

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS JUNIOR DEPARTMENT

by the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

on

9th - 12th October 2006

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Dame Allan's Schools Junior Department

The senior schools were inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	Dame Allan's Schools Junior Department
DfES Number	391/6035 (Boys'), 391/6036 (Girls')
Registered Charity Number	1084965
Address	Fowberry Crescent, Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 9YJ.
Telephone Number	0191 275 0608
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Email Address	enquiries@dameallans.co.uk
Principal	Dr J R Hind
Head of Junior Department	Mr A J Edge
Chair of Governors	Mr E Ward
Age Range	8-11
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	9th - 12th October 2006

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Dame Allan's Schools were established in 1705: one to educate poor boys and the other poor girls of three Newcastle city-centre parishes. They moved to their present purpose-built accommodation in 1935. Since 1988 there has been one principal in charge of both schools, the aim being to provide continuity of education from 8 to 18. In line with their tradition and parental preference, Dame Allan's Schools continue to ensure that single sex education is provided for pupils aged 11 to 16, while the education of the younger pupils in the Junior Department, and those in the sixth form, is mixed.
- 1.2 Dame Allan's Junior Department was founded in 1988. It is sited within the girls' school and this enables good access to senior school facilities for information and communication technology (ICT), art, gymnastics, sport and music practice. There are excellent school playing fields on site. In addition to on-site facilities it makes use of the local swimming baths, theatres and art galleries. The present Head of Junior Department has been in post since 2001.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection the department had 133 full time pupils of whom 83 were boys and 50 girls. The majority of pupils join in Year 4 and are drawn from an area within a 10 mile radius of the school. In September 2006 there were 30 new pupils in Year 4 and 25 new pupils in Year 5. Pupils come predominantly from professional backgrounds or have parents in local businesses.
- 1.4 Pupils are assessed with set tests in English, mathematics and verbal reasoning. The analysis of standardised test data shows that pupils' average ability is above the national average, though the range is wide. No pupils have statements of educational needs funded by the local education authority. Twelve pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties.
- 1.5 The school aims 'to provide education for boys and girls from all cultures and all backgrounds within a supportive environment in which they can make the best use of their varied abilities'.
- 1.6 Most pupils transfer at age 11 to Dame Allan Girls' or Boys' school.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year group in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Dame Allan's Junior Department provides an all-round education of high quality, fully consistent with its aims and philosophy. The department gives due emphasis to academic success and the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge and skills. Strong emphasis is placed on spiritual, moral, social and cultural values. The department's use of time has improved since the last inspection.
- 2.2 The atmosphere and ethos of the department are such that the pupils flourish. They are confident and enthusiastic. The older pupils enjoy opportunities to take responsibilities for others; for example there are form captains in each year, who are also representatives for the newly formed school council, and there are house captains in Year 6. Pupils clearly love their school. In the pupils' questionnaire and during the inspection, many pupils have expressed their enjoyment of the school. Comments have included: 'there is always someone to turn to if we need help' and 'school rules are fair, they teach us to respect each other.'
- 2.3 The curriculum provides ample opportunities to develop a range of linguistic, mathematical and scientific skills. Throughout the department, the provisions for speaking and listening skills are plentiful. The curriculum contributes well to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The formal curriculum is well enhanced by a very varied programme of visits, visitors and events that extend pupils' learning. Recent visitors to the school have included local dance groups, and destinations for visits made by pupils range from re-cycling centres to local museums and theatres. During the course of the year, pupils perform in the school play, extend their oral skills through speech and drama and represent the school in a wide variety of sports. The school prepares its pupils very well for the next stage in their education. The Year 6 children are thoroughly prepared for the life and work of the senior schools.
- 2.4 The curriculum is well planned and organised overall; although in certain areas there are timetabling restrictions where facilities and staff are based in the senior school. In these lessons time is restricted by having to fit in with the senior timetable, and sometimes this results in inappropriate length of lesson time for the age group. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and specification of activities and resources. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties clearly supports their needs. Once pupils have been identified and assessed, they receive either one to one support, small group support, or in-class support. Individual education plans (IEPs) are drawn up by the qualified learning support teacher who liaises with class teachers. The system is thorough and fully supports the needs of all pupils. Parents are happy with the support their children receive.
- 2.5 Pupils who are gifted and talented are identified through a wide variety of measures to ensure that opportunities for them are provided.
- 2.6 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.7 The department is successful in meeting its aims to develop the pupils' academic potential, intellectual curiosity, knowledge and skills. Pupils achieve well both in and out of the classroom and develop effective skills and attitudes for work and study. The school has improved the standards it achieved at the time of the last inspection but has not developed pupils' ICT skills fully through their work in other subjects.
- 2.8 Teachers, in the main, have high expectations of pupils who respond accordingly. They are very well grounded in the knowledge, understanding and skills which they need. They are focused on their work, able to sustain concentration and enthusiastic in their learning. Above all they enjoy their work. A Year 5 pupil said: 'I want to be great at history and make my teacher proud' and a Year 6 pupil commented: 'it's not often I like homework but I did a project on Victorian servants and I thought it was really good.'
- 2.9 Literacy and numeracy standards are good throughout the age range and pupils apply their skills with competence and confidence. Pupils write well in a variety of genres and their creative and imaginative writing is well developed. They are articulate and able to respond to open-ended questions, thereby extending their knowledge and understanding. Pupils think their way effectively through problems in mathematics. They show a very well-developed understanding of concepts such as the study of muscles in the human body. Standards of singing and playing are excellent in music. However, although in some lessons across the curriculum pupils have the opportunity to think critically and creatively, in other lessons they have insufficient opportunity to develop their own ideas or analysis of issues as the time set is too limited, or expectations of the age group not fully appreciated.
- 2.10 Pupils listen attentively, discuss thoughtfully and write well. They write for a very wide range of purposes and in a wide range of styles. They use language sensitively and appropriately and, by Year 6, show a well-developed and mature feel for it in written work. For example in poetry one pupil described the sea as 'a shark's buffet, the doorway to the underworld'.
- 2.11 The use of ICT across the curriculum and appropriate facilities are areas for improvement. The facilities available for ICT are limited; pupils are expected to research at home. Access to the ICT suite is restricted and resources in there very limited.
- 2.12 Pupils develop strong skills and attitudes for work and study. They are articulate, listen effectively, and read and write intelligently and fluently. Speaking and listening skills are good. Pupils listen carefully to each others' comments. They articulate their ideas clearly and learn to discuss effectively; they also reflect on each others' ideas and develop them. In a Year 6 personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson one pupil said: 'I just worked it out from what he said before'.
- 2.13 Much emphasis is placed on encouraging confidence in the pupils, reinforced by the use of praise. This confidence is developed throughout the school; pupils respond readily to questions and are prepared to think and speak for themselves. Pupils work effectively individually, but also co-operate readily and sensibly when opportunities afford. Some excellent co-operation was seen in a Year 5 class in dance.
- 2.14 Mathematical skills are applied well in science, for example when presenting results in a graphical form.
- 2.15 Pupils are capable of independent work and study, and show they can think and argue for themselves. At best they ask and answer questions, discuss ideas well, use their own

judgements to analyse data and work problems out for themselves. They undertake research on the internet, at home rather than at school, and evaluate the quality of their own work.

- 2.16 Pupils collaborate well. They help, support and learn from each other when working in groups, and make effective teams. They are almost always keen to take part and show plenty of enthusiasm and enjoyment; lessons are busy and productive occasions. Pupils persevere when work is demanding and are prepared to perform in front of others.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.17 Throughout the department, the pupils demonstrate outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The ethos of the department, which permeates all that it does, together with the quality of relationships in its harmonious community, makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. It is well supported by a very clear and detailed programme of PSHE throughout the school. Newcomers in September talked of their warm welcome in assembly: 'everyone is so friendly'.
- 2.18 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent as a result of worship in the department through assemblies and the programme of religious education (RE) and PSHE. Pupils show increasing self-confidence. The teachers build on their self-esteem and knowledge by valuing them as individuals and through the support they provide.
- 2.19 Pupils have a strong moral sense and distinguish clearly between right and wrong from an early age. They find school rules good and fair. A Year 4 pupil commented: 'rules are here to protect us'. Pupils appreciate the need to respect laws and their behaviour is exemplary. They display a caring, kind and respectful attitude to one another and both teachers and pupils show courtesy inside the classroom and out of it.
- 2.20 The pupils' social development is excellent. A broad range of opportunities actively encourages pupils to relate positively to one another. The department encourages pupils to be caring, responsible citizens, who consider the needs of others less fortunate than themselves, and pupils work together to support a variety of charities. In discussion with inspectors, older pupils recognised their responsibility to the department community by setting examples to younger ones. Monitors handle their responsibilities very well.
- 2.21 A vast range of opportunities within many curriculum areas assists pupils to appreciate their own cultural traditions and the diversity of others. The acknowledgement of Christian festivals, together with Hanukah, Divali and Eid contributes effectively to pupils' knowledge of celebration across cultures. Pupils are very aware of the need for tolerance, understanding and fairness. They respect their own and other cultures and beliefs.
- 2.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.23 Pupils throughout the department are taught effectively and the quality of education fulfils the school aims. A substantial amount of very good and some excellent teaching was observed. In no lesson was the teaching any less than satisfactory.
- 2.24 In the classrooms there are bright displays of children's work and informative teaching aids. The pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons and the help they receive from staff. A feature of the most successful lessons is the well-planned teaching: learning objectives are shared with the pupils, and this stimulates learning and enables pupils to increase their knowledge

- and understanding. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in lessons. They listen carefully, share ideas with their peers and enjoy working in this conducive environment.
- 2.25 Teaching is supported by teachers' good subject knowledge and by effective use of resources. In addition teachers have a good personal knowledge of their pupils. They use this to support individuals very effectively on a day-to-day basis.
- 2.26 During the best lessons teachers' high and explicit expectations are evident, the pace is good and effective questioning is used; pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. There are opportunities for participation in group work, evident in a PSHE lesson when collaborative work produced a result to a question asked of the whole class. Pupils with learning difficulties are very well looked after, lessons consistently taking sufficient account of pupils' different abilities. The most able pupils are challenged through the provision of suitable extension tasks. In lessons which are less good, pupils have little opportunity for independent study or writing is too prescribed by the closed nature of the work they have to do.
- 2.27 In a similar way, the wide variety of tasks in the best lessons stimulates pupils' interest and provides a continuous focus for their learning. A significant amount of practical work in science brings pupils' learning to life and a variety of stimuli in English encourages the range of their writing. In these lessons the pace is brisk and pupils are expected to move quickly from task to task. Less good teaching involved exercises with a preponderance of single-word answers, or basic skills that added little to pupils' learning. Such tasks give pupils little chance to develop their own ideas and language.
- 2.28 In almost all lessons, teachers manage pupils well, helping them to stay on task. In a minority of lessons, the lack of a consistent approach to the management of behaviour allowed pupils to disregard the teachers' instructions. Relationships are always very good.
- 2.29 Resources to support pupils' learning are sufficient and of a good quality. ICT resources are being developed, for example an interactive whiteboard is very well used in Year 6. The use of ICT through the curriculum is an area for development.
- 2.30 Teaching includes the regular assessment of pupils' learning. Since the last inspection, the department has developed assessment further, with marking indicating how pupils can improve their work and formative assessment linked to planning work to meet pupils' needs. Thorough testing occurs through examinations, assessments and the use of standardised testing on an annual basis. Marking is regular and thorough. It is positive and makes use of the house point system to provide additional motivation.
- 2.31 Assessment has improved since the last inspection. The department now tracks pupils' progress annually against national norms as they move through the department. Assessment information is passed on effectively as pupils move through the department and regular analysis of pupils' progress is used fully as a basis for future planning.
- 2.32 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The care that the staff devotes to the well being of their pupils is a great strength of the department. It has maintained its high standard of pastoral care since the time of the last inspection. Staff know their pupils very well and relate very well to them. The very impressive pastoral care system produces open, honest, confident and articulate young people. They clearly love their school. The strong sense of mutual respect between teachers and pupils and between pupils is consistent throughout the school. Comments have included: 'there is always someone to turn to if we need help' and 'the school rules are fair; they teach us to respect each other.'
- 3.2 The natural and professional concern of staff is effectively underpinned by excellent formal arrangements for the pastoral care, support and guidance of its pupils. From discussion with pupils of all ages it is clear that all feel well supported in and out of the classroom. Pupils show themselves familiar with school procedures and clear about what to do if they have any concerns.
- 3.3 There is a clear and appropriate anti-bullying policy in place. Work in PSHE assists in underlining appropriate attitudes and behaviour. Pupils respond very well to the school's encouragement to care for others and many examples of this were seen.
- 3.4 The department has appropriate policies and procedures for dealing with any child protection issues that may arise. There is a designated governor for each area. In relation to health and safety, risk assessments for activities within and away from school are carried out and acted upon. The school has an appropriate number of first-aiders. All necessary measures have been taken to minimise the risk of fire and fire drills are held regularly. The standard of food provided by the department is excellent and very much appreciated by staff and pupils.
- 3.5 Admission and attendance registers are kept properly.
- 3.6 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.7 Links with parents and the community are well established and parents are highly satisfied with the department. It has continued to maintain the open door policy and warm welcome to parents which were a strong feature of the last inspection.
- 3.8 The parents of about a third of the pupils responded to a questionnaire distributed before the inspection. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive about the department. In particular they appreciated the overall atmosphere and ethos of the department, the progress their children make and the breadth of the curriculum. They felt that the department supported worthwhile values and provided pupils with very good help and guidance. Inspectors agreed with all these views.
- 3.9 The department maintains strong links with its parents and keeps them well informed through parent information booklets, regular newsletters, the website and the open door policy of the Head of Junior Department. Homework diaries both enable parents to know what work their children are doing and provide for easy contact with class teachers. Parents are encouraged to come into the department; and staff are approachable and are seen as such by parents.

Reports provide useful information about pupils' work and progress, showing pupils how to improve their work by setting targets.

- 3.10 The department handles parents' concerns with due care, and both the Head of Junior Department and staff are always available to discuss any concerns which parents have. The department has an appropriate complaints policy which meets current obligations.
- 3.11 The department promotes positive links with the wider community and continues its tradition of charitable giving with its support for such local ventures as the 'People's Kitchen' in Newcastle; for national causes with on-going fundraising for Guide Dogs for the Blind and internationally, with its assistance to the Indian Rural Education Fund. The pupils are also keenly aware of global issues such as the need to re-cycle and thus protect the environment.
- 3.12 The department takes full advantage of local facilities to enhance pupils' learning, by such visits as the 'Centre for Life' in Newcastle and is rightly proud of both school and local heritage.
- 3.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of the governance is good; some aspects are excellent, especially the long-term strategic and financial planning. Governors support the department's aims effectively. Governors' detailed knowledge of the department and their long-term commitment to it is a key part of its continuing success. The structure of the governing body is well defined; they enable sound oversight of the department and contribute effectively to its strategic operation. Management of the premises and investment in resources are very well directed. There is clear accord among governors as to their role in maintaining the ethos, the high quality and further development of the department, as well as ensuring compliance with statutory duties. There is appropriate involvement in the school and regular opportunities to meet with the staff. As part of a good working relationship between governors and the Head of Junior Department, the latter is provided with both affirmative support and constructive challenge, as required.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.2 The department works well as a result of effective management. Strong leadership enables it to sustain the ethos which enables it to provide pupils with a caring, happy and stimulating environment in which to develop.
- 4.3 The Head of Junior Department provides excellent leadership, being unwavering in pursuit of the school's aims and purposes; he is pivotal to the success of the department. He provides a clear and decisive sense of direction, which has produced radical improvements in the curriculum and facilities provided.
- 4.4 As the Junior Department is very much part of the senior school, the Head of Junior Department does not, as yet, have the back up of a junior-based senior management team with subject co-ordinators to provide proficient subject management. This lack of a senior management team providing a proper balance of skills limits the range of leadership provided, especially to the curriculum. The department therefore lacks a clear and shared sense of priorities as to the further development of the good education it already provides. A good range of policies have been drawn up over recent years, but procedures for monitoring their effectiveness have yet to be devised.
- 4.5 Financial resources are well managed and, as a result, key requests for additional educational resources are usually met. At the moment there is no coherent overall School Development Plan for the Junior Department to cover curriculum and budgetary requirements. Criminal Records Bureau, qualification and medical fitness checks are carried out. Staff enjoy working in the department, are highly committed, enthusiastic and keen to stay. Staff would welcome more professional development through specific in-service training on junior issues. Work in class is supported by an equal commitment from administrative, catering and other staff, who contribute widely to the many areas of school life. As a result of the hard work of all involved, this happy department runs very smoothly from day to day.
- 4.6 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.7 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Dame Allan's Junior Department provides a positive and supportive learning environment within a caring family atmosphere in which teachers; parents and pupils work to a common purpose. Pupils are very well cared for and enjoy close relationships with all members of staff; their personal development is excellent. The department has a clear sense of purpose and benefits much from the commitment, dedication and hard work of the Head of Junior Department and the staff. A high proportion of teaching is very good, though assessment is not always fully used to identify pupils' immediate and long-term needs. Much of the curriculum contains a good balance of different activities, but in some areas where the teaching is done by senior school staff the needs of junior pupils are not always completely met. Too little use is made of pupils' ICT skills. As governors are aware, limitations in management make academic leadership, management and monitoring less strong than in other areas.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, the department has improved its use of time, the use of regular and objective testing to measure the attainment of individual pupils and has identified different levels of tasks and materials appropriate to the needs of all pupils. It has made great improvements in assessment but does not fully use information from assessment to modify planning. Through a suitable programme, the department has ensured appropriate challenge for gifted and talents pupils. It has maintained outstanding standards in its quality of pastoral care, provision for pupils' personal development and welfare, and the quality of links with parents.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to further develop the very good quality of education the department already provides, it should:
1. develop an overall coherent School Development Plan for the Junior Department to cover curricular and budgetary requirements;
 2. develop a clear management structure for the department defining responsibility for curricular responsibilities and review of same;
 3. review current ICT facilities and develop a programme of study to develop ICT throughout the curriculum.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 9th – 12th October 2006. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Karin Kelly	Reporting Inspector
Jane Disley	Headmistress, IAPS school
David Williams	Headmaster, ISA preparatory school