



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**CLIFTON COLLEGE  
INTERIM INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Clifton College

Full Name of College	<b>Clifton College</b>		
DfE Number	<b>801/6000</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>311735</b>		
Address	<b>Clifton College 32 College Road Clifton Bristol BS8 3JH</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01173 157000</b>		
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Email Address	<b>info@clifton-college.avon.sch.uk</b>		
Headmaster	<b>Mr Mark Moore</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Tim Ross</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 19</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>1332</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (834 boys; 498 girls;)</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): <b>142</b>		
	5-11:	<b>359</b>	11-18: <b>831</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>1016</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding:
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>316</b>	
	Full:	<b>316</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Dr Wendy Bowring</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>15 Mar 2011 to 16 Mar 2011</b>		

## PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in March 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced in November 2009 for the upper school and January 2010 for the preparatory school by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding 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 law.

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills	2
The quality of the pupils' personal development	3
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	4
<b>3 ACTION POINTS</b>	<b>6</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	6
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	6
<b>4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	<b>7</b>
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	8
<b>INSPECTION EVIDENCE</b>	<b>9</b>

## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Clifton College is an independent day and boarding school for boys and girls aged from three to eighteen years. Three schools constitute the college: Butcombe (for pupils aged 3 to 8), which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); the preparatory school (for pupils aged 8 to 13); and the upper school (for pupils aged 13 to 18). These share common aspirations and approaches, many facilities and a common governing body, but have distinctive approaches to the education of pupils of different ages. There are currently 1332 pupils of whom 316 are boarders. The college opened in 1862, to educate boys, and became co-educational in 1987. It is a Christian foundation but welcomes pupils of all faiths or none. It has historically included provision for pupils of Jewish faith and the buildings include a synagogue.
- 1.2 The school is based around Victorian buildings in a suburb of Bristol, with boarding accommodated in outlying town houses, and sports facilities across the River Avon. Since the last inspection in 2007, an executive management structure comprising the heads of all three schools and the bursar has been introduced, together with increased resources for information and communication technology (ICT), music, dance, drama and sports, and refurbishment of boarding and day houses. The college is governed by a council appointed by the 150-strong college governors. The chairman was elected in 2010.
- 1.3 The school aims include the nurturing of the spiritual life of each person; the enabling of pupils to appreciate cultural, religious and social diversity; and the teaching of responsible moral choices in private and public life, alongside academic excellence for all, together with intellectual passion and curiosity. It aims to foster an appreciation of music, art, design, drama and literature together with physical fitness and competitive games. It hopes to promote a culture of honesty, trust and respect within a happy and homely context, encouraging pupils and staff to grow emotionally and learn to live together co-operatively.
- 1.4 Pupils are offered places in Butcombe after informal assessment, and at the preparatory school on the basis of potential, informed by standardised tests. Nearly all pupils proceed from the preparatory to the upper school, with about a third of the Year 9 intake coming from other preparatory schools, selected by testing. Just under a third of sixth-form pupils are new to the school, most joining from other independent schools, or from overseas. The average ability of pupils in all three schools is above the national average with tests at age eleven showing a quarter of pupils to be of far above average ability. The pupils' abilities in the sixth form are slightly above the national average. All year groups demonstrate a wide range of abilities.
- 1.5 Most pupils come from Bristol and the surrounding counties. One quarter of pupils in the upper school come from overseas, and a tenth in the preparatory school, drawn from thirty-five different countries. Pupils come mainly from professional households. There are 151 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), 70 of whom receive additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 232 pupils who have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 173 receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### **The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills**

- 2.1 The pupils' overall achievement is excellent. The school meets with considerable success its aim to ensure academic excellence for all. In all three schools, pupils of all abilities and ages, including those with LDD, achieve consistently well in all subject areas in response to good, often excellent teaching and a stimulating curriculum. Pupils with EAL play an active role in most lessons. The achievement of more able pupils, and those with particular talents, is consistently good, strengthened by the school's provision. Pupils in both the preparatory and upper schools achieve exceptionally high standards of musical performance, and highly developed drawing skills are a distinctive feature of their achievement in art.
- 2.2 Pupils develop good knowledge, skills and understanding, including in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). They are highly articulate. Sixth formers articulated their opinions and discussed ideas confidently, using good contextual knowledge to inform a debate on Munich. Literacy skills are well developed, and numeracy and mathematical skills are strong. Knowledge and understanding of science are consistently good. Pupils regularly achieve national representative honours in sports; teams enjoy regular success in national competitions including tennis in the preparatory school and cricket, real tennis and golf in the upper school. This is replicated in national engineering, mathematics and science competitions. Pupils regularly gain places in national performing groups in music and drama.
- 2.3 The following analysis of examination attainment uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009, the most recent three-year period for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at age eleven have been above the national average for maintained primary schools. Results at both GCSE and A level have been above the national average for maintained schools and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. They show a year on year improvement which is reflected in the 2010 results where, in GCSE, 62% of pupils achieved A\* or A grades, and at A level, 80% of pupils gained grades at A\*, A or B. Many pupils regularly achieve places at universities with rigorous entry requirements. This level of achievement and examination attainment, together with the consistently good teaching observed, indicate that pupils make excellent progress relative to pupils of similar ability, and this is supported by standardised measures of progress over time.
- 2.4 Pupils show good, often excellent attitudes to learning. They respond well to challenges in class and gain confidence thereby. Pupils work hard, whether in class or engaged in activities, throughout a long school day showing notable resilience. Occasionally, pupils become distracted when teaching lacks stimulus. They work together effectively and respond well when given the chance to work independently.
- 2.5 A significant contribution to the pupils' achievement is made by the excellent quality of the curriculum in all three schools. Butcombe, with a strong emphasis on the personal development of pupils, and distinctive features such as regular learning experiences in a woodland setting, lays the ground for a wide range of experiences in the preparatory school. Here, frequent teaching from subject specialists provides experience in depth for pupils while ensuring a due focus on core skills. On entry to

the upper school pupils are ready to move forward to make choices from a wide range of options at GCSE and an extensive programme of A-level subjects. At all ages, consistent attention to the pupils' personal development and a rigorous sporting programme, combined with excellent creative opportunities enable the development of a wide range of skills and interests to suit all tastes. The curricular provision is enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Some are organised within designated times, such as the combined cadet force and community service; others provide imaginative choices for the pupils' free time, such as yoga, a puzzle club and rock bands.

- 2.6 Good, often excellent teaching, consistently excellent in Butcombe, ensures pupils are well placed to make the most of the school's provision. Teaching is effectively planned, and most demonstrates high expectations of pupils. It often includes varied activities and good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. These are supported by a wide range of resources, including plentiful ICT and excellent library provision. Oral feedback in lessons includes helpful advice on how to improve, and this is backed up in some teaching by encouragement for pupils to assess each other's work. Some marking provides good targets for future achievement, but this is not yet consistent across all subject areas. The school has developed its use of assessment data to good effect, enabling pupils to set long-term targets for themselves and staff to monitor their progress.

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

- 2.7 The pupils' excellent personal development is testimony to the school's emphasis on developing confidence in the individual, and its aims to nurture spiritual awareness, the appreciation of cultural, religious and social diversity and the development of responsible moral choices. All are met to an outstanding degree. In chapel, upper school pupils respond intuitively to opportunities to reflect on the misfortunes of others. Pupils in Butcombe treasure exhibits from their woodland experiences. Older pupils value the spiritual challenge that the chapel and synagogue provide, whether they practise a faith or not, and express interest in the faith practices of others. They show strong self-esteem in their confident participation in diverse activities. Pupils develop high levels of moral awareness, accepting codes of behaviour and their implications. The development of a college-wide ecological committee demonstrates the seriousness with which such issues are regarded.
- 2.8 The pupils' open attitude to visitors and their lively, but thoughtful behaviour show the excellent social development which is the fruit of the school's excellent programme to enhance their personal development. The youngest pupils show care and courtesy for each other when lining up to go to lunch. The house system in both the preparatory and upper schools provides opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, whether running charitable stalls, representing the house in competitions and quizzes, or in offices such as Praepostors (prefects) or house captains. Pupils present assemblies with natural flair and humour, providing a strong lead for their peers in supporting charitable work. They develop strong cultural awareness in response to outstanding opportunities, such as that for a large group of preparatory school pupils to experience life in Kenya, and the Russian society in the upper school. The multi-cultural mix of the school community results in a natural tolerance, born of the pupils' support for one another, regardless of cultural background. Excellent opportunities to develop an awareness of Western art and language cultures, such as the foreign film club and regular art trips and concert-giving, including for the youngest pupils, enable all to develop good

understanding. Enthusiasm for drama results in widespread participation in house plays and school productions.

- 2.9 These very high levels of personal development are supported by outstanding pastoral care and excellent arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Pupils of all ages feel well cared for and respond by showing high levels of concern for one another. Pupils acknowledge the success of both boarding and day house staff, tutors, and other figures, such as medical staff, in providing care as a strength of the school. Parents express high satisfaction with the provision for pastoral care. Highly successful procedures are in place for promoting good behaviour. The school has excellent arrangements to safeguard pupils, including boarders, and these are implemented highly effectively, with appropriate training for staff in place. It has excellent measures to guard against bullying and pupils are confident that any such issues occur rarely. Planning for access for those with physical or learning needs is good. Attendance and admission registers are kept methodically. Excellent arrangements exist for pupils who are unwell. Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are strong. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle well and encourages pupils to participate in sporting activities.
- 2.10 The boarding ethos is the predominant element of the experience of all older pupils at the school, whether boarding or day. Saturday lessons, designated chapel services for all on some Sundays, and the provision of activities for all older pupils throughout the school day mean that the boarding experience is fully integrated into life at the school. This gives boarders extensive opportunities to develop their interests in the evenings and at weekends, making full use of the school's excellent facilities in areas such as music, drama and sport. Relationships in boarding are the central point of the pupils' lives, whether with fellow boarders or with house staff and they are fruitful and secure. A variety of accommodation in town houses gives individual houses particular character and this is also extended to provide bases for day pupils. A planned programme of development of such accommodation ensures continual focus on improvement.

### **The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management**

- 2.11 Excellent governance gives consistent support to the school's provision for the pupils' academic and personal development. It provides effective oversight of those areas where it has legal responsibilities. Council members visit the school regularly and meet staff, both to receive and exchange information about the school, and socially. They are well informed about senior managers' methods and the focus of their planning. Particularly effective support has been given to recent developments to achieve closer integration of the three schools. Highly effective, confident financial support enables the school to plan imaginatively for the future. The governing council includes a wide range of expertise across different fields. It currently has no figure with focused expertise relating to the education of children in the EYFS, but staff in Butcombe feel well supported. Throughout the college, council members ensure that resources and staffing are plentiful and well matched to each school's needs.
- 2.12 Strong leadership, and excellent management overall, ensure that the college is forward looking and well placed to meet its aims. Senior leaders have a clear vision of the school that they feel best suits the needs of pupils. They show energy and clarity of purpose in pursuing it, with great success, as demonstrated by the pupils' successful academic progress and excellent personal development.

- 2.13 Highly effective self-evaluation is a hallmark of the school's senior management. This results in well-focussed policy making and strong management structures. Since the previous inspection this has had a particularly significant impact on bringing the three schools closer together, to the benefit of the pupils' progression through the different curricula, the strengthening of the school's ethos, and co-ordinated development planning. Pastoral management is highly successful in implementing policy to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Initiatives to develop teaching and learning have achieved much success, although the monitoring of some policy at middle management level, particularly that for marking, is not yet consistent. Development planning is ambitious, carefully considered and shared well with staff. A regular system of staff appraisal identifies appropriate areas for professional development and is well focused on benefits to pupils. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and governors to work with children, and their recording, are carried out extremely efficiently and diligently. The school community embraces a large number of secretarial, administrative and other non-teaching staff, who play key roles in supporting pupils.
- 2.14 The quality of the school's links with parents is excellent. The school has a clear concept of how it feels constructive relationships with parents benefit the pupils' academic progress and personal development. Parents of the youngest age children have frequent daily contact with senior and classroom staff and regular contact continues through the preparatory school. It is then encouraged in the upper school through attendance at events, sports fixtures and other appropriate opportunities for parents to come into school. Some parents, in response to pre-inspection questionnaires, felt they received limited encouragement to be involved in the school's life and work, but inspectors found no evidence to support this view. Methods of communication are good and the school provides all the required information to parents of pupils and prospective pupils through its website and other materials.
- 2.15 Parents show strong satisfaction with the school's provision, particularly for the curriculum and extra-curricular provision, for the pastoral care given to pupils and the school's promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views, and this is confirmed by inspection findings.
- 2.16 Parents receive regular information about their children's work and progress through thorough and informative reports. An effective complaints procedure is in place and is operated appropriately, although it has not needed to be used recently. Parental concerns are dealt with sensitively, reasonably and promptly.

### **3. ACTION POINTS**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

#### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the quality of marking and its monitoring is consistent across all teaching in the preparatory and upper schools.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.1 This outstanding setting successfully achieves its aim to deliver a well-balanced, interesting and challenging curriculum in a happy, purposeful learning environment. Children benefit greatly from well-qualified, caring staff who have developed strong links with parents and families. Children make rapid progress, showing high levels of independence in their learning. Staff recognise the uniqueness of each child and meet their individual needs. The EYFS is an important part of the school community and enjoys access to the school's many facilities. Overall, the setting is very well placed to sustain the current high standards of provision.

### **4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.2 Leadership and management within the EYFS are outstanding. Exemplary recruitment procedures, the consistent implementation of comprehensive policies, rigorous risk assessments and excellent procedures for supporting children with LDD ensure the safeguarding of children and equality of opportunity. Partnership with parents, who express a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the provision, is excellent. Regular reports and information evenings keep parents very well informed about their children's progress. Good relationships with the local agency, have had a positive impact on staff awareness of recent EYFS developments. A comprehensive staff appraisal system and regular staff meetings identify priorities for future development. A detailed development plan, to which all staff contribute, sets out clear, achievable targets for continuous improvement. Excellent use is made of resources, including training, to meet the needs of children.

### **4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

4.3 The quality of the EYFS provision is outstanding. Children's learning is exceptionally well supported by highly stimulating, well-resourced environments, both inside and outside. There is an excellent balance of adult-led and child-initiated activity and staff work hard to provide children with as much free-flow access to the outside area as they can. Specialist teaching in physical education, music, French, ICT and ballet, and the development of a woodland environment, greatly enhance children's experiences. Regular, high quality observations, thoughtfully evaluated, are used in planning which expertly combines individual children's interests with whole class topics. Effective assessment of learning allows staff to track the children's development and carefully match provision to individual needs. Inspirational teaching and expert, open questioning, encourage children to think for themselves. Children's health, safety and well-being are significantly enhanced by the robust and consistent implementation of policies. Warm, caring relationships between both staff and children, and between the children themselves are a real strength of the EYFS.

#### **4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 4.4 Outcomes for children, including those with LDD and EAL, are outstanding with most children working consistently above the Early Learning Goals by the age of five. Children are happy, enthusiastic, confident learners who enjoy coming to school and respond well to the high expectations of their teachers. They develop excellent social skills, form strong friendships, play cooperatively and respect the ideas of others. Children have excellent communication skills and become confident in the use of ICT using computers and other technology independently. They use mathematical concepts as part of daily routines and develop excellent early literacy skills, instinctively using emergent writing in role-play activities. Children eat very well at lunchtime and understand the importance of eating vegetables and fruit to stay healthy. They have a positive attitude towards physical activity, making full use of the excellent outdoor play facilities.

**Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

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

### **Inspectors**

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Valerie Clark	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Pam Simmonds	Head, ISA School
Mr John Vick	Head, HMC School
Mr Chris Manville	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Diane Kimber	Early Years Team Inspector (Head of EYFS, HMC School)