

School inspection report

05 to 07 December 2023

DLD College London

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Lambeth

London

SE1 7FX

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders treat pupils as individuals and nurture their progress through structured pastoral care. They provide opportunities for pupils, domestic and international, to thrive within a caring community. Pupils engage well with their academic studies and respond positively to the encouragement they receive. The school fulfils its aims of preparing pupils for their future by equipping them with skills and building their independence and self-confidence. The new house system, introduced since the previous inspection, places pupils' wellbeing at the centre of school life with the result that pupils feel well supported and readily work hard.
2. Governors evaluate strategic risks and ensure change is well managed, such as with the recent change of the school's proprietor. Their decision-making is done in conjunction with school leaders, with an openness that ensures procedures are implemented suitably and without delay. Decision-making and development planning by school leaders are undertaken following careful and extensive reflection about what best meets the needs of the school given its international community and central London location. Senior leaders have appropriate skills and expertise to carry out their roles effectively, with suitable governor oversight.
3. Recent initiatives to promote effective teaching are yielding improved consistency within and between subjects. Academic leaders understand how to continue this to ensure that all teaching comes into line with the best throughout the school. This work continues. The emphasis on tracking attainment data enables teachers to identify when support is needed. Similarly, the level of challenge that pupils experience in lessons is planned well. The school has expanded its age range, since the previous inspection, to include a new Year 9 intake. Leaders plan the curriculum, schemes of work and associated provision to ensure that these younger pupils are effectively provided for.
4. Pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points whether joining from overseas or from other UK schools. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective, targeted both via dedicated sessions, and through support in lessons to help them to achieve in line with expectations across their subjects. Teachers cater effectively for those pupils who have individual education plans, with well-structured lessons which support pupils' individual learning needs.
5. Pupils, including boarders, have positive experiences at school, so that all nationalities feel well integrated in the school's international community. Pupils' wellbeing is actively promoted and as a result pupils are happy at school. Provision for physical education is largely delivered by accessing off-site facilities, through a well-structured programme that promotes pupils' physical health and wellbeing.
6. Boarding facilities are well maintained, modern and comfortable, enabling pupils to develop their independence and maturity within a nurturing environment. Site security and safety for boarders is well managed. Health and safety practices meet requirements. However, leaders' oversight of some aspects such as risk assessment monitoring is inconsistently implemented, resulting in variation in how risks are managed.
7. Leaders encourage positive and respectful relationships between pupils, and pupils have positive relationships with their teachers. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is effectively delivered within the personal, social, health and education (PSHE) programme, and along with

suitable careers guidance pupils are prepared well for their lives beyond school. Leaders promote British values, and pupils demonstrate suitable awareness. Expectations for how pupils should behave are clear and well understood, and as a result pupils enjoy that they are part of a trusting and respectful community within.

8. Safeguarding is well supported by governors, who ensure leaders make it a priority. Leaders with safeguarding responsibilities are suitably trained and ensure that the school consistently places safeguarding as a high priority for its community. Minor adjustments to the record of pre-appointment checks were made during the inspection so that it continues to meet requirements.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- embed recent initiatives to ensure consistency in the effectiveness of teaching, in areas where there is some unevenness
- ensure they maintain a systematic approach to managing risk assessment within health and safety protocols
- ensure that the record of pre-employment checks is consistently accurate and up to date.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The ethos of the school is pupil-centred, focusing on the needs of pupils as individuals and preparing them for life beyond school. Leaders ensure that relationships between staff and pupils are positive and purposeful. Requirements for boarding are suitable and boarders are well integrated in the school community.
10. The school has undergone a change of ownership and governance since the previous inspection. Governors have applied thorough strategic planning and decision-making to focus on the needs of the school within its new schools' group. Governors have a supportive relationship with leaders, which contributed to the smooth transition of ownership. The school is well maintained and well resourced, demonstrating governors' commitment to ensuring quality of provision.
11. Arrangements for the management of boarding are suitable. Staff who are responsible for boarding have the skills and experience to fulfil their duties well, placing an emphasis on ensuring a positive experience for boarders. The school's location in central London enables pupils to see the capital as their local area and provides boarders with a wide range of opportunities for weekend trips and activities. Leaders ensure that suitable measures are in place to manage associated risks and to promote the wellbeing of boarders.
12. The school's policies are mostly implemented effectively and kept up to date. However, risk assessment and safer recruitment were adjusted and clarified during the inspection. The school sets clear expectations for pupils in terms of conduct and behaviour, and these are communicated to parents and available on the website. Pupils clearly demonstrate an understanding of what is expected of them and what the policies mean for them.
13. School leaders use development planning and school self-evaluation to ensure delivery of the school's aims and objectives. Pupils' welfare and academic attainment are priorities, with staff seeking to ensure that pupils feel well supported pastorally so that they can focus on achieving well. Appropriate provision for pupils who have SEND, and for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), enables these pupils to make good progress towards reaching their goals. The care given to international pupils enables them to quickly feel part of the school community and to thrive in an environment that encourages positive attitudes towards academic attainment.
14. A suitable procedure is in place to deal with complaints and leaders listen and respond to any feedback they receive. Leaders' listening approach is effective in developing a positive working relationship with parents who reside overseas, so that any matters can be resolved satisfactorily. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are understood and followed.
15. A culture of safeguarding is well embedded in the school. There is regular and open reporting to governors to ensure that they have suitable awareness of any actions being taken to support pupils' safety. Leaders ensure that the safeguarding policy and arrangements are suitable and are kept up to date. They maintain effective links with external agencies, seeking guidance and support when appropriate.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The curriculum model meets the needs of pupils. This includes the introduction at the start of the academic year of a DfE accredited Year 9 curriculum with a suitable range of subjects being taught. The range of courses available allows pupils from different educational backgrounds to choose pathways that can fulfil their ambitions, including those pupils who have SEND. Therefore, whether boarders or day, domestic or international, pupils can flourish academically. The Year 14 cohort, consisting of pupils aged 19 to 21, follow an accredited NCFE course (the International Foundation Programme) on a separate pathway taught alongside, rather than with, the pupils in Year 13.
18. Inspectors found that the breadth of the curriculum allows pupils' academic needs to be met, with different combinations of sixth-form courses allowing them to reach the next stage of their education. Most pupils have English as an additional language, and their needs are well met whether arriving with fluent or partially fluent English, with teachers taking care to ensure EAL pupils are as ambitious with their academic goals as non-EAL pupils. Pupils take responsibility for decisions about their subjects, often being ambitious in terms of their choices. The curriculum is well designed to enable pupils to combine BTECs and IFPs alongside GCSEs and A levels, resulting in study programme combinations best meeting pupils' needs.
19. With oversight from academic leaders, the most effective teaching utilises suitable teaching techniques, which promote engaged learning, leading to good pupil progress. Well-planned activities are used to teach pupils how to think more deeply and develop their analysis skills. Teaching is consistently inclusive.
20. The provision for pupils who have SEND includes the use of teaching assistants who provide dedicated support for pupils in lessons. Teaching in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is highly effective, enabling them to make steady progress over their time at the school from their starting points on arrival. This means that pupils are well placed to follow their chosen pathways after school.
21. Pupils achieve well in creative subjects such as art, graphics, photography, media studies and drama. For example, well-designed resources and teaching expertise in media studies enable pupils in the sixth form to finalise their documentary productions, meeting technically and creatively high standards. In History, pupils reflect on a discussion about the futility of war to create a website reflecting the complexity of the debate.
22. Academic leaders are implementing an ongoing initiative that uses an approach to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching across the subject range. It aims to promote pupils consistent progress across all subjects. Leaders analyse results from internal and external assessments along with their evaluations of effective teaching methods to promote consistency in the quality of teaching. Other teaching and learning initiatives are developing more proactive pupil-focused activities in lessons to increase pupil engagement by ensuring that pupils are actively involved. Teachers and pupils use an online platform to set and submit assignments. In this way pupils have ready access to teachers' helpful feedback to improve their work.
23. Leaders have enabled a wide range of co-curricular activities, including a global issues discussion group, a boxing club, a music band, and a law society. Pupils participate readily, enjoying activities that promote their skills, extend their experiences, and which enhance their personal development.

A recent A-Level physics trip to the European Organisation for Nuclear Research in Switzerland, was valued by pupils, and opportunities for pupils themselves to co-direct the school drama production have helped develop self-confidence and leadership skills. Leaders promote independent learning, with the result that pupils frequently opt to use some of their free time to undertake further academic work independently, including by working in pairs and small groups. Supportive subject clinics are on offer which pupils attend to get extra help as and when they need it.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

25. A nurturing pastoral care system brings out the best in pupils. Pupils are confident and sociable, displaying maturity and self-confidence within the school environment. Leaders use the experience of pupils being at this school to encourage mutual respect, with the result that diversity and inclusion are a normal part of school life. Pupils are supportive of their peers in and out of lessons, across year groups and friendship groups. They demonstrate how they embrace differences of nationalities or cultures; this is particularly noticeable when socialising together in the dining room and in free time.
26. Leaders set clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are attentive learners and engage well with their lessons. They respond to the rewards and sanctions system positively and can see how it helps to enhance their learning experience as well as shaping their conduct. A suitable anti-bullying strategy is in place. Staff are well trained to deal with any incidents that occur. Pupils develop their understanding of the impact of their behaviour on others.
27. There is a well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme which takes a graduated approach through the age range, including for the new pupils in Year 14. Pupils learn about being respectful towards others and develop their understanding of the differences between people and social responsibility, in preparation for life in British society. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme is implemented well. Pupils understand how it is beneficial to them. Leaders consulted with parents, staff and pupils when planning the RSE curriculum and it takes their views into account. The programme develops pupils' understanding of topics such as how to manage healthy relationships and sexual health. External speakers contribute to the programme, and this enhances pupils' understanding of life beyond school.
28. Through the house system, introduced since the previous inspection, a collaborative approach is encouraged and pupils' self-esteem is enhanced through the public rewards for their individual and group endeavours. As a result, the school's community is harmonious and tolerant. Pupils of different faiths enjoy the ability to meet in groups such as the Christian Society and use the multi-faith room for their religious practices. Pupils quickly settle in to boarding life and recognise the positive culture of praise and recognition from staff. Tutor time, assemblies and house meetings give an opportunity for self-reflection, self-appreciation and a focus on positive thinking.
29. The school's facilities are well maintained and provide a purpose-built learning environment for pupils. Boarding accommodation is comfortable and suitable for the different age groups. Medical facilities are available for the short-term care of sick pupils. Suitable trained staff provide medical care, when necessary. Leaders take steps to ensure the site is secure and safe.
30. Outdoors there is a secure area where pupils can access a seated picnic and recreation area, and a small all-weather court used for games. Boarders over the age of 18 are encouraged to live off site to build their independence.
31. Senior staff monitor the effectiveness of supervision, so that pupils are adequately supervised at all times. Leaders set clear expectations for staff regarding their supervisory duties, taking into account the boarding nature of the school community and its central London location. The newly designated

Year 9 and Year 10 social area has its own supervision rota, with leaders paying careful attention to the integration and pupil experiences of this new younger cohort.

32. Senior leaders have oversight of the implementation of an appropriate health and safety policy, but application of risk assessments falls to multiple users making it complex to track. A systematic approach is used with some but not all risk assessments, with the result that there is not centralised oversight. During the inspection leaders worked to plan how implementation may be consistently robust in all areas. Responsibilities are suitably delegated according to staff roles, and staff are trained as appropriate. The fire risk policy is reviewed regularly and appropriate procedures are in place for evacuations. Boarders respond well when the half-termly fire drills are conducted. Fire safety records are maintained.
33. Risk assessments are undertaken, recorded electronically and overseen by a health and safety committee. Leaders have identified any risks associated with the extended age range which include Year 9 and Year 14 pupils and have put in place appropriate mitigations to manage the risks.
34. Admissions and attendance registers are properly maintained and recorded.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 35. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

36. The school's description that 'London is our classroom' is lived out. Pupils are actively encouraged to make use of all the resources and experiences available, from visiting art galleries to literary walking tours, and participating in work placements and film festivals. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to embrace the multi-cultural benefits of their cosmopolitan local environment, and they prosper in terms of personal and social development and intellectual stimulation from the opportunities that are available to them.
37. With leaders' encouragement, pupils engage willingly with the wider community beyond the school and are pleased to have opportunities for charity involvement, such as jam and honey making for the Archbishop's Park Community Trust in support of disadvantaged local young people with learning disabilities, as well as helping with clothes donations for the Salvation Army and We Are Waterloo charities. Pupils are well prepared for life in British society. They have opportunities to take responsibility for themselves. Similarly, they are thoroughly supported and 'walked alongside' as they make decisions, for instance the daily freedoms they enjoy accessing London, and the choices they make regarding degree courses, and their university-style living experience. The College's TRACK (tolerance, respect, academic curiosity, community and kindness) values system aligns closely with the fundamental British values, encouraging pupils from culturally diverse backgrounds to support each other.
38. Pupils gain financial awareness as part of a wider programme of life skills, and in particular how financial management operates in the UK. Pupils aspiring to British universities learn about managing student finances, following on from their experiences as boarders living in London.
39. Pupils develop their leadership skills through the school and boarding councils which have made a positive impact on enabling pupil-led change. For example, with accommodating cultural dietary preferences, with a wider range of international meal choices available. Activities such as participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, school band, netball and football teams allow pupils opportunities in environments which are safe and supportive to pursue their personal interests, develop strengths and socialise across age groups. Moreover, in other specialist areas such as eSports, with its dedicated suite, pupils explore new learning concepts and experiences with a view towards potential commercial career paths.
40. Leaders encourage pupils to be ambitious with clear aspirations. Careers provision is well designed and implemented, so that pupils benefit from guidance linking their choices of academic subjects to potential career pathways and professions. Most pupils apply to UK universities, and a university entry programme is offered which assists pupils with their decision making.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 41. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

42. Senior leaders and governors with responsibility for safeguarding demonstrate suitable skills and knowledge and fulfil their roles effectively. They ensure that information relating to safeguarding is provided to parents and published on the school's website. Governors have oversight of safeguarding, regularly meeting with the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL), deputies, and safeguarding team. There is regular reporting of safeguarding matters to governors, including reviewing the staff code of conduct, so that governors have a full awareness and can fulfil their oversight role. An annual review of safeguarding is undertaken.
43. The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy in place and it is kept up to date. Staff responsible for safeguarding hold senior positions, and their training is updated regularly as required. Since the previous inspection an extended safeguarding team structure has been established, with clearly defined roles and areas of responsibility.
44. The safeguarding team works with external agencies when appropriate, including with the local authority designated officer (LADO) and with child and adolescent health services (CAMHS). Senior leaders are knowledgeable about recent safeguarding updates to legislation. Leaders have carefully considered any additional risks with the introduction of older pupils. They have put specific safeguarding measures in place.
45. Arrangements for safeguarding for boarding pupils are robustly implemented. Pupils undertake a detailed induction on joining the school. They know how to stay safe, and how to access appropriate adults if they need to. The wellbeing centre, new since the previous inspection, assists pupils in providing access to counselling should they require it, alongside knowing how to contact an independent listener. When pupils raise concerns, there is timely follow up to ensure that pupils' needs are promptly and appropriately met.
46. A suitable recruitment policy is in place and is implemented effectively. Staff complete the necessary pre-appointment checks on adults joining the school. Checks and evidence are in place prior to commencing work and are suitably recorded. A minor adjustment to the record of appointment was made during the inspection so that the use of risk assessments was recorded in line with the safer recruitment policy.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 47. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	DLD College London
Department for Education number	208/6004
Address	DLD College London 199 Westminster Bridge Road Lambeth London SE1 7FX
Phone number	02079 358411
Email address	dld@dld.org
Website	www.dldcollege.co.uk
Proprietor	Abbey DLD Colleges Ltd
Chair	Mr Tim Haynes
Principal	Mr Irfan Latif
Age range	13 to 21
Number of pupils	421
Number of boarding pupils	237
Date of previous inspection	01 to 03 October 2019

Information about the school

48. DLD College is an independent day and boarding school. It is coeducational and predominantly educates pupils in the sixth form but also admits pupils aged from 13 years. Many pupils attend the school for two years, having previously been educated overseas, before moving on to British universities. The school has recently transferred ownership and governance to the Abbey DLD Colleges Group.
49. The school moved to new purpose-built accommodation on London's South Bank in 2015. The self-contained boarding accommodation is situated on the upper floors with the teaching and other areas below. Over half the pupils are boarders, representing 60 nationalities.
50. The school has identified 71 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
51. English is an additional language for 316 pupils.
52. The school states its aims are to develop pupils who have the potential to be the next generation of leaders to take their place in a challenging and diverse world. It aims to build pupils' confidence by providing strong pastoral care and to help each individual achieve their potential by encouraging a rigorous approach to academic work, independent thinking and intellectual curiosity.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

05 to 07 December 2023

53. A team of 6 inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The onsite inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

54. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and house assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area
- visits to the boarding house accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

55. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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