

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

DAME ALLAN'S SCHOOLS

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

9th - 12th October 2006

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Dame Allan's Schools

The junior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	Dame Allan's Schools
DfES Numbers	Dame Allan's Boys' School 391/6035; Dame Allan's Girls' School 391/6036; Sixth Form 391/4900
Registered Charity Number	1084065
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
Chair of Governors	Mr E Ward
Age Range	11-18
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 schools or investigate their accounting procedures. The inspectors check the schools' 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 schools, their services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the Schools

- 1.1 The Dame Allan's Schools are schools for pupils aged eight to eighteen years old. The schools have a joint mixed junior department for eight to eleven-year-olds, which is the subject of a separate report. Eleven to sixteen-year-olds are educated separately in the two schools, but in the sixth form pupils from the two schools are educated together in mixed groups, as in the junior school.
- 1.2 The schools were established in 1705 as Christian Foundations in order to provide education for poor boys and girls in three central parishes of the city of Newcastle. Now pupils come from the city and a wide surrounding geographical area. They are predominantly from British white families, but about ten per cent of pupils come from families with other cultural heritages.
- 1.3 The two schools have shared the current site since 1935, but until 1988 they operated as completely separate establishments with a joint governing body. The governors of the two schools then took the decision to appoint a principal with overall responsibility for the management of the two schools. At the same time they created a joint mixed sixth form and re-introduced a mixed junior school, which had not existed since the 1950s. The current principal, the third, has been in post for two and a half years. During this time he has led preparations for, and celebrated, the tercentenary of the two schools, which included a visit from Her Majesty the Queen.
- 1.4 The schools have a broad range of common aims and these are shared with parents through the school prospectus. Key aims include the provision of a good education for boys and girls within a supportive environment, so that they can make the best use of their varied abilities through a rich mixture of experiences that develop academic, sporting, artistic, leadership and other talents. The development of self-discipline, self-confidence, integrity and independence within a community informed by Christian ethics is another key aim.
- 1.5 The two schools are selective and entry is competitive. Pupils take entry tests in English, mathematics and verbal reasoning and are interviewed. Considerable weight is attached to the interview, and the schools recruit a broader range of pupils in terms of academic ability than is often found in selective schools. A significant minority has intellectual abilities that are assessed by standardised tests at about the national average on entry and relatively few have scores that indicate very high academic ability. This means that, if pupils perform in line with their abilities, their examination results will be above those of all maintained schools and in line with, or slightly below, those of maintained selective schools.
- 1.6 Between a third and half of Year 7 entrants come from the junior school, about a third from state maintained schools and the rest from the independent sector. The schools also take a small group of pupils into Year 9, who take entry tests equivalent to those in Year 7.
- 1.7 There are 802 pupils on roll; 264 girls and 332 boys in the main schools and 206 pupils in the joint sixth form. The number of pupils overall is similar to the figure at the time of the last inspection, but the composition of 11 to 16-year-olds has altered. At that time about 55% of these pupils were girls, now about 45% are. This reflects the increased provision for girls in independent selective schools in Newcastle of recent years, which has made recruitment more difficult. The sixth form has increased in size slightly. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational need who is funded by parents and twenty others identified as needing extra support, mainly to address literacy needs. Thirty-seven pupils have English

as an additional language, but only one is deemed to need extra specialist support. The schools also have a considerable number of pupils who are designated as gifted and talented.

- 1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the schools.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The education provided by the schools is good. It is well suited to the needs of all of its pupils and meets the schools' key aims well overall and in many respects very well. The combination of curricular and extra-curricular activities provides a great variety of opportunities for pupils to develop academic, sporting and leadership talents. The schools provide multifarious opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles and this is a strength of their educational experience. The development of artistic talent is very strong in dance.
- 2.2 The schools are successful in promoting mathematical, scientific, physical and aesthetic development of their pupils and they do this particularly well in the areas of linguistic, human and social development. They are less successful in technological development because of limitations in curricular provision. Dance, English and drama provide excellent opportunities for pupils to express creativity, but the contributions of music, art and technology are more limited.
- 2.3 The curriculum also encourages the development of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills amongst pupils across the schools. The development of speaking, listening and literacy skills is a particular feature of English, foreign languages and humanities subjects, and produces an impressive confidence and articulateness amongst pupils.
- 2.4 The curriculum in Years 7 to 9, based on the National Curriculum, is balanced and broadly based, with a strong emphasis on modern languages. Information and communications technology (ICT) is taught as a separate subject and there are appropriate arrangements for personal, social and health education.
- 2.5 In Years 10 and 11 all pupils take nine GCSE courses. They all study English, mathematics and science and the great majority study at least one foreign language. Pupils select their other courses from a large number of options, which generally encourages breadth of experience. However, as at the time of the last inspection, the provision of technological subjects is limited, with the introduction of electronics this year representing only a small increase in provision.
- 2.6 The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of subjects, totalling 22 in all, which provides a good choice for pupils, apart from the technological area of the curriculum. Pupils are expected to select four AS subjects to study in Year 12, and three at A level, although a few study four A levels. All sixth form pupils are also involved in the enrichment programme, which covers health, drugs and sex education, communication and life skills, careers education and guidance, preparation for university and current affairs. It builds effectively on the comprehensive personal, social and health education programmes offered lower down the schools. Both programmes add a breadth to the curriculum that informs and educates pupils about important issues in their own lives and prepares them for adult life in a manner that was not apparent at the time of the last inspection.
- 2.7 Curriculum planning to meet the needs of all pupils has improved since the last inspection, but there is still some variation in its quality. Pupils with learning difficulties, including those for whom English is an additional language, are identified through a careful diagnostic process carried out by the learning support department. Individual education plans are developed to meet identified needs. These are shared with subject teachers, who report on pupils' progress in their subject area. This process has heightened teachers' awareness of pupils' difficulties and helped to improve their planning for these pupils.

- 2.8 Subject departments contribute to the identification of pupils who are gifted and talented in their subject, using criteria provided by the learning support department, and are expected to address the needs of these pupils in their planning. Some do this well, but there is less consistency in addressing fully the needs of this group through curricular planning than those pupils with learning difficulties.
- 2.9 Other opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to develop their talents are exploited well through regional and national competitions, participation in the national programme for the gifted and talented at the University of Warwick and an interesting initiative whereby sixth form pupils can study an Open University Foundation Course programme on mammals.
- 2.10 The schools offer a good range of extra-curricular activities to enrich and extend pupils' educational experiences, and this is now more extensive than at the time of the last inspection for boys. The extent of individual pupils' participation is variable. In sport and dance there is a high take-up across both schools and some groups such as Amnesty and Christian Union groups flourish. Currently, the participation of individual pupils in extra-curricular activities is not monitored; there is no specific policy of encouraging all pupils to participate in one or more activities and their participation is not always reported to parents. The structure of the day, with staggered lunch-time breaks for pupils of different ages, also hinders the participation of pupils at lunchtime and after school. This is particularly so for activities involving a range of age groups, such as music. The structure is currently being reviewed by the schools, which acknowledge the difficulties the current arrangements create.
- 2.11 Pupils' education is enhanced through links with the local community in a variety of ways. Pupils make a helpful contribution through community service, as part of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Sixth form pupils provide support at the local special school, while Young Enterprise and work experience increase understanding of local industry. The vicar of the local Church of England parish, as the school chaplain, contributes to assemblies and personal, social and health education, and the schools attend several services a year in the church.
- 2.12 A considerable number of older pupils also gain much from the biennial World Challenge expeditions to developing countries in which the schools have participated, and the trip to Tanzania next year involves over 20 per cent of pupils in Years 11 to 13.
- 2.13 The schools make good provision for the next stage of education and adult life. Early careers work is delivered through the personal, social and health education programmes. In Year 9 it also becomes the focus of some school assemblies. The local Connexions careers service runs whole day workshops and pupils research various career possibilities. In Year 11 pupils complete a careers profile, identifying potential attitudes and interests, which are discussed with careers advisers from the local Connexions service. Biennial careers conventions are organised by the schools, which are attended by pupils in Years 10 to 13 with their parents. All Year 11 pupils are strongly advised to take part in the voluntary work experience programme and last year about two-thirds of the group did so. Further opportunities for work shadowing and extended work placements are becoming available in the sixth form and there is a work shadowing week for all Year 12 pupils at the end of the summer term this year.
- 2.14 Good guidance about careers and higher education courses in the sixth form means that pupils are well informed about higher education and career options. The head of sixth form coordinates the process of applications for higher education courses, working closely with the head of careers and sixth form tutors, who provide most of the personal guidance to pupils. Nearly all pupils are intent on going on to higher education, but where this is not the

case good counselling and guidance is provided about the occupations that pupils might consider.

- 2.15 The schools meet the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.16 The achievement of pupils across all age groups and abilities in the school is good overall, with examples of excellence in some areas.

- 2.17 Pupils gain a thorough grounding in knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum, and this is particularly strong in English, humanities, foreign languages and dance. A particular feature of much of the work in humanities is the rapidly developing capacity of pupils to think critically and creatively about the evidence and concepts to which they are introduced.

- 2.18 In science and mathematics, pupils also develop a secure grounding in knowledge, understanding and skills and learn how to think critically about concepts that they are studying, but they do not always explore the broader implications of what they learn, for example in the use of statistical techniques. Occasionally learning in lessons is limited by a lack of sufficiently challenging and varied learning opportunities.

- 2.19 Pupils develop their capacity to think and act creatively in foreign languages, humanities subjects, dance and sometimes in science. Dance and drama make an important contribution to this area of development, but the impact of art, food technology and music is less significant.

- 2.20 The attainment and progress of pupils with learning difficulties is good, as is that of the gifted and talented pupils overall, but occasionally work does not provide sufficient challenge for the latter group. There are no significant differences in the relative attainment of boys and girls beyond what is found nationally.

- 2.21 Examination results in the last three years confirm the good achievement and progress identified in pupils' current work during the inspection. GCSE results overall are far above those of all maintained schools and are above those of maintained selective schools nationally. This represents a significant improvement on results at the time of the last inspection, when they were slightly below those of maintained selective schools. Results in all subjects are in line with, or above, those of maintained selective schools, with the exception of art, food technology and music, which are below. The results in dance and German are notably high compared with this benchmark. Standardised tests, designed to measure the extent to which the school has added value academically compared with national norms up to GCSE, indicate that progress is considerably better than one might expect.

- 2.22 A level results present a similar picture, with overall results well above the national average for all maintained schools, which have a selective intake into the sixth form, and slightly above those for maintained selective schools. This again represents a significant improvement on results at the time of the last inspection, when results were in line with all maintained schools and below those for maintained selective schools. Results have improved considerably over the last two years and those for dance, German and religious studies are now notably high compared with those achieved in maintained selective schools nationally. Over the three years for which comparative data is available, 2002 to 2005, the results in English, ICT and politics are above the national average for maintained selective schools and the results for other subjects are a little above this benchmark.

- 2.23 Girls achieve results that are better than boys in relation to the highest grades at GCSE and A level, reflecting national trends. Data analysing performance indicates that marginally more value is added to pupils' performance at GCSE than at A level, compared with national norms. Nevertheless, it is still good overall and confirms inspection evidence from lessons and work, that pupils make good progress in the sixth form.
- 2.24 Pupils achieve success in a wide range of activities other than the academic, both individually and as teams. The school has a national reputation in dance and a group of sixth form boys won a place at the National Youth Dance Festival, the only group that came from one school rather than a geographical region. A group of pupils won the regional Salter's Festival of Chemistry University Challenge competition, the schools' debating team reached the regional final of the Cambridge University schools' competition and two groups reached the national finals of economics and English literature competitions. Pupils have played a major part in the Cathedral choir and a large group of senior pupils participate in World Challenge expeditions.
- 2.25 A considerable number of boys and girls have achieved representative honours at county, regional, and occasionally national, level in all the major sports. Individuals have also achieved major successes in less popular sports, such as orienteering, the triathlon, trampolining, rowing, swimming and in the case of archery at Under 18, National Championship honours.
- 2.26 The skills and attitudes that pupils display towards their work are impressively good. They are excellent communicators, express themselves clearly and confidently at all ages and respond readily to questions, drawing on a wide range of appropriate vocabulary. They listen intently, read fluently and write effectively in English and foreign languages. In the classroom, in corridors and around the school, pupils talk easily and sensibly to adults.
- 2.27 Both boys and girls apply their mathematical skills appropriately in a range of subjects. Interpretation of statistical data gathered from fieldwork in geography and calculations of enthalpy and entropy changes in chemistry are good illustrations of mathematical skills being applied in other subjects. In mathematics pupils are adept at solving textbook exercises and use mental arithmetic confidently, but they are not as practised in applying concepts to problem-solving or more open ended tasks.
- 2.28 Pupils of all ages are confident personal users of ICT for research purposes and word-processing, very largely done at home, but they have much less experience of wider applications of ICT, for example to manipulate data using spreadsheets, data-logging or control technology.
- 2.29 Pupils can produce cogent arguments in support of their views and many subjects bear witness to this. Sixth form pupils in particular often demonstrate excellent analytical and evaluative skills, for example in debating the moral positions of various philosophers in religious studies.
- 2.30 Note-making and the organisation of work are well-developed skills. Competent notes are often made as a matter of course, particularly by older pupils, and are organised in a logical manner. Independent learning becomes more evident with age, but is seen at an early stage in book reviews, research and project work.
- 2.31 Both boys and girls work very well on their own and confidently with others, in pairs and small groups. In laboratories pupils worked amicably and positively with their partners and good cooperation was observed in physical education and dance. The manner in which pupils of all ages settle very quickly to their studies is a particular strength. Concentration

throughout lessons is impressive and pupils persevere with their tasks. Their responsible attitude to work displays their interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.32 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is a key aim of the schools and is one of their outstanding strengths.
- 2.33 The schools establish a strong common framework of moral values and social responsibility, which imbues relationships with pupils. It is underpinned by a code of conduct and system of rewards and sanctions which are applied consistently, fairly and with humanity. This is reinforced through subject teaching, personal, social and health education, sporting and other activities and the wide range of charitable causes that the schools support.
- 2.34 As pupils progress through the schools they develop an increasing sense of their own personal and wider moral and social responsibilities. In classes and around the schools pupils are strongly encouraged to respect and value each other. Topics and discussions in various subjects, including English, drama, geography, history, personal, social and health education, and notably religious studies, together with assemblies, inform pupils about the world, help them to understand the nature of injustice, what is right and wrong and what their social and moral responsibilities are. This is encouraged by the wide range of local, national and international charities which pupils support through fund-raising events, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, support for a local special school and the World Challenge expeditions. The Harvest Festival assemblies observed during the week of inspection provide one good illustration of this. Pupils had brought into school a plentiful array of gifts to be distributed to the People's Kitchen, a local charitable organisation supporting the homeless. The assemblies, organised and run by sixth form pupils, informed the pupils of the main schools about the importance of the work of this charity, but then moved on to talk about the wider issue of poverty across the world, quoting chilling statistics such as the number of children dying of starvation daily, which made a telling impression on those who heard it.
- 2.35 Pupils also develop their social and moral responsibilities through the variety of leadership roles available throughout the school and particularly in the sixth form. In the main schools pupils can act as form captains, captains of sports teams and take up responsibilities for charity events, recycling and Amnesty groups, amongst other things. In the sixth form pupils take on a broad range of responsibilities, run through the prefect system, which include general oversight of the school, contributing to the organisation of a wide variety of activities and events, providing support and guidance to younger pupils as form prefects and through the counselling service for which they have been trained, as well as other roles through community service, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and World Challenge.
- 2.36 The spiritual development of pupils is excellent. Through their relationships with teachers and the encouraging and supportive ethos of the schools, they become increasingly mature, self-aware and self-confident in their own abilities, without any sense of arrogance, and with a strong awareness of their own relatively privileged position in the world. Work done in personal, social and health education and religious studies, in particular, helps pupils to develop self-awareness and the capacity to evaluate their own actions and beliefs in a sophisticated and morally responsible manner.
- 2.37 Pupils develop a good awareness of key public services and institutions. This reflects the work they do in personal, social and health education and religious studies and the themes of some assemblies, for instance one religious studies lesson during the inspection focused on the moral principles underlying the National Health Service. School Councils also provide opportunities for pupils to experience the democratic process at first hand. Many subjects,

particularly in the humanities area, encourage pupils to express and debate their opinions, which is the cornerstone of the democratic process.

- 2.38 The great majority of pupils come from broadly similar cultural traditions, but during their time at the schools they develop an impressive understanding and respect for a wide range of cultural traditions. This is very much encouraged by the ethos of the schools and is directly developed through work in a great number of subjects in the curriculum, as well as through assemblies. Particular features of this development are the understanding and interest that pupils display in the various great religions of the world, which is particularly fostered in religious studies, and the understanding and enjoyment they gain from learning about different cultural traditions in dance and foreign languages.
- 2.39 The cultural understanding of pupils is also enhanced by visits to foreign countries and exchanges with pupils from other parts of Europe. These include recent visits to France, Germany, Spain, Norway and Poland in Europe and Kenya in Africa. The work the schools do with the Relais de La Memoire organisation, in remembrance of the Holocaust, brings contact with French and German pupils and World Challenge expeditions require participating pupils to learn about the cultural traditions of a developing country. In addition, there are regular visits to theatres, art galleries, museums and exhibitions, which further extend pupils' cultural development.
- 2.40 By the end of their time at the schools, pupils have developed into mature young adults, with a quiet assurance and self-confidence born of secure moral values, a strong sense of personal and social responsibility and an open-minded interest in a diverse range of cultural traditions.
- 2.41 The schools meet the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.42 The quality of teaching is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. In a great majority of lessons observed it was judged to be at least good and in a significant number excellent. There was virtually no unsatisfactory teaching and there was more good and excellent teaching in lessons than at the time of last inspection. Examples of excellent teaching were found across most subjects, but the largest number of lessons where this was so was in the humanities area. The proportion of lessons where teaching was judged to be excellent was unusually high in dance and religious studies.
- 2.43 Teaching that was excellent was marked by the subject teacher's excellent subject knowledge and planning, a driving pace of learning, a variety of teaching strategies, often very effective use of questioning and the generation of great interest and enthusiasm amongst pupils. In the minority of teaching that was judged to be only satisfactory, teachers had a good command of their teaching material, clear and appropriate learning objectives and lessons were soundly organised. However, the pace of learning was often pedestrian, in some cases there was over-reliance on textbook exercises, expectations of pupils' achievement were not always sufficiently high and sometimes the full range of pupils' learning needs were not catered for that well, particularly those of the most able pupils.
- 2.44 Nevertheless, the teaching is generally successful in ensuring that all pupils make good progress in their learning and now does this rather more effectively than at the time of the last inspection. This is in part because teachers have much better information about pupils with learning difficulties and gifted and talented pupils.

- 2.45 Teachers are well-qualified, have a good to excellent command of their teaching material, and form excellent relationships with their pupils. They exercise firm but friendly discipline and create an atmosphere that is very conducive to learning.
- 2.46 Teaching in many subjects fosters in pupils an intellectual effort and enthusiasm in their work, which encourages them to think and learn for themselves and, in subjects involving physical activity, to challenge themselves physically. Subjects, such as drama and dance, encourage creativity strongly, but this is generally a less strong feature of the teaching. Some teaching is pedestrian and does not engender intellectual enthusiasm, although pupils are nearly always conscientiously diligent in carrying out tasks set.
- 2.47 Lessons are usually well planned and purposeful, with organisation and time management of activities as general strengths. Transitions between activities are managed effectively, so that the pace of learning does not drop. In the large majority of lessons teaching methods and learning activities are judiciously selected to meet the lesson's learning objectives and ensure pupils' interest and a good pace of learning. In a small minority of lessons there is an over-reliance on textbook exercises, handouts and very occasionally copying from books or board, which often reduces the quality and pace of learning.
- 2.48 Medium-term planning is inconsistent. In some subjects it provides clear and helpful guidance about how teaching and learning will be organised, resourced and assessed, but in others it does not go far beyond the content of what is to be taught. This is particularly so with examination courses at GCSE and A level, where there is often only the syllabus to guide teaching, learning and assessment. Planning generally makes some reference to meeting the various needs of those with learning difficulties and the gifted and talented, but it is less often incorporated into detailed planning.
- 2.49 Teachers generally have a good understanding of the attitudes, needs and prior attainment of their pupils. This is a result of the good assessment records they normally keep, information about pupils with learning difficulties now provided by the learning support department and an increased sensitivity to the needs of these pupils and those who are gifted and talented, resulting from recent policy initiatives. This aspect of teaching has improved since the last inspection and has contributed to improved standards of teaching overall.
- 2.50 Subjects are soundly resourced with textbooks, handouts and other paper resources, together with the equipment and materials required for practical activities. The libraries provide adequate support to learning, but are too small to meet fully independent learning needs of pupils and lack sufficient facilities for ICT.
- 2.51 ICT provision to support teaching has improved since the last inspection, and the schools are in the middle of a major project to develop the library and ICT facilities. At the moment ICT provision still does not support teaching and learning satisfactorily, either in the range or amount that is available. Every department now has a data projector and good use of these were made in history, Latin and physics in lessons observed, but they do not yet feature regularly in most teaching. An increased number of computers are available for use by pupils, but they report that they are much more likely to use ICT at home to support their learning.
- 2.52 The schools have a common assessment policy that makes it clear that the marking of pupils' work should be diagnostic and constructive, so that it helps pupils make progress in their learning. Departments are expected to develop policies that meet these criteria.
- 2.53 A number of departments have developed policies and practice that are successful in meeting the criteria consistently, and in these departments there is clear evidence of marking helping

pupils make progress in their learning. The practice in other departments is variable. Pupils' work is marked regularly and graded, but the quality and length of comments vary considerably, often in relation to the age of pupil and/or the member of staff concerned. The work of younger pupils is more likely to have little or no comment and staff in the same department can follow very different practice, from a brief word to a helpful diagnostic comment.

- 2.54 Teachers generally use questioning well to assess pupils' progress, even where they make little comment in pupils' books or files, and also use answers to their questions and other assessment information competently to inform their planning.
- 2.55 The schools meet 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 quality of pastoral care and the provision for the health, welfare and safety of pupils in the school is excellent. It promotes the academic and personal development of pupils very well and ensures that their welfare is fully safeguarded. At the time of the last inspection this was a strength of the schools, but tutorial arrangements meant that sixth form tutors saw relatively little of their pupils. This has now been addressed and sixth form tutors have tutor time with their pupils and work with them during the enrichment programme.
- 3.2 Form tutors play a key role in the pastoral system and much thought is given to the selection and allocation of tutors to specific year groups. Tutors usually stay with their tutor groups for two years and, over time, they build up expertise in dealing with issues and concerns that are more common in particular year groups.
- 3.3 Tutors are responsible for the personal well-being and the monitoring of the academic progress of pupils in their tutor groups. They generally provide excellent support and guidance. However, during the inspection tutor time was used variably. Some tutors used it very well, for example in a Year 9 group to consider possible option choices for GCSE, but in other tutor groups activities were not as focused and the time was not used effectively. In contrast, time in the enrichment programme in Year 13 was used productively to explore university options.
- 3.4 The work of tutors is complemented effectively by subject teachers, who monitor their pupils' academic progress closely, and consult with tutors expeditiously if necessary. The school nurse is a trusted confidante who handles pupils' concerns with empathy. The schools have recently appointed a part-time professionally qualified counsellor to deal with issues requiring specialist guidance.
- 3.5 The staff handbooks lay out clearly the roles and responsibilities of various members of the pastoral teams and these are well understood by those concerned. Pastoral team leaders provide effective guidance and support to their teams of tutors and intervene in issues where necessary or where the tutor wants another opinion. Staff know each other well and informal communication works effectively with individual issues and concerns. The induction programmes for Year 7 pupils are planned well to ensure that, from the very beginning, pupils together with their parents are well aware of the ways in which they can seek help.
- 3.6 Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are excellent. They very much reflect the mutual respect, courtesy and sense of community that are a hallmark of the school. Senior pupils, particularly in the sixth form, are very much aware of the duty of care for younger pupils. This is formally acknowledged through the supervisory roles they take on around the school, through the form prefect's role, the confidential counselling service that they run and the recently introduced 'buddy' programme where sixth formers support Year 7 pupils.
- 3.7 The schools have a clear code of conduct, including rewards and sanctions, and this appears in pupils' planners. Pupils understand the code and support it, including the system of sanctions that are regarded as fair. Positive behaviour, particularly that which displays a strong sense of social and moral responsibility, is praised and acknowledged. Where punishment takes place careful records are kept of sanctions used.

- 3.8 Effective measures are in place to promote good discipline, and behaviour in lessons and around the schools is exemplary. The schools have a clear and appropriate anti-bullying policy that covers harassment of all kinds. On the few occasions that an incident has been reported, the policy has been implemented speedily and effectively. Comments by pupils and parents confirm the infrequency of bullying and the expeditious manner in which it is dealt with when it occurs. The schools have effective child protection procedures and all staff have recently had training to update their knowledge by a qualified member of the Newcastle Child Protection Scheme. All staff and other adults who work with pupils have undergone Criminal Records Bureau checks.
- 3.9 The welfare, health and safety of pupils is safeguarded and promoted through a comprehensive and well-designed set of policies, including those concerned with anti-bullying, substance abuse and child protection. The child protection officer has a very good relationship with Newcastle Child Protection Scheme and can consult them about any matters of concern.
- 3.10 Regular fire risk assessments are carried out and two fire practices are held during the year to ensure that pupils and staff are familiar with procedures. An emergency and disaster plan is also in place. Risk assessments are reviewed annually by each department and there are very thorough and comprehensive procedures for risk assessment for school visits and trips.
- 3.11 The school has an appropriate first aid policy and a well-qualified and experienced full-time school nurse, whose care and support is much appreciated by pupils. Additionally, many staff have first aid qualifications.
- 3.12 The schools have followed a healthy eating policy for some years and food is of a high standard, with plenty of variety of freshly prepared hot and cold food. Fresh fruit, and fruit juices, vegetables, salads and yoghurt are also available daily.
- 3.13 Good provision is made for the supervision of pupils before and after school.
- 3.14 Attendance registers are completed appropriately, with agreed codes about reasons for absence. Unexplained absences are followed up speedily by office staff to ensure pupils' safety. The admissions register fulfils all obligations.
- 3.15 The schools fulfil their duties with regard to legislation on race and gender discrimination, special needs and disability.
- 3.16 The schools meet all of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.17 The schools have excellent links with parents and good links with the local community.
- 3.18 The parental questionnaires administered before the inspection elicited responses from just under two thirds of parents. The responses indicated very high levels of satisfaction amongst parents with all aspects of education and support provided for their children, but particularly the schools' supportive, caring ethos and encouragement of individual achievement.
- 3.19 Parents have many opportunities to become involved in school activities. The thriving parents' association, which is common to the two schools, organises and runs several fund-raising and social activities during the year and raises significant sums of money for the schools. It also supports school functions such as plays and concerts. The association liaises

- closely with the governing body of the two schools and provides advice on the formulation of certain policies, such as school uniform.
- 3.20 On a more individual basis, the schools respond readily and rapidly to queries parents raise about their children's personal well-being or academic progress and instigate action themselves promptly where they have any concerns.
- 3.21 Reporting to parents takes place through written and oral reports. There is an annual parents' meeting for each year group at appropriate times during the year, where staff discussed pupils' achievement and progress, drawing on the annual written report which precedes this meeting. Parents also receive progress summaries with attainment and effort grades for each subject regularly throughout the year.
- 3.22 The criteria for attainment and effort grades in the summaries are explicit and understood by staff and pupils. Where unsatisfactory grades are awarded form tutors follow them up and parents are kept informed about future progress. Written reports vary in quality. They are constructive and personally encouraging, but sometimes do not identify clearly enough achievement and progress in individual subjects or exactly what pupils have to do to improve their performance. Nevertheless, parents consider that they are well informed about their children's progress and achievement and express high levels of satisfaction with the reporting process.
- 3.23 Parents also receive a good variety of other information from the schools, such as termly newsletters and an annual school magazine. All pupils have school planners to record information such as homework tasks. Parents are required to sign these regularly, which helps to keep them in touch with what their children are studying. The schools' website is used to convey information to parents and prospective parents. It provides some helpful information, but the schools recognise that it could be more informative and they are in the process of updating it.
- 3.24 Parental complaints are dealt with according to the well structured complaints procedure, of which all new parents are given a copy. The schools handle complaints and concerns of parents in a thorough, sensitive and expeditious manner.
- 3.25 The schools have many positive links with the wider community. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award involves pupils in local community service and sixth formers support the local special school. The schools maintain good links with the local Church of England parish and the vicar is the school chaplain. Young Enterprise and work experience create links with local businesses. Pupils organise fund-raising events to support various locally based charities, such as the People's Kitchen and the North East Air Ambulance. They also play for a large number of local and regional teams in various sports. The schools have links with the developing world and there have been annual visits to Kenya since the late 1990s, but the most impressive link is through the World Challenge expeditions which senior pupils participate in every other year.
- 3.26 These activities extend and develop pupils' understanding of the wider world, encourage a strong sense of social responsibility, provide good opportunities for team work and enhance pupils' maturity and self-respect.
- 3.27 The schools meet 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 governing body provides good governance of the schools. It has an appropriate structure of main board and various sub-committees that report to the main board. The sub-committees include education, which is particularly concerned with issues related to teaching, pupils' learning and achievement; finance, whose main brief is financial planning; marketing, focusing on marketing and pupil recruitment; policy, which is charged with ensuring that all the schools' policies comply with current legislation; and strategy, which is particularly concerned with strategic issues affecting the future development of the schools. The remits for the various sub-committees and the governing body allow detailed work on particular issues and initiatives to take place in sub-committees and informed consideration of proposals by the whole governing body. The combination helps to ensure effective oversight of the schools.
- 4.2 Governors have a strong commitment to the schools' well-being and development. They bring to the governing body a broad range of business, financial, legal and higher education expertise. There is currently no one with specific direct experience of working in the school sector nor is there anyone from a minority ethnic group on the governing body. It is aware of this and is seeking to recruit governors to provide this experience within the vacancies that are now available.
- 4.3 The financial planning of the governing body is impressive and has allowed the schools to continue to develop their facilities whilst remaining financially very secure, so stimulating growth and improvement.
- 4.4 The governing body gains good insights into the working of the schools through reports from the principal, the work of the link governor in each school, reports by heads of department and their own familial networks. Most staff in the schools, however, have little contact with any governors apart from the link governor.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The quality of leadership and management is good overall. There are considerable strengths and managers pursue the schools' aims effectively, but their role in monitoring teaching and assessment is under-developed.
- 4.6 The principal and senior management team provide clear educational direction and good leadership. An example of this is the recent creation of a learning support department, bringing together teachers with overall responsibilities for pupils with learning difficulties, including those for whom English is an additional language, and the gifted and talented. They are well-qualified for their roles and work effectively together to develop strategies for improving the quality of provision for these pupils.
- 4.7 The senior management's consultative management style encourages discussion and debate, is much appreciated by the staff and reflects the ethos of the schools.
- 4.8 The schools' development plan for 2005-8 was produced through this consultative process, which included consultations with staff at all levels and detailed consideration by governors. It identifies a range of appropriate tasks to be carried out over the three-year period, those with responsibility for them and progress made annually towards the completion of these tasks. It lacks, however, clear success criteria for some of the tasks and a coherent strategic

- vision of what the schools will be like by 2008 as a result of the work done in the development plan.
- 4.9 Financial planning is good and ensures that the schools are generally well resourced to support teaching and learning, although there is scope for further development of ICT resources, which the school is addressing.
- 4.10 The administration of the schools is efficient and ensures their smooth running, with the bursar, principal's secretary and office manager playing key roles in this process.
- 4.11 Management is successful in recruiting well-qualified, highly motivated staff. The professional development of staff involves a combination of school based in-service training for all staff and courses that address the particular training needs of individual staff, including some award bearing courses that the schools part fund. The senior manager with responsibility for professional development organises whole school training in discussion with the senior management team and seeks information about individual needs from heads of department and pastoral team leaders. A new appraisal system will provide a more systematic way of identifying individual needs. The budget for professional development is satisfactory and allows the coordinator to satisfy most needs. There are no procedures to monitor the effectiveness of professional development in improving teaching, learning and standards of work. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers are appropriate and the schools make use of the local education authority provision.
- 4.12 The monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievement, as measured through examination results and standardised data on achievement and progress, is generally effective. All heads of department discuss this data with the principal and action is planned to address any clearly identified inadequacies as a result of this discussion. However, some heads of department are not yet making effective use of the available data about pupils' achievement and progress in order to set them achievement targets.
- 4.13 As a result of a recent management initiative, the schools are currently computerising pupils' progress summaries and reports, which will allow a detailed monitoring of pupils' achievement as they progress through each school.
- 4.14 The monitoring of teaching and assessment by senior and middle managers is not well-developed. Job descriptions for middle and senior managers do not identify this as one of their roles. Most middle and senior managers do not systematically monitor teaching and assessment in order to discuss with colleagues how they might be improved. Senior managers are only beginning to develop a strategy for monitoring teaching and learning across the schools. This lack of monitoring and evaluation contributes to the unevenness of teaching and assessment in the schools.
- 4.15 The great majority of middle managers provide models of good practice as lead professionals for their colleagues and good personal support to those with whom they work. Heads of large departments and pastoral middle managers are currently not given sufficient time for them to monitor the teaching of their colleagues or pupils' learning effectively.
- 4.16 The schools meet the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.17 The schools participate in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meet its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Dame Allan's are good schools with several great strengths and no significant weaknesses. The schools succeed very well in their key aims of providing a broad education for their pupils, where academic success is greatly valued but so is the moral, social and spiritual development of pupils. They have developed a strong sense of community; relationships are excellent and well-qualified and highly committed staffs provide very good personal care and support for pupils. Good teaching helps to ensure that pupils make good to excellent progress in the great majority of the subjects that they study. There is a minority of teaching that is pedestrian and some assessment that is not diagnostic, but this is less than at the time of the last inspection and there is some outstanding teaching and good assessment practice in a considerable number of subjects. The governance of the schools is good and governors bring a broad range of expertise to the governing body, of which financial planning is a particular strength. Leadership in the schools is good and the consultative style of senior managers is successful in motivating staff and gaining their support for development. Middle managers generally provide models of good practice as lead professionals, but they and senior managers do not monitor the teaching and assessment practice of their colleagues closely. The schools have established excellent links with their parents, who are very appreciative of the education that their children receive. By the time they leave, pupils have become well-educated, rounded individuals with a clear set of values and a moral compass to guide them through adult life.
- 5.2 The schools have maintained the key strengths identified at the time of the last inspection, including the ethos of the schools and their pastoral care, together with the enthusiasm, good work habits and excellent behaviour of pupils. Since the last inspection, the schools have improved the quality of their curricular planning and teaching, including significant improvements in meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and improvements in catering for gifted and talented pupils. Standards of achievement have improved and the schools have removed differences in curricular provision for boys and girls. There have been improvements also in ICT resources and the library provision, but these are still no more than adequate. There has been a small extension of the curriculum in the technological area at GCSE level, with the introduction of electronics this year, but this area of the curriculum is still under-represented across all age groups.
- 5.3 The schools comply with all of the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to improve the quality of their provision, the schools should consider the following:
1. the development of effective strategies for the monitoring of teaching and assessment by middle and senior managers, in order that they can address any remaining inconsistencies in their quality;
 2. the further exploration of ways to strengthen the schools' curriculum in the technology area in order that it can make a more significant contribution to pupils' educational experience;
 3. further improvements in ICT resources and library provision, so that they can make a greater contribution to teaching and learning (the schools have this as a development priority and plans are well advanced to address these deficiencies).
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from the 9th to the 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 schools.

List of Inspectors

Ted Cohn	Reporting Inspector
Chris Brown	Former Headmaster, HMC School
Bill Chadwick	Senior Teacher, HMC School
John Coleman	Head of Department, HMC School
Jean Escott	Deputy Head, GSA School
Paul Fisher	Headmaster, HMC School
Anne Howarth	Former Senior Teacher, GSA School
John Morris	Former Headmaster, HMC School
Jill Noble	Former Senior Teacher, HMC School
Tim O'Byrne	Director of Studies, HMC School
David Taylor	Former Head of Department, HMC School