



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST LAWRENCE COLLEGE

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Lawrence College

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

Full Name of College	St Lawrence College
DfE Number	886/6010
Registered Charity Number	307921
Address	St Lawrence College College Road Ramsgate Kent CT11 7AE
Telephone Number	01843 572900
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Email Address	hm@slcuk.com
Headmaster	The Reverend Mark Aitken
Chair of Governors	Mr David Taylor
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	342
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (213 boys; 129 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 145
Number of Boarders	Total: 197
Inspection dates	11 Oct 2011 to 12 Oct 2011 09 Nov 2011 to 11 Nov 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. 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 full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in June 2011 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Lawrence College was founded in 1879, on its present site close to the centre of Ramsgate. It lies within the Christian evangelical tradition as an independent boarding and day school for boys and girls between the ages of three and eighteen. The senior school has 342 pupils aged between eleven and eighteen, of whom 197 are boarders, many of them from business and armed-services families living in mainland Europe and in Asia. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 occupy a separate building on the same site, Kirby House.
- 1.2 The school describes itself as a caring Christian community, which seeks to recognise the gifts in each, and prepares every individual for the challenges ahead. It aims to give an academic education of the highest standards, to encourage a spirit of service, and to guide young people towards a personal faith.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection in October 2005, the school has developed Kirby House as a middle school for Years 7 and 8 and also built a new sports centre, which includes a dance studio and squash courts. It has undertaken improvements in the boarding provision, especially for girls, and in the use of the library facilities in both Kirby House and the main school. It has reorganised its academic structures to identify more clearly individual pupils' needs and the means to address these.
- 1.4 Admission to the senior school is by interview, reinforced where necessary by the school's own assessments of English and mathematics or by the Common Entrance Examination. Students join the sixth form on the basis of interview and their performance in GCSE examinations. Standardised national assessment indicates that the range of abilities within the school is wide. At Year 7 the average ability is above the national average. At Year 10 and at Year 12 the average ability is in line with the national average. The school identifies thirty-five pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), one of whom has a statement of special educational need. Twenty-eight pupils receive specialist support within the school. One hundred and twenty five have English as an additional language to that normally spoken at home (EAL). Of these one hundred and five receive support within the school.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

School	NC name
Year 1	Year 7
Year 2	Year 8
Year 3	Year 9
Year 4	Year 10
Year 5	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and of their learning throughout the school is good, and in many lessons it is excellent. The pupils are notably keen and committed. They apply themselves eagerly and they are determined to succeed. Consequently they develop their individual skills well across the wide curriculum. They respond keenly to the outstanding quality of teaching which they receive so that learning is strong at all stages, including the sixth form and including those with EAL or SEND. Pupils' progress throughout the school is good, compared nationally with pupils of similar ability. They also engage keenly in drama, music and a large variety of sports, and their participation in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and the combined cadet force is outstanding.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. The school's pastoral arrangements are careful and comprehensive. Consequently, pupils from all backgrounds and of all nationalities care for each other and are mutually supportive. They relate extremely well to each other, as well as to their teachers, support staff and visitors. They engage eagerly in shared activities and seek for more. Pupils show a strong sense of participation in the school's success and a determination to contribute well. The school's arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent. Its provision for boarding is good and building has commenced to make accommodation even better. Boarders have ready access to all the school's facilities and to external visits. In their discussions with inspectors, and by their responses to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire, pupils indicated their clear satisfaction with all aspects of the school's provision.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is good and that of leadership and management is excellent. Both are committed to pursuing the school's clear aims and this pursuit is highly successful. All regulatory requirements and all recommendations made by the previous inspection in October 2005 have been met. Arrangements to promote pupils' learning and to ensure their well-being are comprehensive and careful. At the same time, much depends upon the initiative and persistent direction of the senior leaders. Support for them is more personal and informal than structured and secure. Success nonetheless is marked. Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated their strong support for the school and its work. They praised the range of subjects offered and the breadth of extra-curricular activities, as well as the progress made by their children. They appreciated strongly the levels of pastoral guidance and the high levels of pupils' behaviour, as well as their worthy attitudes. They valued their means of ready contact with the school and its regular communication with them.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. The governors should establish appropriate appraisal and support systems within the school for members of the senior leadership team.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and of their learning, attitudes and skills is good overall at all stages, and in many lessons it is excellent. This is significantly advanced on standards at the time of the previous inspection. In particular, progress made by pupils with EAL or SEND is outstanding. The school meets very well its aims to enable each pupil to show intellectual curiosity and academic ambition and to realise his or her potential.
- 3.2 Throughout the school pupils listen carefully, question thoughtfully, show good skills of writing and reading and embrace mathematical concepts well. Pupils speak out keenly, whilst also being considerate of others, and they present their written work neatly and carefully. They listen attentively and follow instructions carefully. They think both creatively and logically. Throughout the school they are eager learners, persistent in their attempts to achieve accurate knowledge, clear understanding and correct solutions. The library has successfully become a place of quiet study. Pupils also engage keenly and successfully in physical and extra-curricular activities over a wide range of sports and in both the combined cadet force (CCF) and Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. A large number achieve the gold medal award. Pupils use the new sports centre, the dance studio and learning café frequently and well. Success throughout the school is marked.
- 3.3 Pupils' progress throughout the school is good. Those new to the school, including those joining the sixth form, settle quickly and assimilate a keen attitude to work, careful listening and the neat presentation of written work. Attainment in public examinations is good. National data for the years 2008 to 2010, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available, indicate good achievement in relation to the pupils' abilities. At GCSE, pupils achieve above the national average for pupils in all maintained schools, including success at the highest grades A*-A, and at A-level students achieve in line with the average of all maintained schools, including success in the range A*-B. Admissions to university and to centres of higher education are good. Those who choose not to proceed to higher education go successfully and directly into employment or gain a place on a professional training course.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils).

- 3.4 The support given to the pupils' learning and achievement by the school's curricular and extra-curricular programmes is excellent. The range on offer is wide. It is also accessed readily by all pupils.
- 3.5 The curriculum covers all major areas of learning very well. It allows maximum choice to each pupil, including those in the sixth form. The skilful support for those with EAL or SEND is carefully arranged and delivered sensitively. The curriculum meets the pupils' interests well, enables successful progress and encourages much pleasure in learning. Mathematical challenges, public speaking competitions and young enterprise schemes are keenly pursued and contested. Since the previous inspection, the school has included drama at both GCSE and A-level and it has introduced a pre-university course in global perspectives for the most able. Keen participation in music and communal singing has increased significantly. The school's programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is comprehensive, carefully planned and much appreciated by the pupils. Careers advice is available and used well.
- 3.6 The academic curriculum is successfully enhanced by a strong and challenging programme of extra-curricular activities. Sports include a wide range of team games and individual pursuits for the more senior pupils. Regularly organised visits abroad extend both linguistic and cultural understanding most successfully.
- 3.7 The school's engagement in the local community is well-developed and eagerly undertaken. It is active, vigorous and beneficial. It strongly promotes links with the outside community, especially by raising the pupils' awareness of needs and engaging them in meeting these.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.8 The quality of teaching throughout the school is excellent, consistently stronger than at the time of the previous inspection. It meets the school's aim to encourage intellectual curiosity and academic ambition well. It is also directed carefully to the needs of each pupil, enabling clear understanding by all and encouraging adventurous enquiry and bold learning among the most able. All lessons are well-planned and take careful account of particular need. Most are exciting. All promote strongly, across the full ability range, the pupils' acquisition of knowledge and the development of their skills and understanding. Lessons are characterised by varied activity, a brisk pace and the incorporation of team work and shared learning. Practical exercises are plentiful, and there are ample opportunity for discussion, enquiry and individual support. The teaching ensures high levels of progress and success.
- 3.9 Subject knowledge is excellent, allowing teachers to respond promptly and fully to questions and to press beyond the formal syllabus into pupils' personal enquiries. A feature of many lessons is the delivery of complex subject matter whilst also developing the literacy skills, vocabulary and precise understanding of pupils with EAL or SEND. Pupils value the opportunities given them to attend subject clinics and they appreciate the individual attention these provide. Formal programmes of learning support complement and enhance classroom learning very well. Pupils use well the school's wide resources in information and communications technology (ICT), design technology, art, music and games.
- 3.10 The quality of assessment is excellent and it supports pupils' progress well. Written work is graded carefully. It is also supported by formative comment and the setting of targets for future work as well as, for pupils approaching examinations, reference to the expected criteria and detail. The teachers know their pupils well, plan and prepare carefully and incorporate appropriate methods into their lessons and their teaching.
- 3.11 Since the previous inspection, the school has developed the roles of heads of subject departments well so that lesson observation and appraisal are more securely in place and the sharing of best teaching practice is enabled.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is outstanding. It is a strength of the school and a hallmark of the pupils. It is clearly evident in their relationships with each other, and when receiving visitors. The school is wholly successful in fulfilling its aims to foster spiritual growth, confidence, compassion and the ability to become responsible and caring members of a community. Pupils are confident, friendly, helpful and proud of their school and their community. They also engage well with the wider community, of which they feel a special part.
- 4.2 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. As a result of the highly supportive house system, pupils develop as thoughtful and considerate individuals, respecting each other and themselves. They have confidence in their teachers and support staff and they readily seek guidance and help, both pastoral and academic. Their engagement and success in extra-curricular activities enhance self-esteem significantly. Pupils take clear advantage of opportunities to explore values and beliefs. They recognise the Christian values of the school, appreciate the regular chapel services and develop a clear awareness of different faiths. They also use the chapel for occasional quiet reflection. Pupils also enjoy performing in the chapel band and choir.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral development is excellent. They show a highly developed sense of right and wrong. They accept the appropriateness of the school rules. Their behaviour is excellent in lessons, within the boarding houses, at meals, and whenever moving about the school. They show a clear consideration for each other, listen carefully to each other and share each other's successes. They are exemplary in the respect they show for the school environment and they wear their uniform with great pride.
- 4.4 The social development of the pupils is also excellent. Through the strong house system, pupils develop a clear sense of membership, of participation and sharing. They also accept opportunities to take on responsibility and leadership. Pupils of all ages accept roles and volunteer help whenever it is needed. They enjoy weekly 'tutor time' when they interact in a small group, take on duties and participate in personal and group planning with a trusted adult. Senior pupils eagerly assist those more junior to settle into the school and to become full members of the community.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural awareness and development is excellent. They particularly enjoy the cultural diversity within their community, as well as participating keenly in lessons with cultural content such as geography, art, history, music and modern foreign languages. Their relationships with each other are harmonious and characterised by tolerance and understanding. Visits and excursions are frequent and well supported.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.6 The school's arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of all its pupils are excellent. They encourage and support the pupils' outstanding personal development. The school provides an attractive and secure environment of gardens and buildings, excellent modern sporting facilities and plentiful opportunities for recreation and involvement with the local community. Pupils engage extremely well with their teachers and boarding staff, as well as support staff, estate workers and visitors. In their conversations with inspectors, they showed themselves hugely happy with their school and extremely proud of it.
- 4.7 Careful and considerate behaviour is a hallmark of the school. Instances of bullying are extremely rare and pupils agree that the school deals promptly and effectively with any that occurs. Pupils believe that they can approach any member of staff with a concern and that they would receive a careful and helpful hearing. Safeguarding policies are comprehensive and the school's arrangements to implement them are effective. Risk assessments are detailed, across the full range of school activity, including the risk of fire. All evaluations of risk are reviewed regularly and comprehensively. The school has met all recommendations made at the time of the previous inspection.
- 4.8 Training in child protection is thorough and it is updated regularly. Medical and first-aid provision is good. All treatments are appropriately recorded. The school has a clear policy to improve access for the disabled. Healthy eating is carefully encouraged and managed. Admission and attendance registers are compiled carefully and absences are effectively recorded and followed up. Regular exercise is required of all pupils as part of the curriculum and it is achieved successfully. All appropriate checks on staff and visitors are made and records are kept carefully.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.9 The overall quality of boarding education is good; much is excellent. It is central to the school and determines its arrangements and overall character. It provides a safe, stimulating and supportive environment. Boarding facilities are to a high standard, much improved since the previous inspection. Accommodation for boys is excellent in shared and individual rooms, each with appropriate study and toilet facilities. Girls, presently in good housing, await completion of their new boarding house which has been designed to the highest standards. Boarders in Years 7 and 8 have their separate and recently improved accommodation within Kirby House.
- 4.10 Boarders have easy access to the library, to indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, and to meals within the main building. They use these well. The quality of meals is good, with a wide range of dishes which include particular diets. The medical centre is staffed all day and throughout the night as needed. Care is excellent and all treatments are carefully recorded. Pupils have access to an independent listener, whom they trust and respect highly.
- 4.11 Boarders' access to and their engagement in sports, extra-curricular activities and community work are excellent and they use these keenly. Opportunities to study within the boarding houses, as well as in the library, are good and well supervised.
- 4.12 The school has acted appropriately to meet the recommendations made by the recent ofsted inspection of boarding in June 2011.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good. It is committed and it is effective. The governors have a clear vision for the school and they oversee successfully its development to high standards according to that vision. Since the previous inspection, they have developed Kirby House as the academic, pastoral and boarding centre for Years 7 and 8 and they have built an outstanding sports centre. Much recent growth has focussed successfully on the school's provision for boarders, on learning support for pupils with EAL and on encouragement for the gifted and talented, as well as on pursuing the aim to be a caring school firmly within the Christian tradition. In this work, the governors have entrusted much to the senior leaders of the school, and very successfully so, but they have not yet set up adequately clear and effective procedures for formal appraisal and review.
- 5.2 The governors discharge very well their responsibilities for child protection and for the welfare, health and safety of all pupils and all staff. They receive reports, they review policies and they undertake and provide regular and appropriate training. Since the previous inspection, they have improved fire protection throughout the school. Financial planning is careful and thorough so that significant and continuing building to a high standard is under way. The governors value the pupils' strong personal development and their engagement in social roles. Consequently the school succeeds very well in the pursuit of its aims and the care of its pupils and staff.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is excellent. It is concentrated in a small team of the most senior staff who meet frequently, both formally and informally. Consequently, decisions, policies and arrangements are sometimes more communicated than shared. Success, however, is marked in every aspect. The school's character and ethos are clear, its achievement is strong and its programme for development is active and well-funded. Recommendations made at the time of the previous inspection have been met so that the roles of subject leaders are defined, an annual review of academic performance is established and regular observation of classroom teaching is in place. The library is better used and it has become an important centre in the school. The school serves all its members confidently and generously and it has taken on a strong position in the local community.
- 5.4 Educational direction is strong and comprehensive, including introduction of a pre-university research course in Years 12 and 13 to challenge the most able and enquiring. Support for those with EAL or SEND is sensitive and outstanding, located in dedicated and attractive accommodation. The school meets its aim to give an academic education of the highest standards to all its members very well. Teachers respond vigorously so that teaching is enthusiastic and committed. Support for each other is strong.
- 5.5 Pastoral leadership and management too are outstanding. The house system is central and house leaders provide excellent guidance for all pupils. The provision of PSHCE is good and the qualities of mutual respect and consideration among staff and pupils are excellent. All staff are approachable and pupils value their roles

highly. The school is thorough in its checks on staff, governors and volunteers, and it ensures that all are trained appropriately in the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Records are meticulously kept and ordered. The administration of the school is highly effective. The reception of visitors is welcoming and friendly, catering is good and the grounds are attractive and very well maintained.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.6 The quality of links established between the school and parents, carers and guardians is excellent. Communication is regular, thorough and detailed. Parents receive full and lengthy written reports on academic and pastoral aspects each term. These identify very effectively each pupil's areas of strength and weakness and they propose suitable routes for improvement. Formal meetings between staff and parents, carers and guardians are arranged once a year. These are supplemented successfully by informal tea-afternoons in the school's cafe each Friday and by meetings privately arranged. Heads of house enjoy easy and frequent informal conversation with parents of boarders, both by telephone and by e-mail.
- 5.7 All required policies are sent to parents, carers and guardians, as well as displayed on the school's web-site. Complaints and concerns are dealt with carefully and they are recorded formally.
- 5.8 Parents responding to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire showed a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of school life. They praised highly their ease of communication with the school and the promptness of replies from it, the high standards of behaviour evident among the pupils and the school's promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views, as well as the breadth of the curriculum and of extra-curricular activities appropriate to their children. Parents are effusive in their praise and indicate no significant area of concern.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Dr Anthony Dachs

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