



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports

For Schools with Residential Provision

Chelsea Independent College

September 2019



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School's Details

College	Chelsea Independent College			
DfE number	205/6404			
Address	Chelsea Independent College 517-523 Fulham Road Fulham London SW6 1HD			
Telephone number	0207 610 1114			
Email address	enquiries@cic.ac			
Principal	Dr Martin Meenagh			
Proprietor	Astrum Education Group Ltd			
Age range	14 to 21			
Number of pupils on roll	110			
	Day pupils	56	Boarders	54
	Seniors	22	Sixth Form	88
Inspection dates	17 to 19 September 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Chelsea Independent College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between 14 and 21 years. It is governed by the directors of Astrum Education Group Ltd.
- 1.2 The school opened in 2004 and moved to its present site in 2006. The school consists of a senior school for pupils aged 14 to 16 and a sixth form for pupils aged 16 to 21. Boarders are accommodated in one boarding house.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school has refurbished the science laboratories. The current principal was appointed in 2017.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims for its pupils to acquire a firm academic base, to be self-assured in regard to their ability and flexible in approach to their chosen careers. It seeks for pupils to leave as confident, independent, resilient and culturally aware young people.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of different backgrounds. The majority come from overseas whilst the remaining pupils come from the London area. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is broadly average. The school has identified one pupil as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 51 pupils, some of whom receive additional support for their English. Data used by the school have identified six pupils as being the most able in the school's population and the curriculum is modified for them and for four other pupils because of their special talents in sports.

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](#).

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

- 2.2 At GCSE in the year 2015 performance has been in line with the national average for maintained schools. In the years 2016 to 2017, performance has been below the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.3 In the sixth form, A-level results in the year 2015 have been below the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools. In 2017, performance has been in line with the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 **The standard 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

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 **The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, 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

- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 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

- 2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' 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.
- 2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.19 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.
- 2.20 The standard 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 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'.

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 good.

- Pupils of all abilities make good progress and pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) make excellent progress.
- Pupils do not apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills consistently across the curriculum.
- Pupils achieve well in lessons but there are limited opportunities for pupils to strengthen their achievement beyond the classroom.
- Pupils demonstrate extremely positive attitudes towards their learning.

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

- Pupils are extremely confident and self-aware and show a very strong understanding of how to improve their own learning.
- Pupils have a very strong sense of what is morally correct and are willing to take responsibility for their behaviour.
- Pupils are extremely tolerant of one another, showing a deep respect for and appreciation of their own and other cultures.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Increase opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills across the curriculum.
- Develop further the opportunities for pupils to strengthen their achievements in activities beyond the classroom.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils join the school with a wide range of abilities. At GCSE in the year 2015 performance has been in line with the national average for maintained schools. In the years 2016 to 2017, performance has been below the national average for maintained schools. In 2018, at GCSE the large majority of pupils achieved grades A* to C and most pupils were graded 9 to 4. A-level results in the year 2015 have been below the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools. In 2017, performance has been in line with the national average for maintained schools. In 2018 most pupils passed at A level and a large majority gained A* to C grades. Results in 2019 suggest that this level of attainment, at both GCSE and A level, was maintained. The large majority of pupils who applied to university in 2018 achieved entry to their first or second choice; most pupils who followed the International Foundation programme were successful in their application to university. Lesson observations, work scrutiny and discussions with pupils indicate that by the end of year 13 all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and EAL and the most able have made at least good progress from their starting points. EAL pupils make excellent progress because of the individual help they are given by their subject teachers and by learning support staff. Pupils told inspectors that the feedback they receive from regular tests and homework pieces, along with additional support from their teachers, helps them to improve. Boarding pupils who spoke with the inspectors said that the willingness of boarding staff to support them in their independent study in the evenings helps them to make progress. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that teaching enables their child to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils display well developed knowledge, skills and understanding and can apply these skills successfully across all areas of learning. This is because of much high quality teaching coupled with the vision of governance and leadership and management to offer a broad and suitably varied curriculum. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the range of subjects is suitable for their child. In lessons pupils were seen to apply previous knowledge effectively to new contexts. For example, in a Year 13 English lesson pupils demonstrated strong interpretative skills and correct critical idiom skilfully applied to the detail of the poetry discussed, reinforcing existing contextual knowledge to interpretations. In GCSE history, pupils applied their historical knowledge of the Saxons effectively to evaluate the Saxon trial system. Strong aesthetic and creative skills were seen in Year 11 art where pupils worked to produce some pieces of high quality which demonstrated careful attention to detail.
- 3.7 Pupils have very well developed communication skills. They listen carefully to each other and contribute willingly to discussions in the classroom. Pupils in the debating club could confidently express and communicate complex ideas and arguments when debating the role of and need for feminism in society. Excellent discursive skills were demonstrated in a Year 13 economics lesson as students debated profit maximisation and the reasons for shifts in cost curves. Pupil essays discussing themes such as whether parliament remains a truly representative body were well structured and used correct terminology. Pupils demonstrate such high level skills because teachers regularly plan lessons that use a wide range of strategies to ensure that communication skills are deliberately practised in the classroom.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate competent skills in numeracy and they apply these skills successfully in other areas of learning. Year 12 physics pupils solved problems with a high degree of competency when combining different equations to find the velocity of electrons and their kinetic energy in an electric field. In Year 12 economics work, pupils successfully calculated the size of the change in aggregate demand. Curriculum provision with the availability of further mathematics, a one-year accounting course that is followed in addition to existing A levels, along with participation in external mathematics competitions stretches the more able mathematicians.
- 3.9 Some pupils demonstrate a high level of competency in ICT as seen in photography portfolios and coding in the robotics club. Year 13 accounting pupils showed good skills and understanding when using spreadsheets to prepare appropriation-of-profit accounts. Pupils say that they use ICT mainly for research and presentation purposes and some departments are using ICT classroom platforms to good effect to enhance these skills. However, there is inconsistency in the pupils' application of ICT across all curriculum areas.
- 3.10 Pupils have very well developed study skills and are able to draw from a wide range of resources. Pupils made excellent use of a wide range of source material that included a helpful glossary of terms in Year 10 chemistry, making strong progress as a result of this. In essays on the prorogation of parliament, Year 13 government and politics pupils were able to synthesise and analyse opposing arguments to reach a conclusion with a high level of detail and respond to current events using media articles. Pupils in a Year 13 psychology lesson were able to suggest a suitable hypothesis regarding which parts of the brain might be involved in different medical conditions. Regular open-ended questioning by teachers and the tasks they set in the classroom promote these higher-order skills.
- 3.11 Pupils' individual achievements in competitions, sports, the performing and other arts is, in some cases, good but this is not reflected in all areas. Pupils perform well in the UK Maths Challenge, with some pupils achieving gold awards. High quality pupil work in art, photography, textiles and graphics is on display at the annual art and design exhibition that is open to the public. Where pupils excel in activities outside the school, such as dance, diving and swimming, the school encourages and facilitates their participation. Leadership and management have introduced a co-curricular programme, which includes activities such as football, yoga, calligraphy and dance. However, such opportunities across the school are not always developed so that all pupils have the chance to demonstrate achievement beyond the classroom.

3.12 Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes towards their learning and work with great determination. In many lessons observed pupils collaborated willingly and freely, engaging with each other and their teachers. For example, Year 12 mathematics pupils demonstrated a very mature and positive attitude towards their learning when sketching curves of mathematical functions. They continually asked well informed questions to aid their understanding and were very capable independent learners, as was also seen to be the case in Year 10 geography. Both independent and collaborative work was a common feature in many of the lessons seen because teachers provide these opportunities. Boarders praise the collaborative nature of working together in the boarding house and younger pupils appreciate the help that older boarders willingly provide.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

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

3.14 At all ages, pupils develop high levels of self-confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem. Pupils in the 'personal development club' were able to discuss their emotions and motivations freely, and thoughtfully demonstrated high levels of self-awareness. Pupils say that their teachers are supportive and encourage dialogue that helps them build their confidence, self-esteem and resilience. Excellent pastoral care, that includes a very effective tutorial programme, contributes significantly to the development of these qualities. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to improve their own learning. This is because feedback from teachers encourages pupils to be involved in their learning and enables them to reflect on their contributions and improve them as they acquire new knowledge. This was seen in GCSE history where pupils showed a clear understanding of their relative strengths as learners, where improvements could be made and the steps required to help these happen. Pupils understand the importance of their target grades and say how much they appreciate the discussions about them with their tutors and teachers which further assists their progress in their learning. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they are confident in completing their university applications and have a firm understanding of the process. They have clear ambitions for their future for study and employment both in the UK and overseas. All parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps pupils to be confident and independent. Most boarders who responded to the questionnaire said that boarding contributed to their independence and confidence. The school is most successful in meeting its aim for its pupils to be self-assured in regard to their ability and flexible in approach to their chosen careers.

3.15 Pupils are mature and confident decision makers and have a strong understanding of the impact these decisions can play in their own future. Pupils in a Year 13 tutorial were involved in questioning the decisions they had made regarding their own university choices enabling them to demonstrate a clear understanding of the relevance of these choices to their futures. Pupils say they are given the independence and freedom to make their own decisions and are confident in their ability to make the right decision because they feel well informed and supported by their teachers, tutors and the careers department.

3.16 Pupils develop a strong sense of non-material aspects of life and are able to reflect well in the spiritual dimension. For example, Year 10 art pupils explored what expressive qualities of feelings, moods and emotions they detected in particular tapestry pieces. Pupils were seen in quiet contemplation during a yoga session. Pupils develop very strong philosophical understanding as seen in essays where pupils explored Aristotelian virtue ethics and contrasted different ethical theories.

- 3.17 Pupils are extremely well behaved and well mannered towards other pupils and adults. They have a very strong sense of what is morally correct. This is because teaching provides opportunities for pupils to explore moral considerations. For example Year 12 pupils studying philosophy answered the question *'Is utilitarianism useful for making moral decisions?'* very thoughtfully. Pupils wrote critically with clear and balanced arguments when evaluating the use of referendums to determine important political and constitutional issues. Pupils are interested in discussing moral issues as seen in a Year 10 geography lesson on the ethical considerations raised by climate change. Pupils readily take responsibility for their own behaviour and show no tolerance of bullying.
- 3.18 Pupils have very well developed social skills. They readily engage in conversation and work effectively together. Pupils of all ages show strong social awareness both as they walk between lessons and buildings and when interacting with staff and visitors. Pupils demonstrate an excellent ability to work effectively with others, as seen in Year 10 chemistry where pupils worked together enthusiastically to solve a range of questions on atomic structure. The boarding house creates an environment which successfully promotes social living. All boarders who responded to the questionnaire agreed that boarders generally get on well with each other in the house. Pupils are actively involved in the student council and organise school events together, such as the Valentine's Day sale, to raise money for the school prom. Pupils readily interact socially away from the classroom when involved in the rich programme of educational trips and visits to museums and galleries.
- 3.19 Pupils make an excellent, positive contribution to the school community. They have recently been successful in achieving the *Fairtrade FairAware* award for the school by boosting awareness of international trade issues. Older pupils regularly volunteer to mentor younger pupils in different subjects. Pupils contribute to the wider community through pupil led charitable initiatives supporting both local and international charities of their choice.
- 3.20 Pupils demonstrate a very strong appreciation of different cultures and say how much they value being part of a very diverse school population. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that the school encourages them to respect and tolerate other people, and interviews with pupils confirmed this. The global politics noticeboard enables pupils to share political news stories from around the world and many pupils contribute towards this. International pupils who spoke to the inspectors said how much they enjoyed learning Chinese calligraphy. Pupils exhibit widespread respect and admiration for each other's diversity and culture. They openly discuss their own countries and backgrounds, as witnessed in the debating club and in government and politics lessons. Pupils readily exhibit respect for diversity and tolerance and have been involved in a recent campaign to support the LGBT community. The multi-cultural nature of the boarding house creates an atmosphere which strongly promotes cross-cultural understanding. The high quality personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme helps further to actively promote these values. All pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people. Inspection evidence agrees. Governance, leadership and management and all staff successfully promote a highly tolerant multi-cultural ethos and the school very successfully meets its aim for its pupils to be culturally aware.
- 3.21 Pupils show a strong awareness of how to stay safe, including when online. They understand how to be physically healthy and boarders enjoy the choice to go the gym, but not all take advantage of the opportunities available for physical exercise. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to be mentally healthy and say that they feel well supported by the school with mental health related issues. Pupils say this because of the importance the school places on mindfulness in both its tutorial and PSHE programmes.

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 the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended tutorials. Inspectors visited the boarding house, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Dr Tracey Martin	Reporting inspector
Mr Tim Kirk	Compliance team inspector (Former deputy head, HMC school)
Mr James Polansky	Team inspector (Head, IAPS and ISA school)
Mr Martin Reader	Team inspector for boarding (Head, HMC school)