



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

DENSTONE COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Denstone College Preparatory School			
DfE number	860/6019			
Registered charity number	1102929			
Address	Denstone College Preparatory School Smallwood Manor Uttoxeter Staffordshire ST14 8NS			
Telephone number	01889 562083			
Email address	enquiries@denstoneprep.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Jeremy Gear			
Chair of governors	Mrs Pamela Yianni			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	163			
	Boys	99	Girls	64
	Pre-school	20	Pre-prep	40
	Main Prep	103		
Inspection dates	22 to 23 March 2017			

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.

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 following their inspection 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 unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

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.

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 an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting 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.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. 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 for the school 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'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with 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 form meetings and assemblies in chapel. Inspectors visited facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support area and the library. 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

Mr Stephen Fox	Reporting inspector
Mrs Jane Grubb	Team inspector (Head of prep school, HMC school)
Mrs Louise Salmond Smith	Team inspector (Head of junior school, GSA school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
About the school	1
What the school seeks to do	1
About the pupils	1
Recommendations from previous inspections	2
2 KEY FINDINGS	3
Recommendations	3
3 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	7

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Denstone College Preparatory School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 11 years. The school, which is part of the Woodard group, is a charitable trust administered by an independent governing body, whose chair reports to the main Woodard board. Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new headmaster and the leadership team has been restructured. The school has created an outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and a woodland classroom.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1902 as the junior school to Denstone College and moved to its present site in the 1930s. It became co-educational in the early 1980s, changed its maximum age to 11 in the 1990s, and at that time formed its own board of governors, separate from Denstone College. The school changed its name from Smallwood Manor to Denstone College Preparatory School in 2014. The school occupies a 50-acre site on the outskirts of Uttoxeter and is housed in a listed manor house. The pre-school accommodates children from age two; the pre-prep provides for children from age four and the main prep for children from ages eight to eleven.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to ensure that every pupil enjoys school so that they grow into capable, confident and independent learners. It aspires to educate children so that academic achievement goes hand in hand with developing spiritual, cultural and physical maturity, and to ensure that the traditional Christian values of good manners and responsible behaviour are followed. It sets out to provide a stimulating programme of activities to encourage pupils to develop skills and interests that will make their school careers successful and rewarding, and to lay a firm foundation for further education.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a variety of professional, farming and business backgrounds, mostly from White British families living within a 20-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability of the school is above average. The school has identified 29 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and other spelling difficulties, all of whom receive additional specialist support. Five pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupil in the school has a statement of special educational needs. There are currently no pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL).
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Squirrels	Nursery (ages 2 – 3)
Owls	Nursery (ages 3 – 4)
PP1	Year 1
PP2	Year 2

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was an interim inspection in March 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Ensure that all teaching helps pupils achieve their full potential in lessons, in line with the school's best provision.
 - Render fully effective the system for collecting pupil performance data to ensure that achievement can be more accurately described and analysed.
 - In the EYFS, improve the outdoor provision to allow greater use across all six areas of learning for children of all ages.
 - Strengthen further the use of self-evaluation and subsequent action plans in the EYFS provision.
- 1.7 The school has fully met the recommendations relating to the EYFS and has partially addressed the recommendations regarding teaching and the use of data to monitor pupils' performance. Further detail is in given in the main text of the report.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils make good progress because teachers help them to focus on their next steps in learning by knowing their strengths and weaknesses and offering constructive feedback.
- Pupils demonstrate strong numeracy skills because of engaging teaching and the fact they are given the opportunity to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils communicate effectively, particularly orally, because they are encouraged to speak in public from an early age.
- Pupils show high levels of enthusiasm for their learning because of a 'can do' culture, and the resilience they develop both through their woodland learning opportunities and the encouragement of their teachers.
- Progress is sometimes restricted when pupils are not given the opportunity to think independently and thus extend their learning and understanding.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils' spiritual awareness is highly developed because of the Christian ethos at the heart of the school community.
- Pupils are exceptionally kind, caring and respectful because their teachers act as highly effective role-models.
- Pupils relate extremely well to each other and work effectively together because they frequently come together as a school to undertake shared tasks.
- Pupils relish the many opportunities they are given to take on responsibility and willingly embrace the challenges such service brings.

Recommendations

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure best teaching practice in the classroom is shared across all year groups and subjects, and that this process is supported by effective monitoring by leaders.
- Embed the recently introduced tracking system to ensure the academic needs of individual pupils are fully met.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.2 In line with the school's aims, pupils clearly enjoy school and grow into capable, confident independent learners, developing skills and interests which lay a firm foundation for their future education. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, most parents agreed teaching enables their child to make good progress and felt their child's educational needs are met by the school. In their own responses, an overwhelming majority of pupils felt the school gives them the opportunity to learn and make good progress, teachers are supportive and helpful and they know how well they are doing in their subjects. These views are supported by evidence gathered during the inspection.
- 3.3 Results from standardised tests used by the school indicate that pupils make good, and in some cases, rapid progress. However, the use of a new tracking system is in its infancy. Evidence from pupils' work and their performance in the classroom also indicates pupils make good progress over time, and their level of attainment is good overall. Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses well and the new tracking system further helps them to identify where they need to focus in order to achieve maximum progress for individual pupils. Older pupils build on their strengths and learn from their mistakes through helpful, constructive marking which focuses on next steps, whilst a similar 'smiley-face' system is in operation in the pre-prep.
- 3.4 Pupils make strong progress in lessons where they are able to perform and take an active part in their learning, or where trips and outings bring their learning to life, such as visits to a local mosque and a magistrates' court. They make slower progress in a few lessons which do not engage their interest and learning is not tailored to pupils' individual needs. Pupils with SEND make good, and in some cases, rapid progress because their learning needs are promptly identified and work in lessons is appropriate to their needs. Additional support is also available through support groups or one-to-one lessons, where pupils successfully develop their skills and confidence. In the EYFS, children make good progress and respond well to the cross-curricular challenges provided by flexible, imaginative and engaging teaching. In a literacy lesson, younger pupils were able to demonstrate their scientific knowledge using accurate and imaginative vocabulary when recounting a visit to a space centre.
- 3.5 Pupils' confidently and successfully undertake complex mathematical challenges because of constructive feedback, skilful explanations and high expectations from their teachers. In discussion, pupils were very positive about mathematics lessons and said that they feel they make good progress because teachers plan a variety of engaging tasks for them. A cross-curricular approach to mathematics means pupils are able to develop their skills in a practical and meaningful context, sometimes without realising that they are 'doing maths'. There is a well-established culture of pupils being encouraged to learn from their mistakes; they are not afraid to fail, which has a positive effect on pupils' attitude and attainment in mathematics.
- 3.6 Pupils show excellent communication skills throughout the school. Their listening skills are particularly strong because teachers successfully encourage them to respect each other's contributions. Pupils are able to articulate ideas and opinions confidently, especially when speaking to adults, and without relying on the help of their teacher. This confidence springs from the many opportunities they are given to speak in public from the EYFS upwards, including class assemblies and an annual poetry competition. During the inspection, older pupils expertly presented the key theme for an assembly on humour, displaying excellent verbal communication skills. The other pupils listened well and responded with laughter and clear enjoyment. The nurturing environment prevalent in the school promotes a curiosity amongst

the EYFS children which is evident in the thoughtful questions they ask in class. Good examples of extended writing were seen in display work around the school and in older pupils' description of a recent school trip. Pupils' vocabulary is well developed because their teachers encourage them to use task-related vocabulary appropriately and accurately.

- 3.7 Pupils show high levels of enthusiasm and eagerly participate in lessons. They are especially positive about learning when they are afforded the freedom to move forward at their own pace. The positive influence of the woodland learning environment encourages pupils to work both collaboratively and independently, and teaches them to be resilient and to persevere in the face of difficulty. This is particularly notable in children in the EYFS. The 'can do' culture that pervades the school helps pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 3.8 Pupils achieve good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of the curriculum, especially when planning is ambitious and includes stimulating tasks which engage the children fully. Pupils have a genuine thirst for knowledge and recall facts well, but they are equally successful in their pursuit of understanding. For example, in a history lesson, older pupils demonstrated a very good ability to recall the key leaders and protagonists in the Second World War, as well as a strong understanding of the concept of the Commonwealth and its relevance to the topic. This is due to the strong subject knowledge of their teachers and their ability to explain more complex ideas clearly. It also stems from teachers' skilful questioning, their attention to the needs of individual pupils and their willingness to offer extra support if pupils do not understand.
- 3.9 From the evidence of a minority of lessons and some pupils' work, the focus on factual knowledge is occasionally at the expense of understanding and the development of higher-level thinking skills. In those lessons, a lack of challenge and relatively low expectations from the teacher means that pupils, particularly the more able, do not make as much progress as they might. However, pupils can effectively transfer skills to other areas of study because of the school's cross-curricular approach and are able to reflect on their work maturely and objectively because teachers make success criteria very clear. Pupils demonstrate outstanding performance skills and take delight in the many opportunities they have to excel. This is particularly apparent in music, where they show a maturity and confidence beyond their years. In an assembly, the quality of choral singing and the instrumental prowess of individual pupils were outstanding. Pupils clearly derive a great amount of pleasure and fulfilment from their success, which is due in no small measure to the excellent coaching they receive.
- 3.10 Pupils are competent in their use of information and communication technology (ICT). They also demonstrate good analytical skills and are able to reason confidently and articulately, supporting arguments and accepting or countering alternative views. The positive way in which pupils respond to more open tasks, such as the Shakespeare project undertaken by older pupils, indicates that they are capable of adopting individual approaches and drawing ideas from a range of sources, producing a range of different outcomes that they have developed themselves. However, both pupils' independent learning strategies and their ICT skills are not as fully developed as those in other areas because opportunities to apply these across the curriculum are limited.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve well academically because of the strong help and guidance they receive from dedicated and caring teachers and teaching assistants. Governors provide generous resources and support and challenge for the leadership team. Both are committed to ensuring the best outcomes for pupils. However, because the quality of teaching is not consistent, leaders should monitor lessons more closely to ensure that all pupils are given the opportunity to think independently and are challenged to extend their learning and understanding. The EYFS

leaders self-evaluate effectively and make excellent use of outdoor areas, as recommended in the previous inspection.

- 3.12 Many of those leaving at the end of Year 6 are awarded academic or other scholarships at their chosen senior school. Pupils also achieve well in art, music and sport, thanks to the encouragement and support they receive from the school and a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Over the past two years, pupils have represented their county in cricket, swimming and hockey, and six pupils have been selected for the a children's national choir this year, which is no mean feat given that there are only limited numbers in the school.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school is a close-knit community where pupils and teachers work closely together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Pupils are exceptionally happy and well-balanced, successfully reflecting the school's aims of ensuring that every child enjoys school and develops spiritual, cultural and physical maturity. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is clearly demonstrated by their overwhelmingly positive response to all areas of school life in the questionnaire. Pupils are highly self-disciplined and demonstrate great perseverance in the classroom, in sporting, musical and other extra-curricular activities, and in their woodland learning activities. This is because there is a strong ethos of 'keep trying', a message that inspires everything the children do. Pupils understand very well how to improve their learning because their teachers help them to understand their strengths and weaknesses and set them challenging targets. Consequently, they are self-assured without being over-confident. They are supported by a strong personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme which focuses on developing self-respect and self-knowledge as well as other opportunities the school provides to build their self-esteem, such as drama courses and team sports.
- 4.3 Pupils show great appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. The Christian ethos underpins the school community, and pupils respect the chapel as a place of worship and clearly value the central part it plays in their lives, as shown by their ability to listen, be still and reflect as well as their inspirational and uplifting hymn-singing in assembly. Pupils take a huge delight in their rural surroundings and fully exploit them, demonstrating a love of the outdoors and an enormous respect for the natural world, because their teachers, who have a passion for the values of outdoor education, inspire them to reflect on its wonders. In a lesson outdoors, children in the EYFS thoughtfully reminded each other of the care they needed to take to avoid squashing insects.
- 4.4 Pupils behave sensibly and courteously around school, and are kind, caring and respectful, reflecting the school's aim of ensuring traditional Christian values of good manners and responsibility. Pupils actively seek opportunities to behave positively, encouraged by a system of 'caught badges', whereby pupils' good deeds are celebrated and rewarded. Their behaviour in the classroom is excellent, and pupils of all ages obey requests and instructions without question. From the EYFS upwards, an atmosphere of calm endeavour prevails in the classroom and pupils report that in the very rare instances where behaviour was less than satisfactory, it was dealt with quickly and appropriately. This is largely due to a code of conduct that is based on a respect of everybody's right to learn, teachers' clear expectations and a system of sanctions and rewards that are seen as fair and help the pupils learn from their mistakes. Consequently, pupils develop a respect for the needs, feelings and opinions of others. They clearly distinguish between right and wrong.
- 4.5 Pupils relate extremely well to each other and take great pleasure in working collaboratively and effectively to solve problems and to generate and share ideas. The school provides a number of opportunities for this to happen, for example in house and whole-school events such as school plays, where pupils of all ages work together as equals, and year assemblies which are devised exclusively by pupils without the intervention of their teachers. These experiences build teamwork, self-confidence and leadership skills, as well as cementing excellent relationships across and within different age groups and genders. For example, in a mixed-age basketball training session, girls and boys worked happily together to build their skills.

- 4.6 Pupils contribute positively to the lives of others within the school through the many opportunities they are given to serve. They relish these opportunities and take them very seriously, showing strong commitment and great maturity. Prefects and librarians are invited to apply for their roles, and they appreciate the responsibility they have to fulfil them effectively and the duty they have to their fellow pupils. Other opportunities to serve the community similarly promote the strong social awareness manifested by the pupils, such as the 'Ministry for Food' and the 'Pupil Parliament'. Their decisions have a genuine impact on the community, for example the introduction of non-meat Mondays and the choice of recently installed outdoor play equipment. Older pupils willingly help younger ones by helping them with their reading, and there is a well-established 'buddy' system in operation; further evidence that pupils get on with each other extremely well, irrespective of age or gender.
- 4.7 Pupils respond with equal enthusiasm to opportunities to serve the local community. This springs from an understanding of their duty to help those less fortunate than themselves. Recent examples include delivering harvest gifts to old people who live in the area, visiting nearby care homes for the elderly, supporting a child in the local community who suffers from cerebral palsy, collecting shoes to raise money for a village in Africa and organising their own in-school events to contribute to national charity days.
- 4.8 Teachers often encourage EYFS children to take decisions for themselves, for example in choosing their own learning pathways, and they respond sensibly by looking to challenge themselves, rarely resorting to easy options. This stems from a culture where children are not afraid of failing and are therefore prepared to take risks. Younger pupils confidently read out their piece of writing in front of their peers; in assembly, pupils confidently introduced and then played their music to a large audience. Pupils understand the importance of making wise decisions, and do so in practice, because the school values the pupil voice and gives them frequent opportunities to decide on issues that affect the community as a whole.
- 4.9 Despite the fact that there is limited ethnic or religious diversity in the school, pupils show great respect for and appreciation of their own and other cultures as a result of strong messages conveyed through assemblies and the wider curriculum. They are sensitive and tolerant and this creates a strong sense of community and empathy, where pupils accept others for who they are without question. When pupils from an inner-city and a special school visited on separate occasions, their hosts went to great lengths to make them feel welcome, despite the differences in background and experience.
- 4.10 Pupils understand how to stay safe and keep healthy because the school establishes excellent routines from an early age so that the EYFS children know how to behave in different situations. They are confident that adults will help them if things go wrong. When they are outdoors, they demonstrate a sensible regard for possible risks, but this does not make them fearful of their surroundings, which they embrace and enjoy with quiet self-assurance. Pupils are energetic, and through the PSHE curriculum they understand the connection between being active and playing sport and staying healthy. That understanding also extends to healthy eating, something they put into practice when supporting initiatives that come from the pupil-run 'Ministry for Food'. Because their teachers are vigilant and caring, it is no surprise that almost all of the pupils said they felt safe in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Pupils also know how to stay safe online thanks to excellent guidance in ICT lessons. Leaders and governors strongly reinforce the school's values and expect high standards, which pupils are highly successful in meeting.