



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

## **BRITISH SCHOOLS OVERSEAS**

### **INSPECTION REPORT ON DULWICH COLLEGE SUZHOU**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Dulwich College Suzhou

Full Name of School	<b>Dulwich College Suzhou</b>			
Address	<b>360# Gangtian Road Suzhou Industrial Park Suzhou 215021 CHINA</b>			
Telephone Number	<b>+86 (512) 6295 9500</b>			
Fax Number	<b>+86 (512) 6295 7540</b>			
Email Address	<b>headmaster@dulwich-suzhou.cn</b>			
Head	<b>Mr David Porritt</b>			
Regional Director	<b>Mr John Todd</b>			
Age Range	<b>2 to 18</b>			
Total Number of Pupils	<b>905</b>			
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (470 boys; 435 girls)</b>			
Numbers by Age	0-2:	<b>13</b>	5-11:	<b>437</b>
	3-5:	<b>75</b>	11-18:	<b>380</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>898</b>		
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>7</b>		
	Full:	<b>5</b>	Weekly:	<b>2</b>
Inspection dates	<b>18 to 21 October 2016</b>			

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI Schedule* for the inspection of British schools overseas. The inspection consists of two parts: a preliminary two-day visit followed by a four-day (team) inspection. This is the school's first ISI inspection.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the British Government for the purpose of inspecting schools in England and overseas. As such, ISI reports to the English Department for Education (DfE) on the extent to which schools meet the relevant Standards for British Schools Overseas and the *ISI Framework* requirements. ISI is also the agency responsible for the inspection of schools in membership of the Associations of the Independent Schools Council (ISC). Accordingly, ISI inspections of British schools overseas are required to:

- help schools to improve the quality and effectiveness of pupils' education and of the care for their welfare;
- provide objective and reliable inspection reports which help schools to recognise and build on their strengths and to identify and remedy any weaknesses;
- inform parents and the wider public of the quality of British schools overseas by placing reports in the public domain;
- report to the DfE the extent to which schools comply with the published Standards for British Schools Overseas;
- where applicable, assure ISC Associations that their member schools maintain the quality of provision expected.

ISI inspection is for the benefit of the pupils in the schools and through public reporting makes the information available to parents, governments and the wider community.

Inspections for British schools overseas follow closely the framework and guidance for independent school inspection in England. The major difference is that schools in England must comply with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which do not apply with legal validity to schools outside the United Kingdom. However, the inspection of overseas schools takes account where possible of compliance with any local requirements and it judges the extent to which the schools comply with the British Government's Standards for British Schools Overseas. The range of these Standards is as follows.

1. The quality of education provided by the school (curriculum, teaching and assessment).
2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff.
5. The premises and accommodation.
6. The provision of information for parents, carers and others.
7. The school's procedures for handling complaints.
8. The quality of provision for boarding.
9. Leadership and management of the school.

**The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:**

- (i) **an exhaustive health and safety audit**
- (ii) **an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features**

- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures**
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment or company law.**

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Dulwich College Suzhou is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils between the ages of 2 to 18. It is one of nine schools operated by Dulwich College Management International in Asia. A board of management is responsible for the strategic development of the college and offers scrutiny and support to the college leadership. The school opened in 2007 and occupies grounds and accommodation in Suzhou Industrial Park to the west of the city of Suzhou. The school's early years building opened in 2010 and the senior school building in 2014. A new headmaster and director of business administration were appointed in August 2016 and a new head of the junior school in August 2015. Around half of the teaching staff are international staff from the United Kingdom and other English speaking countries.
- 1.2 The school aspires to be respected internationally as a community committed to developing individuals who seize and act ethically upon the breadth of opportunity the world presents. It aims to educate the whole child within a safe, secure and stimulating environment whilst emphasising the benefits and responsibilities of working collaboratively and developing an awareness of the natural world and its resources. The school seeks to challenge all pupils to be the best they can be and encourages them to live their lives honestly and with a spirit of respect for themselves and others.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school had 905 pupils, 470 boys and 435 girls. It provides boarding accommodation for seven pupils. The college is divided into three schools. The early years, known as DUCKS, educates 217 children from the age of two to the end of Year 2. The junior school caters for 318 pupils in Years 3 to 6, and the senior school has 370 pupils in Years 7 to 13, of whom 72 are in the sixth form. Most pupils come from professional and business families with at least one parent working in an international company based in China. Because of the nature of such work, there is a high turnover of pupils, and the average length of stay in the school is around three years for pupils in the senior school and less than two years for pupils in DUCKS and the junior school.
- 1.4 The ability profile of pupils varies throughout the school, but is generally above the British national average. Around 5 per cent of pupils have been identified as having special educational needs (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia. All of these pupils receive additional support from the school's learning support department. Around 40 different nationalities are represented in the school and just under 80 per cent of the pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils' competence in English varies widely on entry to the school, and additional support is provided for those who need it.
- 1.5 English National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The school is extremely successful in fulfilling its aims to educate the whole child and to inspire pupils to achieve their very best. Pupils make an excellent start to their education in DUCKS, make very good progress through the junior school and consolidate this with excellent progress in the senior school. This is the result of teaching which is generally excellent, even though, at times in the junior school, it does not always fully stretch the most able pupils or make the most of the excellent facilities to engage pupils in practical work. The school is particularly successful in integrating and providing first-class worthwhile educational experiences for the many pupils who join the school part way through their education or who stay for a relatively short period of time because of parents' work commitments. For those who stay for the latter part of the secondary school, results in IGCSE and International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations have been excellent, improving significantly over the last few years, and the large majority of pupils proceed to their first-choice university in many different countries. The school is also particularly successful in helping many pupils who arrive with little or no command of English to make rapid progress and to cope with the demands of conversing and studying in English. Pupils with SEND also receive excellent support. The curriculum provides a wide-ranging, international education which not only provides pupils with basic skills, but equips them extremely well for further study in other international schools or universities. An extensive extra-curricular programme, visits, residential trips and special occasions provide plenty of interesting learning experiences for pupils throughout the school.
- 2.2 In accordance with its aims, the school is highly successful in developing pupils who respect each other and have a strong awareness of the natural world and its resources. The pupils develop into mature, socially and morally aware young people with high levels of confidence. Older pupils are good role models, especially in the way they lead clubs and activities, and show concern for those less fortunate than themselves. They carry out responsibilities willingly and effectively. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. They develop excellent cultural knowledge and understanding and display tolerance and mutual respect for the many different cultures represented in the school. Excellent pastoral care and the secure, supportive environment throughout the school contribute strongly to the pupils' outstanding personal development and to their welfare, health and safety. The school's safeguarding arrangements are extremely thorough. Regular maintenance of installations and equipment, measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards and qualified first aid provision ensure excellent attention to pupils' health and safety. Boarding arrangements make an excellent contribution to the development of the small number of pupils who use this facility.
- 2.3 Governance provides highly effective oversight of the school, ensuring that its aims are met and that the school's leaders fulfil their responsibilities. It has ensured that the pupils have access to excellent well-managed facilities and learning resources, and that the teaching is supported through the generous provision of well-qualified staff. It ensures that all legal responsibilities are met and pays careful attention to the safeguarding of pupils. Excellent leadership throughout the school ensures clear educational direction, careful analysis of current educational provision, vision for the continued development of the school and highly effective implementation of the school's policies and procedures. Links with parents are excellent. The school does a great deal to keep parents informed about what is happening in the school and their children's progress, and provides many opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school.

**2.(b) Action points**

**(i) Compliance with the Standards for British Schools Overseas**

(The range of the Standards for British Schools Overseas is given in the Preface)

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Standards for British Schools Overseas.

**(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that the teaching in the junior school always provides the most able pupils with a sufficient level of challenge.
2. Make full use of the junior school's excellent specialist facilities to engage pupils in a wider range of first-hand practical learning experiences.
3. Ensure that the excellent understanding boarding staff have of their roles and responsibilities is fully reflected in written guidance and job descriptions.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills**

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills is excellent. The pupils are educated extremely well in line with the school's aims. They are supported and challenged to become the best they can be in all aspects of school life. They are encouraged to understand that learning is 'learnable' and that the process will involve them in working collaboratively and taking risks.
- 3.2 In DUCKS, the children are enthusiastic and happy learners who make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. They are keen to learn both indoors and outdoors, and make good use of the activities provided for them. Those with SEND or EAL make excellent progress because they are supported very well with appropriate support from staff. Children communicate with each other and their teachers with increasing confidence in both Mandarin and English. The youngest children enjoy listening to stories and joining in with songs and actions to music. In Reception, the children identify the initial sounds of words and are beginning to blend letters to make simple words. They enjoy devising their own games, which often involve using their numerical skills and selecting the resources needed. They show high levels of concentration and persevere with a variety of tasks. In Years 1 and 2, pupils consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills extremely well and are fully prepared for their transition to the junior school.
- 3.3 In the junior school, pupils of all abilities are highly motivated to succeed, have exemplary attitudes to learning and display excellent levels of independence and self-motivation. Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, including the school's own data, it is judged to be high, particularly in mathematics. Most pupils, including those with SEND, make excellent progress; those with EAL make rapid progress with English and go on to achieve at similar levels to their colleagues because of the effective support that they receive. Pupils are exceptionally focused and attentive in all activities, and are well organised and productive. Occasionally, the progress of the most able pupils is limited because the tasks they are given provide insufficient challenge.
- 3.4 The pupils in the junior school have excellent skills for learning. They acquire excellent mathematical ability and apply their skills well. For example, pupils in Year 6 placed a series of mixed fractions in order and showed great perseverance to discover the fractions represented in a diagram. The pupils develop excellent speaking and listening skills. During a junior school assembly, for example, they listened attentively as pupils in Year 3 confidently described their highlights from China Week. Standards of reading and writing are excellent. For example, pupils in Year 5 could discuss the process of drafting a piece of writing in great detail. In many cases, pupils are working in English as an additional language, but they quickly learn to write fluently and provide insightful responses to a text. The pupils are encouraged to think about how to learn and develop the ability to work methodically, collaboratively and creatively. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, worked extremely well in collaboration with each other as they designed and built model houses and made bread in preparation for their Pompeii day.
- 3.5 The pupils in the junior school achieve particularly well in music and sport and enjoy participating in music festivals and the school's annual dramatic production. The junior school choir is due to sing alongside the Vienna Boys choir. Many pupils learn to swim at the school and some go on to swim competitively at international school games.

Pupils also compete internationally in football, netball, rugby, athletics and mathematics. The pupils' artwork has been displayed at Suzhou Arts and Cultural Centre. The children are proud of their participation and achievements.

- 3.6 In the senior school, pupils' attainment is excellent as measured both in standardised tests and through the school's own data. Over the past three years, performance in GCSE has been above the English national average, and that in IGCSE and IB examinations has been above the worldwide average. Although comparative statistics are not available for 2016, a score of 45 in IB and four top-in-subject awards for China at GCSE in 2016 are notable examples of year-on-year improvements in the school's results. Pupils make excellent progress in relation to their starting points, including in English for those with EAL; progress is also excellent for those with SEND because of the support they receive, and for the more able because of the level of challenge in lessons. Independence is encouraged and reinforced from the start; the pupils' use of homework diaries is particularly noteworthy in that, from Year 9 onwards, pupils choose how to manage and record the tasks required of them. Through their individual learning plans, pupils in Years 12 and 13 learn how to organise their lives effectively. The overall effect is that pupils display excellent attitudes to learning, have high aspirations, achieve excellent outcomes and are very self-motivated and independent learners. Those who join the school at different times of the year are quickly brought up to speed as a result of the help provided by their teachers and other support staff. Almost all pupils who stay to the end of Year 13 proceed to university in different parts of the world, and the large majority gain entry to their first choice institution. Those who stay for a short time and leave part way through their education nevertheless make excellent progress which prepares them well for the next stage of their education.
- 3.7 The pupils participate willingly and with great enthusiasm in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Of particular note is the number of pupil-led initiatives which further develop independent learning and give excellent opportunities for student leadership. The 'Friendly Faces' project, a pupil-led initiative to welcome new pupils and make them feel valued, is an excellent example of this. Pupils' achievement in sport is both inclusive and of a high standard, with the school both hosting and winning a significant number of tournaments. Pupils demonstrate excellent talent in music and drama, and develop their skills extremely well through opportunities to train and perform with world-class professionals.

**3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)**

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent. The educational programmes in DUCKS cover the requisite areas of learning and provide an excellent range of experiences, which contribute strongly to the development of children's speaking and listening skills and help them with their personal, social and emotional development. A good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities provides children with opportunities to solve problems, create their own play and explore their ideas. The online assessment system and classroom observations help staff to identify the next steps to be taken so that the individual needs of each child are well met. The recently introduced language development programme has helped staff plan opportunities to encourage children to build on the vocabulary, words and sounds they already know, both in English and Mandarin. The curriculum is enhanced with a range of trips out and visiting speakers and through the use of specialist staff for music and physical education (PE).

- 3.9 In the junior and senior schools, pupils encounter a wide range of learning opportunities, fully meeting the school's aim to educate the whole child. There is excellent curricular provision in the areas of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and in aesthetic and creative education. Specialist teaching throughout the school enables pupils to achieve high standards in a range of sports. A comprehensive personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) supports pupils' personal development effectively. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the very large majority of parents indicated that they are satisfied with the range of subjects and areas of experience provided by the school.
- 3.10 Throughout the school, pupils are taught in English, but the dual-language approach in DUCKS and the teaching of Mandarin in the rest of the school provide pupils with a distinctive multi-lingual and multi-cultural experience. Support for pupils with English as an additional language is excellent, and a combination of in-class and withdrawn support is highly effective in equipping pupils with the necessary skills to access the mainstream curriculum.
- 3.11 The school uses a variety of methods to group pupils by ability across the curriculum. These are highly effective and ensure that most pupils receive an appropriate level of support and challenge in their work. However, even though they attain high academic standards, the curriculum for a very small minority of the most able pupils in the junior school does not always provide them with a sufficiently demanding level of challenge. Outside lessons, academic competitions such as the annual competition for elite mathematicians in international schools in Asia, a festival for those gifted in the arts, together with extra-curricular activities such as Matholympics in the junior school, and the Astromagazine Society provide further challenging experiences for particularly able pupils.
- 3.12 The provision for pupils with EAL and those with SEND is excellent resulting in high-performing, articulate and highly motivated students. In their response to the questionnaire, a small minority of parents felt that the school does not provide worthwhile help for pupils with special needs, but inspection evidence does not support this view. The departments supporting pupils with EAL and those with SEND are staffed by highly qualified and enthusiastic teachers who are ably assisted by local teaching assistants who provide excellent support for the Mandarin speakers within the school.
- 3.13 In the junior school, there is an appropriate emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, and pupils also enjoy opportunities to develop their technological skills and their creativity through art, music and drama. Science and humanities are taught through an integrated curriculum designed to enable pupils to make valuable cross-curricular links and to develop independent thinking and problem-solving skills. The junior school science laboratory provides an excellent resource for developing pupils' investigative skills. At present, this and other specialist facilities are under-used, and this restricts the opportunities for pupils to enjoy first-hand practical experiences.
- 3.14 In the senior school, pupils' understanding of the world is enhanced by another modern foreign language introduced in Year 8 and by a global perspectives course in Year 9. Careers days are introduced with appropriate content for each year group. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow the IGCSE programmes of study and, in addition to a common core of English, mathematics and separate sciences, can choose from a very wide range of linguistic, humanities, technological and aesthetic options. In Years 12 and 13, pupils follow the IB and have a wide range of options which can be studied at higher or standard level.

- 3.15 Throughout the school, pupils enjoy many opportunities to work collaboratively, yet they also enjoy taking an independent approach to their learning, making personal choices on how to pursue a topic, carrying out their own research and presenting their work in a range of ways. Pupils make good use of libraries which are well-designed and highly organised facilities with an excellent range of reading material and access to computers to support pupils' learning.
- 3.16 Many areas of the curriculum are enhanced by field trips and visits to places of interest. Speakers and artists are invited into school to stimulate pupils' interest and extend their learning. Pupils thoroughly enjoy China Week, which offers them the opportunity to visit other areas of China, tackle a range of challenging activities and learn more about Chinese culture.
- 3.17 The provision for extra-curricular activities across the school is excellent. In their response to the questionnaire, a small minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the range of activities on offer, but inspection evidence does not support this view. A very wide variety of activities, designed to appeal to different interests and age groups, supports and enriches the academic curriculum. The proportion of pupils who take advantage of these activities is high, and a significant number of pupils attend several activities each week. Physical activities are numerous and represent a diverse range of sports such as football, basketball, netball, ballet and Chinese dance. In the course of the academic year, pupils have many opportunities to showcase their musical and dramatic talents in a variety of concerts, workshops and performances. Members of the Astromagazine Society are some way along the path to becoming the first school pupils outside the USA to send a satellite into space, and have already picked up international awards for their work so far. The ECO council has had a wide-ranging effect on all pupils, raising awareness of environmental issues throughout the school. The pupils' contribution to a local migrant school, raising funds for musical instruments, teaching music and improving their general lifestyle, is outstanding. All three of these activities are student led. Sports are played at a very high standard in competitions against similar schools and also by those who do not aspire to become elite sportsmen and women. The lunchtime busking concerts in the senior school enable large numbers of pupils to perform to great acclaim in front of their very supportive peers leading to enhanced confidence and maturity.
- 3.18 Links with the local community support pupils' personal development, and visits to neighbouring schools and businesses enhance their cultural awareness. Appreciation of those less fortunate than themselves is fostered through links with a local orphanage for children with special needs and pupils' support for local charities.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.19 The contribution of teaching is excellent. The teaching strongly supports the school's aims and is highly effective in promoting pupils' progress.
- 3.20 In DUCKS, enthusiastic staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn. They promote children's learning with planned experiences and activities that are demanding but achievable. Staff know when to intervene and move the children's learning on with targeted questioning, helping them to explore more independently and develop their creativity. They often take into account the particular interests of the group or an individual when planning activities, such as a jet plane investigation in Reception, to ensure that children feel valued and engaged in their learning. Detailed observations are made and recorded, thus tracking children's progress and ensuring that each area of learning is covered and suggestions for the next steps in their

learning are identified. Resources are plentiful, suitably labelled and readily accessible to the children.

- 3.21 In the junior school, there is a strong focus on helping pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of the world by questioning and actively solving problems in accordance with the school's aims. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, to think for themselves and consider how they can apply their skills and knowledge to new situations. Collaborative learning is encouraged in all subjects. Good use is made of pupils' self-assessment and peer-to-peer critique, and time is often built into lessons for pupils to reflect on their progress and how they can improve their learning. This was evident, for example, in PE lessons for pupils in Years 4 and 5 where pupils began the lesson by reflecting on their progress before setting themselves targets and finally assessing their own performance and that of their partner.
- 3.22 In the senior school, most lessons are delivered at a brisk pace, and imaginative and innovative approaches engage and challenge pupils from the start. Pupils are encouraged to work independently, to question and apply reasoning and to make decisions as to how they learn, leading to rapid progress in their understanding. This was most evident, for example, in a design and technology lesson where pupils in Year 10 worked independently on design tasks, yet collaborated with their peers to evaluate their work leading to improvements in design.
- 3.23 Throughout the school, lessons are carefully planned and well-structured with clear learning objectives and a variety of tasks and activities, including individual, group and whole-class work, designed to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. These strategies were successfully employed, for example, in a PSHE lesson where boys and girls in Year 9 were taught in separate groups to explore sensitively how bullying can have a devastating effect, if not addressed. An extremely broad range of resources is used to excellent effect to support pupils' learning and to stimulate interest. Interactive whiteboards are used most effectively to introduce topics and to enable pupils to demonstrate their learning to the class. Increasingly, pupils are using tablet computers for research, and exciting software, such as music and movie-making programs, is used to bring their project work alive and enhance their learning. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and show great sensitivity and skill in their interactions with pupils and in their use of questioning to extend and assess pupils' learning. Every opportunity is taken to reflect on the quality of teaching, and staff benefit from good professional development opportunities and feedback from monitoring visits by members of the school leadership team and their peers.
- 3.24 Marking is highly effective, with feedback focused on guiding pupils on how to improve, whilst the careful use of detailed comments contributes positively to pupils' levels of motivation and self-esteem. Assessment is carried out regularly, and excellent systems are in place to track pupils' progress and provide staff with the information they need to plan effectively for their pupils' needs. Pupils speak highly of the feedback they receive from staff; they know how well they are doing and the steps they need to take to improve.
- 3.25 The collaborative nature of planning for the needs of all pupils throughout the school is exemplary and, as a result, progress is outstanding. There are numerous examples of students entering the school with very little English and then developing into literate and articulate school leaders. This illustrates the impressive accomplishments of these learners within the school and is a reflection of the excellent teaching they receive.

- 3.26 At times, class tasks and homework do not provide sufficient challenge for pupils in the junior school who are particularly able, and this can limit the progress they make. Most pupils, however, are happy with the quantity and quality of homework set.
- 3.27 Pupils speak warmly of their teachers, appreciating the support and encouragement they receive in enabling them to achieve well and make good progress. Mutual respect is evident throughout the school, and the very positive relationships enjoyed by staff and pupils are a key factor in the excellent behaviour and high levels of motivation and application seen in lessons.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent. The school fully meets its aims of educating the whole child, preparing each to live lives honestly with a spirit of respect for themselves and others and with an awareness of the natural world and its resources.
- 4.2 The children's personal development in DUCKS is excellent. The children are happy and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They learn to play well together, frequently offering advice and help to one another. Their behaviour is excellent. They take great pride in being awarded golden children badges and celebrating their achievements in assembly, and this promotes their self-esteem and confidence. They respect each other's differences and are proud to celebrate their cultures and the languages they speak. They show care for the environment as they use the recycling bins and by saving their snack waste to make garden compost. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education by frequent visits to their new classes and by mixing with children in the next stage.
- 4.3 The consistent promotion of the values of the Dulwich College Group permeates all aspects of the school and helps pupils develop intellectual curiosity, self-respect and tolerance for others. In an independent survey in 2015, a very large majority of pupils agreed that they had learned values and lessons from the school which they would carry for a lifetime. Interviews, questionnaire findings and observations carried out in this inspection show that this is still the case.
- 4.4 The spiritual development of pupils is excellent. They demonstrate high levels of self-esteem and confidence in their relationships with each other and with teachers and other members of staff. These relationships are deepened and strengthened through school initiatives, such as when some year groups and their teachers have adventurous off-site study trips. In class, in activities and when relaxing at school, the pupils display maturity and self-awareness, responding thoughtfully in discussions, expressing their own feelings sensitively. They take an active interest in the environment. This is seen through their commitment to recycling and their involvement in eco initiatives, such as 'Eco Warriors' in the senior school, which is one of several student-led sustainability groups, running green gardening projects, and challenging fellow pupils to live more sustainable lives, for example, by curtailing food waste. The Green Tigers in DUCKS and the eco council members in the junior school visit classrooms daily to check on ways of conserving energy, such as turning off the lights and closing the doors.
- 4.5 Pupils show excellent moral awareness and take responsibility for their own actions. They show a clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong. Older pupils are good role models for the younger pupils, especially through the way they lead clubs and activities. The Crescendo Project, for example, founded and led by pupils, helps children at a local school for migrants, and demonstrates pupils' strong empathy for others and their involvement in engaging in this and many other ways to help those less fortunate than themselves. The senior school prefects organise and present regular assemblies on topics of their own choosing, such as resolving differences within a community. Pupils understand that they should treat each other fairly without discrimination: mutual respect is at the core of the community. The pupils understand and endorse the school's anti-bullying policy and are fully aware of adults who can support them if necessary. Older pupils express balanced opinions on

morally controversial issues such as media censorship, identifying circumstances where this might or might not be justified.

- 4.6 The social development of pupils is excellent. The school's insistence on the use of English in all public places in the senior school facilitates social integration. In Years 1 and 2, the dual language speaking and listening approach results in a similar outcome, ensuring all pupils can communicate effectively, especially those new to the school who have little spoken English. Pupils relate well to others in the many different contexts afforded by the school, and were found to be relaxed, positive and articulate in their meetings with the inspectors. Pupils embrace enthusiastically the many opportunities for them to take responsible roles in the school, for example as prefects, representatives on the school councils or as heads of houses. They work well together and with staff, collaboration being identified as one of the personality traits encouraged by the school. For example, in an assembly, pupils in Year 10 and staff celebrated overcoming the challenges they met during China Week together, particularly the arduous six-hour hike up and down steep hillsides in the Tian Mu Shan area.
- 4.7 Pupils enjoy the multi-cultural and international atmosphere of the school, in which they develop excellent cultural knowledge, understanding and appreciation, encompassing the culture and values of the British and Western cultural tradition as well as those from Asia. For example, from Year 1 upwards, all pupils study aspects of life in China and gain understanding of old and new Suzhou, sustainability and the local geography. In the junior school, pupils develop international mindfulness as they are required to sit at a table at lunchtime where at least four people have been born in different countries, with the result that they develop an understanding of different cultural viewpoints and the skill of including everyone in the conversation. Through the international perspectives programme, which helps prepare senior pupils for the IB Diploma, pupils develop an excellent awareness of how to examine personalities and events from different cultural, ethnic and historical viewpoints. The pupils develop deep knowledge of and respect for other cultures through the school's celebration of events of particular significance to different cultural traditions, such as Remembrance Day and Chinese New Year.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent. The school is highly successful in achieving its aims to educate the whole child by challenging pupils to be the best they can be, and by supporting them to develop specific learning dispositions, which enable them to be effective lifelong learners. The excellent pastoral care provided throughout the school and the secure, supportive environment contribute strongly to the outstanding personal development and welfare of pupils of all ages, and from a wide range of nationalities, cultures and educational experiences.
- 4.9 In DUCKS, staff have a very good understanding of their responsibilities to ensure the children's welfare. The warm, caring atmosphere created by staff ensures that the children feel safe and secure and are extremely well supported at school. They readily seek reassurance and guidance from familiar adults. The behaviour policy is implemented well with gentle reminders, resulting in a happy and busy atmosphere, where children benefit fully from all the opportunities provided. Independence is encouraged. Very clear explanations help children understand and manage risk. Routines for personal hygiene are well established, and children are suitably supported by adults when additional help is needed. A strong emphasis is placed on developing a healthy lifestyle with frequent discussions at meal times about what food is healthy and with regular access to the extensive outside areas for physical exercise.

- 4.10 The school has well-defined policies and procedures to guard against bullying and promotes very high standards of behaviour. The few incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with fairly and consistently in line with stated procedures. Often, these situations are dealt with by the pupils' themselves. In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt that some teachers do not always apply school sanctions evenly. However, discussions with a wide range of pupils and observation of lessons throughout the inspection indicate that pupils are treated fairly and consistently. During lessons and around the campus, behaviour is exemplary: pupils are exceptionally polite, helpful and considerate.
- 4.11 Pastoral care is excellent. There is an overarching emphasis on providing effective support for each pupil. Class teachers in DUCKS and the junior school and form tutors in the senior school know their pupils extremely well. Middle leaders take a very active role in overseeing the pastoral care, welfare, discipline and academic performance of pupils. The school listens to the views of pupils and their opinions. For example, in the senior school the school council is exceptionally active, and a 'listening box' is located in each junior school classroom whereby pupils can post questions or concerns. A very small minority of pupils expressed a contrary view. However, the inspection found that pupils are aware of and use the various ways to make their views known, and that these are taken seriously by the school, even though the school may not accede to some of the pupils' requests.
- 4.12 The school counsellor provides pastoral care and support for pupils across the whole school, and offers advice to parents on a number of issues via the school website. Pastoral guidance in both the junior and senior schools, provided through tutor periods, the PSHE curriculum, special events and assemblies, is highly effective and supports pupils' personal development and their contribution to the wider and global community extremely well. Year-group residential visits and events such as 'China Week' enable pupils to forge friendships and build fortitude and perseverance. The PSHE programme is highly effective in preparing pupils with the knowledge and skills for the opportunities and experiences of life. They develop a deep level of responsibility, and become reflective of themselves and the impact of their actions and experiences with others.
- 4.13 Excellent induction arrangements help the many new pupils who join the school at various times throughout the academic year to feel welcome and enable them to settle in quickly. The quality of friendships amongst pupils and their relationships with staff is exceptional.
- 4.14 The school's safeguarding arrangements are extremely thorough and have proper regard for child protection and the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Effective security arrangements ensure that pupils and staff are able to move freely and safely within the school site. A comprehensive safeguarding policy, thorough induction and regular update training ensure that all members of staff are conversant with the school's safeguarding procedures. Safeguarding arrangements are overseen and coordinated by senior members of staff, and prominent posters in many locations throughout the school make clear to both staff and pupils to whom they should turn if they have concerns about a particular pupil or allegations have been made about a member of staff.
- 4.15 The school takes all necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Fire alarm and monitoring systems are regularly serviced by a specialist company. Instructions to staff and pupils are clear, and regular fire drills are held. Health and safety procedures have been strengthened significantly in the light of lessons learnt from an incident which occurred in the previous school year. Regular health and safety

audits and meetings with contractors who provide services to the school ensure that practice is of high quality. Thorough risk assessments are carried out. Accidents are recorded, the results monitored and systems improved as a result.

- 4.16 The school makes excellent provision for pupils who are ill or injured. Pupils on both school sites have access to a full-time nurse who is always available to deal with the health issues and pastoral care of both students and family members. Staff receive up-to-date training in first aid. Personalised support is provided for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 4.17 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through taking regular exercise in their PE lessons and the many sporting extra-curricular activities on offer. Healthy eating habits are encouraged through the provision of well-prepared and well-balanced meals, and pupil representatives have the opportunity to meet with staff and catering providers to discuss any issues to do with catering.
- 4.18 The school's admission and attendance registers are properly maintained.

#### **4.(c) The quality of boarding education**

- 4.19 The quality of boarding education is good. Although at the time of the inspection only seven pupils were resident, the outcomes for boarders at the school are excellent. The pupils confirm that the boarding experience contributes significantly to their educational success and personal development. In interviews, boarders show themselves to be confident, self-reliant individuals. Responses to the boarding questionnaire indicate that almost all boarders enjoy their experience and that it helps them to develop personally. Parental comments show they too are very happy with the quality of boarding provision. Boarding, therefore, plays a valuable part in pupils' education and development, contributing to the school fulfilling its aims of educating the whole person.
- 4.20 Boarders enjoy the advantage of being able to study and complete their homework in the house with access to one or more supervising teachers, who are on hand to offer academic advice. They appreciate the interest taken in their studies and personal development by the house staff. Pupils relate well to each other and have great respect for the house staff, who include five resident and two non-resident adults. Resident staff can be contacted by boarders during the night if necessary. Staff have a good understanding of their roles, but some written guidance and job descriptions lack precision. The school's pastoral and safeguarding policies apply to the boarding house, suitably supplemented by sensible house arrangements for privacy, security and appropriate gender segregation. Supervision, including at night, is better than adequate. Boarders are consulted by the house staff, and they can also raise concerns at the minuted weekly house committee meetings. These meetings have resolved issues such as foul-smelling drains in the house, or gaining an improved range of choice in the breakfast foods provided. The informal family atmosphere of the house encourages easy flow of communication between boarders and house staff.
- 4.21 Boarders take full advantage of access to the wide range of after-school activities available. They also have use of the school's sporting facilities later in the evenings, supervised by a member of the house staff. The house staff also arrange special events at weekends, such as visits to places of interest or to restaurants for shared meals, but these activities are sometimes publicised at short notice. Boarders can be given permission by the house staff to make use of nearby off-site social facilities, such as a well-known coffee bar. Parental permission is required before approval is granted for more adventurous expeditions, such as visits to the centre of Suzhou city. The boarders form a cohesive community, each contributing to its success. They

appreciate the opportunity to dine with house staff, on occasions, in their private quarters.

- 4.22 Boarding accommodation is modern, generous, well equipped and well maintained. Boarders are comfortable and secure. Each boarder has a single room, with en-suite facilities. There are two common rooms, one specifically for female boarders, and a large games area within the house. There are facilities where the boarders can make themselves hot drinks and snacks. Main meals are provided by the school kitchens, and eaten in the house at weekends. The boarding house adjoins the school's medical centre, and medical cover is arranged for the periods when the centre is closed. The house staff are qualified first-aiders. Arrangements are in place should medical assistance be needed in the house on Saturday or Sunday. The boarders have unrestricted communication with their parents, and the house staff also keep in close touch with them.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The board of management provides highly effective oversight of the school in line with its aims and discharges its responsibilities for ensuring the maintenance of high educational standards. Effective and detailed financial planning has resulted in major investment in the school's excellent accommodation which allows all areas of the curriculum to be taught effectively and offers wide-ranging opportunities for pupils of all abilities to flourish and achieve at the highest level. The imaginative, exceptionally well-constructed outdoor learning area for children in DUCKS and the spacious theatre and indoor sports facilities in the senior school demonstrate the board's commitment to providing facilities of the very highest standard. Investment in staffing ensures an extremely favourable ratio of staff to pupils in all areas of the school, resulting in an excellent level of personal attention for all pupils, and especially those who need additional care and support. Resources are plentiful and of good quality.
- 5.2 Through its regional support structure and regular reports from the headmaster and other senior leaders, the board has an excellent insight into the working of the school. It is highly effective in exercising its monitoring role and holding senior staff to account for the standards achieved and the quality of education provided. The wide range of expertise and experience of the board, and of professionals who are brought in to advise, ensures excellent support for the school's leadership. Involvement with other schools from within the Dulwich College Group provides stimulus for growth and improvement, as good practice is identified and shared within the group. The board subjects the school's improvement plans to rigorous scrutiny, but also works closely with the headmaster and director of business administration to ensure leaders are provided with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil the school's strategic goals and bring further improvement. There are thorough procedures for evaluating the work of the headmaster and holding other senior leaders to account.
- 5.3 The board has been instrumental in strengthening the school's procedures for child protection and for improving provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety throughout the school. It ensures there are rigorous procedures for checking the suitability of staff and for maintaining thorough appointment records.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent. The leadership of DUCKS has a clear vision for the continued development of the early years. This is coupled to a strong emphasis on self-evaluation to improve the quality of provision and to implement new ideas and initiatives, which are linked to the school development plan. An effective system for monitoring the planning of the curriculum and assessments ensures that staff receive regular feedback about the quality of their teaching and interactions with the children. Staff are well qualified, and their performance is regularly monitored through a thorough system of supervision which results in the setting of targets and the identification of areas for professional development, so that staff keep up to date with current good practice.
- 5.5 Throughout the school, leadership at all levels provides staff with clear educational direction. There are well-formulated strategic plans to guide the future development of the school. The leadership team works successfully to ensure that the eight guiding statements of the school are embedded in practice. This is reflected in the excellent

quality of education and personal development of the pupils. Pupils were overwhelmingly positive in their opinion that the school is well managed. Although a small minority of parents felt the school is not well managed, inspectors found the leadership and management of the school to be well organised, efficient and effective and to have a clear, strong educational vision.

- 5.6 In the junior school, the use of data analysis has enabled the leadership team to identify clear priorities and work with staff to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Recently, this has led to a strengthening of the teaching of writing. Regular review meetings allow the opportunity to discuss the progress, achievement and well-being of all pupils individually. New and revised systems have been developed to monitor the consistency of teaching, learning and administrative tasks. A restructuring of middle management into strategic teams, driven by the determination of curriculum priorities, has also been completed. Early indicators of the effectiveness of these new initiatives are positive.
- 5.7 In the senior school, the strong team of highly motivated leaders provides clear and effective leadership in aspects such as performance management, staff training and development, assessment, and teaching and learning. Systems are clear and effective, are communicated well to staff, pupils and parents, and are efficiently administered. Teachers know what is required of them and demonstrate a strong commitment to the school's aims. There is a consistency of approach which helps shape the school's success; staff are effective practitioners and embrace change with enthusiasm. There is effective use of data analysis enabling the team to identify clear priorities for the further development of teaching and learning.
- 5.8 The school is successful in appointing, supporting and motivating staff of a high quality. Staff induction is thorough, effective and indicative of the school's caring ethos. Staff are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of the children in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.9 Staff have a positive attitude towards the performance management process, 'Blue Sky', and gave examples of how their teaching has improved as a result of its completion. High-quality internal and externally provided training is given to staff. In addition, the implementation of 'Looking for Learning', a peer review and professional development process encouraging staff collaboration across the entire school, has been welcomed by staff as a tool to develop further the standard of teaching.
- 5.10 School leaders carry out their responsibilities diligently including those for the safeguarding of pupils and for checking the suitability of staff. Extensive checks are carried out before members of staff are appointed. Each check is accurately recorded on a central register, and meticulously organised files provide a detailed record of the recruitment and appointment processes for each member of staff.

#### **5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.11 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. In DUCKS, parents are provided with wide-ranging information about their children's life at school. The detailed, online learning stories, together with written reports and regular consultation evenings, keep parents very well informed about the progress their children make. All children and parents are invited to a family day at the start of the new school year so that they are familiar with their new surroundings before the term starts. Information is also available in the weekly newsletter, daily diaries and in a comprehensive parents' handbook. Parents are invited to join the parent focus group so that they learn more about how children learn at this stage. The school operates an 'open-door' policy, and staff are always available to talk to parents at the start or end of each day or by email

so that any concerns are quickly dealt with. The school's relationships with parents are constructive, and the school amply fulfils its aims of recognising the importance of parents as enduring educators and working in partnership with them.

- 5.12 In the junior and senior schools, parents are actively encouraged to liaise with teaching staff and to play a part in the education of the pupils. A number of 'parent cafes' exist around the school where parents can come together at any given time during the day to meet in comfortable surroundings. Parents are encouraged to share their expertise in the educational setting and help enrich the learning opportunities of the pupils.
- 5.13 A wide range of helpful information is available for parents of current and prospective pupils, and policies and procedures can be downloaded from the school's website. Regular newsletters and email allow for a full exchange of up-to-date information. Published material about the school is well presented and covers all aspects of school life. Welcome events help new families feel a part of the school community. Regular workshops are run to inform parents about learning strategies and topics being covered.
- 5.14 Pupils' academic achievement and progress in their personal development are clearly set out in well-produced and detailed reports which are issued on a regular basis, and reports are supplemented with parent consultations to discuss academic and pastoral matters. A small minority of parents raised concerns about the extent of information regarding their children's progress. Inspection findings, including conversations with parents, do not support this view. Feedback in reports is thorough and plentiful, and targets set for the pupils, especially in the senior school, help parents see what pupils need to do to improve. In the junior school, a new information system is being trialled which issues updates on pupils' progress along with photographs of key events.
- 5.15 The school has a clear and appropriate complaints procedure. A small minority of parents felt the school had not handled their concerns well. However, the inspection found that the school's records and documentation show that concerns are heard promptly and treated with care and consideration in line with stated procedures.
- 5.16 Many opportunities exist for parents to be involved in the school through the parents' association and by attending school events. For example, a parents' choir has been established, as has a football community initiative which offers coaching opportunities for parents, sports leaders and members of the wider community. Parents appreciate the welcome they receive in the school and feel involved in the school community.

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and staff and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with a member of the board of management, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Graham Sims	Reporting inspector
Mrs Joy Gatenby	Team Inspector (Former head, GSA school, UK)
Mr Stephen Gray	Team Inspector (Former director of studies, HMC school, UK)
Dr Christopher Greenfield	Team Inspector (Head, COBIS school, Georgia)
Miss Penelope Kirk	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school, UK)
Mr Edward Moore	Team Inspector (Deputy head, HMC school, Brunei)
Mr Stephen Moruzzi	Team Inspector (Deputy head, HMC school, Indonesia)
Mr Kevin Riley	Team Inspector (Former head, HMC school, UK)
Miss Karen Tuckwell	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school, France)
Mrs Ros Ford	Early Years Team Inspector (Former head of pre-prep, IAPS school, UK)