

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

TONBRIDGE SCHOOL

by the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

on

14th – 18th November, 2004

SUMMARY REPORT

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

SUMMARY INSPECTION REPORT ON

Tonbridge School

Full Name of the School	Tonbridge School		
DfES Number	8866020		
Address	Tonbridge School, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1JP		
Telephone Number	01732 365555		
Fax Number	01732 363424		
E-mail Address	hmsec@tonbridge-school.org		
Name of Headmaster	J. M. Hammond		
Chairman of Governors	G. B. Thompson		
Age Range	13-18	Gender	Male
Number of Pupils	749	Number of Boarders	426
Inspection Dates	14th-18th November, 2004		

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 163(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, 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 was not carried out in conjunction with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general.

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.

MAIN FINDINGS

Overall Summary

Tonbridge successfully fulfils its declared purpose of offering an all-round education to intelligent boys within a structured environment of care, support and encouragement. Excellent leadership and good quality teaching enable pupils to achieve high academic standards. The strong sense of community, fostered by very good pastoral care, provides the context in which pupils may develop their individual talents and skills as well as their sense of responsibility to others. The school provides an excellent programme of cultural, social and sporting activities which enrich its pupils' lives.

What the School Does Well

The school has many strengths in all aspects of its provision; outstanding amongst these are the following:

- The school's excellent management and high quality of staff are major factors contributing to the current high standards of education provided.
- Pupils of all ages and abilities attain high standards.
- The very positive ethos of the school is characterised by the attitude of the pupils and their excellent relations with staff.
- The school's excellent library facilities strongly support the academic and cultural life of the school.
- The outstanding quality of the school's extra-curricular programme is made possible by its excellent resources and facilities.
- The very good provision for pupils' personal development, pastoral care and welfare help pupils to develop well as confident, caring and responsible young people.

What the School should do better

No weaknesses were identified that have significantly adverse effects on the teaching or learning or on pupils' welfare. Some suggestions to improve provision further are made in the main body of the report.

Standards of Attainment and Progress in Subjects

Throughout the school pupils achieve high standards. Pupils' attainment in GCSE and at A level is good in relation to their abilities. Results have been well above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools over the last three years. The progress of pupils is rapid. In lessons, the standard of attainment seen was high and pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding ensuring that the vast majority fulfil their academic potential. The attainment and progress of pupils identified as having specific learning difficulties or for whom English is an additional language are comparable with others in the school.

The Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and Behaviour

The quality of pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour is very good. The pupils are competent learners, aim to achieve high standards, respond positively to intellectual challenges, retain focus and are well motivated. Learning is particularly enjoyed when pupils have an active role. Pupils appreciate their teachers and fully support the aims and ethos of the school. The standard of behaviour is very good, resulting in an atmosphere that is co-operative and productive throughout the school.

The Quality of Teaching

The quality of teaching is good and it meets the needs of all pupils. Teachers' subject-knowledge is excellent, and their management of pupils is very good. Lesson planning is mostly very good. In many cases teaching extends pupils' education well beyond the requirements of public examinations, but a significant minority of teachers adopts a teacher-dominated approach which restricts pupils' opportunities to develop independent learning.

Other Aspects of the School

Attendance

Pupils' attendance levels are very good. Pupils are usually punctual to lessons and teachers follow up unexplained absences. The school maintains the necessary admissions and attendance registers, but there is some variation between day houses in the way in which attendance is recorded.

Assessment and Recording

Marking and thorough screening to identify pupils needing support are good, but assessment data are not used to best effect and it is too soon to evaluate the recently introduced assessment and recording systems.

Curriculum

The very good curriculum has many strengths and is effectively managed to suit the needs of all pupils, including the most able and those receiving learning support. Pupils have access to a broad range of subjects in their first year in the school. As they progress up the school a core curriculum, followed by all pupils, is balanced with optional choices. Sixth form pupils have their curriculum enhanced by a valuable 'seminar' programme and extension classes in many subjects. The academic curriculum is greatly enriched by the wide extra-curricular provision.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

The quality of the teaching and non-teaching staff is very good. The number, qualifications and level of experience of staff make a very good contribution to the quality of education provided and to the standards attained by the pupils. Induction of all members of staff new to the school is excellent. An extremely thorough scheme of appraisal is in place. Teachers are very ably assisted by the non-teaching support staff. The necessary Criminal Records Bureau checks have been carried out for all staff. Ancillary staff in administration, secretarial, domestic, maintenance, catering and library roles contribute greatly to the efficient running of the school.

Resources for Learning

High quality materials, equipment and books support the teaching, learning, study and recreation of the pupils. Budgets are effectively controlled by the bursar and well managed by heads of departments. The school's excellent ratio of computers to pupils, and its provision for each teacher and boarder, facilitate learning and research. Their use and that of excellent audio-visual resources are very well supported by the technical team.

Libraries

Library provision, including both the Smythe Library and department libraries, is excellent, providing the ideal resource for independent learning while at school and in preparation for life after school. Skilled librarians provide an excellent service. Pupils make very good use of the library for research and leisure reading.

Premises and Accommodation

The quality of the buildings, accommodation and other facilities is very good and is appropriate for the numbers, abilities, ages and gender of the pupils; facilities are well used and enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. The school's attractive grounds, many splendid buildings, including the recently restored chapel, provide an enviable learning environment.

Links with Parents and the Community

Links with parents and the community are very good. Parents are well informed about their children's progress. Many opportunities exist for them to become involved, especially through the Tonbridge School Parents' Arts Society. Effective links exist with the wider community, especially through art, drama and music.

Pupils' Personal Development

The school makes very good provision for the personal development of its pupils. A strong Christian ethos prevails and the development of beliefs and values is fostered by an extensive range and variety of spiritual, moral, cultural and social education. The structure and management of boarding and day houses promote a strong sense of community.

Pastoral Care

The school cares very effectively for all its pupils' well-being, personal development, welfare, health and safety. The well-established and successful system of pastoral care is based on the houses. Academic progress is carefully monitored and promoted. The range and quality of provision for careers education and guidance are very good in preparing pupils for adult and working life, including employment and higher education. The school effectively encourages very good behaviour and courtesy to all. Child protection policies are in place and observed.

Boarding Standards

The Commission for Social Care Inspection carried out an inspection of the school in May, 2004. The action plan in response to this inspection proposed by the school has been accepted by the Commission.

Governance and Management

The overall quality of governance and management is very good, with some excellent features. The school's aims are being met effectively. The governors provide excellent support for those who manage the school and exercise effective control of the school's finances. The headmaster is very committed to every aspect of the school's life and his leadership of the school is excellent. During his fourteen years at the school, it has developed and improved significantly in all areas. The senior management is of high quality, ensuring that the school is very well organised. The academic life of the school is well managed, although better use needs to be made of assessment data. The management of its houses and organisation of games and extra-curricular activities is of high quality. The cheerful friendliness and hard work of the academic support staff and of those who work in the various non-academic departments of the school contributes significantly to the school's success.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

Achievement and quality in activities is excellent. The school rightly prides itself on the wide-ranging sporting, cultural, outdoor, community service or Combined Cadet Force provision available. Pupils make the most of the many opportunities that they are given. Highly committed staff ensure that the activities are run smoothly, efficiently and productively. Pupils and parents alike praise what is available.

Progress Made by the School since its Last Inspection

The school has successfully addressed the recommendations made in the 1997 Inspection Report.

Compliance with the Regulations for Registration

DfES Standard		Does the school meet the regulatory requirements?
1. Quality of education:	1.(2) Curriculum	Yes
	1.(3)-(5) Teaching	Yes
2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils		Yes
3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils		It meets almost all of the requirements
4. Suitability of proprietors and staff		Yes
5. Premises and accommodation		Yes
6. Provision of information		Yes
7. Manner in which complaints are to be handled		Yes

Actions Required for Compliance with the Regulatory Requirements

Only minor action relating to risk assessment is required. In order to meet all the requirements the school must:

Have a satisfactory level of risk assessment Regulation (5) (i)