable the best progress for all pupils.

## The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 From the schools' own assessment data, lesson observations, pupil interviews and work scrutiny, the inspectors judged that a very large majority of children of all abilities achieve at a high standard across the curriculum and make rapid progress as they move through the school. Only occasionally in the lessons observed were the needs of a very small minority of pupils not being fully met. The excellent standard of the pupils' overall achievement is supported most effectively by the leadership and management. By the time the pupils leave, they are well prepared for the next phase of their education with a considerable number gaining scholarships to their destination schools each year.
- 3.6 In the EFYS, children make rapid progress, and a program of well-planned activities ensures that their interests and aptitudes are quickly identified. Their swift development is measured and enhanced through selecting photographs of, and writing about, their favourite activities of the week and sharing them with parents. The children work hard in lessons, collaborate well together and are not afraid to make mistakes when trying new things because the teaching is supportive. The majority of children, early in the academic year, are able to blend consonant-vowel-consonant words without support, and for those who have difficulty, extra teacher or teaching assistant time is available.
- 3.7 In all lessons observed, the attitude of the pupils was positive as they responded eagerly to well-prepared activities. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and in the best lessons they used targeted questions, ranging in difficulty, to enable all pupils to contribute and make rapid progress. To ensure that all pupils throughout the school are achieving their full potential in every lesson, the senior leaders have recently introduced a new tracking system and this is beginning to provide classroom teachers with data to assist them with their planning.
- 3.8 Throughout the school, the achievement of pupils with SEND and with EAL is excellent, and in line with their peers of similar ability because of the high-quality support they receive. In individual learning development lessons, pupils achieve at a high level as they are strongly encouraged to persevere with appropriately targeted tasks. By the time they leave the school pupils feel confident to take risks and have become independent and resilient because they are challenged to extend their own learning through open-ended, self-determined tasks and research projects.
- 3.9 Pupils have excellent oral communication skills throughout the school, whether this is an older pupil speaking confidently in a play rehearsal, or a Reception pupil articulating their ideas clearly in a conversation about their grandparent. The pupils' highly developed vocabulary is furnished in part by the excellent culture of reading throughout the school evidenced in thorough reading records. This was noted in an English class where pupils confidently and articulately put across their ideas after studying an extract from *Of Mice and Men* in pairs.
- 3.10 Pupils' writing shows a high degree of maturity. The pupils' extended essay writing in the higher age groups was well-crafted, and they have an excellent grasp of language structure and technique, being able to identify, for example, metaphors, similes, and hyperbole and explain why writers might use these particular devices.
- 3.11 Pupils spontaneously make links between different areas of the curriculum for example they were able to apply their knowledge of the brain when considering how humans differ from animals. Reception children were able to use their counting skills, so they knew how many house-points they had achieved and when they should receive a certificate.
- 3.12 The higher-order thinking and assimilation skills of the pupils are well developed. In science, pupils demonstrated their excellent ability to hypothesise when undertaking experiments, and they showed a mature understanding of the scientific process when separating salt and rock. In English, pupils were able to deduce that Ariel in *The Tempest* was gender neutral, and in religion and theology essays, pupils successfully used arguments and counter-arguments to discuss whether or not it was acceptable to sacrifice one life for the common good.

- 3.13 The pupils' attitudes to learning throughout the school are excellent whether they are working together or individually. They demonstrate excellent study skills by being able to successfully draw on a wide range of resources such as the internet and non-fiction library books when undertaking projects. They also take notes efficiently from videos, for example in geography. Pupils used mature techniques to produce some exciting pieces of art work, and the younger pupils demonstrated their efficient fine motor skills when they whittled carrots in the outdoor learning environment programme.
- 3.14 Pupils have well-developed numeracy skills. For example, older pupils could determine the formula to successfully find the  $n$ th term of an arithmetic progression, whilst younger pupils are able to demonstrate effectively a range of mathematical concepts including number, shape, space and measure.
- 3.15 The pupils have a strong understanding of basic ICT skills and concepts. These are taught through well-planned, discrete ICT lessons including coding, office skills and how to stay safe online. Older pupils used Boolean expressions to refine internet searches and then applied this to an open-ended task of their own choosing. The pupils are also confident using a variety of applications such as music sequencing software, word-processing software and spreadsheets as well as online learning tools, for example vocabulary quizzes in French.
- 3.16 Pupils achieve considerable success beyond the classroom as endorsed by overwhelming satisfaction of the extra-curricular provision in parental questionnaires. The clubs observed during the inspection including drama, football and engineering support this view. Pupils achieve highly in external examinations in the arts. The majority of pupils taking external music examinations gained a merit or distinction, and in external speech examinations a large majority passed with distinction. The pupils are competitive in team and individual activities with the under 13 cricket team recently becoming Sussex County Champions and members of the school's equestrian team competing at national level.

## **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.17 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.18 Pupils have high levels of self-awareness as a result of the welcoming environment for both day and boarding pupils which provides a home-away-from-home experience. This was strongly appreciated in the views expressed in the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires. The pupils' self-esteem is excellent and is underpinned by the carefully-crafted personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum.
- 3.19 From the earliest years, pupils organise themselves well and learn to make excellent decisions about their daily needs and routines, such as which clubs and activities to attend and how to spend their break times. They confidently set their own learning targets as seen in mathematics' lessons and in science books. The school council is organised, led and elected by pupils, and the body gives pupils throughout the school the opportunity to further demonstrate their excellent decision-making qualities. Recently this has led to more potted plants in the classroom and blackout blinds in the boarding house. The older pupils take on leadership roles with maturity such as head of school and head of orchestra, and in the boarding house pupils take it in turns to be dormitory representatives. The pupils fulfil their responsibilities sensibly within the school and in boarding, thus meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection.
- 3.20 Pupils are resilient, reflecting carefully on their actions and persevering in all that they do without fear of failure. They are keen to try new things, such as reading new words in the lower year groups. They enthusiastically celebrate the achievement of other pupils of all ages in their weekly assemblies and regularly support each other's contributions in class, such as in music lessons where pupils are able to take turns and remain enthusiastic and positive even when they aren't chosen to perform.
- 3.21 Pupils have a strong moral understanding, recognising the need for the school rules and the requirement to work within them. From an early age they develop an excellent sense of right and wrong, and behaviour throughout the whole school is excellent. The pupils are very aware of the rewards and sanctions systems such as, being 'star of the week' in Year 3 or receiving house points for good work and kind behaviour, all of which encourages them to make excellent decisions. On the few occasions when they make the wrong decision, they understand there are consequences and feel supported in understanding the way forward by being given good advice. Pupils are able to make the link between the necessity for rules at school and those which govern society, and they consider empathetically the bravery and sacrifice of others for example, through observing Remembrance Day.
- 3.22 The boarders benefit greatly from the warm, family environment where they learn to live with each other and share experiences in a safe and supportive community. They become independent as they learn to take care of their possessions and observe routines such as putting on their own duvet covers.
- 3.23 The pupils develop an excellent understanding and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They appreciate the opportunities for reflection in their busy day such as listening attentively to a Handel Jig being played confidently on the piano at the beginning of assembly, or relaxing in the open-air dining facilities of the manor house courtyard recently provided by the Parents' Association. Pupils also have a keen awareness of the beautiful environment in which the school is situated, as demonstrated by Reception children who were full of joy as they studied the changes in a tree through the seasons.

- 3.24 The pupils have a good awareness and respect for people from other cultures and backgrounds, and with different beliefs. The religion and theology curriculum covers the major world religions and the pupils appreciate that others may have a different point of view. For example, when studying the creation of the world, Year 7 pupils understood that there were many different interpretations thus prompting a discussion of science versus religion. The school is aware that improvements can be made in this area and are looking to further their provision by undertaking, for example, an outing to a local mosque.
- 3.25 The pupils are proud of their school community and hence contribute positively to the lives of others. The easy and positive relationships the pupils have with each other and with adults are significant factors in actively supporting the social development of every pupil. The younger pupils appreciate the opportunity for 'buddy breaks' where they are able to make friends with pupils from other year groups. They enthusiastically embrace opportunities to be involved in the wider community such as singing at the local railway station in an event to mark the end of World War I, and taking part in a regional Shakespeare festival with other schools.
- 3.26 Beyond the school, the pupils recognise there are those less fortunate than themselves and regularly develop fundraising ideas for charity. They are able to work together as a community for good causes, such as a project providing accommodation and long-term support for eight pupils and their families in India.
- 3.27 The pupils have an excellent understanding of their own physical and mental well-being and how to stay safe, including online. The pupils, including boarders, learn about the importance of a healthy lifestyle in their PSHE lessons and were very enthusiastic about the choice of nutritious options provided at meal times. They recognise the need to stay within school grounds during break times, and are aware of the consequences of taking unacceptable risks. For example, Reception children knew of the need to be careful of the stinging nettles whilst looking for a woodlouse in the walled garden. All pupils including EYFS and boarders are confident in speaking to a trusted adult, and they are happy to approach the independent listener either personally or in writing which they can post in the red box in the student common room.
- 3.28 The governors and leadership team are committed to developing the schools' facilities as imaginatively as possible, to enable the teachers and support staff to work together to develop successfully the talents and abilities of the pupils.

#### **4. INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

#### **Inspectors**

Dr Andrew Storey	Reporting inspector
Mr James Bishop	Compliance team inspector (bursar, IAPS school)
Mrs Amanda Childs	Team inspector (headteacher, IAPS school)
Mr Martin Ford	Team inspector for boarding (senior teacher, ISA school)