

School inspection report

17 to 19 October 2023

Dame Allan's Senior Schools

Fowberry Crescent

Fenham

Newcastle-upon Tyne

NE4 9YJ

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

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders and managers, together with governors, are knowledgeable about their responsibilities and duties to safeguard pupils and actively promote their wellbeing. They have put in place plans to further the school's aims, with a strong focus on the care provided for individual pupils and the active promotion of their mental health. This enables pupils to achieve high academic results and to discover and develop their interests and talents.
2. Leaders provide high-quality education, training and recreation opportunities for pupils. As a result, pupils' attainment in public examinations is well above average. A challenging broad curriculum, enhanced by a wide range of co-curricular activities and extensive opportunities in sports, promote pupils' health and emotional wellbeing. Pupils participate enthusiastically in sporting activities, are proud to represent their school, and many are highly successful.
3. Teaching is usually of a high standard, which enables pupils to make good progress. However, some teaching is less effective in ensuring pupils' individual needs are met. This is because it fails to engage pupils and so the progress of some pupils in those lessons is not as rapid. Many subject leaders monitor the quality of lessons closely, to see when individual pupils may be falling behind. They then intervene promptly to ensure teachers provide support or greater challenge for pupils. Some leaders do not look out for uneven progress in the same way. Pupils make good progress overall but for some this progress is uneven.
4. Leaders have processes in place to promote pupils' physical and mental health and their emotional wellbeing. Pupils appreciate and benefit from the care staff give them. Leaders review this provision on a regular basis and are responsive to pupils' views. For example, they have appointed school counsellors to support pupils' emotional wellbeing and pupils now enjoy an area for quiet reflection.
5. Most pupils behave well, but some poor behaviour goes unnoticed and unchallenged. Leaders are considering how best to ensure their high expectations for behaviour are more fully understood by pupils. There is a lack of cohesion in the monitoring of behaviour by middle and senior leaders.
6. Leaders have established suitable arrangements for health and safety and implement the school's policy effectively. However, at the start of the inspection leaders clarified the roles and responsibilities of those with oversight of health and safety matters. Leaders are alert to possible risks in all areas of the school's provision and ensure that suitable risk assessments are in place, where appropriate. Leaders take action to reduce the risk from fire. Trained first aiders attend to pupils when they are injured or unwell.
7. Leaders provide well for pupils' social and economic education and their contribution to society. An extensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme supports the school's aims and ethos. Strong, personalised and successful careers advice prepares pupils well for the next stage in their lives. Pupils make effective contributions to their school and to the wider community.
8. Safeguarding is effective and follows the latest statutory guidance. Staff are trained and training is kept up to date. Leaders keep suitable records of safeguarding, behaviour and bullying issues and concerns. They ensure that prompt action is taken when concerns are identified and liaise with external agencies as appropriate.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

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

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- clarify the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers to monitor and evaluate key aspects of the school's provision, including health and safety processes and behaviour management so that policies are implemented well
- ensure the school's behaviour policy is implemented by all adults consistently so that the behaviour of a minority of pupils improves
- ensure that teaching engages the interest of pupils and meets their needs so that inconsistencies in pupils' progress are addressed.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders successfully ensure that the school's aims are fulfilled and that the ethos, which reflects its Anglican foundation, provides a positive atmosphere for learning. They promote pupils' achievement, resulting in their high attainment in public examinations. Pupils are always expected to strive for their best, and to recognise setbacks as opportunities to reflect and learn. Leaders have drawn up a series of well-considered plans at both strategic and operational level which cover all aspects of the school's work. As a result of this planning, pupils now benefit from improved facilities for science and technology teaching and learning, for sport and for the promotion of pupils' wellbeing. Additional leadership posts have strengthened the management of pastoral care. Leaders' plans carefully consider any associated risks and unintended consequences.
10. Governors hold the school to account through a series of regular committee and board meetings which monitor and evaluate the work of the school. This leads to change, such as listening to pupils more and acting on their views. For example, in updating the content of the curriculum for personal, social, health and relationship education, leaders considered the views of pupils. Leaders fulfil their responsibilities and duties effectively. They understand their duty to promote pupils' wellbeing. Leaders prioritise this duty, alongside educational outcomes, and have developed effective procedures to promote pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. For the most part they implement this duty successfully and continue to review where they could improve, for example in the management of pupils' behaviour.
11. Leaders regularly monitor and evaluate the overall implementation of their policies and plans, promoting continuous improvement. However, at times, day-to-day management and oversight of some aspects of school life are less secure because of unclear roles and responsibilities. At the start of the inspection, a small number of health and safety related matters relating to onsite building work did not reflect the school's policy. Leaders promptly rectified these points. Whilst leaders identify and mitigate most of the risks associated with the school's work, the assessment of risk in relation to pupils' behaviour has been less carefully considered. The behaviour of some pupils at times adversely affects the wellbeing of others.
12. Leaders ensure that appropriate information is made available to parents on the school's website. Leaders and staff are readily available to parents and deal with their concerns or complaints promptly and carefully.
13. Leaders have provided a broad range of activities and a suitably challenging curriculum for pupils, which enable them to thrive and to achieve highly positive outcomes. In their survey responses, pupils say that they are happy in school and keen to do well. Their public examination results reflect this. GCSE results are well above the average, and at A level they are significantly above the average.
14. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and ensures that teaching does not discriminate against any pupil groups. The school has analysed and reviewed its decision to educate male and female pupils separately between the ages of 11 and 16. They have considered any unintended consequences of this decision and ensured that both sexes are treated equally and that they receive the same range, standard and quality of education.
15. Leaders actively seek the views of pupils to inform their planning. They respond to the many external influences that might impact pupils, such as from social and other media. For example,

leaders have enhanced the school's emphasis on the development of good mental health. As a result, pupils have many sources of support and advice and can access quiet areas in school for rest and relaxation. Pupils are positive about the care they receive.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. Teachers have specialist subject knowledge and skills and draw upon a broad range of teaching methods, which motivate pupils to learn and ensure they make good progress. Teachers identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and plan teaching and learning well to meet their needs. Teachers adapt work to help remove barriers to pupils' learning, or supplement learning with specialist support. This ensures that pupils who have SEND achieve in line with their peers.
18. The curriculum is offered equally to both sexes. Teachers adapt their methodology to suit the different teaching approaches pupils need to flourish. The school has balanced the teaching of the pupils separately from ages 11 to 16, with a good number of opportunities when they can be together. For example, for many joint activities in music, adventure training and the arts. Pupils eat together at lunchtime and for recreational times. These arrangements promote pupils' social skills and prepare them well for an integrated sixth form and for life beyond school. Leaders continue to reflect on how best to ensure that the school's expectations of the behaviour are clear to all pupils.
19. Most teaching enables pupils to achieve good outcomes in their subjects. However, not all teaching is successful in engaging pupils' interest. and at times this causes inattentiveness and slows progress. Leaders are aware of this and have started to address the inconsistency in the quality of teaching. For example, they have facilitated the exchange of good practice across subjects, whereby teachers observe one another or explain their successful teaching strategies as part of staff training. This is having a positive impact, so that pupils are becoming more successful day to day.
20. The curriculum is suitably planned, and appropriate schemes of work, activities and assessments are in place. The curriculum is broad, balanced, and challenging. Pupils follow many examination courses based on a wide choice of subjects including three sciences and modern foreign languages, whilst also participating extensively in the co-curricular activity programme of sports, the arts, and clubs. This enables pupils to contribute extensively to their school community. The imaginative programme of extra-curricular activities appeals to a broad range of interests and helps to develop a wide range of skills, including building confidence and co-operative working habits. Sport and music feature highly, for example, pupils demonstrate their well-developed musical skills when playing in the orchestra and in other ensembles; choral singing in the cathedral; and producing musical theatre performances. These many joint activities help to develop pupils' social skills prior to entering the sixth form and for future adult life.
21. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and acquire knowledge and skills rapidly. When teaching is stimulating and interactive pupils respond with keen interest, especially when given opportunities to explore their own ideas. Sixth-form pupils are especially confident and curious learners. For example, In English lessons, as they gain technical expertise in using the correct technology for linguistics and in applying their decoding skills effectively to an animated lesson on gibberish and meaning.
22. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a routine tool for learning is commonplace in many subjects. Pupils are competent users of technology, applying these skills to good effect in many aspects of their learning. Pupils use technology to research areas of interest, such as in lower school science, working with an industry-based scheme to develop initiative in engineering through design projects with an environmental focus. The school's facilities enable

many such practically based science and engineering lessons to take place, stimulating pupils' interest and creative abilities. Pupils' mathematical skills are particularly well developed and they apply them well to a range of contexts.

23. The curriculum for physical education and sport is broad and balanced, providing pupils with a diverse range of aesthetic, athletic, recreational, and elite performance activities that successfully develop their health and skills. Pupils are justifiably proud of their achievements in team sports.
24. Pupils are skilled communicators. In English, they respond effectively to probing questions, either orally or by using an interactive digital platform. At GCSE level, pupils show confidence and maturity when writing and analysing. In drama, their speaking and performance skills further support their developing confidence.
25. Leaders effectively track pupils' progress, informing leaders when interventions are required. Additional support is available through various routes, including subject clinics, and programmes in school that develop high ambition and awareness of the essential criteria for success. These programmes increase pupils' motivation and enable them to take responsibility for directing their own learning.
26. Good quality teaching in most subjects is reflected in their positive attainment at A level. Their overall A level attainment is above average. Attainment at GCSE is well above average.

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

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

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

28. Leaders' have considered how to ensure that pupils' social skills are developed well. They ensure that all pupils have opportunities to work and socialise together in school. Pupils enjoy opportunities to meet for social activities and when attending organised activities in the co-curricular programme, where they pursue their talents and interests. Pupils rightly comment on how this helps to prepare them for life beyond school. Pupils receive high-quality encouragement, care and support from pastoral staff, nourishing very positive relationships between pupils and staff which are based on trust. The 'Big Choir' brings pupils and staff together to rehearse jointly on a regular basis.
29. Leaders have identified the need to enhance the school's provision to meet the emotional wellbeing needs of young people in today's world. They have increased staffing and leadership to help equip pupils to cope with the problems they may face, or any pressures they perceive in an ever-changing society. Pupils benefit from the support offered by staff with counselling expertise, and they appreciate the comfort they experience from spending time with the school's therapy dogs. Sixth-form pupils develop empathy, patience and wisdom through their training and work as peer mentors to support younger pupils, whom they help in reaching decisions about their education and personal lives.
30. Pupils have many channels for expressing their views, including frequent surveys and membership of the school council. Pupils comment that leaders are increasingly listening to their views. For example, in response to the suggestion from younger pupils, leaders created the Snug as a place for quiet reflection, supported by staff who support pupils' emotional wellbeing. This has been well received by pupils, who now have a place they can retreat to when they need to be alone.
31. An appropriate and well-planned PSHE programme, which incorporates relationships and sex education is taught in an age-appropriate and relevant way. The programme reflects the school's aims and values and encourages pupils to be respectful and tolerant. The programme is highly responsive to the evolving needs of the pupils. Governors and subject leaders reviewed the programme for PSHE and relationships and sex education for older pupils to include more prominent consideration of the issues of sexual harassment and of what consent means in the lives of young people.
32. Teachers make arrangements to alleviate any stress pupils might be feeling, including those who have numerous commitments. They allow time for pupils to catch up with their work if necessary. This enables pupils to do their best in all areas of school life.
33. The behaviour policy specifies suitable sanctions and reward systems to promote good behaviour, but the policy is not always implemented effectively. Most pupils behave well, showing respect and consideration for one another. However, pupils' behaviour when moving around school is sometimes noisy and disorderly, and occasionally in lessons there is inattentiveness leading to poor behaviour. Staff do not always sufficiently challenge this poor behaviour.
34. Supervision of pupils is generally effective, but some inappropriate behaviour, for example in the corridors, goes unchallenged. Pupils usually bring such matters to the school's attention and are confident this will be followed up. Occasional inappropriate racist and homophobic comments are

recorded appropriately and dealt with effectively. School leaders are committed to ensuring this area of school life remains a focus for development.

35. Governors are committed to securing further improvements. Leaders have begun to consider how they might ensure better behaviour, for example by raising their expectations of the behaviour of all pupils and by ensuring that these are better understood by pupils. Leaders agree that they need to be more alert to the nuances of pupils' behaviour.
36. The school has a suitable policy to prevent bullying. Staff and pupils receive appropriate, regular training in understanding and implementing the policy, including to consider the risks posed by the internet and social media. Any instances identified are managed appropriately and advice is sought promptly from external agencies when required.
37. Admission and attendance registers are kept appropriately.
38. Premises and accommodation are maintained to a suitable standard to support pupils' education and care. There are appropriate arrangements and procedures for health and safety, but there is sometimes a lack of clarity regarding areas of responsibility. A few matters brought to the school's attention at the start of the inspection were promptly rectified. The school complies with the fire regulations, and suitable arrangements are in place for first aid and medical care.

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

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

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

40. Leaders and staff prepare pupils well for the next stages in their education and lives. Pupils and parents appreciate, and benefit from, the highly personalised careers provision. Nearly all pupils progress on to their first-choice higher education courses at a range of institutions and universities. Pupils apply their knowledge and skills in mathematics to real-life contexts which develops their understanding of how money and finance work.
41. Through both curriculum and enrichment activities, including overseas study visits, pupils learn to appreciate and respect other cultures. Pupils are interested in learning about the world around them and are aware and tolerant of cultural differences. For example, they were highly engaged when they debated unconscious bias. Pupils show respect for the law and democracy, and they acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England. There is appropriate consideration of fundamental British values in the PSHE programme. This helps to prepare pupils well for life in British society.
42. The well-designed school curriculum helps to develop pupils' self-esteem, responsibility and resilience. For example, in drama, pupils are encouraged to develop co-operative behaviour when faced with adversity. In philosophy, independent supported learning gives pupils who have SEND a sense of achievement as they apply their learning to their own life path. Trips and visits promote pupils' physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing and social skills through exposure to the wider world.
43. Pupils are enthusiastically involved in voluntary charity work in school, the wider community and further afield, for example with environmental and conservation projects in Africa. Some sixth-form pupils devote an afternoon each week to a range of activities, which include community-based projects, for instance helping the elderly and helping with a national advice charity. Pupils' empathy and understanding are enhanced through this work, and they broaden their awareness of the local community, other aspects of life and of a range of cultures. At the same time, such opportunities develop their initiative and organisational skills.
44. Younger pupils learn about service by raising funds for charity and participating in activities such as the Combined Cadet Force and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE). Pupils recognise that these opportunities develop their self-confidence, resilience and leadership skills.
45. Pupils develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally because of the many opportunities to explore these aspects. These are underpinned by the school's Anglican foundation which welcomes pupils of all, some, or no faith, and which builds upon the belief of common values.
46. Pupils across the school bring a strong sense of collegiality and shared purpose to their work. They work co-operatively with others in lessons and with evident enthusiasm in the many extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, music and theatre. They contribute actively to the broader life of the school. Through the work of the school council, pupils gain an understanding about the principles and processes of democracy.

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

47. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

48. Appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place which promote the welfare of pupils and are in line with the latest statutory guidance. An appropriate written policy underpins the school's arrangements. It is clear and helpful to staff. Leaders accord a high priority to establishing a culture in school where pupils feel safe, and regular surveys ascertain pupils' views on aspects of school life. Leaders draw on these views to inform their plans for the school.
49. Leaders and designated safeguarding governors monitor the implementation of safeguarding procedures through regular visits, checks of safeguarding records and checks of the recruitment processes to ensure the suitability of adults working in the school. All adults working in the school are listed on the record of appointments and have been checked for their suitability to work with children. Governors conduct an annual audit and review of safeguarding to ensure that procedures are appropriate and effective.
50. Leaders ensure that staff and volunteers receive suitable training, which is regularly updated, and includes information about keeping pupils safe online. Staff understand the important part they play in safeguarding pupils. Pastoral staff and leaders work together effectively to share and manage any concerns that arise.
51. The safeguarding team is led by an overall director of pupils' wellbeing, a new position created to reflect the importance the school places on safeguarding. This position is supported by suitably trained designated safeguarding leads for each section of the school. An effective system for recording information is in place. During the inspection, leaders recognised the need to clarify some potential ambiguity regarding the roles and responsibilities of additional safeguarding staff and made this clearer in their policy.
52. The team works together effectively, and in conjunction with external agencies when appropriate. Leaders deal with low-level concerns in line with their stated procedures, providing support where needed. The process for referral is understood and used appropriately. Staff proactively seek advice when required.
53. Pupils overall feel safe and happy in their school. They appreciate the support given for their emotional wellbeing and mental health and feel known and valued as individuals.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Dame Allan's Senior Schools
Department for Education number	391/6035
Registered charity number	1084965
Address	Fowberry Crescent Fenham Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9YJ
Phone number	0191 275 0608
Email address	enquiries@dameallans.co.uk
Website	dameallans.co.uk
Proprietor	Dame Allan's Schools
Chair	Mr Ian Belsham
Headteacher	Mr William Scott
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	963
Date of previous inspection	8 to 10 May 2019

Information about the school

55. Dame Allan's Senior Schools are located in a suburb of Newcastle. They comprise separate sections on the same site, for male and female pupils, aged 11 to 16, offering single-sex education in a co-educational setting, and a sixth form that is co-educational. A linked junior school nearby is also part of Dame Allan's Schools and is inspected separately. Since the previous inspection, the school has opened a new building for science, art and technology. A further, additional building for the sixth form is partially completed. The current principal was appointed in September 2020.
56. The school has identified 155 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Of these, 36 are in the sixth form. Their needs vary and include dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorder. A very small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
57. English is an additional language for 91 pupils.
58. The school states that its aims are that pupils are challenged to discover and develop their sporting, artistic, leadership and other talents alongside their academic abilities, and to aspire for excellence in all that they do.

Inspection details

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

60. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, recreation time and other activities in and around the schools
- discussions with groups of pupils, staff, senior leaders and governors
- scrutiny of pupils' work
- discussions with leaders of subject departments
- scrutiny of the school's policies, information on the school's website, and other information provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation
- scrutiny of the school's records related to behaviour, bullying, safeguarding, and health and safety.

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

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

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

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